

OUR NEW LWVSC POSITION: LET'S MAKE IT PERFECTLY CLEAR!

“LWVSC supports gender and racial equity, including the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, and promotion of fairness in hiring, advancement, pay, and in representation in public appointments.”

Equity and equality are the core values of this position proposed at LWVSC state convention by the League of Women Voters of the Charleston Area. We deeply appreciate LWVSC’s leadership and the convention’s unanimous support of the position which will be included in the 2019-2021 Agenda for Action. We believe it is also an important commitment to the convention’s overarching message – **Celebrating Democracy, Embracing Diversity.**

In principle, the words of the position are woven into many different dimensions of the Charleston League’s work including support for LWVSC’s redistricting and ethics reform initiatives. The values

have also been carried forward in locally focused work on the importance of voter education and engagement; public education and school board election; education on criminal justice reform; and partnership with organizations supporting the City of Charleston’s Apology for Slavery.

The Charleston League embedded the Equal Rights Amendment in the position because of its energetic program of community ERA education that began two years ago. Only 13 states have failed to ratify the ERA. It now stands as a legislative issue in 11 of those 13 states – including South Carolina. One more state is needed to meet the threshold for an amendment to the United States Constitution.

The tallest hurdle for ratification of the ERA stands deep in history. The United States foundational structure was created by men who did not allow for diversity.

For example, Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence wrote sometime later: “Were our state a pure democracy there would still be excluded from our deliberations women, who, to prevent depravation of morals and ambiguity of issues, should not mix promiscuously in gatherings of men.”

The ERA looks forward to a legal system in which each person will be judged on the basis of individual merit and not on an unalterable trait of birth that bears no relationship to need or ability.

— Melinda Hamilton, President, LWV of the Charleston Area

Highlights

- Co-President’s Message.....2
- Spreading LWVSC Across the State2
- Redistricting: It’s the Census, Stupid3
- 2019 Convention Recap4
- 2019 Legislative Update6
- Building Statewide Strength Through Working Groups.....7
- New LWVSC Officers 2019-217
- Donate to the League8

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Co-President's Message

Gender & Racial Equity Issues — and Our Own Dark Past

“White supremacy will be strengthened, not weakened, by women’s suffrage,” insisted Carrie Chapman Catt, founder of the League of Women Voters in 1920. The racism that stained the battle for women’s suffrage and the earliest days of the LWV is well documented if not well known. From Elizabeth Cady Stanton’s openly racist statements to Alice Paul’s insistence that Ida B. Wells and her black suffragists walk in the rear of a 1913 march in Washington D.C. to Carrie Catt’s refusal to allow a consortium of black women’s clubs to become cooperative members of the National American Woman Suffrage Association, only months before that organization became the LWV — the failure of the white women leaders to include black women in the struggle was blatant. It must be looked at squarely; it is part of the picture, even as we approach with excitement the 100th anniversary of the 19th amendment and the 100th birthday of the LWV, and celebrate the success of the long, dramatic, and painful fight for women’s suffrage.

Now the LWV is engaged in a nationwide effort to emphasize diversity, inclusion, and equity in the League’s internal make-up, and the LWVSC, at its recent State Convention in

Charleston, adopted a position stressing our current convictions: “The LWVSC supports gender and racial equity, including ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment, and the promotion of fairness in hiring, advancement, pay, and in representation in public appointments.”

Since the early 1970s the League of Women Voters has supported ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and continues to do so. But, as the new position’s wording takes into account, the ERA would grapple with only part of the problem women face in South Carolina.

As Frederick Douglass said when asked if it was not true that black women suffer the same injustices as black men and therefore should be given the vote, “yes, yes, yes, it is true of the black woman, but not because she is a woman, but because she is black.” This comment still resonates.

Ratification of the ERA will not help equalize the educational opportunities offered to white and African-American girls in South Carolina’s de facto segregated public schools.

It will not touch the large inequities in employment, housing, public health, and education highlighted in the College of Charleston’s Avery Research Center’s 2017 report on racial disparities in Charleston County.



It will do nothing to address the appalling inequity in maternal mortality in this country — black mothers dying at a rate 3.3 times greater than whites, and Native American or Alaskan Native women at a rate 2.5 times greater than whites, according to a recent report from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

With humble awareness of the glories, and the shames, of past battles, we will continue to work for women’s rights — for both racial and gender equity. Not either/or.
Christe McCoy-Lawrence, Co-President, LWVSC

Keep in touch between SC Voter Issues!

LWVSC regularly communicates news, announcements, policies, legislative developments, and more through email, Facebook, and our website.

Email: Watch for emails (about twice a month) from **LWV of South Carolina.**

If you do not receive these, please let us know (send to lwvsc.cml@gmail.com).

Facebook: Follow our page **League of Women Voters of South Carolina.**

There are daily posts about breaking developments and the page gets a lot of traffic. “Liking” and “sharing” posts helps spread the word.

Website: Our website, lwvsc.org is kept up to date; check it regularly.

Don’t miss out on all the things LWVSC has going on!

REDISTRICTING: IT’S THE CENSUS, STUPID

While we wait anxiously for the Supreme Court ruling on the North Carolina and Maryland redistricting cases, we are also expecting a consequential ruling on the question of whether the Trump administration can include a question on citizenship in the 2020 census.

The health of our representative democracy depends on nonpartisanship when drawing the lines that define the districts in the US House of Representatives and our State House. That, in turn, depends on an unbiased and comprehensive census to provide the data that underlies redistricting. This past week, compelling new evidence has emerged that the introduction of the citizenship question on the census has partisan intent.

The 2020 census has engendered a number of controversies, including questions about the adequacy of the budget. But the single most controversial issue and the one before the Supreme Court is the question of whether to include in the main census form a question about whether each individual counted is a United States citizen. The administration claims that the question is important for enforcing the 1965 Voting Rights Act. Critics claim that there is no useful purpose for the question and even the administration’s own research indicates that the fact of the question will reduce the response rate of Hispanic and Latinx Americans.

The impact of undercounting minority groups is well understood. It can affect how resources for population-based programs are allocated to localities. It can affect apportionment, shifting Congressional representatives away from states with undercounted populations toward other states. But a recent development in the news has drawn attention to another potential impact of the citizenship question: it could be used to further gerrymander district boundaries.

Thomas B. Hofeller was a consultant for the Republican party on redistricting. Among his notable achievements was the 2011 North Carolina Congressional map that was struck down due to racial gerrymandering and re-drawn in 2016. (It is the 2016 map that is the subject of the current Supreme Court gerrymandering case.) Hofeller died in 2018. His estranged daughter, Stephanie Hofeller, discovered computer hard drives and thumb drives with records of his redistricting activities, specifically, records relevant to the issue of the citizenship question on the 2020 census.

- a requirement in the Constitution, but which did not rule out states choosing to use that criterion.
- A memo sent to the Justice Department, part of which was used word for word in a letter from the Justice Department to the Census Bureau recommending addition of the citizenship question as a way to support Voting Rights Act enforcement.
- A more detailed memo, significant portions of which were apparently used in the Justice Department memo supporting the Voting Rights Act justification for the citizenship question.



A potential impact of the citizenship question: it could be used to further gerrymander district boundaries.

According to the New York Times, among the documents Stephanie Hofeller turned over to Common Cause and their attorneys—who are also pursuing a suit in New York against the inclusion of the citizenship question—are these:

- A 2015 study by Hofeller concluding that a citizenship question on the census was necessary to provide information that Republican-dominated legislatures could use to tilt gerrymandered district maps even more to the advantage of “Republicans and non-Hispanic whites.” The study was prompted by a Republican donor considering a suit in Texas to require that the Texas legislature consider only voting-age citizens when drawing districts, rather than the current practice of using total population. That suit went to the Supreme Court, which found that there was not such

The Justice Department denies the accusation that their testimony was insincere, but the evidence from the disks and thumb drives has been presented to the Manhattan Federal District Court. The Supreme Court heard oral arguments about the citizenship question in April. From the transcripts, it was apparent that the conservative majority seemed ready to grant the administration request to include the citizenship question. It is not clear at this point what impact this new evidence will have on the Supreme Court ruling, but that ruling is due imminently. The Census Bureau says that printing of census forms must commence on July 1 in order to conduct a timely census.

— Matthew Saltzman
Director for Redistricting

CONVENTION: WE LISTENED, LEARNED, DEBATED, VOTED, — AND ENJOYED CHARLESTON!

The 2019 biennial convention of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina was exciting, exhaustive, informative, uplifting and productive. We listened, we learned, we debated, we voted, we ate (well) and came home empowered to get back to work—after a rest. Nearly 100 League members representing 12 of our 13 local Leagues converged on Charleston for a very intense day and a half.

Our speakers were outstanding. Jennifer Bremer from North Carolina led off with lessons from her state's redistricting. Catherine Cotten from the LWVUS board was with us for the whole convention and shared some of the challenges and innovations at the national level. Anton Gunn inspired us on the subject of inclusiveness and diversity, and Judge Richard Gergel shared the fantastic story of Isaac Woodard, Harry Truman, and Judge Waties Waring who, together with Thurgood Marshall, helped to end legalized segregation forever.

Plenary sessions were lively. We changed the bylaws to allow us to become a 501(c)(3) corporation, making contributions and dues tax-deductible (but not yet!). We approved all the

recommended changes to program in five areas: criminal justice (access to education), election management (open primaries, paper ballots), home rule (appointment of local councils and commissions), state and local taxation (means-testing any additional property tax relief) and health care (adding domestic and family violence as issues to be addressed). We added a proposal from Charleston for a new position, drawn from LWVUS positions, to promote racial and gender equity and the ERA. It passed unanimously. A proposal to change the *SC Voter* to electronic-only was hotly debated and referred to the next budget committee because of a need for more information

about options and preferences. (Please see more information on page 1.) A proposal to do polling was likewise referred for further study and more information. Our parliamentarian, Katarina Moyon, reminded me that I said it would be an easy job. Not.

Finally, there was the issue of program priorities. These are the positions in *Agenda for Action* that local Leagues agree to give some attention to in the next two years by offering education to members and the public and looking for opportunities for individual advocacy. Near the end of the third and final plenary session, using ranked voting, we adopted three program priorities:

redistricting, racial and gender equity/ERA, and K-12 education. (More about how to address these program priorities in a separate article about working groups.)

Six roundtables hosted by eight experienced and knowledgeable presenters provided local members with good information and ideas for program and advocacy in six areas: dark money, diversity, education, environment, status of women/ERA and health care. We welcomed new LWVSC board members Nancy Williams (treasurer) and Marie Vandivort (secretary) and said a fond farewell to retiring members Julie Hussey, Fran Holt, Eleanor Hare and Sally Huguley. We celebrated two new local Leagues in Beaufort and Horry County and a new MAL unit in Aiken and presented growth awards to Greenville and Charleston. We visited the displays from seven local Leagues on their activities over the last two years and our judges (Keller Barron, Barbara Zia, and Sheila Haney) gave awards to all of them for excellence on a variety of criteria. We introduced our new very part-time administrative assistant, Kim Baker, and celebrated passing the 1,000-member mark in January.

And then we staggered home, with your co-presidents particularly happy to note that convention only comes every other year. And with gratitude in our hearts for everyone who helped to make it happen, and for the gracious hospitality of Charleston and the Charleston League.

— Holley Ulbrich, LWVSC Co-President



Andrew Brown, from the *Post and Courier*, presenting his breakout session on dark money.



Clemson LWV delegation



Columbia LWV delegation



Anita Baker (Columbia) and Kirsten Abrahamson (Charleston).



Julie Sellers (Columbia) and Dee Woodward (Sumter president).



L to R: Mary Deku and Karen Mitchell (outgoing and incoming presidents, Spartanburg); Mary Finklea (Florence); Jennifer Bremer (LWVNC Fair Elections); Trish Montgomery (incoming president, Hilton Head Island-Bluffton)



Charleston LWV delegation

2019 LEGISLATIVE SESSION – WE’RE HALFWAY THERE!

We have now ended the first year of a two-year legislative cycle in South Carolina, so bills introduced during the past session remain alive for the next. We have made progress in some areas, and regrettably little or none in others.

The State Board of the League is most intensely focused, as they always have been, on the national League mission of “Making Democracy Work.” The specific MDW areas in which we were active in 2019 were redistricting reform, elections and voting systems, ethics reform, and government accountability and transparency.

We have not yet had a hearing for the bills reflecting our thinking on the very important and time sensitive issue of redistricting reform, H.3045 and S.230. We plan for continued advocacy to have these bills heard and we also plan to advocate for maps that put voters first during the redistricting process as it moves toward resolution in 2021.

The League has prioritized a new voting system that meets League standards for security and voter verifiability. This session provided our last opportunity to have a significant impact in this area for years to come. And so, League expert Duncan Buell testified in subcommittee on S.182, a bill that would have required a “paper trail.” The bill did not progress. Other bills were filed in 2019 in support of our preferred hand marked paper system (H.3616 and S.374), but they were not heard.

However, we were instrumental in passing H.4157, which provides a procurement process protected from known sources of bias. Also, we worked to pass a budget proviso that allocates \$40 million for a new system. The only remaining step is a decision by the procurement panel, which is expected on June 10. We may or may not be entirely satisfied with the outcome, but have successfully made a less biased and better informed process possible.

I testified in support of S. 142, which would provide no-excuse early voting, and H.3035 which allows poll workers to work in any SC county. Both remain under consideration in Senate subcommittee. I testified on behalf of H.3031 which would have allowed added time for voter registration prior to elections. It was defeated in the House on third reading.

In general ethics reform we have seen too little activity. This year bills requiring disclosures of “dark money” campaign expenditures received House subcommittee hearings, too late for passage this year but sending them on their way with a favorable report. H.4203 addresses what should be the simpler aspect of this problem, correcting the definition of “committee” when requiring disclosure from groups established specifically to influence elections.

H.3045 addresses the more difficult issues surrounding disclosure requirements for other organizations that engage in electioneering. A recent federal district court ruling in *CREW v. FEC* and Crossroads GPS has made requiring disclosure of funding sources for electioneering “social welfare” groups genuinely feasible.

In 2019, I testified for H.4260, which combines a series of smaller bills to enact major accountability and transparency improvements in utility oversight. This bill has passed the House but has not been heard in the Senate.

Acting “pro se” (for myself) I participated as an intervenor in Public Service Commission dockets associated with the V. C. Summer case and the SCANA-Dominion merger.

I have also testified in support of H.3145, a bill to ensure more accountable governance and stronger ethical standards for electric co-ops, stressing that like all ethics bills it will instruct officials who wish to do the right thing far more often than it will be used to define and punish wrongdoers. This very positive bill passed and we participated in the Governor’s bill signing.

In other areas, we have worked closely with partner organizations.

In women’s reproductive health, in 2019 we testified against H.3020, the “fetal heartbeat” abortion restriction bill. Both WREN and Planned Parenthood provided strong leadership in this effort. Sadly, the bill has been reported favorably out of House Judiciary. However, we remain optimistic about stopping it in the Senate in 2019.

We also worked with sponsors of H.3279 in the House and S. 187 in the Senate, bills that would allow women to obtain a full year of contraception at once, thus preventing unintended pregnancies and, as a consequence, abortions. A subcommittee hearing late in the session failed to reach a conclusion and negotiations will continue through the summer.

Janelle Rivers, president of the Columbia League and an experienced expert on educational accountability, has testified for the League on accountability issues in the major educational bills H.3749 and S. 419. The General Assembly, and the League, now await a report from the Department of Revenue on current education funding mechanisms before taking on the task of considering improvements in the current system.

We also await action on bills to reform the larger system of state taxation, and we will again take advantage of Holley Ulbrich’s deep expertise in this area.

Our testimony on environmental issues has included opposition to S. 105, H.3653, and the various “ban the plastic bag” bills.

Other bills that did not progress in 2019 include many of interest in our “Making Democracy Work” focus and in other areas such as women’s social and economic rights, environmental protection, and health care.

As always, we deeply appreciate our legislative partners from both parties who have worked with us.

— Lynn S. Teague
Vice President for Issues and Action

BUILDING STATEWIDE STRENGTH THROUGH WORKING GROUPS

Over the decades, the state League has attempted a variety of ways to create networks across local Leagues and draw on the expertise and work ethic of local members to manage our education, advocacy, and voter service activities. With the shift in focus of the state board to an expanded support and co-ordination role, we have chosen to experiment with working groups in the next two years. Currently, there are three working groups in the development stage. One group will address redistricting (for which we already have a well-formed nucleus), one is focused on education, and the third will work on gender and racial equity issues/ERA. We expect to see three more ad hoc groups emerge, one for natural resources and two for non-issue functions, the 100th anniversary celebration and VOTE411.

These groups may function differently, but they will all have one or preferably two coordinators, at least eight members (with as many local Leagues as possible represented), and a liaison from the state board as well as regular contact with our state issues director, JoAnne Day, and our state director for issue specialists and coalitions, Suzanne Rhodes. We will try to make effective use of our newly purchased ZOOM communications tool, so be sure to download the ZOOM app, preferably to a desktop, laptop, or tablet with a camera so we can see your smiling face (or scowl, or rolling eyes, as the case might be). ZOOM is our hope to reduce travel to Columbia for face-to-face meetings.

I know you are all chomping at the bit to join one or more of these groups! We offered an opportunity to sign up at

convention and got lots of responses. Those names have been shared with state board. But we need to make sure that we have balanced representation from as many Leagues as possible, so we will be recruiting through local presidents. If there is one working group in which you are interested, put your name in the hat with your president. If there are too many in one local League (which seems to be happening in redistricting), we will ask you to send no more than two and form a local working group to support them back home.

There are still a lot of operational details to be worked out for our working groups. We want to emphasize the role of local Leagues in **offering education** — good information widely shared with the public and forming the basis for any advocacy that may emerge. We want to advocate in ways that are effective, and advocating from a basis of good information is part of that, but so is the style of advocacy, so we will need to work on **our advocacy skills** and be mindful of the importance of **close co-ordination with our Vice President for issues and advocacy, Lynn Teague.**

However, networking among local Leagues is not limited to working groups. By forging connections among local Leagues, we hope to use the ideas we have, the programs we create, and best practices developed at the local level to strengthen every local League. The working groups are a start. Look to hear more about them in the fall after the Board retreat in July as we start to gear up for another exciting and challenging legislative and election year.

— Holley Ulbrich
Co-President, LWVSC

New LWVSC Officers 2019-2021

**Secretary: Marie Vandivort
(Charleston Area)**

Marie currently serves as Natural Resources Director of the LWV of the Charleston Area. She has been a member of the LWV for six years, beginning with the Greenwich, CT, League. Marie and her husband Dan reside on the Charleston Peninsula. A native of California, Marie earned a B.A. in History from the University of California, Berkeley. She graduated from Law School and is a licensed, though inactive, California attorney. In addition, she holds an MA in American Studies. In the past she has volunteered at her children’s schools including a stint as President of the Parent Association and as Chair of the major fundraiser. Marie volunteers every year as a docent for the Festival of Houses for Historic Charleston Foundation, in addition to being a member of HCF’s National Advisory Council. Most recently, Marie was awarded the Frances R. Edmunds pin in honor of her volunteer efforts for HCF.

**Treasurer: Nancy Williams
(Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area)**

Nancy Williams has been a member of the LWV of Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area since 1991. After her retirement in 2013 as Executive Director of Literacy Volunteers of the Lowcountry, Nancy served as LWVHHI-BA’s Vice-President (2014-2016) and Co-President (2017-2019). Prior to moving to the Lowcountry from Hartford, Connecticut, in 1987, Nancy was employed as a human resources manager for CIGNA and Aetna and a high school English teacher. Nancy has a passion for women’s reproductive rights and is a past board chair, state director, and member of various regional and national committees for the Planned Parenthood Federation of America. She is a graduate of Ohio Wesleyan University (BA) and Wesleyan University (MA). She and her husband are parents of a son who lives in Athens, Georgia.

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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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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. 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!