



League of Women Voters of Greenville County

Newsletter
Issue: Third Quarter 2018
Editor: Jean Wood

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08/2/18 Board Meeting
1PM – 2:30PM
Room 209C
Westminster Church

08/6/18 General Mtg.
L Howard/Brennan Ctr
6:30PM – 8PM
Room 209A/B
Westminster Church

08/23/18 General Mtg.
Yearly Kick-Off
6PM – 7:30PM
Room 209A/B
Westminster Church

09/6/18 Board Meeting
1PM – 2:30PM
Room 209C
Westminster Church

10/4/18 Board Meeting
1PM – 2:30PM
Room 209C
Westminster Church

10/11/18 General Mtg.
B. Inglis/ReFormers
6PM – 7:30PM
Room 209A/B
Westminster Church

Notes from the President – Lawson Wetli

On the national level, the current League program is the “campaign to make democracy work.” And looking around, it’s not hard to see an abundance of work to be done, both to improve our system and to protect it from attack.

There is so much to do, and it all feels so crucial. (Indeed, it **is** crucial.)

There’s good news in this, which is that the League is well-positioned to take action and make a positive difference at this historical moment and with the challenges that we face. Because we are a nonpartisan, issue-focused organization, we stand apart from partisan posturing and polarized flame-throwing and instead focus on issues that help everyone by strengthening the system of electoral democracy.

We have a **clear mission**, which is to strengthen electoral democracy and to empower voters, especially those from historically marginalized communities. We are **locally based**, which means that we can apply our mission to the specifics of the needs in our own community, filling a space that would not otherwise be covered.

And we are **energized**: The strong growth in membership of the Greenville League shows an upsurge in civic engagement and in the desire to take action and make a difference in our communities.

This moment provides an exciting opportunity for us to make real and positive differences in the areas we are focusing on – public education, voter access and redistricting reform – and in general.

And this opportunity is paired with challenges. There is the challenge of harnessing existing energy to effective and satisfying outlets. After all, the League is what we make it, which means that we all have to ask ourselves what we want to make and what we are willing to do to make it happen.

There is the challenge of making positive changes to the League itself to make us, as an organization, better, more inclusive and more effective in our mission.

And there is the challenge of maintaining our energy and our optimism in the face of what can seem like a new crisis every day.

I chose to focus on the League of Women Voters because I care deeply about its core issues of support for the system of electoral democracy and empowerment of voters and because I think we are all more effective when we identify clear, manageable tasks and goals that will make a positive difference and then accomplish them.

Tasks like having a speaker about election security. Like registering voters at local high schools. Like providing VOTE411 information to voters. Those are a few examples of things that we are doing as a League. And the more of us step in to help, the more of these clear, positive steps we can take.

As your president, the core of my role is to help you find and take the steps that you want to take. Together, step by step, we are moving forward and we are making a difference. And I look forward to taking these steps together with you.

New Members



We have more new members that have joined our League. Please welcome Laura Hathaway, Ray Hathaway, Sarah McHenry.



**Welcome to the
League of Women Voters
of Greenville County**

LWVUS NATIONAL CONVENTION 2018

By Lawson Wetli

What's it like to be part of almost 1000 League members at the national League convention? Like being a drop in the ocean of democracy defenders.

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) held its 53rd biennial national convention from June 28 to July 1, 2018. Lawson Wetli, the president of the League of Women Voters of Greenville County, was one of the delegates. South Carolina was well-represented at the convention, with 19 South Carolinians from eight of SC's twelve League chapters.

At the core of the convention is taking care of national League business, like electing officers and directors, voting on bylaw amendments, approving a budget and delineating the LWVUS program for 2018-2020. The chosen program, the "Campaign for Making Democracy Work", aims to ensure a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters with a focus on voting rights, improving elections, campaign finance/money in Politics, and redistricting reform.

Before and after convention business, though, there were opportunities to learn more about specific topics of interest like VOTE411, environmental issues, get-out-the-vote strategies and much more. There were a wealth of informative and inspirational speakers. For many attendees, a highlight was the opportunity to connect with other League members. We South Carolinians gathered for a glass (or who's counting?) of wine several evenings, and events like the banquet were an opportunity to meet people from across the country.

At the convention, LWVUS president Chris Carson introduced the newly chosen CEO of the LWVUS, Virginia Kase. As the former head of CASA, an immigrants-rights group, Ms. Kase is well-positioned to lead the League in its mission to protect democracy and empower voters.

One high-level focus of the League at all levels – national, state and local – is moving towards diversity, equity and inclusion. The convention included many discussions and workshops aiming to equip Leagues and League members to identify current barriers to inclusion and work to remove them.

All in all, there was nothing like being surrounded by people who share a passion for making democracy work. It was an inspiring reminder that we are truly stronger together, and the League is well-positioned to step boldly forward, protect our democracy and empower the voters that are at the heart of it.



Photo above from registration at LWVUS Convention in Chicago 2018.

Photo on next page shows SC delegates from local and state Leagues. Lawson Wetli is first row, far left.



SURVEY of INTEREST

Looking at the upcoming year, we want the Greenville League to be as effective as possible. This includes connecting members who want to step in and take action with the opportunities for action that suit their interests and the time they have available.

We currently have committees for each of the three program areas (public education, redistricting reform and voter access). We are assembling teams for target areas like communications, membership engagement and short-term assignments like candidate forums. And we want to find out which members want “bite-size” projects so we can do that, too.

The best way to help the League figure this out is to let us know what you want. [Click here](#) to take our brief survey. It has five simple questions and takes less than a minute. Help us make our League as strong and effective as possible!

2018 Election Season has the Benefit of Newly Registered Young Voters

By Dorothy Dowe

This year, the most represented voting group by age in Greenville County could be the group that was the least represented in the 2016 election cycle, namely, those who are 18-29 years of age by election day. This so-called “youth vote” was underrepresented in each of the past ten presidential elections, and chose to turn out in disproportionately low numbers (approximately 46%, compared to turnout for older age ranges of around 60% to 70%) in the 2016 election. This underscores how the interests of young people are underrepresented in the election process due to their choice not to vote at all.

In 2016, young voters represented nearly a quarter of the eligible voting population. These are tomorrow’s leaders, and they are coming of age in a time of great diversity and tremendous opportunity, especially in Greenville County. Nationwide, they have demonstrated a willingness to become politically engaged change-makers through organized walkouts, protests, and social media engagement.

Recognizing the importance of engaging tomorrow’s leaders today, the national League of Women Voters (LWV) has dedicated tremendous effort and resources to register voters who are in the 18-29 age group, and to provide tools to allow young voters to become informed and engaged in the election process, so they can choose to vote as part of their efforts towards positive change. Knowing that they will become our future leaders, it is in everybody’s interest that young people become engaged in the election process earlier rather than later.

Locally, the League of Women Voters of Greenville County (LWVGC) was awarded a grant to empower the voters of tomorrow by assisting and encouraging them to register, and providing them with information to research the issues and candidates they could be supporting with their vote. We implemented the LWVGC Youth Voter Registration Project this spring with the goal of engaging high school and community college students in the electoral process. In this and in all our activities, the LWV is nonpartisan and has no political agenda other than to engage all citizens in running their government. This includes a concentrated effort to overcome potential young voter apathy and to educate voters through nonpartisan activities.

We contacted principals of all 14 of the high schools in the Greenville County School District, as well as the SC Governor’s School for the Arts and Humanities, Greenville Technical Charter High School and representatives of Greenville Technical College to offer volunteer support to register eligible students to vote, and to provide them with information on the election process and resources available to them to become informed and engaged voters.

During the presentations in the schools, LWVGC volunteers walked the students through the registration process and assisted students when needed to complete their registration forms. Students were engaged in skits demonstrating the historically low turnout of their voting group and the impact that it has on them as citizens. Additionally, students participated in mock primary, runoff and general elections to demonstrate our system of nominating a single candidate for each of the major parties. Lastly, our volunteers educated the students on using the LWV-supported website VOTE411.org, which provides users with a personalized ballot and includes the candidates running for each office as well as the candidates’ responses to questions posed on various issues of interest.

In order to continue to engage and inform these young potential voters, students were given the opportunity to sign up to receive messages through the “Remind” app, which is currently used in many of the high schools for contacting groups of students. The LWVGC will provide reminders through this app before each of the election days (primary, runoff and general), as well as any candidate forums that are hosted by the League. This is our way of “meeting the students where they are”, and using technology to communicate in a manner that they are accustomed to so they can stay informed.

For too long, younger voters have chosen to stay home on election day. The LWV believes that we all have a role to play in inspiring and empowering young Americans to register to vote and to show up at the polls. As a result of our Youth Voter Registration Project, over 1,000 newly registered students now have the credentials and information to lend their voice through their vote. We applaud and greatly appreciate the schools that permitted the LWVGC to engage with their students, and we will continue to work to inspire young people to become active in the election process.



Upcoming Events

As we head into our 2018-2019 League year (which goes from July 2018 through June 2019), we have a lot of exciting events planned. Some upcoming ones include:

- On Monday, August 6, we are hosting cybersecurity and elections expert Elizabeth Howard from the Brennan Center for Justice. This event, which will focus on our voting systems in South Carolina and how to make them more secure, will take place in Room 209 A/B of Westminster Presbyterian Church (2310 Augusta Street) beginning at 6:30 pm. There will be an opportunity to write postcards to officials about this issue from 6:00 to 6:30
- Thursday, August 23 will be our kick-off event. Come hear what the Greenville League accomplished last year, what we have in store for the upcoming year and how you can play a part in it! The event begins at 6:00 pm at Westminster Presbyterian Church (2310 Augusta Street) in Room 209 A/B.
- We will be letting you know details about other upcoming events, including National Voter Registration Day (September 25), a presentation by Bob Inglis of the ReFormers Caucus (October 11), candidate forums and more. There's a lot going on with the League!