

# THE FIRST MONTHS OF THE 2020 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

**A**s usual at this time of year, this report will be in many respects outdated when printed, but for now this is a summary of the status of some of our legislative issues at the end of February.

The 2020 session of the South Carolina General Assembly began on January 14 and has been an odd combination of frantically busy (certainly for the League lobbyist) and unproductive. In the Senate, a filibuster by Senator Fanning against the Senate’s big education reform bill, S.419, has taken up all of the early session. Cloture was finally invoked but the backlog of unaddressed bills remains very high. In the House, action on bills both supported and opposed by the League has been slowed by a very inactive Judiciary Committee, which as of the end of February had met only twice, with few subcommittee meetings.

A decision on selling or reforming Santee Cooper looms large over everyone and is taking much of the available time and energy of legislators. The League is not lobbying actively on this issue, but we are monitoring the situation in case questions emerge that fall within our areas of greatest concern.

No redistricting reform bill, including our preferred H.3054, has received a hearing in subcommittee. All bills this session must clear their house of origin by April 10, “crossover day.” The House will devote the entire week of March 9 to the budget and take furlough the following week. This is the last year that a bill

could be passed with effect for the 2020 census redistricting. However, our work continues unabated. Without statutory reform, we will simply proceed full speed ahead to see that the process meets our goals of meaningful public involvement, transparency, and districts undistorted by partisan or incumbent protection.

We left last session with high hopes for two bills that would have compelled disclosure of donors to “dark money” organizations. H.4203 and H.3045. Both received a favorable report in subcommittee in 2019. However, neither has progressed in full Judiciary this session.

S.687, a bill to allow counting absentee ballots beginning a day before the election to circumvent problems associated with the new voting system, has passed the House and is currently in the House Elections Subcommittee, where concerns have been raised.

League Co-President Holley Ulbrich has been very active in testimony before the Senate Education Funding Reform Committee. This group is drafting a major reform bill for next session and we hope that the League will be a significant contributor.

The League has actively opposed S.556, a bill to divert public funds to private schools. At present the bill remains in subcommittee.

We are working to defeat resolutions in support of a federal constitutional convention (H.3125 and S.125), which the League regards as a great threat to

our system of government and civil liberties. These bills picked up more support this session, but we believe they will not succeed in 2020. However, we must be prepared to continue to fight this battle vigorously, as one of our highest priorities, because the issue will not go away.

The League lobbyist was the only person testifying on the issue of closed primaries when S.389 and S.1083 were heard in Senate subcommittee. We opposed the bills, but they were nevertheless forwarded with a favorable report to full committee.

We have had a leading role in pursuing expansion of accessibility to birth control through H.3279 and S.187. At mid-

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## Co-president's Message: Beyond Tribalism

It is human nature to identify with a tribe whether that tribe's base is ethnicity, religion, occupation, geography, income, politics, shared interests, or even sports teams. (My native New England remains sharply divided even within families between Yankees and Red Sox loyalists.) Most of us belong to multiple tribes, some overlapping more than others. Bonding with our tribes is part of how we develop our own identity and self-understanding. But to make democracy work, we must not only bond but also bridge—to communicate across tribal lines to others who perceive the world differently from the purview of their tribal identities.

Over the last few decades, aided and abetted by the proliferation of social media that cater to defined tribes, our civil society has degenerated into tribalism, hiding in our barricades and shouting over the ramparts. Theologian Paul Tillich defines neurosis as “retreating to a limited defensible fortress of ideas.” By that definition, we are an increasingly neurotic society.

The League of Women Voters, committed to nonpartisanship, has had to learn to operate outside or across

many tribal divisions, so we have a contribution to make not only to a vibrant democracy but perhaps to our collective mental health as well. In voter service, we encourage everyone to participate in the political process, whether they share our hopes for the outcome or not. We invite dialogue at candidate forms and insist that every candidate be treated with respect. In advocating with public officials, we seek common ground in trying to identify the public good and how we might best achieve it. In a world of yes/no, either/or, we stand for compromise, for that fundamental principle of public policy that the best is often the enemy of the good (or the good enough, or the good enough for now, or a move in the right direction). It took 72 long years for our foremothers to win the right to vote, but they persisted. Compromise is not a four-letter word. It is the essence of being able to live together in spite of differences, whether it is in a family, a workplace, a neighborhood, a city, state or nation.

So as we move into the fray of electoral politics, remember that our



task is, as Rudyard Kipling said, to keep our heads when all of those around us are losing theirs and blaming it on you (or us). As we begin our next century of serving the public interest and rising above our tribal allegiances, remember (the theme of our upcoming state Council in May)-- we are in it for the long haul.

Holley H. Ulbrich,  
LWVSC Co-President

## LWVSC Council Coming Up on May 2

On Saturday, May 2, LWVSC will hold its 2020 Council — our between-conventions conference of state board members and selected leaders from each local League and MAL. This is an opportunity for us to assess progress, analyze problems, and reset goals, as well as to learn and network as a group. Council 2020 will be held from 9:00 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. at St. Paul's Lutheran Church, 1715 Bull Street, in Columbia. Look on our website, LWVSC.org, for registration information.

All participants will be engaged in workshops, including a focus on the progress, organization, and future of our statewide Working Groups and a session on best practices for Candidate Forums. In addition, we expect to spend some time on how best to further our Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiative.

A highlight on the agenda will be an address by Marjorie Spruill, nationally known historian (and Charleston League member), on the history of the nineteenth amendment and how women won the vote. Marjorie Spruill is Distinguished Professor Emerita of History from the University of South Carolina. She is the author of *Divided We Stand* (about the 1977 battle in the U.S. women's movement over the Equal Rights Amendment) and *New Women of the New South*, as well as *One Woman, One Vote: Rediscovering the Woman Suffrage Movement*.

Also planned is an exploration of how primaries, large and small, work in South Carolina, led by College of Charleston political scientists Gibbs Knotts and Jordan Ragusa. They are

co-authors of a new book titled *First in the South: Why South Carolina's Presidential Primary Matters* (published Dec. 2019). Their presentation will include information and perspectives about South Carolina primaries, the presidential ones but also the smaller, local primaries. Why do we have primaries, how did the current system emerge, and what are the tradeoffs with alternative nominating systems?

H. Gibbs Knotts is a professor and chair of the Department of Political Science at the College of Charleston and co-directs the American Politics Research Team. Jordan M. Ragusa is an associate professor of political science, co-directs the American Politics Research Team, and is a research fellow in the Center for Public Choice and Market Process at the College of Charleston.

## LWV IN THE LOBBY

With 100 years of advocacy under our belts, members representing almost every local league in SC gathered at the State House on February 12 to ask our legislators for redistricting reform.

Our morning began with a training session on the State House grounds, where Rep. Gary Clary (a sponsor of our preferred redistricting bill) presented us with a resolution recognizing our Centennial. He also spoke candidly about the difficulties presented by a legislature that is increasingly divided, both from a personal perspective and a policy perspective. He is retiring at the end of this session; his presence will be missed.

We then made our way into a packed lobby; advocates for issues from animal rights legislation to education reform were jostling and vying for a few minutes with their legislators. A line waited to reach staff members in charge of sending “Please come out to the lobby” notes from constituents to their legislators. It was chaotic but also informative and a bit exhilarating. Lobbyists making hundreds of dollars an hour were there alongside advocates who were setting foot inside the lobby for the first time, and legislators were coming out of their chambers to meet with both.

In an unfortunate turn, the House adjourned early, shortly after LWV members made it into the lobby. This was disappointing because the bill we want (H. 3054) is in the House Judiciary Committee.

### Legislative Session Report

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session we continue negotiations with the insurance industry.

We have been very active with coalition partners in fighting H.3020, the “fetal heartbeat” bill that would ban most abortions after about six weeks, before most women know they are pregnant.

More than a hundred additional bills have been monitored by the League lobbyist as touching on some part of our concerns. This is an absurd number, but

LWVSC VP Lynn Teague, who helped organize the day, had warned us that their schedules were fickle. With a shortened session (January-May) and a three-day work-week, there are a multitude of commitments they must pack in, and the nature of those commitments can change on short notice.

League members, ever resourceful and tenacious, quickly pivoted. They tracked down their representatives, left notes in their offices, and hustled to the opposite end of the lobby to meet with their Senators. To their credit, many were successful.

After a little over an hour, almost half of the group migrated to a nearby lunch spot to discuss redistricting reform strategy, offer feedback for future Lobby Days, and enjoy the company of League members they don't often get to see. It was a great way to end our Centennial Day of Action.

The path to redistricting reform in 2020, which was always an uphill climb, has gotten steeper. Time is very short. House Judiciary Committee Chair Peter McCoy has called few meetings of this crucial committee and its subcommittees this year, and our preferred bill has never received a subcommittee hearing. We do not expect that to change in the final weeks before the “crossover” date of April 10, when all bills must have passed their house of origin in order to survive.

many have been inactive, for good or ill. We continue to prioritize our “Making Democracy Work” issues. Members should be aware that on many of these absolutely crucial issues the League is virtually alone at the SC Statehouse, or is alone in representing the positions that we take against large coalitions attempting to push through damaging legislation. We must continue to focus on these issues to protect democracy in South Carolina.

—Lynn S. Teague, LWVSC Vice President  
for Issues and Action



Lobby Day participants from the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton League.

However, our goal remains the same. Whoever draws the district lines in 2021 — legislators themselves or an independent redistricting commission — should have a transparent process that accommodates meaningful public input and does not use partisan or incumbent protection as criteria. **The incredible work put forth by local leagues this year to educate their communities on the need for this outcome has meant that this issue has gotten much-deserved attention — if not in the legislature, among the citizens.** The result is that an extensive group of people understand the negative impact of gerrymandering and are willing to hold 2021 map-drawers accountable for drawing fair maps that serve the voters, not elected officials, and we must remain vigilant.

Shayna Howell, Co-Chair,  
LWVSC Redistricting Workgroup

### Find Us Online

**Email: LWV of South Carolina.**  
*If you do not receive these, please let us know  
(send to lwvsc.cml@gmail.com).*

**Facebook: League of Women Voters of South Carolina.**

**Website: lwvsc.org**



# 2020 VISION AND THE CENTENNIAL OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> AMENDMENT

# “WELL-BEHAVED WOMEN SELDOM MAKE HISTORY.”

August 26, 2020 is the centennial of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, the women’s suffrage amendment. August 26<sup>th</sup> is called by many “Women’s Equality Day”. Winning the right to vote is, of course, a huge step toward equality for women. While celebrating the centennial of women’s suffrage in late August, though, we must reflect that it was a step into citizenship for some women. Many women did not immediately benefit from the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. Intersectional dynamics of gender, race, social class, and sexuality meant that women of color, especially in the south eastern part of the United States, poor and working class women and their families still lacked access to the vote. Vigilante and government racial violence and oppression, literacy tests, grandfather clauses, and poll taxes were barriers to full citizenship for many people. The work of civil rights activists and their allies to pass both the 1964 Civil Rights Act and the 1965 Voting Rights Act provided opportunities for all people to utilize voting rights.

As the League celebrates the centennial of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment keep three points in the mind:

1. Women were not given the right to vote. They won it. Respect the agency and activism of women and their supporters to win the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment and then 44 and 45 years later the Civil Rights and the Voting Rights Acts;

2. Speak the truth, the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was not implemented fairly, given racism and class barriers, especially in the southeast. Many white women were complicit in these injustices or were silent in the face of them;
3. Women’s votes matter. Often, we do not know the full history of the suffrage movement and the impact of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was the biggest expansion of voting rights in the history of this country. It deserves more than a footnote in civics and history classes and books.

Voting is very powerful and important. If it was inconsequential, why would the status quo spend so much time, money and energy trying to suppress the vote, map political districts to partisan advantage, and encourage the ole “divide and conquer” tactics among women, the poor and working poor, families in all their diversities, and more? Please promulgate the awesome website the League of Women Voters maintains for this country: VOTE411.org. It is a foundational example of how the League “makes democracy work.”

There are many celebrations planned for the centennial of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment. The League of South Carolina and the Columbia Area League have planned the following for us, the heirs of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, to demarcate the ongoing and

endless process of securing women’s full and complete citizenship:

**A Centennial March and Rally on Saturday, August 22, 2020!** We will meet at the corner of Taylor and Sumter Streets in Columbia. We will step off at 10:30 a.m. and march, strut and sashay down Sumter Street to the steps of the State House on Gervais Street. A short rally in honor of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, women’s activism and women’s status as the majority of voters in United States elections will be held. The rally will also discuss a necessary next step: to make people’s votes count through fair, impartial and open redistricting reforms. The League of Women Voters’ top priority going forward envisions “People Powered Maps.” All the issues and programs members of the LWV and their allies care about rise or fall based on how votes are distributed into districts.

Please donate to help cover the expenses of the march and rally. You can donate via PayPal on the state’s website (lwvsc.org) or the Columbia Area League’s website (lwwcolumbiasc.org) or both! Follow us on Facebook: League of Women Voters of Columbia, SC. Invite your families, friends, and allies to the march and rally. Wear suffrage outfits if you care to. We have earned a big march and rally. Our foremothers will be proud!

*Laura Woliver, President, LWV of Columbia Area*



*The 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment was the biggest expansion of voting rights in the history of this country. It deserves more than a footnote in civics and history classes and books.*

## Centennial Local League Celebrations



### BEAUFORT

The League of Women Voters of Beaufort Area celebrated the centennial by throwing a soiree on February 15<sup>th</sup>! We met at the Beaufort Yacht and Sailing Club where we kicked off the event with prominent guest speaker Shirley Perry reading “Ain’t I A Woman?” by Sojourner Truth. We had door prizes and delicious catering by Debbi Covington. Professor of Women’s History Robert Landrum from USCB spoke about the history of the suffrage movement and the League of Women Voters. We broke for dessert and then reconvened to have the honorable South Carolina Senators Margie Bright-Matthews and Tom Davis talk about South Carolina and the ERA. The best part of the event was the attendance of 11 young women, our first group of Emerging Leaders from Battery Creek High School. Our League’s goal is to lift young women into power. Senator Matthews addressed them directly and encouraged them to get involved and to run for office. These young ladies are our future

and we need to adjust their crowns so they can soar!!! We ended with take-aways from the senators: Write the two legislative judicial committee chairs and request they move the ERA bills to committee to be debated. We had over 100 people in attendance and it was magical; we are planning another soiree for August! More to come!! — *Catherine Forester, President, LWV Beaufort*

### CHARLESTON AREA

Charleston held their big fundraiser on Saturday, Feb. 8. The League and its supporters sold out the PURE Theater in Charleston with a performance of the AGITATORS, a play about the longterm friendship of Frederick Douglass and Susan B. Anthony as they fought together and against each other for universal suffrage. A champagne reception hosted by Carolyn Murray from News 2 followed the performance. Murray shared her story of the importance of voting in her family.

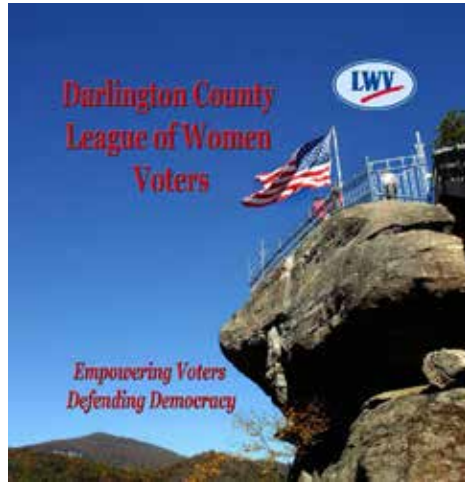
Charleston also had two League book club meetings discussing books related to the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment (The Woman’s Hour by Elaine Weiss) and the impact the Reconstruction Amendments had on voting for both men and women (The Second Founding by Eric Foner).

During March, Women’s History Month, the LWV has been asked to host three book discussions of The Woman’s Hour at local libraries, and to discuss women and the vote at seven different venues—libraries, schools, and the U.S. State Dept. at the Naval Base. Still in progress are plans to create a Women’s History walking tour in Charleston and a Women’s History digital map.

Finally, of course, we’ll be joining the Leagues from around the state for the Centennial March in Columbia in August. — *Joan Zaleski, LWVCA Centennial Chair*



# Centennial Local League Celebrations



**DARLINGTON**  
Darlington put together a book about their League and its activities and had it printed by Shutterfly. Copies have been given to all Darlington County Libraries and the Curriculum Coordinator for Darlington County School District, along with voter registration information and voter registration forms. They have also made a CD version of the book (which contains the high school curriculum developed by the Columbia LWV) for distribution to the libraries and to all high schools in the district.



Darlington also had a comic book artist develop a “Wonder Woman: Voting is the Real Super Power” business card for distribution at registration events. This is a companion card to the one developed last year: “Super Man: Voting is the Real Super Power.” Both were designed to appeal to younger voters and to highlight online voter registration.

Finally, Darlington LWV President, Shelia Haney, has been working on a book about the state League’s centennial history, 1920-2020, which she hopes to publish this year. —*Portia McJunkin*



The Sumter League with the mayor of Sumter proclaiming February League of Women Voters Centennial month.

## HORRY

The LWV of Horry County is planning a Centennial Luncheon on March 30th honoring Retiring Auditor Dr. Lois Eargle and recognizing the struggle for women’s right to vote. This event will be held at noon at Christ the Servant Lutheran Church Fellowship Hall. Then on National History Day, April 25<sup>th</sup>, LWV HC is sponsoring a contest in which a student wins a \$200 prize by creating a product (TEDtalk, art, essay) that best addresses the history of the suffrage movement in South Carolina.

## CENTENNIAL CELEBRATION IDEAS

### Books

- *The Grimke Sisters* by Gerda Lerner
- *The Invention of Wings* by Sue Monk Kidd
- *The Woman’s Hour: The Great Fight to Win the Vote* by Elaine Weiss
- *Divided We Stand* by Marjorie Spruill
- Playlet: (6 pages) based on Elaine Weiss’ *The Women’s Hour* by Holley Ulbrich

### Film Festival Movies

- *Not for Ourselves Alone* (Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Susan B. Anthony)
- *The Life and Times of Rosie the Riveter*
- *Norma Rae*
- *Iron-Jawed Angels*

Compiled by Sheila Haney, Historian

### Songs

Check Youtube for the following suffrage songs:

- Bad Romance Women’s Suffrage
- Standing on the Shoulders, Women’s Rights and Suffrage Anthem by Earth Mama
- The March of the Women

**MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK®**

# LEAD DAY



Suzanne Rhodes and Lill Mood



Christe McCoy Lawrence, Grace Gifford, Pam Craig



Kirsten Abrahamson, Laura Woliver and Karen Mitchell



Lynn Teague



Marianne McGrath and Janelle Rivers

# 38 STATES HAVE RATIFIED THE ERA! WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

The Equal Rights Amendment finally has 38 states voting to ratify after languishing for many years with just 35. But, do we still need a federal Equal Rights Amendment? In 1978, future Supreme Court Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg thought so when she wrote in the *Harvard Women’s Law Journal*: “With the Equal Rights Amendment, we may expect Congress and the state legislatures to undertake in earnest, systematically and pervasively, the law revision so long deferred. And in the event of legislative default, the courts will have an unassailable basis for applying the bedrock principle: All men and all women are created equal.” But that same Ruth Bader Ginsburg doesn’t think that the recent ratification by Virginia as the 38<sup>th</sup> state is going to make that happen. The fact that the deadline expired 38 years ago and five states have since voted to rescind their ratification has greatly clouded the picture and Ginsburg thinks that the best path is to have Congress pass the amendment again and start the process over.

Why? Article V of the U.S. Constitution gives Congress the power to propose an amendment and to determine the mode of ratification, but it is silent as to the power of Congress to impose time limits and it fails to define the role of Congress after ratification by three-fourths of the states. A 1921 Supreme Court decision (*Dillon v. Gloss*) affirmed that Congress has the power to fix a definite time limit for ratification. The *Dillon* decision said that an amendment should be ratified within a «reasonable» and «sufficiently contemporaneous» time frame «to reflect the will of the people in all sections at relatively the same period.» Can Congress change their minds 48 years later and remove the time limit? That question is up for grabs, but it’s worth asking our members of Congress to do so. And, ultimately, the courts will decide.

The other obstacle is rescission—some state legislatures that voted to approve the amendment subsequently voted to *rescind* their approval. Nebraska,

Tennessee, Idaho, Kentucky, and South Dakota all voted to ratify and later voted to rescind. **Article V of the Constitution affirms the states’ power to ratify an amendment but not the power to rescind.** There are many legal precedents that do not accept a legislature changing its mind by ratifying and then rescinding (but not rejecting and later ratifying). The most important precedent was the 14<sup>th</sup> amendment, a case in which two states ratified and later rescinded and two others (including South Carolina) first rejected and then ratified.

It would be great if the South Carolina General Assembly chose to ratify the ERA, but it would not affect the outcome. We may be looking at Round 3 of the ERA (first introduced in 1923 and again in 1972). Stay tuned for further developments.

*Holley H. Ulbrich,  
LWVSC Co-President*

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## SC VOTER

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Established in 1951, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina is a nonpartisan, political organization that encourages citizens to play an informed and active role in government. At the local, state, and national levels, the League works to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Any citizen of voting age, male or female, may become a League member. All members receive the National Voter, the SC Voter, and a newsletter from their local League.

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I wish my contribution to remain anonymous.

I wish my contribution to be tax deductible where allowed by law. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters Education Fund" which is a 501(c)(3) organization.

I wish to support the League's action priorities. My check is made out to the "League of Women Voters" and is not tax-deductible.

Comments \_\_\_\_\_

Contribution can be mailed to LWVSC, P.O. Box 8453, Columbia, SC 29202 or a donation can be made on line at [www.lwvsc.org](http://www.lwvsc.org). You can donate with a one time or recurring gift. Every little bit helps support advocacy efforts at the SC Statehouse and grassroots efforts in our local communities.

*Thank you for your support!*