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The Voter April 2020

Edited by Jogee Detchemendy

Life in The Time of Quarantine

by Carol Young

It is hard to know what to say to everyone in this time of self-isolation and interruption of daily life. I certainly hope everyone is staying healthy. However, life is still going on and issues that affect us still need to be addresses.

There are two internal League activities that are supposed to occur now and going forward into June. Since we do not know if we will be able to meet in person, we need to start planning for alternative ways to plan programs for the coming year, and have a virtual Annual Meeting. Fortunately, our bylaws do not mention *how* we hold an annual meeting, just that we have to have a quorum, elect the Leadership Team, Adopt a Program of Work and adopt an Annual Budget.

I watched a LWWUS webinar yesterday that gave ways to hold virtual meetings. Several of the free services limit the length of time to can have to 40 minutes, and limit the number of people you can have participating. I would like to hear from members who have experience with tele /video conferencing.

Since we do need to stay abreast of what is happening, so we can continue our "Impact on

Issues", I am reminding everyone to use all the resources that are available to you:

- 1) Subscribe to the Leaders Update on lwv.org.
- 2) Join the Facebook pages for our local league, LWVAR and LWWUS.
- 3) Join other Facebook pages-, especially the Arkansas Voters First, with info on the redistricting petition.

We need to stay in touch with each other and the world!

Little Rock School District Information

by Norma Johnson

A lawsuit was filed March 27, 2020 challenging the limits Arkansas placed on the Little Rock School District when it returns to local control, including a prohibition on restoring teachers' collective bargaining rights.

The lawsuit was filed by a Little Rock teacher, a parent, and a member of the local School Board that was dissolved when Arkansas took over the city's schools. The state took over the 23,000-student district in 2015 because of lagging test scores.

A second lawsuit, filed March 31, 2020 challenging restrictions imposed by Arkansas Education Commissioner Johnny Key and the

state Board of Education that would prevent the Little Rock School Board from choosing its own superintendent, among other restrictions.

Announcing Our New Website

by Carol Young

You still reach our page by going to lwvpc.org. But this isn't our old page, we migrated to a new platform called MyLo, which is what all local leagues have been asked to use by the LWVUS. On its own it, it is beautiful, but the plan is for it to be interactive with other local, state and the LWVUS.

This would have never happened if wasn't for our wonderful web-persons, Clint and Michelle Rhoden. Honestly, they both have important jobs

and family matters that require large amounts of their time, but they been extremely generous in devoting the time it took to get this new site up and running and to keep it updated. THANK YOU, THANK YOU, THANK YOU!

Also exciting is that we also migrated our email platform, because GoDaddy stopped offering free email. We now have 365 Office email, but our lwvpc@lwvpc.org address remains the same.

Thanks to Devita for helping changing payments, and other issues regarding the change. The only issue was rebuilding the group email lists. If you have been wondering why you haven't received any email updates recently- now you know why! It was a bit arduous, but it happened- or you would not have received this Voter!

Continuing our work in unprecedented times!

by Pat Landes

Empowering voters and defending democracy doesn't stop because of our current health crisis. But it does change the way we do our work and take our action, plus create an environment with new opportunities. Fortunately, we have two significant resources. The first is the commitment, energy, talent, and dedication of our members; and the second is the vast resources available from the LWVUS.

So, this month we are asking you to do two things since we cannot safely meet in person.

1. Immediately sign up (instructions below) for League Updates, one of the most effective tools offered by the LWVUS. The Update arrives in your e-mailbox and briefly identifies League victories around the country and then offers useful, practical information on an array of topics. The most recent one had information about the following:
 - a. Election changes during COVID-19
 - b. How to use League positions for advocacy during COVID-19
 - c. Voter registration during COVID-19
 - d. Corona prevention guidance for Leagues
 - e. Steps election officials can take to safeguard our elections
 - f. Regional digital organizing training
 - g. Webinar follow-up on continuing our work in unprecedented times
 - h. Census 2020
 - i. Listing of available webinars
 - j. LWV Kentucky and civil rights
 - k. ERA resources
 - l. Guidance for virtual transparency of government bodies
 - m. Exemption of affirmative action obligations during COVID pandemic
 - n. Guidance on virtual platforms for Leagues (not meeting in person)

- o. Convention 2020
 - p. Organizational and leadership training
 - q. Fundraising
2. Please take 5 minutes to read the highlighted topics and/or links in the League Update, and then further explore if you are interested. And if you are interested and have time, think about how our League and/or you can use this information to make a difference, and then share your interest and ideas for implementation with our Leadership Team by contacting lwvpc@lwvpc.org

All of us are being affected by the health crisis in different ways and have different capacities at this point. We understand that some are overwhelmed and some are looking to fill up time, and we all are in uncharted territory. But our mission is more necessary more now than ever, and will continue to empower voters and defend democracy.

Instructions to sign up for League Updates:

1. Go to lwv.org
2. On opening page, scroll down to the bottom and click on League Management
3. Scroll a short way down and click on League Update
4. Then fill out your information and click on Submit

If you have any questions about signing up, please contact Pat Landes 309-648-3504 or landes.pat@gmail.com and she will try to help you.

Update on 30 Crossing: Deadline Approaching

by Carol Young

We have another chance for Public Comment on an aspect of the proposed 10 lane highway project slated for downtown Little Rock. ArDot has asked Metroplan for 350 million dollars, to get the project started. The complete article was at the bottom of the front page of the Arkansas Democrat Gazette on Monday, March 30, 2020. I sent an email from the League, but you are encouraged to comment on your own. Email: comments@metroplan.org, fax: 501-372-8060, or mail to CARTS Study Director, Metroplan, 501 W. Markham, Suite B, Little Rock, AR ,72211. THE DEADLINE IS APRIL 20, 2020.

Here is my letter:

Metroplan

I am Carol Young, Convener of the League of Women Voters of Pulaski County. On behalf of that group, I am asking the members of Metroplan to reconsider their support of the 30 Crossing project in light of the covid-19 crisis. You have been asked to release \$350 million dollars to allow this project to begin, but if you allow this, then we are still dependent on the passage of Issue 1 on the November 3rd ballot. I think passage of that issue is uncertain at this point in time.

We would like for you to look at the bigger picture once more. There have been many suggested alternatives to a 10- lane highway through downtown Little Rock. There are many cities that have chosen to downscale their multilane highways through their downtown areas, and have seen positive results. I know you are

aware of these examples, but you seem to be determined to follow outdated methodologies that believe that more lanes solve traffic problems, when in fact they increase traffic, and create the need for more expansion.

There is another reason to scale back this project: With the onset of the Covid-19 outbreak, many companies have expanded their use of telecommuting. Many more people have begun to work from home. This may well continue after the threat of the virus subsides. This aspect of a changing workforce, is one of the major reasons that experts have predicted the need for fewer highways, not more. Also, more people want to walk and bike to work than ever before. This is a trend that is not going away.

The recent article in the Arkansas Democrat Gazette, said the replacement of the I-30 bridge across the Arkansas River, remains the "centerpiece" of the 30-Crossing project. The League supports this aspect of the project. Not because commuters are held up a few minutes in peak times, but because there is a support structure in the navigation channel, which poses great risk to barge traffic and the bridge itself. We also support the reconfiguration of some interchanges, such as the one at LaHarpe and Clinton Boulevards.

I suggest that Metroplan decline the appropriation of another \$350 million dollars, and use the \$631 million to build a new bridge, with bike and pedestrian lanes, and push pause on the rest of the 30-Crossing project.

Information from Our Observers Corp: Little Rock Governance in the Time of the Virus

by Ruth Bell

As the Corona-19 Virus began to impact Arkansas, Mayor Scott withdrew his proposal for sales tax increase from consideration by voters. The Mayor implied a possible sales tax might still be a possibility in the future.

To facilitate holding City Board meetings during a time of social distancing, the City Board passed an ordinance allowing members to attend and cast votes electronically for a period of up to 90 days. This past week the City Board voted to allow the City's boards and commissions to also meet electronically.

The City Board, staff, and all interested public are meeting at Robinson Center in a space large enough to allow social distancing. Some Board members join the group electronically.

Citizens can watch City Board meetings on Cable Channel 11, at LittleRock.gov or at the City of Little Rock's YouTube channel. Citizens who wish to comment on an agenda item or at Citizen's Communication should call 501 371 6803, leaving your name and a phone number at which to be reached during the Board meeting or email a written statement/request to speak to cityclerksoffice@littlerock.gov. Include your name, agenda item upon which you wish to speak, and a phone number you can be reached at during City Board meetings. City staff will call you when your agenda item is to be heard, and you will be able to address the Board and citizens attending the meeting. Requests to speak at Citizen Communication must be received by 5 p.m. on day of meetings.

LWVPC strongly supports enabling citizens to comment on items of concern at public meetings.

City of Little Rock Boards and Commissions can also meet electronically during this time of the virus, and citizen input at those meetings will be handled as it is for the City Board. For more details on those meetings

and opportunities to participate, check the [Board or Commission's website](#) for meeting date, agenda and information on participating electronically

**For information on observing opportunities please see prior Voters which are located at our website.
*Special thanks to Michelle Rhoden for managing the LWVPC website.**

Make your Voice Heard!

by Pat Landes

Our mission: We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

More now than ever we must use our voices to support public policy and action that we feel benefits our families and communities. Members of the League have a rich, productive tradition of lobbying and advocacy. Right now, there are public health constraints that preclude some activities, but we can all make phone calls.

I challenge you to call your leaders at least once a week and briefly share your opinion on matters that are currently under consideration or could be in the near future. For example, we have all seen what happened in Wisconsin elections this week when voters were forced to choose between their right to vote and the safety of their own health and that of their families. We cannot accept voter suppression in any form and need to be working with the national League and Leagues around the country to make sure the next major election, in November, can be conducted in a way that permits all registered voters to participate and have their votes counted.

Calling does not need to take much time or preparation. When you call, please be succinct and to the point. Give your name, address, and confirmation that you are a registered voter and constituent of the elected official you are contacting. Then briefly and clearly state your position on a given topic, and ask that your message be conveyed to the official. End by thanking the call taker. Within 5 minutes you should be able to call both US senators, 1 US representative, and 1 US president.

Below you will find the phone numbers for those offices listed above and some key state offices. If you need or want more background for the call, you can find all the League positions online by googling LWVUS Impact on Issues. You can also subscribe (no cost) to League Updates for timely issues to have your voice heard (see other article in this VOTER).

I would also recommend using an app called 5 Calls. The app is free and makes it easy to call your US elected officials. Please be aware that the app is not associated with the League and in background descriptions may have content that does not align with our positions. I use it because it is easier than making the calls myself.

We are in times of great change and your voice needs to be heard...only 5 minutes a week. Please call!

UNITED STATES

PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT Term- 4 years

Donald Trump- R Jan. 2021

Comments: 202-456-1111

Email through: <http://whitehouse.gov/contact/>

Mike Pence- R

Comments: 202-456-1111

Email through: <http://whitehouse.gov/contact/>

U.S. SENATORS Term- 6 years

John Boozman - R Dec. 2023

United States Senate Office: 202-224-4843

<http://www.boozman.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/e-mail-me>

Lowell Office: 479-725-0400

Tom Cotton - R Dec. 2021

United States Senate Office: 202-224-2353

<https://www.cotton.senate.gov/?p=contact>

Springdale Office: 479-751-0879

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES Term- 4 years

Second Congressional District

French Hill - R

Washington Office - (202) 225-2506

hill.house.gov

Little Rock Office - (501) 324-5941

ARKANSAS

GOVERNOR

Asa Hutchinson - R

Office: 501-682-2345

governor.arkansas.gov

LT. GOVERNOR Tim Griffin - R

O: 501-682-2144 State Capitol,

ltgovernor.arkansas.gov

SECRETARY OF STATE

John Thurston – R

Office: 501-682-1010

ATTORNEY GENERAL

Leslie Rutledge - R
Office: 501-682-2007 323 Center St.
oag@ArkansasAG.gov

STATE TREASURER
Dennis Milligan – R
Office: 501-682-5888
artreasury.gov

Leadership Team 2019-2020

Ruth Bell- one year remaining. 501.225.2538 or rfbell@aristotle.net
Jogee Detchemendy - new term. 662.312.9277 or jogeeduzzi@gmail.com
Devita Harden- Treasurer new term. 770.617.3096 or devita467@gmail.com
Norma Johnson-new term. norma_johnson58@yahoo.com
Carol Young- President one year remaining. 501.680.3947 or cyoung8151@sbcglobal.net

League Links:

[League of Women Voters \(National\)](#)
[League of Women Voters \(State of Arkansas\)](#)
[League of Women Voters of Pulaski County](#)