

# **THE VOTER**

**P.O. Box 68214, Jackson, MS 39286-8214**

[http://www.lwv-ms.org/Jackson\\_League.html](http://www.lwv-ms.org/Jackson_League.html)

<https://www.facebook.com/LWVJA/>

**MAY 2020**

League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement

## **PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

**Carol Andersen**



### **COVID-19 vs. Free and Fair Elections**

I was born two days after Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965. I have never lived in a time when all Americans did not have at least a fighting chance to cast a ballot. I worry the COVID-19 virus may present real and frightening barriers for many Americans on Election Day 2020. Free and fair elections are essential for our democracy to function effectively and legitimately. As we witnessed with the chaos of the April 7 presidential primary in Wisconsin, the COVID-19 pandemic poses a valid threat to our elections process.

The League of Women Voters of Mississippi—and therefore the League of Women Voters of the Jackson Area, as well—is urging an expansion of no-excuse absentee voting, giving all voters the opportunity to vote early at their circuit clerk's office or to request a mail-in absentee ballot. The League also takes the position that the requirement for notarization of mail-in absentee ballots should be reduced to requiring only that mail-in ballots be witnessed.

We agree with Secretary of State Michael Watson's statement in a May 19 op-ed in the *Clarion-Ledger* that voters should not have to choose between casting a ballot and risking their health during the COVID-19 pandemic. We also agree the integrity and legitimacy of our elections must be safeguarded. We

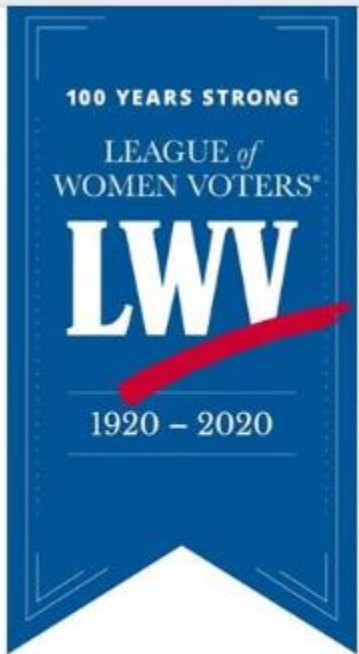
(continued in Column 2)

do not believe these are mutually exclusive. With limitations, early voting and voting by mail are both provided by absentee voting under current Mississippi law. We need to expand those opportunities to vote safely, without risk of exposure to COVID-19.

The League of Women Voters of the Jackson Area will hold its annual meeting via Zoom this Saturday, May 23, from 10-11 a.m. (details elsewhere in this newsletter). I invite all LWVJA members to participate, where we will screen recorded interviews with state leaders discussing strategies for ensuring fair and safe access to the polls now, with the threat of COVID-19 still with us, and for all future elections. The right to vote is a fundamental principle of our democracy. When more Americans can participate in our elections, the outcome better reflects who we are as a country. Therefore, a key aspect of the League's work is to fight to increase voters' access to the polls. Join us!

**Congratulations, VOTE411!**





League of Women Voters  
Jackson Area:  
Virtual Annual Meeting

---

Saturday, May 23, 2020  
10am -11am

MAY  
23

Virtual Meeting: League of Women Voters  
(Jackson) Annual Meeting

- **Election of Officers**
- **Adoption of FY2021 Budget**
- **Selection of Public Policy Priorities**
- **Interview with David Blount on Voter Issues**

## ZOOM ACCESS

To attend the meeting via Zoom, click link:  
<https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81699156770>

**OR**

**One tap mobile**

+13126266799,,81699156770#

**Phone in:**

+1 312 626 6799

Meeting ID: 816 9915 6770

# REPORT OF THE LWVJA NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Dierdre Payne (chair), Barbara Powell, and Joy Parikh

*According to the LWVJA by-laws the president, the secretary, and the Voter Service vice-president shall be elected in even-numbered years. No officer shall be elected in one capacity for more than two (2) consecutive terms. We should elect two (2) directors each year, with a maximum of four (4) elected directors on the board at one time.*

This requires an election at our May 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Meeting. The following members have accepted nomination for these offices:

President – Kay Brodbeck  
VP – Voter Services – Willie Jones  
Secretary – Megan Tidwell  
Social Media and Public Relations Director - Joy Parikh  
National Issues Director - Emily Stanfield  
Nominating Committee – Margaret Barnes, Dierdre Payne, Martha Phillips

\*\*\*

**Officers continuing on the board** (elected for a two-year term in 2019):

Administrative Vice-President -- Deloris Lee  
Treasurer -- LaKeeta Jones  
Membership Director — Elaine Talbott  
The Voter Editor — Savina Schoenhofer

**IN MEMORIAM**  
**Harriet Sheila Tanzman**  
**October 12, 1940 - May 5, 2020**



*“The League was very important to Harriett and she was eager to attend the meetings and stay informed right up to the very end.” Dary Schoenfelt*

Harriett Tanzman was profiled in *The Voter* in November 2018. Here is an excerpt from that feature.

**Voter:** I know you are an activist in civil rights and progressive politics – what interested you in the League of Women Voters, a non-partisan organization?

**HT:** The fact that we focus on the vote...protecting the right to vote; educating people about issues and candidates.

**Voter:** Do you see the work of the League being related to your civil rights work?

**HT:** Yes, I do. Civil rights is about increasing the opportunity to vote...increasing opportunities for people to do many things, and voting is one of them – voting is primary...and so they dovetail. Voting is central to my decision to be a civil rights activist.

**Voter:** What you tell young people about joining the League?

**HT:** Well, there was a time when there wasn't a right and we had to fight for it. And that time is past...but we still have a lot of fight left! We deserve the right to vote.

**Voter:** What would you want to tell young people about activism?

**HT:** Get active! It's the only way you can preserve your own rights, and the rights of other people.

# People Powered Fair Maps: 2012-2020

By Ray Mikell

While the COVID-19 crisis has put many areas of American life on hold, the battle for redistricting reform in the nation's courts is not one of them. Consequently, the League of Women Voters continues to pay close attention to what is happening with Voting Rights Act-related litigation as part of its People Powered Fair Maps, a program aimed at shifting policy and conversation about redistricting.

According to the [Brennan Center for Justice](#), Mississippi—where the League sees VRA enforcement as a top priority--is one of the few states with ongoing redistricting and voting rights legislation today.

The federal case in question is *Thomas v. Reeves*, involving [Mississippi State Senate District 22](#). Before redistricting by 2012, District 22 had stretched across the lower-to-mid Mississippi Delta, while also taking in majority-black sections of Madison County. After redrawing, the district reached into majority-white and more affluent parts of the county.

In mid-2019, three African-American voters from the district filed suit, challenging the district under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act. The plaintiffs charged that, in creating the district the way they did, legislators denied black voters in the district a chance at electing a candidate of their choice via a dilution of black voter strength. The plaintiffs asked that the district be redrawn to increase its black voting-age population from 50.8% to 60%.

On February 13, 2019, federal Judge Carlton Reeves of Mississippi's southern federal district ruled that District 22's apportionment violated Section 2, leading the legislature to redraw it. Later that year, a three-judge panel of the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals in New Orleans affirmed Reeves's ruling, while approving the redrawn district.

In November of that year, Democrat Joseph Thomas defeated Republican Hayes Dent to take the District 22 seat.

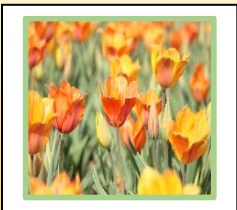
New reports before the election focused on the Fifth Circuit's affirming of the ruling. But the State of Mississippi requested a rehearing of the case *en banc*, meaning that it wanted the case heard by all judges in the circuit, not a three-judge panel of the sort that usually hears federal appeals. The court granted the state's motion in late 2019 and heard [oral arguments](#) in January 2020.

The Fifth Circuit has continued with its work in recent weeks. Stay tuned for more information about this case. You can read about other redistricting cases in the Deep South and elsewhere, at the Brennan Center website.

## **SURVEY: LWV-JA POLICY PRIORITIES**

There is still time to give your input into LWV-JA policy priorities for 2020-2021 at this link:

**[MEMBERSHIP SURVEY - LWVJA POLICY POSITIONS FOR 2020](#)**



# MEMBERSHIP NOTES

## Elaine Talbott



It occurs to me some of you may feel disconnected from the work and mission of League of Women Voters during this time when we are unable to meet in person. What does membership in the League of Women Voters of the Jackson Area mean now?

Membership requires of us a more active role. I urge you to participate in the calls to action that come to your email inbox from your local League, state League and from LWV-US. In the age of COVID 19 vote-by-mail and digital voter registration resources are vital to full voter participation. That will require activism at the local, state and federal levels. Other articles in this newsletter address resources for our use.

It has challenged us to be more inventive in the ways that we engage each other, voters and our elected officials. Even in this age of digital connection, we are also able to go back to some old school tactics like letters to the editor. If we write to the weeklies, we often have a greater chance of publication than letters to the larger daily papers. We also know from lobbyist feedback that our elected officials pay attention to these grassroots publications to get a sense of what their constituents are reading. One note of caution, you are speaking as a concerned citizen and not on behalf of the League of Women Voters. Only our Presidents may do that. League of Women Voters urges all members to be active and involved in good government public policy issues. The more of us who speak to these issues the more likely at least one of us will have a letter published. There is strength in more than one person voicing the same concern.

The takeaway should be, in the age of social distancing it is more urgent than ever that our members be even more engaged on a personal level in the work of the League of Women Voters. Please each of you make it your personal goal to do at least one action per week to advance the policy priorities and goals of the League of Women Voters. Do it consistently and persistently and be prepared to see results, sometimes slowly, but steps forward none the less.

*Elaine*

Elaine Talbott  
LWV-JA Membership

[JOIN OR RENEW HERE](#)

**Memberships and Membership Renewals are VITAL to the Work of The League**

**You are Appreciated!**