

THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY IN 2021

The 2020 general election brought significant change in the South Carolina General Assembly. Representative Gary Clary retired. He was a very valued advocate for fair redistricting and shedding light on dark money. Other allies were unexpectedly lost. Representative Mandy Powers Norrell also worked to rein in the influence of dark money in our elections and backed significant measures to protect women and families. Representative Laurie Funderburk deserves much of the credit for South Carolina’s important move to allow on-line voter registration a few years ago. The

Senate is affected by a shift to a stronger majority party with the loss of three veteran Democratic Party senators. There are now 30 Republicans and 16 Democrats in that body, where 2/3 votes take on immense significance in ending filibusters and awarding special order to contested bills.

Against this backdrop, it is expected that the redistricting process will be heavily contested in the General Assembly and possibly in the courts. Also, legislative leaders have indicated that they intend to take advantage of the stronger Republican majority. House Majority Leader Gary Simrill has said

that he expects a focus on “conservative budget principles, pro-life legislation, pro-law enforcement legislation, pro-Second Amendment legislation.”¹ The Senate will likely follow a similar game plan.

Overall, the legislative session promises to be interesting and in some ways a difficult one for the League. We look forward to working with members across the state to make our voices heard.

— Lynn Teague, LWVSC Vice President, *Issues and Action*

¹ Maayan Schechter. “South Carolina’s ‘red surge’ on election night gave GOP more power inside State House.” *The State*. November 8, 2020, 5:00 AM.

Welcome to Virtual LEAD!

The good news is, there is no registration fee and no driving. The not quite so good news is that we will be doing our annual kick-off-the-new-legislative-year event on Zoom, so it will be without lunch and schmoozing. Save the date, Saturday, January 23rd, 9 to 12:30. We have lots planned for the day: the big Janus in the doorway of a new year, looking backward and forward. Reflecting on all the voting work we did from registration to poll monitoring to advocacy to information and VOTE411 to a court case that went all the way to SCOTUS. And bracing for an upcoming legislative session with a lot of old friends missing and unfamiliar new faces and not enough money to go around. Lynn Teague, our VP for Issues and Action and lobbyist at the General Assembly, will turn her head in both directions and bring us up to speed on voting and what to expect from the General Assembly.

We will also touch briefly on plutonium pits, redistricting, and the state of DEI. Then we will catch our breath and turn to an exciting panel on **The Digital Divide** and its effect on education in South Carolina. Jim Stritzinger, CEO of Revolution D, is a national expert in rural broadband and has been closely involved with Connect South Carolina. He will bring us up to speed on the technology and what has been and is being done to deploy more resources for our public school students. The other part of the digital divide is the education side, the learning challenge for students in a virtual environment. We will hear from School Superintendent J.R. Green about the challenges he encountered in rural Fairfield County, and from Sara Gams, an elementary school teacher who is South Carolina’s Teacher of the Year.

Save the date and watch for an invitation and an information packet!

— Holley Ulbrich, LWVSC Co-president

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Co-president's Message: Listening — and talking — to learn

At a friend's recommendation, I recently watched the October 2020 DarkHorse Podcast in which host Brett Weinstein (a U.S. liberal) talks with Douglas Murray (a British conservative). The lengthy discussion is intriguing, but I make no comment here on any of the views expressed. What struck me forcibly was the tone of the conversation. These two highly articulate, educated, and well informed men listen and talk for over two hours with unflinching mutual respect, civility, and cooperation, moving through various aspects of our national — and to some extent global — situation, disagreeing when needed, but persistently seeking and finding common ground as they go.

What a rare, almost exhilarating experience in today's environment!

We all constantly lament the extreme polarization of our political scene, the extraordinary extent to which those on both sides are "dug in," the effect it has on family relationships, the sting of the wildly exaggerated epithets that are hurled back and forth. As an organization, the League fiercely defends our nonpartisanship and, also, democracy. We understand how great a threat the verbal extremism is to our system of government and how much a successful democracy depends on civil discourse.

TED Talks and other programs suggest various techniques for trying to break through the deadlock— such as starting a conversation with each person stating a position or attitude promulgated by her or his own "side" with which he or she

disagrees. But we don't seem to make much headway— partly because progress can only be made among people who are willing to listen to learn, not merely to contradict and teach.

Among the documents preserved in our family farmhouse in Orangeburg County are diaries that my father kept when he was attending Wofford College in the 1920s. Much space is devoted to recording his enthusiastic, competitive participation in the intercollegiate debating society which was a prominent feature of student life at that time. I have memories myself of middle school debating assignments: should (or should not) Alaska achieve statehood?

Debating still has many adherents, I imagine, and national competitions must exist, but we seem to hear less about it. In debating, one doesn't just listen, one talks, one argues as persuasively as possible for an arbitrarily assigned position with which one may wholeheartedly disagree. I venture to suggest that a revival of widespread debating could offer a tonic in our current crisis.

To use this technique most productively, people would be required to argue positions that they do not hold. We could start debating clubs, Zoom debating meetings, create debating board games, play debating parlor games! The debating would not even have to be public. We could do this exercise on our own, in our own minds, intentionally marshaling the facts and arguments for the opposing view regarding specific points of disagreement.



If the response is that this approach is too difficult, or even ludicrous, I understand; I grant that it demands a certain courage. It's a habit of mind we have become highly resistant to. But surely if we want to find common ground, then we can find — and talk for — at least some cogent, reasonable ideas that defend the other side's views.

The purpose would not be to change our own position but to increase our understanding, to acknowledge the possibility that those holding opposite views can be thoughtful human beings, and to promote — the thing most desperately needed in today's world — civility.

— Christie McCoy-Lawrence,
LWVSC Co-president

A TERRIBLE DANGER: RESOLUTIONS FOR A FEDERAL CONSTITUTIONAL CONVENTION

Resolutions to amend the U. S. Constitution through a "Balanced Budget Article V Convention" resolution or "Convention of States" resolution have been introduced in South Carolina in recent years, and in 2020 made progress in the South Carolina General Assembly with support from leadership and approval in the House Judiciary subcommittee. Similar measures, backed by wealthy extremists, have already been passed by legislatures in many states.

In 2016, LWVUS adopted positions to address the specific dangers posed by these conventions (<https://www.lwv.org/newsroom/press-releases/constitutional-convention-needs-safeguards>). However,

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina calls on our members to vigorously advocate against such resolutions.

there is no effective mechanism to ensure that the requirements outlined by the League could ever be met. In 2017, the League joined with other public interest groups to take a strong stand against a convention (<https://www.lwv.org/fighting-voter-suppression/league-opposes-calls-article-v-constitutional-convention>). They accurately observed that "Calling a new constitutional convention under Article V of the U. S. Constitution is a threat to every American's constitutional rights and civil liberties."

In theory, a convention could help to realize important League of Women Voters positions, for example ending the electoral college and establishing the presidential election by popular vote. However, achieving positive ends in our terribly divided nation would be exceedingly difficult, and the goals of those currently calling for a convention are very much at odds with those of the League of Women Voters.

What are the Proposed Goals of a Federal Constitutional Convention?

A Convention of States is intended, as stated in the 2020 South Carolina House of Representatives resolution H.3125, to balance the federal budget, enact term limits, and limit the power and jurisdiction of the federal government. This is the long-familiar goal of "shrinking federal government until it is small enough to drown in a bathtub."

A balanced budget is appealing to those who believe that federal money is always flowing to someone else, presumably someone who doesn't deserve it, while they remain blind to the many benefits that we all receive. This is especially true in South Carolina, which benefits very disproportionately from federal funds. South Carolina's economy would be devastated.

Supporters of calls for a convention want the federal government to step away from regulating private business. Large corporations could more easily pollute our air, water and land. Consumer protections would be crippled. The federal government would not work to ensure that banks and loan companies accurately represent the terms of their contracts, and federal regulation of the safety of everything from autos to baby carriages would end. Federal protections for employees would be gutted, from OSHA regulations to labor organizing. There would be no federal minimum wage.

However, businesses and corporations would also find themselves with new and daunting problems, as consistent federal oversight was replaced with highly variable state provisions affecting every aspect of interstate commerce.

Finally, at the most basic level, this is an attempt to cripple the federal government's ability to protect the civil rights of all Americans. The Bill of Rights could be edited in ways that would dismay people across the political spectrum. EVERYTHING would be open to change.

Is a Convention really that Dangerous?

Scholars of constitutional law agree that the greatest danger of a constitutional convention is the inability of any state resolution or other measure to limit the scope of the convention once convened. Restrictions written into convention objectives and processes in state resolutions are meaningless window dressing to make nervous legislators more comfortable. A convention would be a free-for-all for well-funded special interests.

Some argue that there is protection in the necessity of the convention submitting amendments for approval by three quarters of the states. However, the same deep pockets that are funding the push for a convention would be back with a vengeance to pour money into backing amendments generated by a Convention. If you tell the public that you are going to "balance the federal budget" and "rein in federal overreach" many citizens will happily lobby their legislators for approval. It would be too late when they discovered that the federal budget was balanced by gutting their Medicare, preventing federal help when hurricanes destroy our coastal communities, or closing major military bases that protect the nation and sustain South Carolina communities.

Legislators cannot be expected to draw the line at the amendment stage if they can be stampeded into voting for this very dangerous first stage. No one with any grasp of rational risk management would embark on this journey, with our entire system of government hanging in the balance. The League of Women Voters of South Carolina calls on our members to vigorously advocate against such resolutions.

— Lynn Teague, LWVSC Vice President,
Issues and Action

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Emails from: LWV of South Carolina

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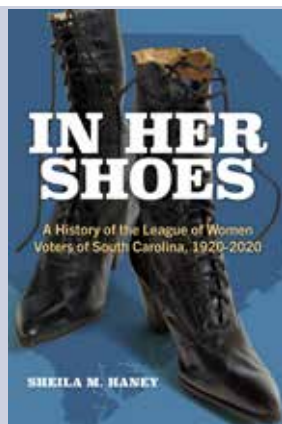
Facebook: League of Women Voters of South Carolina

Website: lwvsc.org

Looking for a Holiday Present?

my.lwv.org/south-carolina/league-resources

You'll find League grilling aprons, coffee mugs, ink pens, T-Shirts sizes Med, Large, X-large, and 2X, notecards, and reversible business cards. Spread holiday cheer while you support LWVSC!



VOTER SERVICE ACTIVITIES FOR THE NOVEMBER 3 ELECTION



Keiona Marshall at a GOTV event in Bluffton on October 24.

As we recover from the hard work of election season, I asked each Voter Service group to tell me about their new successful or fun activities from National Voter Registration Day (September 22) through Election Day.

Beaufort County: We participated in “Give a Day for Democracy” Campaign at various voter registration and census help events held from August to October.

- Held Drive-Thru Voter Registration during National Voter Registration Week, partnering with the Pan-Hellenic council and their member volunteers
- Set up tables at the Piggly Wiggly and Food Lion every Saturday for 6 weeks in a row
- Visited drive-through food distribution sites at schools, churches, and Penn Center several days a week for 6 weeks

We reached over 3000 people and registered 325 voters, not including those who registered online via Vote411.org or SCvotes.gov. We also provided census information and assistance to over 900 people.

Charleston League: Charleston Candidate Forums and Conversations with Candidates were outstanding.

- Fifteen forums were held October 1-19, 2020, for contested races in Berkeley, Charleston and Dorchester Counties.
- Eight Conversations with individual candidates were held in races where only one of two candidates agreed to participate.
- Many forums combined districts, such as for county council, school board, SC House and Senate.
- All events used Zoom to ensure the safety of candidates, volunteers and public.
- All events were recorded and posted on LWVCA website, Facebook and VOTE411.org.

Clemson League: Several activities in and around Clemson were successful despite the pandemic. Videos were sent to all high schools in the tri-county area after they disallowed our usual personal visits because of COVID-19. Dressed in suffragist attire the students had a history lesson on women’s struggle to gain the vote and another lesson on how to register to vote. Additionally, each high school received a bag of materials to help with student registration. The response was good considering the times.

Columbia Area League: This fall the most successful voter service activities were based on partnerships that reached low-income communities and young people.

We partnered with Christa Williams, a local community activist and coordinator of “I Vote Too” campaign in North



People waiting to vote at the Bluffton early voting locations on October 30. During the early voting period, waits could be as long as six hours.

Columbia. With her help, we registered 16 voters at an EZ Stop and 23 voters at a Piggly Wiggly and answered many questions and distributed flyers on absentee voting.

Lill Mood, League member, coordinated a successful voter registration drive in Chapin by partnering with A.M.E. Church pastors. The event was held at a community center. The team registered 14 voters, gave out 20 applications to people to take to family members and colleagues and answered many questions.

Ashley Harrington, USC student and League member, formed a partnership with a community service organization at Preston Residential College. They registered 10 new voters, helped 5 students check their registration, and helped 12 students apply for out-of-state absentee ballots.

Darlington League: Our Zoom meeting with the 2 sheriff candidates was interesting and informative and something new for our League.

Greenville County: Greenville County delivered QR codes and promotional materials from National Voter Registration Day to Melanie Gearhart, head of Greenville’s Goodwill Industries. Volunteers in 29 Goodwill locations helped 60 individuals register to vote or update addresses, check polling places, or apply for absentee voting.

The Greenville League also contacted all county high schools and received positive responses from 9 (about 50%) agreeing to hold a registration event for students. During this effort, one volunteer recruited 5 students from one high school to be poll workers on election day.

Hilton Head-Bluffton Area: Two “car parades” were held on National Voter Registration Day with 20 cars loaded with volunteers. Door hangers were deposited at over 500 residences with 2 car caravans—at Habitat for Humanity communities in Bluffton and Hilton Head Island. Voter support was provided two days per week during October at early voting locations. In long lines in the warm weather, 25 League volunteers gave out bottles of water and answered many questions at both Voter Registration and Board of Elections locations.

Horry County: This fall the local Co-op Markets provided great access to voters to answer their questions about the election process. Our revamped website and new Facebook page helped to drive folks to those sites, alert voters to various voting changes and recruit new poll workers in our county.

Spartanburg League: The Spartanburg League participated in a virtual voter information workshop. We led several



L to R: Sandy Stern, Communications Chair and Board Member, Ruth Wilwerding, Voter Service Chair and Board Member and Kay Roshnow, Voter Service Co-Chair and Board Member at a voter registration event at Hilton Head Plantation. They registered 37 voters and distributed voting information, and answered a lot of questions about absentee voting.

sessions with college students during September. We provided information about the election process, how to register to vote online and Census 2020. These sessions received positive praise by attendees and over 20 new voters registered at the end of our sessions.

York County: As a new League which hasn’t had an opportunity to meet in person as a group since they formed, York had a good turnout setting up a voter service & education table in Rock Hill two Saturdays in October. Over the course of 2 weekends, 7 members rotated through and manned the table. On Election Day, York had four members work as poll managers (three for the first time!) and one member was a poll clerk.

— Jane Turner,
LWVSC Director of Voter Service

DONOR CONTRIBUTES LWVSC RADIO SPOTS FOR 2020 ELECTION

“A message from the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, a nonpartisan organization empowering voters and defending democracy.” These words rang out in sonorous tones over the radio 500 times before the election, coming at the end of six different public service spots that encouraged voter registration and early in-person voting. A major gift from a generous anonymous donor enabled LWVSC to have these messages developed and aired over nineteen radio stations during the runup to election day.

The creative 60-second spots, featuring appealing interactions and scenarios, were focused towards rural and underserved voters, especially those who might not have internet access. Spots urging registration ran until Oct. 2, and the next set of spots, on early in-person and election day voting, ran from Oct. 5 through Oct. 31. The announcements aired many times on hip hop, gospel, urban adult contemporary, and variety radio stations from Myrtle Beach down to Beaufort and west to Allendale, Orangeburg, Bamberg, and Florence.



Ascertaining the exact impact of these radio spots will be difficult in an election that saw record high participation across the state, but we fully believe that they helped reach many citizens who might otherwise have lacked the information and reminders provided. We are very appreciative of the major gift that made them possible!

LWVSC PROGRAM PLANNING TIME

Yes, it is that time again. In odd-numbered years, local Leagues participate in the LWVSC program planning process by reviewing existing positions and making recommendations for changes, additions, or deletions to the League's program and Action agenda. This is our biennial effort to get into the heads of our members about what issues they care about and want to learn more about and help educate others about and perhaps even advocate. This process reflects the grassroots influence of our League members. Each League's president and program chair should have received a packet by the end of November. For those of you who have done this before, you will see some changes. We are emphasizing educational programming because we can't predict what other action opportunities such as advocacy will be. We are also offering some suggestions for possible changes in positions coming from working groups and State Board members for you to consider. Feel free to accept, reject, ignore, or editorialize about any or all of them. Add your own thoughts and suggestions. Just be sure it is done and back to State Board by March 1st so it can be compiled and put in the workbook for the May 2nd convention. We hope that everyone will engage in the process and help to ensure that the positions that underlie so much of our work are sound and appropriate.

— Holley Ulbrich, Co-president, LWVSC and Lynn Teague, Vice President for Issues and Action

SAVANNAH RIVER SITE WASTE UPDATE

Huge old tanks holding liquid radioactive and chemical wastes at the Savannah River Site (SRS) have concerned LWVSC for more than 40 years. Pre-treatment closure processes are proceeding, requiring continuous maintenance, but are encouraging.

A new and challenging proposed mission for the SRS would generate significantly more wastes. The Department of Energy (DOE) has proposed manufacture of nuclear weapons pits at SRS, an expensive warhead modernization program. The Government Accountability Office and the Defense Nuclear Facilities Safety Board have criticized planning and budgeting estimates for avoiding "best practices."

DOE has promoted waste storage at SRS, near Aiken: "Atoms for Peace" wastes from sloppily managed labs around the U.S. and the world (which the League didn't oppose), plutonium from a troubled Japanese reprocessing venture,

German spent fuel for experimental treatment and indefinite storage, and Canadian spent fuel. Germany and Canada have the talent, means, (and legal responsibility) to handle their wastes, as Canada had done for more than a decade. Canadian liquid wastes were nevertheless trucked to SRS. German wastes are in Germany, at least for now.

The Mixed Oxide (MOX) facility, an \$8 billion design/build, redesign/rebuild experiment, is cancelled after design, schedule, and budget problems, as well as dubious success, were acknowledged.

In addition to the Atoms for Peace wastes, 11.5 metric tons of plutonium were stranded because MOX was terminated. Pits production would bring another 7.5 metric tons. Japanese wastes brought about 0.75 tons. Plans to process and remove this material, as required by law and agreement, remain vague. The Waste Isolation Pilot

Project in New Mexico is mentioned for permanent storage but sending additional SRS wastes to WIPP would likely require "bumping" scheduled waste receipts from other federal facilities.

SC hired a law firm to renegotiate a DOE agreement to remove nuclear wastes from SRS and instead allow 15 more years of storage in return for promises of money.

The "need" for new U.S. weapons is as questionable as the cost estimates and design planning. U.S. and Russia each have about 6,000 weapons; the total at all other nations is about the same. More weapons materials are in stockpiles. The pits proposal would include redesign of weapons deployment systems at a significant cost to taxpayers and has already stirred arms races. The story continues.

— Suzanne Rhodes, LWVSC Issue Specialists and Coalitions

REDISTRICTING: WHERE ARE WE NOW? WHAT HAPPENS NEXT?

The first step in the decennial redistricting process is the national census. The live count portion of the census usually wraps up in July, but this year, due to the pandemic, the process was extended through October. The Trump administration attempted to cut the process short on September 30, despite warnings from experts that ending early risked undercounting minority and immigrant populations. The count was eventually halted on October 15 with the expectation that results would be delivered to Congress by year's end. But the shortened count has also caused difficulties for the analysis phase, and the report to Congress has been delayed until late January. Meanwhile, the administration's effort to remove undocumented immigrants

from the count goes to the Supreme Court. Under the original timeline, results were expected to be delivered to states around early April, but it is not clear at this point what impact the delayed report to Congress will have on the report to the states. South Carolina's legislature is generally in session from January to June, so any significant delay is likely to result in a special session.

The November election resulted in Republicans holding 30 seats in the state Senate to the Democrats' 16, so Republicans are in a strong position in this cycle of redistricting. A two-thirds vote is significant in Senate rules, allowing cloture on filibusters and approval of special order for bills on which objections have been placed. The League is hopeful

that the redistricting process will be open and will allow significant public input, but discussions with General Assembly staff have been very preliminary.

LWVSC is a participant in the second year of the national League's People Powered Fair Maps campaign. As part of that effort, our redistricting workgroup will be engaging LWV volunteers and partners across the state to help educate the public about the redistricting process and the long-term effects it will have. Informed advocates could be the key to convincing the legislature to use a transparent mapping process that doesn't create heavily gerrymandered districts based on partisan or incumbent bias.

— Matt Saltzman, LWVSC Director for Redistricting



LWV OF YORK COUNTY BECOMES SC'S 13TH LOCAL LEAGUE

On November 7, 2020, the LWV of York County was officially recommended by the LWVSC Board of Directors to become the thirteenth local League in S.C. This is the culmination of almost two years' work started by Joyce Franklin, LWVSC Director for Membership, who planned meetings every few months in Rock Hill or Fort Mill until a core group took shape last November.

"We now have an enthusiastic, diverse group of new members in the northern part of the state, working on voter services as well as on our good government advocacy efforts," said Franklin. "It has been marvelous seeing them come together and move from MAL Unit status to full local League status in less than nine months. They will contribute a great deal to our strength and visibility in South Carolina."

Co-presidents Pastor Karen Woods and Lisa Griffin and other members in York County already participate in local League leaders' Zoom meetings and on state working groups and add an important new perspective to our voice. Welcome, LWV of York County!



Post Office Box 8453
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SC VOTER

Winter 2020 • Volume 70 Issue 2

Established in 1920, the League of Women Voters of South Carolina is a nonpartisan, political organization that encourages people 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. League membership is open to men and women who are at least 16 years old. All members receive the *SC Voter*, email communications and news from their local League.

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Donations to the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, a 501(c)3 organization, are now tax deductible.

We have added suggested levels of donations that you may choose:

- \$1000 or more *Sarah E. Leverette Circle*
- \$500 to \$999 *Defender of Democracy*
- \$300 to \$499 *Suffragist*
- \$200 to \$299 *Advocate*
- \$100 to \$199 *Supporter*
- \$99 or less *Friend*

Any amount is appreciated! You may contribute on the LWVSC website or mail a check to LWVSC, P.O. Box 8453, Columbia, SC 29202. Checks should be made payable to LWVSC.

Every little bit helps empower voters and defend democracy! Thank you for your support!