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## The Voter July 2020

Edited by Jogee Detchemendy

### July Membership Meeting 07/20/20 @ 6 pm

by Pat Landes

#### Did you know we are the only state in the country that doesn't have Implied Warranty of Habitability\*?

You are invited to the LWVPC monthly membership meeting on Monday, July 20, at 6 pm via Zoom meeting platform to hear about the issue of Implied Warranty of Habitability (IWH), known to most of us as tenant habitability. IWH was identified by the LWVPC members as a topic they wanted more information in order to advocate and lobby the AR legislature.

We are most fortunate to have one of the state's experts, and League Member, Lynn Foster, present and discuss IWH with us. Lynn is a former law professor who has written journal articles and legislation, in addition to co-chairing a state commission, on this critical topic.

The LWVAR has a state position on IWH based on several national positions published in *League of Women Voters of the United State Impact on Issues 2016-2018, a Guide to Public Policy Positions*, including the position under Meeting Basic Needs to support housing policies to provide a decent home and suitable living environment for every American family.

\* Referred to by many as tenant habitability, IWH has the definition in Arkansas Public Policy Panel report *Trapped In Danger: Arkansas's Housing Crisis & Need for an Implied Warranty of Habitability*:

“The duty of a landlord to provide a minimum standard of safe housing is called the implied warranty of habitability. ‘Implied’ means the law places it in every residential lease, even if the landlord has not included such a promise in writing. ‘Warranty’ means it’s a promise the law will enforce. And ‘habitability’ means just that: premises that are fit, sanitary and safe for occupation.”

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# Safe Absentee Ballots

by Nell Matthews

League members, their families and friends, always responsible and engaged voters, are facing a tough choice this fall: go in person to vote, either at an early voting site or at their polling place on election day, or stay home. On the basis of the chaos and long lines found in other states, we can see that the pandemic has disrupted the normal operations of polling sites. Poll workers are refusing to put themselves at risk, polling sites are being closed because of lack of staffing, too few voting machines are available.

But, we do not have to miss casting our ballots. Now that both the Governor and the Secretary of State have said use "Excuse #1, unable to be at the polling place on Election Day", all voters should have no concerns about requesting an absentee ballot for the November 3 election. To request your ballot, go to the [https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/pulaski/Absentee\\_Ballot\\_Application\\_Rev\\_07-17.pdf](https://static.ark.org/eeuploads/pulaski/Absentee_Ballot_Application_Rev_07-17.pdf), which is the Pulaski County Clerk's website and download and print the absentee ballot application. It is important that all the information matches the information on your voter registration form: address, signature, and date of birth must all match. One of the biggest problems is that people will write THIS YEAR instead of their birth year. For instance, I might mess up and put October 2, 2020 instead of Oct. 2, 1948!

The return address to mail your ballot request is located on the upper left of the form, already filled in. Note that if you are not living in Pulaski County, you must look up the address for your county clerk and mail the request there. You will find more information on the Secretary of State's website under elections, voter information, absentee voting.

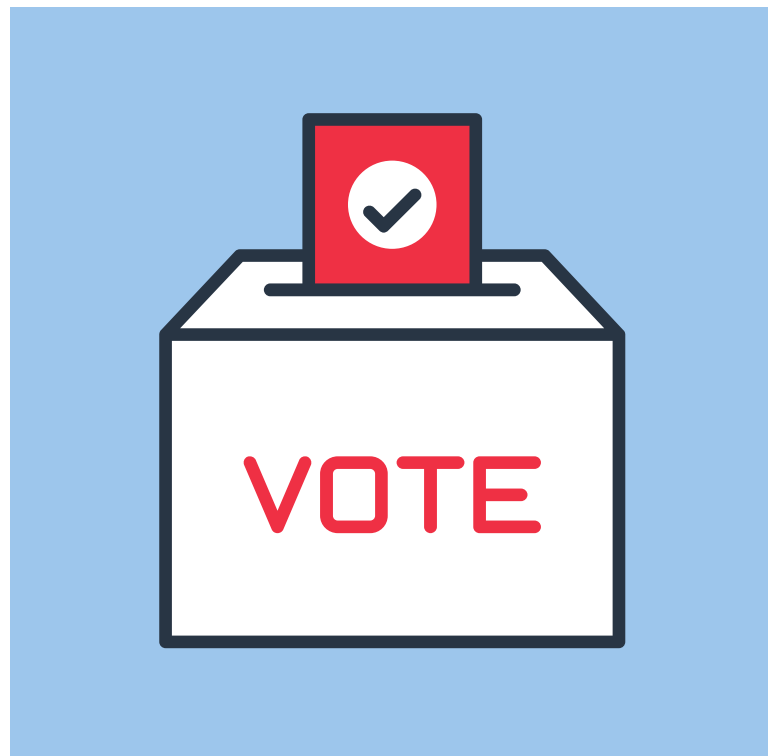
Your ballot will come in mid-September with the return envelope. When you have filled in your ballot and are ready to mail it back in, you must return it in the envelope provided. You may also hand deliver the ballot, but wasn't the whole point that you would not have to leave the house?

Mailed ballots must be received by the clerk no later than seven days before the election. You may hand deliver the ballot as late as the day before the election but see above. **BE SURE TO INCLUDE A COPY OF YOUR PHOTO ID.**

If for some reason, you receive an absentee ballot but decide to vote in person, ask for a provisional ballot. When the county clerk sees that you did not turn in an absentee ballot, your provisional ballot will be counted.

For any questions, contact Pulaski County Clerk Terri Hollingsworth.

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# **Update from the Pulaski County Election Commission Regarding Voting and COVID-19**

**by Danielle Butler \*\* Info from Joshua Price, Pulaski County Election Commission**

The Pulaski County Election Commission and staff are working hard to protect Pulaski County voters during this fall's General Election. We are currently working on plans to keep voters and election officials healthy and safe during in-person voting and minimize exposure to COVID-19 by providing PPE such as masks, gloves, hand sanitizer, and plastic styluses as well as strict social distancing policies. We are also implementing a number of new procedures to integrate updated voting equipment into the election process in Pulaski County. We are working with the County Clerk's office to prepare for an expected surge of absentee ballots and are recruiting and training additional poll workers and acquiring new equipment to efficiently and securely process these absentee ballots to make sure every vote is accurately counted. Finally, we are planning to keep open all polling locations that were used in the March Primary Election, and to add a limited number of voting centers on Election Day, where any voter from across the county can cast their ballot so that the residents of Pulaski County have more options to where and how they can safely vote.

## **Redistricting Initiative**

**by Nell Matthews**

Around the time the *Voter* goes to press, we will know if the independent redistricting commission petition garnered enough signatures to either qualify for the November ballot or the 'cure' period to finish gathering the 89,500 valid signatures. If you haven't signed, yet, you may have another opportunity to help Arkansas citizens select their politicians instead of letting the politicians pick their constituents. Reapportioning will be done after the 2020 census; we won't have this opportunity again for 10 more years. If the petition is successful, the education campaign will start immediately to inform voters of the need to vote "Yes" for this measure. If you have a group that would appreciate a presentation on this issue, contact Nell Matthews at [lwvarnell1920@gmail.com](mailto:lwvarnell1920@gmail.com). Zoom means she can speak all over the state!

## **Top Four, Open Primary, Instant Runoff General Election**

**by Nell Mathhews**

When you signed the redistricting petition, you may have been offered a second petition, as well. The purpose of this one is to change the way parties select candidates for office. Currently, we have 'open primaries', where a voter may choose to vote in the Democrats' Primary, the Republicans' Primary, or participate in a caucus with the Greens, the Libertarian, or the Independent parties to identify candidates. What if anyone who wanted to run for office in November was listed on the March Primary ballot? We know that in Arkansas, as in other states, the Primary winner of the dominant party is the winner in November. Often, the Primary winner will not even have an opponent in November because the results are a foregone conclusion. This proposal wants to give November voters the opportunity to see the top four March vote getters on ballot. In November, voters will rank their choices, one through four, in order of preference. If a candidate gets a simple majority of votes, the election is over and the winner declared. However, if no one receives a majority, the Instant Runoff provision comes into play.

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If your number one choice is dead last in number of votes garnered, your second choice moves into number one. Has this provided a majority to anyone? If not, the cycle begins again with your number three moving into first place on your ballot. By this time, it is likely that one candidate has received a majority of votes and a winner can be declared.

The advantages of this type of election is that the voters will have more of a choice of candidates. Nothing precludes there from being more than one candidate from the same party on the November ballot if those were the top Primary vote getters. Thus, you don't have to hold your nose and take others' first choice. It is thought that this will create a more thoughtful campaign with fewer negative ads because everyone wants to get as many second and third place votes as possible and not be dinged because of extreme views. Further, candidates and the public will be spared having to go back to the polls for runoff elections, a costly and time-consuming, but little supported, event. Currently, the winner of a Primary runoff election may see participation by only a half or a third of the number of voters. Sometimes, less than 2% of the registered voters will send a candidate to the November ballot where, if there is no opponent, that candidate will win by fiat.

This petition began gathering signatures even later and thus, may be too far out of the race to succeed. However, unlike the redistricting petition, it can come back for a second shot in two more years - unless, Issue 3, the Legislators effort to kill citizen-initiative petitions succeeds in November.

## **Membership Update**

**by Devita Harden**

I am excited to announce that LWVPC has four new members, Martha Alman, Jennifer Ronnel, Jacquelyn Lincoln, and Karla Campalans. Please join me in extending a warm LWVPC welcome to our newest members.

More exciting news! Our webmaster, Michelle Rhoden, has uploaded League resource materials in the members' only section of the website that tells who we are, what we do, and how we do it (League Basics and Impact on Issues). Also, for your reference the page also contains the LWVPC bylaws. More helpful LWV resources and information will be added in the near very future.

To access information in the members' only page you must "register" at <https://my.lwv.org> by clicking on the "register" in the upper right hand corner.

After you have completed registration you will be granted access by our webmaster. This may take a few days. You will be able to access the members only information once she adds you.

Please email me if you have questions or concerns [devita467@gmail.com](mailto:devita467@gmail.com).

If you would like to join the membership committee please send an email to [lwvpc@lwvpc.org](mailto:lwvpc@lwvpc.org). We look forward to hearing from you. \* Don't forget to take the Interest Inventory discussed below\*

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# **LWVPC Interest Inventory**

by Jogee Detchemendy

In order to better understand the priorities of our members we have created an interest inventory. It explains each committee of our League, so we can better coordinate League participation and volunteering. If you would please take a few minutes to complete this inventory, we can make sure you know about League opportunities that might interest you. Clicking the following link will take you directly to the survey: <https://forms.gle/iHQVva7cw6eYnhxj6>. When you finish, all you have to do is click submit. This survey will also be under the members only section of our website and on our Facebook page.

## **Observer's Corps**

by Ruth Bell

### **CENTRAL ARKANSAS WATER**

Pegasus Pipeline reopening: This pipeline, closed since it broke and spilled oil in a subdivision in the Mayflower area has been undergoing study by a new owner toward the possibilities of repairing and reopening it. Central Arkansas Water (CAW) officials tell us they were informed by the pipeline owners that the study has been completed, and nothing will be done toward reopening it in 2020. Because the pipeline is such a threat to the Maumelle Watershed and Lake Maumelle, CAW is setting up a citizen group to observe and respond to further efforts to reactivate the pipeline. Our members Carolyn Shearman, Kathleen Oleson and Ruth Bell have been asked to serve on the group.

CAW main office complex: CAW's current office building is in need of very expensive repairs and upgrades – due to age of the building and present and future technological requirements. CAW staff is committed to keeping the office in downtown Little Rock and is considering either updating current site or moving to another downtown location.

### **LITTLE ROCK CITY HALL**

Little Rock City Board has not yet approved a new contract with Waste Management to provide for the City's recycling needs. The new contract would increase recycling costs and some Board members are reluctant to increased costs at a time when many citizens have lost jobs or have more limited hours at work.

Little Rock Planning Commission continues to meet virtually. Citizens can participate either by going to the current meeting space in Robinson Auditorium, or by contacting Mr. Jamie Collins at Planning and Zoning Dept. to set up being given opportunity to comment on a particular item of interest.

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## **Voter Services Committee to Help with Rally of Restoration for Felon Voting Rights**

by Jogee Detchemendy

August 6<sup>th</sup> the LWVPC will be to help LaTonya Laird Austin in her Rally of Restoration. The Rally of Restoration is designed to register and get the word out about restoring voting rights for felons who have completed/discharged any criminal sentence. Many people don't know that even if someone has a felony conviction, they can restore their voting rights, even if they haven't gotten their record sealed.

At the rally they will have plenty of voter registration forms, as well as volunteers to assist with understanding the qualifications for felons to register and get criminal records sealed for sealable offenses. The event will be on August 6<sup>th</sup> as that is the date President L. B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act of 1965 was signed into law.

The League will be providing masks and water for the event as well as asking all of our members to spread the word about the event. To help deliver masks and water please contact Katherine Pope at [kgpope@sbcglobal.net](mailto:kgpope@sbcglobal.net). For more details on the event please visit the event's Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/events/s/rally-of-restoration-save-the-/3141665235917778/>.

We will be partnering with Urban League of Arkansas, the NAACP, Pulaski County Circuit and County Clerk, Social Justice Institute at PSC, Indivisible LR and Central Arkansas, Central Arkansas ReEntry Coalition, Rock AR Vote, AR Council on Public Safety and several other organizations.

### **Leaguer's Lives**

**Submitted by members of the LWVPC**

We grieve with Carol Young over the sudden loss of her daughter, Katharine. Please keep Carol and her family in your thoughts and prayers. Cards may be sent to Carol at 712 N Ash St. Little Rock, AR 72205.

Mari Mock and Alfred Lee, daughter and son-in-law of Nell Matthews, will have a baby girl in August. Nell plans to travel to San Jose, California, in an one-way RV rental to ensure a virus-free status to see the new granddaughter and help the new parents for a couple of weeks. The parents are still considering names but Helen is a strong choice honoring both grandmothers (Nell is a nickname for Helen and Lena is the paternal grandmother).

Mrs. Norma Johnson has decided to run for the Little Rock School Board and therefore to focus on her campaign she will be stepping down from the Leadership Team and will no longer be the chair for the Voter Services Committee. Mrs. Devita Hardin has stepped in and will chair with the Voter Services Committee.

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Congratulations to Furonda Brasfield upon her appointment by Mayor Scott to the newly created Independent Review Committee. This Committee will make a comprehensive, independent review of the Little Rock Police Department. Besides Furonda, five other members of the Committee are current or retired attorneys, one is a retired policeman, and two have background in sociology or social justice issues.

Several of our members have had letters printed on the Democrat Gazette Letters to the Editor page. Shannon Chamberlin’s letter discussing the need for no excuse absentee voting was published on June 22, and Carol Young’s letter thanking the Democrat Gazette for providing fact checked information on comment made by public officials was published June 28.



## Key points from 54<sup>th</sup> Biennial League of Women Voters Convention, June 25 – 27, 2020

- The 100-year celebration national convention was quite different, taking place through Zoom.
- LWVUS President Chris Carson opened to highlight our League work over the past biennium:
  - Impact on more than 12.5 million voters
  - Our redistricting fight at the Supreme Court and launching People Powered Fair Maps in the aftermath
  - Nearly \$1 million in pass-thru grants to Leagues around the country.
- Budget
  - No increase in PMP, remains at \$32
- Program
  - Retain all current LWVUS positions in areas of representative government, international relations, natural resources and social policy.
  - Adopt the proposed LWVUS

program for 2020-2022 Campaign for Making Democracy Work®: ensuring a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters by focusing on Voting Rights, Improving Elections and advocacy for the National Popular Vote Compact, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics and Redistricting and to continue to work on urgent issues: Climate Change, the Equal Rights Amendment, Health Care, Gun Safety, and Immigration.

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- Abolition of the electoral college by Constitutional amendment as a LWVUS action focus for the 2020-2022 biennium
- Added by concurrence
  - Transfer of Federal Public Land
  - Voter Representation/Electoral Systems Concurrence
- Resolutions approved
  - Reaffirming our commitment to Immigration reform, for efficient, expeditious immigrant entry into the United States
  - Advocates against systemic racism in the justice system and, at a minimum, for preventing excessive force and brutality by law enforcement in a nation "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all".
  - Call for an immediate, wide-scale, mobilization by the United States, to restore, protect and fund an ecologically sustainable environment and climate.
- Bylaws
  - Strengthened language for DEI (Diversity, Equity, & Inclusion)
  - For student members, provided a definition and excluded PMP.
  - Denied an amendment that would have removed Associate Members, those under the age of 16.
  - Added language for the removal of a Board Member
- Attendance was from 50 states, DC, and the Virgin Island = 1,267 Leaguers.
  - Voting delegates from our League were Lynn Foster and Pat Landes, and from LWVAR Nell Matthews. Observers from our League included Carol Young and Carol Silverstrom.

**Observations from some of those attending from our League:**

- From Nell Matthews
  - Virtual conventions are not nearly as fun.
  - Improvements in managing the voting process are needed.
  - LWVUS staff worked incredibly hard to manage over 1000 delegates.
  - Consensus was achieved to support improved elections using techniques such as ranked choice voting.
- From Pat Landes
  - Throughout the convention there was an emphasis on the Campaign for Making Democracy Work®: ensuring a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters by focusing on Voting Rights, Improving Elections and advocacy for the National Popular Vote Compact, Campaign Finance/Money in Politics and Redistricting. Comments were made that our brand, visibility, and reputation depend on doing this and doing it well.
  - I was impressed to hear several Leagues talk about the efforts of youth supporting League work, and realize in today's environment of activism we may be missing out on engaging these young people.
  - I missed the interaction with other League members across the country to share successes and problems.

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## **Quotes from the Biennial**

*When democracy is attacked, we can't stay neutral. We must stand in our positions and advocate for what is right and just. - LWV CEO Virginia Kase*

*We, as an organization, acknowledge our own difficult history with racism while we embrace our future, where DEI will become part of our DNA.- LWVUS President, Dr. Deborah Turner*

## **Leadership Team 2020-2021**

Danielle Butler- Records

Jogee Detchemendy- Communications. 662.312.9277 or jogeeduzzi@gmail.com

Devita Harden- Treasurer, Voter Services, Membership 770.617.3096 or devita467@gmail.com

Pamela Whitaker

## **Chairs for Committees to Work with Leadership Team 2020-2021:**

Audit Committee- Susan Leon

Communication Committee- Jogee Detchemendy

Finance and Membership Committees-Devita Hardin

Issues and Policy Development Committee- Corinne Kwapis and Becky Jackson

Observers Corps-Ruth Bell

Program Committee-Pam Whitaker, Carol Silverstrom, Nell Matthews, and Pat Landes

Records Committee- Danielle Butler and Carol Young

Voter Registration -Katherine Pope

Vote 411- Carol Young

## **League Links:**

[League of Women Voters \(National\)](#)

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

[League of Women Voters of Pulaski County](#)