



# THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville

PO Box 158369, Nashville TN 37215 | 629-777-5650

<http://www.LWVnashville.org>

Volume 72, No. 11

April 2019

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**April 17, 2019, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Women2Women.** TN State University Graduate School, 220 10<sup>th</sup> Ave. North, Nashville, TN 37203.

**April 20, 2019, 11:00 am to 6:00 pm. Nashville Earth Day Festival.** Centennial Park, Nashville. Environmentally-friendly vendors, educational booths, workshops, speakers, and entertainment.

**April 25, 2019, Noon to 1:00 p.m. Stand Against Racism.** Metro Courthouse Public Square, Nashville. Sponsored by YWCA. Look for LWV table of Voter Information.

**April 30, 2019, 7:30 to 8:30 a.m. YWCA Spring Breakfast (Fundraiser).** Music City Center, Grand Ballroom B & C. Sponsored by YWCA.

**April 30, 2019, 10 to 11 am. The State of Metro Address by Mayor David Briley.** Nashville Public Library, Main Branch. 615 Church Street, Nashville, TN

**May 2, 2019. The Big Payback.** The annual 24-Hour community-wide online giving event kicks off at midnight on May 2 -<http://www.thebigpayback.org>. Be sure to include **LWV** in your support of community organizations that benefit Nashville

**May 3, 2019, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. Hot Topics:** Lentz Public Health Center, 2599 Charlotte Avenue, Centennial Room A Nashville, 37209.

**May 8, 2019, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Hot Topics:** . Green Hills Public Library, 3701 Benham Ave, Nashville, 37215.

**June 6, 2019, 6:30 p.m. League of Women Voters of Nashville Annual Meeting.** Home of Susan Mattson, 1733 Woodson Drive, Brentwood, TN. **Mark your calendars and plan on coming!!!**

## President's Message



Thank you, **Nashville League members** who attended the state convention last weekend and helped us earn a **\$100 incentive**. It was a lively event discussing our position on the current voter registration bills (**House Bill 1079 and Senate Bill 971**) that would penalize groups that turn in *flawed* voter registration forms. **Mark Goins**, State Election Commissioner, attempted to allay our fears saying that nonprofit groups like the **LWV** would be exempt. Members are still concerned that this legislation will suppress voter registration and voting if it passes. Look for an opinion article by **State League President, Marian Ott**, in the Tennessean and respond to action alerts.

We all enjoyed meeting **Jess Vocaturo**, Organizer, from the **LWVUS** and hearing her speak about empowering our inner voting rights advocate. The membership adopted the national diversity, equity, and inclusion statement, as well as the national **League** language on concurrence of voter representation and the election process. **Jess** shared information about national issues and the importance of recruiting and involving young League members.

We appreciate our **volunteers** who have been attending committee hearings at the state legislature. Your

presence representing the LWV is critical to our lobbying efforts. The **State Advocacy Committee** is following our legislative issues closely. Let me know if you are not receiving the weekly report from **Stewart Clifton**, our lobbyist.

Please mark you calendars to attend our **annual** meeting on **Thursday, June 6th**. We will vote on a new slate of officers, the yearly budget, and our strategic focus and present the **Molly Todd Award**. We will meet at the beautiful, new home of our Treasurer, **Susan Mattson** at **1723 Woodson, Brentwood, TN 37027**.

**Barbara Gay**



### **In Memoriam**

We are saddened to learn of the passing of **Dr. Ruth Neff**, a long-time **LWV** member and an inspirational environmentalist. In response to the passage of the Clean Water Act and the Clean Air Act **Ruth** became an energetic volunteer for the **League of Women Voters**, conducting water sampling on weekends and broadening the hands-on work for other **LWV** volunteers. In 1970 she helped found an umbrella organization, the **Tennessee Environmental Council** and became its first Executive Director. Later, she developed environmental and conservation programs under the administration of Governors Alexander and McWherter. Her academic skills and her ability to bring groups with different interests to the table made her an incredibly important voice for the **protection** of Tennessee natural resources and waterways. It was fitting that upon her retirement from state government, a conference room at the L&C Tower was named in her honor.



### **State Advocacy Update**

**By State Advocacy Chair Debby Gould**

As we all know from the local news, state legislators seem to be working overtime to hit all of the **LWV policy** hot buttons from election laws to vouchers to healthcare. As Advocacy Co-Chair for **LWVTN**, I am grateful for the fantastic responsiveness of our members. Our committee has already **issued** 13 Action Alerts for members to contact their legislators, **spoken** at 4 committee meetings, **met** with individual legislators, and **observed** key committee meetings.

We are especially concerned about **HB1079/SB971** that would have a chilling effect on voter registration efforts in the state. Individuals and organizations could be subject to civil and even criminal penalties for administrative failures in preparation for voter registration drives, for submission of large numbers of “deficient” registration forms, and omissions of disclaimers in media and print communications. It is likely that the final votes for this bill (possibly with additional amendments) will occur this week. While the original bill has been amended to exclude volunteers, there are still aspects of the bill that would definitely impact **LWV’s** voter registration efforts. As an organization, we will continue to take steps to address this bill and to mitigate its impact.

**LWVTN President Marian Ott** wrote a recent column in the Tennessean recommending **non-punitive steps** that the Secretary of State’s office could take to **support** effective voter registration drives by organizations, businesses, churches, etc. By **providing clear guidelines** and **voluntary training online**, state election officials could take **proactive** steps to promote rather than discourage voter registration in our state. <https://www.tennessean.com>



*Presented by The Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee*

Once again, the **League of Women Voters Education Fund** is asking for your support through this annual, 24-hour event of on-line giving that **raises** funds for a host of non-profit organizations that help our community thrive.

**Vote Local:** Our goal is to raise **\$3,000** to promote **voter registration** and **informed participation** in the upcoming **Metro Nashville elections of August 1**. Voters will need to get comfortable with the brand new voting machines with their voter-verified paper trail. We will be reaching out to under-represented parts of our community and providing the information they need to be prepared to go to the polls. Please help make our **VOTE LOCAL** campaign a success! Thank you!!!



### **The Tennessee Health Care Campaign and Wendell Potter Offer State Listening Tour on State and National Health Care Policies impacting Tennesseans By Vice President Clare Sullivan**

In the past year, the **non-profit** Tennessee Health Care Campaign has been conducting listening sessions in rural communities that have experienced hospital closures. This work has deepened our understanding of needed healthcare reforms at the state and national levels. This year, we are expanding that work to talk to more communities and develop tools for local leaders.

We have the special opportunity to bring in guest **Wendell Potter** to both listen and learn from local leaders and also share insights from national healthcare policy discussions. Wendell is a Tennessee native and nationally renowned author (of [Deadly Spin](#) and [Nation on the Take](#)), a whistleblower whose speaking out against the health insurance industry helped achieve the guarantee of coverage for pre-existing conditions and other ACA reforms, and founder of [Tarbell.org](#), a network of investigative journalists focused on the impact of money in policy and politics.

**Please** share this information with those you know who care about these issues. Seating is limited, so please check out the locations and dates below and **RSVP** [here](#).

- **Memphis:** April 22, 6-7:30 pm: Cordova Public Library, 8457 Trinity Road, Memphis, TN.
- **Jackson:** April 23, 11:30 am-12:30 pm: The Old Country Store in Casey Jones Village, 56 Casey Jones Lane, Jackson, TN 38305.

- **Nashville:** April 23, 4:45-5:45 pm: Business Community Meeting. Nashville Downtown Public Library.
- **Nashville:** April 24, 9-10 am: Non-Profit Leader's Forum. Healing Trust. 2928 Sidco Dr, Nashville, TN 37204.
- **Chattanooga:** April 24, 6-7:30 pm: Town Hall Meeting. 200 West 38<sup>th</sup> Street, Chattanooga, TN 37410.
- **Kingsport:** April 27, 2-4:00 pm: Kingsport Center for Higher Education, 300 West Market Street, Kingsport.
- **Bristol:** April 27, 6-7:30 pm: Slater Center Auditorium, 325 McDowell Street, Bristol, TN 37620.



## Third Quarter 2018-19 Financial Report

By Treasurer Susan Mattson

The **League of Women Voters of Nashville** continues to be in good financial shape. As of March 31, 2019, the LWN accounts totaled \$48,467. Income for the quarter totaled \$3,651 and expenditures were \$2,008. Funds are available to meet our budgeted programs and services for the current **FY2018-19**.

We started our budget planning process early this spring. The Budget committee (**Barbara Gay, Debby Gould, Winnie Forrester, and Susan Mattson**) met in February and compiled the proposed budget for our next fiscal year **beginning** June 30, 2018. We reviewed our income and expenses from past years and made future projections based on our needs. It was presented to the **LWN Board** at the March Board meeting and approved by all. The budget will be distributed to all our members at least 30 days before our Annual Membership Meeting in **June**, where we will ask for your approval by membership vote.



## Notes from April Hot Topic: Protecting America's Waterways and the Water We Drink

By Voter Editor Madeline Garr

On Friday, April 5, and Wednesday, April 10, members of the **League of Women Voters Nashville** as well as those from the Nashville community gathered to hear the presentation by **Amanda Garcia** and **Anne Passino** from the **Southern Environmental Law Center (SELC)**. This non-profit organization uses the power of the law to aid other non-profits in creating, strengthening, and enforcing environmental protections. The **SELC** and its network of partner groups play a central role in issues ranging from long-term statewide environmental policies to TVA reforms to site-specific pollution cleanups.

The focus of the Hot Topic presentation centered on the proposed rule changes from the Trump administration with regards to the **Clean Water Act**. These proposed rules are an attempt to dismantle the environmental safeguards that currently protect our southern rivers and streams. As a result, adoption of these rules would make our southern rivers and streams more vulnerable to pollution and would jeopardize not only our water supply but also water safety for those who recreate and enjoy the streams and lakes that dot our state and those throughout the south. The 2019 proposed rule changes would likely eliminate protections of streams that feed into larger rivers and lakes as well as interstate waters that do not meet the definition of *jurisdictional* water. In addition, wetlands would not be protected. If such protections **are** removed, proposed streams could be buried, destroyed or polluted without a federal permit, thereby threatening 290,000 streams lying in the Southeast. These proposed rules would also leave a vast amount of wetlands unprotected against pollution and fill. To learn more about this topic,

please visit [ProtectSouthernWater.org](http://ProtectSouthernWater.org) .

The speakers also discussed the issue of coal ash deposits at fossil fuel plants in Tennessee, namely the **Allen Coal Plant** in Memphis, the **Gallatin Fossil Plant**, the **Bull Run Plant** in Anderson County, and the **TVA Kingston Fossil Plant** in Roane County, TN, which had a coal ash slurry spill in 2008. Clear evidence exists that storage of coal ash in unlined ponds or lagoons has been contaminating the surrounding groundwater and, in the case of the Allen Coal plant in Memphis, the aquifer that supplies Memphis drinking water source. To date, the Bull Run Coal Plant and the Allen Coal Plant has been closed and efforts are underway to remove the coal ash to a more secure site. However, the TVA is currently balking at some of these efforts. TVA has recently presented their **2019 Integrated Resource Plan** and had sought public review and comments by April 8, 2019. To learn more about this plan, please click [here](#).

Finally, the speakers addressed the emerging issue of plastics. The **Tennessee River** is among the most plastic-polluted rivers in the world. According to **Dr. Martin Knoll** of the University of the South in Sewanee, micro-plastic levels in the Tennessee River are among the highest ever measured. The issues of control and transparency of industrial use and the disposal of plastics are still to be adequately addressed but local community involvement is key to getting changes enacted. Local level matters when it comes to legislation. **Please** contact your state representatives.



## **The League of Women Voters of Nashville**

*Presents*

### **Hot Topics: Landfills, quarries, & other urban eyesores – Patterns of environmental injustice**

**Speaker: Dr. David Padgett, Associate Professor of Geography, TSU**



Dr. David Padgett will talk about the disproportionate impact on communities in middle Tennessee of these land use patterns. He will share accounts of his work in fighting for fair treatment in responding to landfills, brownfield remediation, and quarry expansions. Dr. Padgett is Associate Professor of Geography and Director of the Geographic Information Sciences Lab at TSU. He has developed a Geography/Environmental Justice curriculum with a strong emphasis on service learning.

**First Friday Hot Topics at Lunchtime**

Friday, May 3, 2019 —  
11:30 am to 1:00 pm

***New Location***

Lentz Public Health Center, Room A  
2500 Charlotte Avenue, Nashville, TN 37209  
*Bring Your Own Lunch. Program begins promptly at noon.*

&

**Second Wednesday Evening Encore**

Wednesday, May 8, 2019 —  
6:00 to 7:00 pm  
Green Hills Public Library Community Room  
3701 Benham Avenue, Nashville 37215

**Free and open to the public. No reservations needed.  
Parking at both locations is Easy & Free!**

*For additional information, contact [LWVNash@gmail.com](mailto:LWVNash@gmail.com)*



**Save the Date!**

**June 6, 2019**

**League of Women Voters of Nashville  
Annual Meeting**

**6:30 p.m.**

**Home of Susan Mattson**

**1723 Woodson Drive, Brentwood**



## **Voter Services Update for April**

**By Voter Services Chairs Hazel Thornton and Perry MacDonald**

Before we address the many issues related to voters and voter services in Davidson County and Tennessee, we want to commend and salute **Congressman Jim Cooper**, a co-sponsor of the first bill in this Congressional session, HR 1 **For the People Act**, a comprehensive package of democracy reforms, **passed** by the House of Representatives in March. Provisions in the **For the People Act** would **restore The Voting Rights Act of 1965** to its full authority, **provide** for easier voter registration, **address** the scourge of gerrymandering, **improve** transparency in campaign finance, and **strengthen** government ethics enforcement. Please contact **Congressman Cooper** to **thank** him for his co-sponsoring and let our Senators know you expect them to support the Senate version. It has been introduced by **Senator Udall** of New Mexico but, as of the date of this Voter, has not yet scheduled for a hearing.

The last two meetings of the **Davidson County Election Commission** (DCEC) have been essentially dedicated to the acquisition and implementation of new voting machines (and associated voter registration database.) The machines will provide a **voter-verified paper ballot** that will be scanned/counted and stored in a locked container (in case of recount or challenge.) The cost of the equipment, acquired from a

single vendor, Election Systems and Software (ES&S), will be **\$6.3 million**. The state has guaranteed \$1.78 m with an additional \$356,000 possible. The remainder of funds will need to come from Metro Council. **The budget hearing** for DCEC is currently scheduled for **May 23**. All parties anticipate that the machines will be implemented and functioning for the **August 1<sup>st</sup>** election. Should rank choice voting occur in Davidson County, these machines **can be adapted** with the acquisition of an add-on module.

DCEC Administrator **Jeff Roberts** has expressed interest in providing demonstration opportunities for the new machines and seems willing for **LWVN** to host one or more of these demonstrations. Administrator Roberts has also affirmed DCEC's willingness to **partner** in voter registration and education activities, including **LWVN's** providing a 20-minute presentation in civics classes, with DCEC officials then facilitating voter registration.

Special thanks go out to the following people, who have already attended General Assembly committee meetings to observe deliberation on Elections-related bills:

**Kristin Hightower**  
**Patricia McCauley**  
**Jennifer Corwin**  
**Russanne Buchi-Fotre**  
**Ann Lucas**  
**Barbara Futter**  
**Kay Knight**  
**Debby Gould**  
**Marian Ott**

Despite our deep concerns about **SB971/HB1079**, the League was able to support bills providing for the Restoration of Voting Rights (**SB 589/HB547**) (deferred until first of calendar 2020) and First time Voters and Absentee Voting (**SB 1093/HB965**.) We give heartfelt thanks to the dedicated **LWVN members** who have monitored and pushed for the passage of these bills.

We may be issuing one or two more sign-up emails before they adjourn, depending on developments in the General Assembly.



## **Where Do We Stand on Health Care?**

**By Health Care Co-Chair Constance L. Caldwell**

Last month, we were introduced to the **BetterHealth Initiative** proposed and headed by **Dr. James Hildreth**, CEO and President of Meharry Medical College through the **Indigent Care Stakeholders Work Team**. This proposal for safety-net care would allow for those who are underserved to receive appropriate and timely care through the coordination of services with other local health care systems and facilities. Nashville has the resources to accomplish this initiative so the next step will be to develop an operational plan. We will be watching their progress and you can follow recommendations online at [Nashville-MedicalNews.com](http://Nashville-MedicalNews.com)

As our state legislature prepares to close-out for this year, there remain major health issues needing to be addressed. Some bills have been placed “on hold” and others have been tabled for re-writing.

An overhaul of the state's **Medicaid** program is being proposed in the General Assembly. This initiative would entail the request for **block grants** rather than receiving the **traditional** Federal match of 65 cents to the State contribution of 35 cents on the dollar. There is opposition to this bill as opponents see it as an easy mechanism to phase out certain existing programs and benefits to eligible Medicaid recipients.

The **Fetal Heartbeat Bill**, which would prohibit abortions once a heartbeat (usually at about six weeks), is stalled in Tennessee Senate Committee with the concern that passing the measure would result in costly court battles. The **Senate Judiciary Committee** will review the measure over the summer and take it up again next year.

In addition, the opioid crisis continues to be a major concern in Tennessee. It is estimated that at least three (3) people a day die from overdoses either from prescription drugs or from street products. With its network of interstate highways, Nashville and the entire state remains vulnerable to the presence of street drugs.

On the national front, the proposed repeal supported by the Trump administration of the **Affordable Care Act (ACA)** has been delayed until after the 2020 elections. Several states have lawsuits pending regarding the constitutionality of the ACA.

There are several bills and issues which need to be monitored closely and that is our **responsibility**.



## Update on Education Bills in the Tennessee General Assembly

### By Education Chair Lara Webb

It has been a busy legislative session! Here is an **update** on two important education bills that we are monitoring.

#### **HB 939/SB 735 Educational Savings Accounts (Vouchers)**

There have been so many changes to both versions of these bills. Currently, the **House** version **removed** the provision that money could be used for homeschooling and has **capped** enrollment at **15,000**. The House version **requires** students that participate in the program to take **some** state tests.

The **Senate** version **reinstated** the provision for homeschooling and **capped** enrollment at **30,000**. The Senate version would **not** require students to take state assessments but would **require national norm-referenced standardized tests**.

Both versions are moving along and slated to be discussed this week in the finance committees of both chambers. We will be monitoring this and will follow up with action alerts next week.

#### **HB 940/SB 796 Charter Authorizer Board**

**Originally** this bill would create a state commission that would authorize charter schools and pre-empt local school boards. **Fortunately**, it has been changed so that the charter application process is similar to that used in the past. Charter schools will still apply **first** to **local school boards**. If they are denied, they can apply to the authorizer commission that this legislation will establish. This change is somewhat similar to the former process now since the **Tennessee Department of Education** has a charter appeals board that charter schools can apply to if they are denied by a local school board.



There are still many concerns about this bill since **ultimately** local school districts **pay** for charter schools, and the legislation **incentivizes** the commission to allow the charter school. We will continue to monitor this bill as it progresses.



## April Membership Update

By Membership Co-Chairs Reba Holmes and Tracy Smith



### Invite Your Friends to Join Anytime

We encourage you to invite your family members, friends, and colleagues. Membership allows you to share a year’s worth of experiences promoting democracy, educating others in the community, participating in political discourse, registering new voters, just to name a few. Plus, the annual membership includes membership to the national, state, and local LWV organizations. Details regarding the various support levels may be found on our website <http://lwvnashville.org/join/>.

### Comments from members as to why they joined the League

*I have over the years worked on various environmental issues but I realized I was not doing much on other issues. Joining the **League of Women Voters** is a way for me to support other issues important for a just civilization.*



Please let us know if there is a death in your family so that the membership may be aware of your loss.

**Thank you!**



**2018-19 LWVN Board of Directors**

President **Barbara Gay**

Vice President **Clare Sullivan**

Secretary **Ethel Detch**

Treasurer **Susan Mattson**

**Portfolio Chairs**

Communications: **Harriet Vaughan-Wallace** and **Kieran Bailey**

Community Connections **Sabina Mohyuddin** and **Tamanna Qureshi**

Education **Lara Webb**

Environment **Barbara Futter**

Fundraising **Cindee Gold** and **Debby Gould**

Health Care **Constance Caldwell** and **Rashonda Lewis**

Membership **Reba Holmes** and **Tracy Smith**

Metro Government **Michelle Steele** and **Winnie Forrester (Off Board)**

Voter Services **Hazel Thornton** and **Perry Macdonald**

*Voter* Newsletter Editor **Madeline Garr**

Nominating Committee Chair (2017-2019) *Off Board*: Chair **Representative Brenda Gilmore**

Nominating Committee Members: **Betsy Walkup, Diane Dilanni, Cindee Gold, Michelle Steele**

