



# THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville

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<http://www.LWVnashville.org>

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March 2020

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**April 3, 2020. Hot Topics Meeting Cancelled Due to Covid-19 Virus Precautions.** Please stay tuned for information about the May meetings.

**April 8, 2020. Hot Topics Meeting Cancelled Due to Covid-19 Virus Precautions.** Please stay tuned for information about the May meetings.

**March 26, 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Lunch and Learn: Disenfranchisement, Voter Restoration and a Path Toward Racial Justice.** *Check with the YWCA to see if program will be held.* YWCA, 1608 Woodmont Blvd. Nashville, 37215. Sponsored by the YWCA. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/91226120783>.

**April 14, 6:00 to 8:00 p.m. Panel Discussion: Women in the Movement: A Multigenerational Conversation about Nashville Rights and Racial Justice Movements.** *Check with the YWCA to see if program will be held.* YWCA, 1608 Woodmont Blvd. Nashville, 37215. Sponsored by the YWCA. Register here: <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/91226120783>

**April 22, 2020. Stand Against Racism Community Rally.** Public Square Park, Union Street & 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. N., Nashville 37423. Sponsored by YWCA.

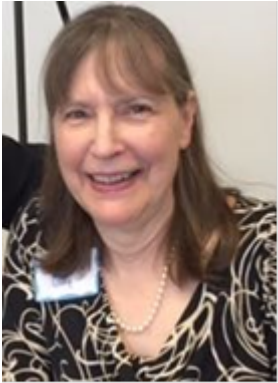
**May 6, 2020. The Big Payback.** A Community Day of giving in support of area non-profits. [www.thebigpayback.org](http://www.thebigpayback.org).

**May 15, 2020. Anniversary Celebrations of League of Women Voters.** Rotunda of State Capitol, 600 Dr. M.L.K. Jr. Blvd. Nashville, 37243. **Please save the date and attend this special event!!**

**May 23, 2020. “We Count: First Time Voters” Exhibit.** Frist Art Museum, 919 Broadway, Nashville, 37203.



## Presidents' Message



We are **so** excited about our new and improved website. Members, please have a look at our **updated** website at [lwvnashville.org](http://lwvnashville.org). We are grateful to **Vanessa Allwardt** and **Debby Gould** for the new design. They have included the **League's mission and history** as well as current board members and events. You may learn about how to join, volunteer opportunities, and how to contact the **local, state, and US Leagues**. We are also planning a section highlighting African American suffragists. Please tell your friends and encourage any and all to join the League as a way of celebrating both our 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary and the 100<sup>th</sup> celebration of the **ratification of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment**.

The **United States Census** survey will be coming out this month. It is extremely important for everyone to respond. The data will determine **how much money** each community receives **for the next ten years** as well as state and congressional representation each community has. The information requested is not identifiable and undocumented people need to be counted too. It is **illegal** for immigration officials to use census information against families. Please respond **online or by mail** and encourage **everyone** you know to do so.

The **League** is watching the development of the coronavirus and will follow recommendations from the CDC about cancelation of meetings and social distancing. Notification of any cancelations will be sent by email and also be posted on our website. **Everyone**: Take precautions and stay healthy.

**Barbara Gay & Madeline Garr**

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## State Action Committee News By State Advocacy Co-Chair Debby Gould

Needless to say, concerns about the coronavirus have upended what was already a chaotic end to the state's legislative session. **Governor Lee** just announced that the general public will be prohibited from entering Cordell Hull Building as a public health precaution. However, it is still possible to view committee meetings at <http://wapp.capitol.tn.gov/apps/schedule/>.

We have been monitoring a number of bills that will be heard in House and Senate Committees this week, including some key election and open government bills. A proposed bill, **SB2298/HB2363**, addresses voter registration drives. If it passes, it would resolve some of the issues that were raised in the lawsuit that **LWVTN** filed against the state of Tennessee over a previous bill passed in 2019.

Our recent devastating tornado on the eve of the Presidential Primary and the ongoing uncertainty of the coronavirus has made it increasingly evident that Tennessee needs to develop more extensive contingency plans to conduct elections under emergency circumstances. There is also a supporting role that **LWVTN** can play by expanding our communication efforts. For example, many citizens don't realize that anyone over age 60 can request an absentee ballot. During public health emergencies, this could be enormously important.

**Carole Westlake**, Executive Director for the **Tennessee Disability Coalition** and **LWV** member, has generously provided the **LWVTN** Advocacy Committee meeting space for our semi-monthly video-conference meetings during the legislative sessions. We are so sorry that tornado damage has made her

building uninhabitable for now. We hope to meet there again for a “tornado-free” legislative session in 2021.

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## **March Hot Topics: Conversations with State Legislators**

### **By Co-Vice President Ethel Detch**

Who knew when the **League** planned its conversations with state legislators, that Nashville would be struck by deadly tornadoes and that the **Covid-19** virus would loom on the horizon? Nevertheless, we persisted. Both **March Hot Topic** meetings had filled rooms to listen to **Senator Brenda Gilmore**, on Friday, and **Representatives Bo Mitchell** and **Bob Freeman** on Wednesday. (Two other invited legislators had to cancel because of tornado recovery efforts in their districts.)

At the **League’s** First Friday meeting, **Senator Gilmore** shared some of her experiences and observations as a member of the State Senate, after previously having served in the House of Representatives and the Metro Council. She finds the Senate to be a more deliberative body and appreciates the smaller size. Senator Gilmore discussed some of the legislation she is working on in this General Assembly, including several bills affecting elections and women’s issues. She emphasized how **important** it is to contact legislators about concerns either in person, by phone, or by letter. Legislators really do pay attention to communication from constituents.

At the Wednesday night meeting, **Representative Bo Mitchell** and **Representative Bob Freeman** chose a more “**question/answer**” format to discuss various issues before the General Assembly. The two legislators responded to several questions about healthcare issues, including the closure of rural hospitals, Tennessee’s failure to expand Medicaid, and the need for more telemedicine options for patients.

They also discussed proposed legislation to re-set state public school funding through adjustments to the **Basic Education Program (BEP)** which is the state government’s formula for distributing funds to public schools. Rep. Mitchell is sponsoring a bill to repeal controversial legislation that created school voucher programs only in Shelby and Davidson Counties. The two legislators explained recent legislation affecting open government, elections, and gun rights. These two representatives also indicated they appreciate hearing from their constituents.

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## **April Hot Topics:**

# **CANCELLED!!!**

**Because of the Covid-19 Virus, both of April's "Hot Topics" meetings have been cancelled. Please stay tuned for information about the May meetings.**

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## **March Voter Services Update**

### **By Voter Services Co-Chairs Kristin Hightower and Perry MacDonald**

In what is likely to be one of our last voter registration events for a while, **Saturday, February 29**, we spent four hours at the United Way-sponsored **Taxathon** at the **Financial Independence Center** on Foster Street. **Six** volunteers in two shifts registered voters using both on-line and paper applications formats as well as answered many questions from those who stopped by. That day we were invited to return on **any** Saturday between now and the tax-filing deadline. **If and when** community healthcare guidelines permit this, we will eagerly accept this invitation.

It is hard to imagine a worse "**perfect storm**" than the one faced by the Davidson County Election Commission on election day, **March 3**. Power outages and damaged buildings, street closures and city-wide disruption resulting from the tornadoes that struck early that morning threatened **all** aspects of a safe and secure election.

We are pleased to report that the **staff and DCEC Commissioners** "rose to the occasion"...literally, with staff arriving at offices and communication centers by 1:00 a.m. Contingency plans were set in place by 6:00 a.m., poll workers were rerouted, broadcast communications sent, and everyone settled in for a long day of extraordinary challenges.

According to the Administrator's report to **DCEC** at its scheduled meeting on March 13, the election was conducted with both professionalism and camaraderie. **Debby Gould** attended the meeting and spoke on behalf of **LWVN** to commend and congratulate the **Commission** and the **staff** for its dedication and accomplishments that day. Thank you, **Debby**, for your continuing support of and work with DCEC.

To our registration volunteers, other **League** members and families we send all best wishes for health and for **calm** and **thoughtful** engagement as we await the time we can be safely present in the community again

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## **Update on Medical Bills in the General Assembly** **By Health Care Co-Chair Clare Sullivan**

***Proposal to resurrect Insure Tennessee as a route to Medicaid expansion in Tennessee.*** The bill (**HB2529/SB2526**) introduced by Republican Representative **Ron Travis** to reconsider Governor Haslam's Insure Tennessee proposal will **not** be moving forward in the House, and its companion bill in the Senate, introduced by Senator Richard Briggs, MD is thus also stalled. The House Bill did **not** have enough votes to pass out of the House TennCare Subcommittee. House TennCare Subcommittee chairman **David Hawk** had assured Representative Travis that there would be discussion over the summer to look into options for expansion of Medicaid under a block grant format. It is not clear how public that discussion will be.

Please contact **Chairman David Hawk** [rep.david.hawk@capitol.tn.gov](mailto:rep.david.hawk@capitol.tn.gov), (615) 741-7482) and House Speaker **Cameron Sexton** [rep.cameron.sexton@capitol.tn.gov](mailto:rep.cameron.sexton@capitol.tn.gov), (615) 741-2343) to ensure that the study process **does** go forward, that it compares the benefits of *Insure Tennessee* to the benefits of a block grant expansion *and* to the benefits of a straightforward expansion of our current TennCare program. The study process should also include **open** hearings throughout West, Middle, and East Tennessee, and needs to include representation from the target expansion population.

***Surprise developments to regulate Surprise Medical Bills.*** There have been some important and unexpected developments this week in the legislature to regulate Surprise Medical Bills. Caption bills **HB 2680 (Timothy Hill)** and **SB 2684 (Bo Watson)** were amended to require that patients can **no** longer

be "balance billed" by out-of-network physician groups working at "in-network" facilities. Patients will only be obligated for the copayments or coinsurance amounts outlined in their insurance plans. If an out-of-network physician group feels that the in-network rate offered by the patient's insurer is inadequate to cover their services, they can bring their dispute with the insurer to a third party arbitration process developed by the Department of Commerce and Insurance to decide a fair reimbursement rate. Passage of this bill would prevent hundreds of thousands more Tennesseans from experiencing crippling medical debt [see Sycamore Institute report on Medical Debt in Tennessee: <https://www.sycamoreinstitute.org/medical-debt-tennessee/>].

The Senate version of this bill be heard in **Senate Committee on Commerce and Labor** on **March 17**. Please contact your State Senator to request they support this bill. The House bill will also be heard in the **House Insurance Committee** on Tuesday, **March 17**. Please contact the House and Senate Committee members below to share your surprise medical bill story and to support this much needed legislation by clicking the links below:

**Senate Commerce and Labor Committee:** <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/Senate/committees/comm-labor.html>

**House Insurance Committee:** <http://www.capitol.tn.gov/house/committees/insurance.aspx>

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## **Dr. Battle Named Director of Schools** **By Education Chair Lara Webb**

**Dr. Adrienne Battle** was named **Director of MNPS Schools** during an emergency school board meeting. **Dr. Battle** had been serving as interim director since **April 2019**. The school board acknowledged that canceling the nationwide search for director was unprecedented but acknowledged that **Dr. Battle** has shown steadfast leadership during the recent tornado. The **MNPS** response to the tornado was quick, effective, and compassionate. Entire schools were shifted to other sites, and students were back at school quickly. In the week that students were out of school, many sites served food to students in need. Many **MNPS** employees pitched in to help clean up efforts across the city. **Dr. Battle** has shown she is the right person to lead **MNPS** during these uncertain times.

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## **What is Happening with the Environment Bills?** **By Environment Chair Barbara Futter**

### **Senator Briggs' bill (SB2131) to ban single use paper bags and plastic bags sent to Summer Study**

**Senator Briggs** from Knoxville filed an important bill to **ban** paper and plastic bags. In his excellent and moving presentation to the Senate's Agriculture and Natural Resource committee he said:

*The Tennessee River is 20,000 more polluted than the Rhine River, which used to be the most polluted river. The Tennessee River is one of the most ecologically diverse rivers and is now the most polluted. This is affecting environmentalists, but also farmers and tourism. Microplastics are killing cows and are threatening our cotton industry. Since recycling plastic bags is not easy, we need other solutions.*

He concluded that the issue can no longer be ignored. **Senator Nicely** was greatly supportive after he amended the bill to **exclude** the ban on paper bags. Senator Nicely argued that there is a great need to use pine trees for paper bags. This was an excellent discussion that resulted in the bill being sent for a summer study. Summer study means that they'll **continue** to work on the bill on the off season. This bill is still alive and will get more time and discussion. Let's hope it comes back with more support and can pass the senate next year!

**Good news for public land funding!! Great American Outdoors Act Filed this week. Please contact your US Senator!**

A new exciting bill was bill filed this week in the US Senate with strong bipartisan support (**S3422**). It would provide significant resources to chip away at the backlog of deferred maintenance across the federal land management agencies and to provide mandatory and permanent funding for the Land and Water Conservation Fund. **Notably**, the legislation has been expanded to include funding to address the deferred maintenance backlog at the U.S. Forest Service, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Bureau of Land Management, and Bureau of Indian Education. **Senator Alexander** is one of the sponsors with **Senators Rob Portman (R-OH), Angus King (I-ME), Mark Warner (D-VA)**.

The Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee **approved** the bipartisan **Restore Our Parks Act** in November 2019 and President Trump has **voiced his support** for this legislative effort. S3422 expands the **Restore Our Parks Act** to address the more than \$18 billion in deferred maintenance backlog across all land management agencies in the Great American Outdoors Act. If President Trump and Congress are able to get this bipartisan act passed, it would establish a fund to deposit **\$1.9 billion per year for five years** into the "National Parks and Public Land Legacy Restoration Fund" from half of unobligated on and offshore energy revenues.

*"The Great American Outdoors Act is the most important conservation and outdoor recreation legislation in the last half century. This bipartisan bill will cut in half the \$12 billion maintenance backlog in our national parks, including \$235 million in the Great Smoky Mountains National Park. It will also reduce maintenance backlogs at our national refuges and forests," said Senator Alexander. "It will fully and permanently fund the Land and Water Conservation Fund (LWCF), an unrealized goal of Congress and the conservation community since 1964. Fully funding the LWCF was also a recommendation of President Reagan's Commission on Americans Outdoors, which I chaired. None of this would be possible without the strong support of President Trump and so many Democrat and Republican senators. I hope Congress can send this bill to the president's desk soon so future generations can continue to enjoy our national parks and public lands."*

At [Oakridger.com](http://Oakridger.com) , look at Lamar Alexander Guest column; or go to [outsideonline.com](http://outsideonline.com) .

The Senate is poised to take action on full funding for **LWCF**! Please call your US Senator to co-sponsor the Great American Outdoors Act: <https://p2a.co/6Sp4WNE>

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## **March Membership Update** **By Membership Co-Chairs Reba Holmes and Tracy Smith**

It is with great delight that we announce and welcome our new and returning members who joined the **Nashville League of Women Voters**. It is our privilege to welcome these individuals to the organization: **Heidi Campbell, Susan Cronin, Robert Holmes, Ursula King, Blakeford Middleton, Kathlyn Pillow, Miura Rempis, and Diane Ruth.**

Many thanks to these members and all our members for their support of the **League's** activities, programs, and underwriting support.

### **Join the League and Celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary**

As we prepare to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the right of women to vote and the 100th anniversary of the League of Women Voters, consider inviting your friends and family members to join. Membership is open to men and women 18 years or older. They can enjoy both historical events and the various celebrations all year long.

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/>](http://lwvnashville.org/join/)

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

*Voting is important. I want to register other individuals to vote.*

### **Question from membership**

How long does a person remain registered to vote in the state of Tennessee?

**Response:** *According to the Tennessee Code Annotated (T.C.A.) 2-2-105 and 2-2-106, once a Voter is properly registered the individual remains permanently on the registration unless the election commission must remove the record per the six acts listed below.*

- 1. Upon receipt of a request to purge by the voter.*
- 2. Upon learning that a voter has had a name change for ninety (90) days or more, except by marriage, and the voter has failed to notify the election commission.*
- 3. Upon the death of the voter.*
- 4. Upon receiving official confirmation that the voter has been convicted of an infamous crime as defined in T.C.A. 40-20-112.*

5. *Upon written confirmation that the voter has moved outside the county of registration or has registered to vote in another jurisdiction.*
6. *If the voter fails to respond to a confirmation notice, and if the voter fails to otherwise update the voter's registration over a period of two (2) consecutive regular November elections following the date the notice was first sent.*

Source: <https://www.sos.tn.gov/products/elections/purging-voter-registration-information>

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### **2019-2020 LWVN Board of Directors**

President: **Barbara Gay and Madeline Garr**  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: **Ethel Detch and Carole Kenner**  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: **Clare Sullivan**  
Secretary: **Elise Lamar**  
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 Clare Sullivan**  
Membership: **Reba Holmes and Tracy Smith**  
Metro Government: **Winnie Forrester**  
Voter Services: **Kristin Hightower and Perry Macdonald**  
*Voter* Newsletter Editor: **Madeline Garr**

Nominating Committee Chair (2020): Chair **Representative Brenda Gilmore**

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Nominating Committee Members: **Betsy Walkup, Diane Dilanni, Cindee Gold, Constance Caldwell, and Carole Kenner**