



THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville
PO Box 158369, Nashville TN 37215 | 629-777-5650
<http://www.LWVnashville.org>

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May 2020

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

May 1, 2020. **“We Count: First Time Voters” Exhibit.** [Frist Art Museum Online Exhibition](#)

June 2, 2020. **League of Women Voters Annual Meeting.** This meeting will be on Zoom. Look for an email giving you the information about how to join.

June 5, 2020. 12 Noon. **Hot Topics on Zoom!!!! Domestic Violence in the Time of the Pandemic.** Sharon Roberson, CEO and President of the YWCA Nashville will discuss the challenges facing our community at this time. Please be on the lookout for information about registering for this important event.

Presidents' Message



I hope everyone is well and safe from COVID-19. According to our Mayor's guidelines, we will conduct our **Annual Meeting on Zoom on Tuesday, June 2nd**. It is disappointing to not be able to socialize as usual, but everyone's health comes first. You will be receiving **emailed** notices of this meeting and the link to join by Zoom or on your telephone. Our dedicated Board members are working to improve our communication using most of the technological platforms.

The League will resume our **First Friday** Hot Topics in June via teleconference. We plan to have a live presentation by **Sharon Roberson**, Executive Director of the YWCA on domestic violence during a pandemic. Our Hot Topic events will also be available to view or listen to on our website.

Debby Gould has forged a strong working relationship with the **Davidson County Election Commission**. She has been pleased to see **Jeff Roberts**, Election Administrator, working with the Commission to ensure that our elections will be accessible, fair, and safe. Many more voters will prefer to vote absentee in our **August 6th** and **November 3rd** elections and recruiting poll workers may be difficult. Please read the directions below to learn how and when to access absentee voting successfully.

It is time to renew your membership to the **League of Women Voters of Nashville**. Look for an **email** with a link to our **website** to pay your dues using Paypal or print, fill out, and mail your membership by check. There are currently many challenges to our democratic system and we need everyone's help to restore confidence in our elections and representatives. **Please** renew your membership, encourage your friends to join, and recruit young people to become informed voters.

Barbara Gay



Voter Services – Absentee Voting in Davidson County - FAQ's by Debby Gould Voter Services Co-Chairs Kristin Hightower and Perry MacDonald

The **League of Women Voters** helps citizens to be informed voters. The elections in **2020**, which will be held under the threat of a pandemic, are especially challenging and voters want to know more about all of their options for voting safely and securely. To help individuals prepare for their upcoming choices of voting either **in person** on election day or early voting, or to **vote absentee by mail**, we have compiled the most frequently asked questions about absentee voting.

I understand that Tennessee requires voters to meet certain eligibility standards in order to vote absentee. What are the eligibility standards?

You may **request** an absentee ballot for any election if you are:

- 60 years of age or older;
- Hospitalized, ill or physically disabled, and unable to appear at a polling place for this election;
- A caretaker of a person who is hospitalized, ill or physically disabled;
- Outside of your county of registration during all hours of Early Voting (July 17-August 1) and Election Day (August 6);
- Enrolled as a full-time student or are the spouse of a student at an institution outside of your county of registration;
- A voter with a disability with an inaccessible polling place;
- A voter residing in relatively permanent care at a licensed facility such as a nursing home located outside the county of registration;
- A candidate;
- A voter on jury duty in a state or federal court;
- Serving as a member or employee of the Election Commission or an election official;
- Observing a religious holiday that prevents you from early voting and on Election Day;
- A member of the military, spouse or dependent; an activated National Guard member on state orders; an overseas citizen and otherwise qualified to vote in TN.

I read that voters in some states can vote absentee during the threat of a pandemic. Is that also true for Tennesseans?

Eligibility to vote by mail is defined by **Tennessee law** and limited to one of the eligibility reasons listed **above**. If you are ill, contact your healthcare provider to see if it is advisable to avoid in-person voting in an upcoming election.

The ballot request form asks for my social security number. I am not comfortable giving it out. Can I just write in the last 4 digits?

No. Tennessee law requires the **entire** social security number. Applications will not be processed without the complete number.

My home/apartment was damaged in the recent tornado and I am living in temporary housing. What should I use as my address?

If you plan to return to your damaged residence after repairs are made, your request form should identify your temporary residence as the address where you want your absentee ballot mailed. If you do not plan

to return to your damaged residency, provide your new address and check the **NEW** address box on the form.

I noticed that my signature on the ballot request form looks different from the way I signed my voter registration card years ago. Does that matter?

The signature on both your absentee ballot request form and the ballot affidavit will be **compared** to the signature on your voter registration record.

How do I request a ballot?

A ballot request form is included with the **sample ballot** and “Tips for Voting During the Covid-19 Pandemic” mailed to households in Davidson County. The fillable form for Davidson County is also available:

<https://www.nashville.gov/Portals/0/SiteContent/ElectionCommission/docs/main/AbsenteeBallotRequest-200806.pdf>. If you registered in a different Tennessee county, you can find a form and the county mailing address at <https://sos.tn.gov/products/elections/absentee-voting>. Complete and *sign* the form. Don't forget the stamp! Send to:

Davidson County Election Commission
Attn: Absentee Ballot
P.O. Box 650
Nashville, TN 37202-0650

A signed form can also be scanned and emailed to moaballot@nashville.gov or faxed: 615-880-1729.

When can I request the ballot?

Requests can be made beginning **90 days before** an election. For the **August 2020** primary election, completed request forms must be received between **May 8-July 30**.

How long does it take for the Election Commission to respond to my application and send me an absentee ballot?

The goal of the Election Commission is to verify the application within **2 business days**. Ballots will be mailed beginning the **second week of June** for the **August 6** primary.

I messed up my absentee ballot. What do I do?

Contact the Election Commission, moaballot@nashville.gov or 615-862-8815, to request a new ballot to replace a spoiled ballot. They will send you one that is marked as a replacement ballot so that only one ballot from you will be counted in an election.

What if I change my mind or never received my requested ballot and want to vote in person?

If you did **not** already mail a ballot back to the Election Commission or you are concerned that your ballot may not be received on time, you can request a **“provisional ballot”** at a polling site on either an early voting day or Election Day. Provisional ballots are saved separately by poll workers and will not be counted until election staff can verify through their records that they did not receive a ballot through the mail from you.

Can I drop off my ballot?

No! Election law requires that **all** absentee ballots must be **mailed**. The Election Commission cannot accept ballots that are dropped off at their office.

Does the absentee ballot need to be postmarked by election day? Or must it be received by then?

Your ballot must be *received* by close of election day.

I just registered to vote online this year. Can I vote absentee in this election?

First time voters who registered **online** or **by mail** must vote in person in their first election. However, the voter can appear in person at the Election Commission office to have their status changed to an “in person” registrant. After that, they can vote absentee if they meet the eligibility criteria.

More than one person in my household wants to vote absentee this year. Do I have to send in all the ballots separately or can I mail them all together?

All ballots must be sealed in their individual signed affidavit envelope. Your household may mail signed affidavit envelopes in the same outer envelope. Be sure to add enough stamps.

How can I be sure that my ballot has been received by the Election Commission?

Do your part! Send your absentee ballot **on time** and be sure to use **two stamps**.

How do I know that my votes will be counted?

Any ballot that arrives on or before Election Day that has a **signed affidavit with a signature that matches the voter registration card is counted.**

How is my vote kept anonymous if I mail it in?

Your ballot will arrive at the election commission in a sealed affidavit envelope that you have signed. Once received, the signature is compared with the signature on your ballot application form. Then the signature flap is removed from the envelope so that the sealed ballot remains anonymous.

Are absentee ballots only counted in close races?

NO! They are **always** counted! **All** absentee ballots with a signed affidavit received by close of Election Day are counted along with ballots cast during early voting periods.

Do I need to go through the application request process again in November?

YES! A separate absentee ballot request form must be filed for each election. Only those individuals who have submitted a physician’s form stating they have a **long term/ permanent disability or illness** will receive ballots without separate applications. <https://sos.tn.gov/products/elections/absentee-voting>

The League of Women Voters of Tennessee Commemorates Its 100th Anniversary
By State Advocacy Co-Chair Debby Gould

Women from all parts of Tennessee gathered in eager anticipation on May 18, 1920 in the house chambers of the state legislature. Their convention marked an important milestone and a promising future. They had **finally** become citizens who could vote!

After the state legislature passed **limited suffrage in 1919**, these women had registered and were anticipating their first opportunity to vote for president in November **1920**. Little did they dream at that gathering that **all** women in America would have the right to vote in **all** elections with the **passage** of the 19th Amendment granting women suffrage in **August**. No one there could have predicted that the final and dramatic **36th state vote** needed for final ratification of the 19th Amendment would rest in the hands of young Tennessee Representative **Harry T. Burn** in that very chamber.

While that final moment of victory for universal women’s suffrage lay in the future, 1920 already felt like a year of progress for Tennessee women. The 1919 legislation passed in Tennessee granted women – **regardless of race** -- the right to vote in both municipal and presidential elections, but the difficult and time-consuming process of amending the state constitution meant that women were **still** excluded from voting in **state races**. With the encouragement of **Carrie Chapman Catt**, the national president of the newly established **League of Women Voters**, the May gathering of women in the state house chambers formally **ended** the Tennessee Equal Suffrage League and established themselves as the **League of Women Voters of Tennessee**.

This inaugural meeting was visionary. **Abby Crawford Milton**, **Catherine Kenny** and other founding members anticipated that their newly minted organization would cross political party lines and racial divisions to educate voters about government and to push the legislative agendas that improved the lives of Tennessee women and their families. It was **not** enough to have the right to vote, women needed to learn **how** to be educated voters who could advocate for the issues in their communities and to be agents of change.



One of the speakers who clearly exemplified this vision of women as agents of change was **J. Frankie Pierce**, one of Nashville’s leading African American activists. It was a highly unusual event in the segregated South of 1920 for an African American woman to speak to an audience of white women. However, **Frankie Pierce**, along with **Dr. Mattie Coleman**, had already demonstrated incredible leadership skills in registering an estimated **2,500 African Americans** in Davidson County in 1919. Considering that Nashville’s entire population at that time was only about 118,000 residents, this was a remarkable achievement which had brought the two of them recognition by the Tennessee Equal Suffrage Association. In that year **Dr. Coleman** was named the state chairwoman for the association’s “Negro Woman Suffrage” efforts.

At the May 1920 convention, **Pierce** used the opportunity to lay out a vision of a shared future linking women together across racial lines. Her answer to the rhetorical question “*What will the Negro woman do with the vote?*” was clear and concise:

“Yes, we will stand by the white women. We are going to make you proud of us, because we are going to help you help us and yourselves. We are interested in the same moral uplift of the community in which we live as you are.

We are asking only one thing: a square deal. It remained for the war to show what the Negroes could do. We bought bonds, we gave money, we made comfort kits, we prayed.

... The women are fortunately enfranchised now because they are ready for the ballot. We want recognition in all forms of this government. We want a state vocational school and a child welfare department of the state, and more room in state schools.”

Indeed, within the year **Pierce** and **Dr. Coleman** had used this inter-racial partnership to push for their long-anticipated goal for the state legislature to authorize the establishment of the Tennessee Vocational School for Colored Girls, that provided vocational training and reform services for African American girls. She became its first school superintendent in 1923 and continued there until 1939 when Dr. Coleman took over the leadership of the school.

The 1920 convention was a spectacular beginning for the newly created **League of Women Voters of Tennessee**. Almost immediately afterwards, members began their lobbying push to persuade **Governor Roberts** to call a special legislative session to vote for passage of the 19th Amendment. Throughout that summer, women worked tirelessly to track down legislators and secure their support for universal women’s suffrage. By August, their hard work paid off. And the rest is history.

Today, our organization continues to build on this incredible foundation laid **100 years ago**. As a non-partisan volunteer organization, we continue in our mission **to promote an informed and engaged citizenry**. We advocate for **fair and open elections, transparent and accountable government, and active citizen participation in the decisions that affect their lives**. Every generation faces new challenges.

One hundred years ago **J. Frankie Pierce** declared “*The women are fortunately enfranchised now because they are ready for the ballot.*” Today, the League of Women Voters wants **everyone**—men and women—to be “*ready for the ballot.*” As we face the upcoming election season under the threat of a pandemic, we are reminded of the importance of our collective voice and action to sustain the democratic principles that motivated our organization’s founders in 1920. Helping citizens understand their options for safely and securely voting either **in person** on early voting or election days, or **by absentee voting**, is an important part of our mission.

In this unusual election season, more people than ever are exploring the possibilities of absentee voting and have turned to the **League of Women Voters** with their questions. We have compiled answers to many of the most frequently asked questions on www.lwvnashville.org and www.lwvtn.org as we continue to navigate this changing election environment.

In remembrance of the Tennessee women who worked tirelessly in 1920 to achieve universal women’s suffrage in America, we **urge** all eligible citizens to honor their efforts by being “*ready for the ballot*” and **voting in August 2020**.



May Membership Drive is Here – Renew Today!
By Membership Co-Chairs Reba Holmes and Tracy Smith

It is with great delight that we announce and welcome our new and returning members that joined the Nashville League of Women Voters. It is our privilege to welcome these individuals to the organization: **Barbara Futter, Melissa Holden, Mary Jones, and Sherry Loller**. Many thanks to these members and all our members for their continued support of the League's activities, programs, and underwriting support.

Annual Membership Drive

It's that time... Our annual membership drive begins this month, **May 2020**. Over the next few days, please expect to receive your membership renewal letter **via email**.

During this Covid-19 pandemic, your membership is even more vital than ever before. Your membership allows the League to continue promoting a **safe and fair election** process, and **fight against voter suppression**.

Please **renew** your membership, **consider** making an additional contribution to the League, and, most importantly, **reach out** to your friends who are not now members to ask them to join.

If you wish to **update** your membership prior to receiving the email, details regarding the various support levels may be found on our website <https://lwvnashville.org/membership/>. You may pay online or send a check.

Comments from members as to why they joined the League

I wanted to see how the League has progressed since my mother's involvement. This is a perilous time in our country. I think it is crucial that we harness everyone's voting power, especially women, because we know women make the difference.

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June HOT TOPICS
Goes on ZOOM!

Be on the lookout for Zoom registration information.
Register and Tune in on Friday, June 5th at Noon.

Sharon Roberson, CEO and President of the Nashville YWCA will join us virtually for a **Hot Topic** presentation on

Domestic Violence

Domestic violence impacts individuals in every community. One in four women will become a victim of domestic abuse within her lifetime. The 2020 Covid-19 pandemic has further complicated the lives of domestic abuse victims because they are confined at home with their abusers, and have more difficulty seeking help.



Covid-19 Continues to Take Its Toll By Health Care Co-Chair Constance Caldwell

We continue to experience and see the manifestations of the COVID-19 virus in our community. Its effect is like peeling an onion that exposes more and more of the issues themselves. Last month, we identified some of those issues that had become acutely obvious as the result of our health care and political systems being broken in places and needing attention. Here is where we currently stand.

Governor Bill Lee has submitted a request to the federal government which will allow Tennessee's TennCare program in conjunction with the federal CARES program to pay hospitals and providers who have treated or are treating **uninsured** patients. This is in the form of a **waiver** since Tennessee opted not to extend its TennCare services to cover more of those in the state who are not covered.

The **Opioid crisis** in the state is still to be dealt with as our overdose deaths continue to rise. Travel restrictions imposed by local and state municipalities in order to curb the spread of the virus has threatened to disrupt patient's access to their needed medication. This encourages relapse and illicit drug seeking. Travel policies have also affected the necessary tracking of these patients and their progress. The opioid addicted person needs consistent follow-up to help them overcome their conditions. This is also true of patients with mental health disorders.

Rural hospitals in the state continue to take a hit. Decatur County General Hospital was **closed** in April, making a total of thirteen (13) since 2010. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected the entire state, emphasizes the need for local health facilities. One of the contributing factors appears to be the reimbursement rate for services.

As concerned citizens, we cannot afford to be **distracted by** the politics of the day but rather be **involved in** the politics of the day. Let's contact our legislators and insist that they do right by the citizens they represent.



Our City in Crisis By Metro Government Chair – Winnie Forrester

As our city continues to hunker down amid the COVID-19 pandemic, our elected Council members are deep into the details of **Mayor John Cooper's proposed budget**. We face an unprecedented large **deficit** without enacting a property tax increase. Every area of city will be affected, especially our public schools. Consolidations and closures of MNPS District 1 schools and others are already on the chopping block. On **May 19th at 2 PM**, the school board will vote at a specially- called meeting with only a few days' notice given to the community.

On **Tuesday, June 2nd**, there will be a **public hearing on the budget at Metro Council**. If our Councilmembers are unable to agree on a substitute budget, the Mayor's budget will automatically go into effect on June 30, 2020.

Councilwoman Kathleen Murphy's newsletter, *All About Metro's Budget* is an excellent overview of the budget proposal, a link to potential substitute budgets, and the proposed tax increase. [Click here for her newsletter.](#)

Nashville \$120 million-dollar allocation from the federal CARES act and is sitting **in the bank**. Local unions and activists are asking for a portion of it to fund a relief effort for renters, homeowners, and small businesses, especially in the face of the Mayor's proposed property tax increase. [Click here for press release.](#) See flyer below.

CARES ACT Proposal **STAND UP NASHVILLE**

FIGHTING FOR THE SOUL OF OUR CITY.

STAND UP

Give the Money to the People!

The residents of Nashville have bent over backwards to keep this city afloat, the least we can do is take care of them in their time of need. – Odessa Kelly, Executive Director

Housing/Rent Support (\$45 million)

- Up to \$1,400/household
- Provides support to more than 28,500 households for 1 month, or 14,250 households for 2 months!!!
- Eligibility by income threshold 80% of median household income
- Administer through Social Services or Metro Action Commission
- Encourage MDHA to use their CARES Act funds for the same program
- \$5 million directed to safely housing the homeless

Homeowner Support (\$15 million)

- Median Household values in Nashville = \$215,000
- \$1.00 property tax rate increase = \$537.50/year (\$44.80/month)
- Grant \$300 one-time relief per household. Basically cutting the tax increase by more than half! \$273.50/year = (\$19.80 per month)
- Eligibility by income threshold 80% of median household income.
- Provides relief to more than 50,000 households!!!
- Administer through Social Services or Metro Action Commission.

Small Business Support (\$15 million)

- Establish a grant program specifically targeted at the most impacted businesses from Covid-19.
- Establish a grant program for underserved neighborhoods and minority owned businesses.
- Fund the purchase of PPE and sanitation supplies to assist businesses open in a healthy and safe manner.
- Administered through the Industrial Development Board.

Workforce Development and Worker Safety (\$10 million)

- Establish grants for Apprenticeship Readiness programs that prioritize displaced workers and promise zone residents for jobs with high-road employers.
- Payments to workers for lost wages while completing training programs for high-road employers. *This means get paid to learn!*
- Grants to support independent health and safety monitoring for businesses and contractors receiving public dollars in partnership with Metro Health Department. *This means no shady staff!*
- Administered through the Industrial Development Board and Nashville Career Advancement Center.

www.standupnashville.org
info@standupnashville.org



May Environmental Updates

By Environment Chair Barbara Futter

UP and coming TCV webinars!!

Environment bills at Tennessee's General Assembly are **not** over. Please join Tennessee Conservation Voters on one of our two webinars coming up in May to learn about key environmental bills and issues at the Tennessee General Assembly. The session isn't over and there is still a need to raise your voices to help the environment this year. Please **register** and come to one of these webinars.

**May 20th at 5:30 PM CDT and/or
May 22th at 12:30 PM CDT**

As the state legislature prepares to return in June, join TCV for an overview of the environmental bills seen this year and the key issues we are likely to see next session. Presented by Stewart Clifton, TCV's long time environmental lobbyist, you will get a chance to be in your own home yet learn the ins and outs of the legislation impacting Tennessee's environment today. From plastic bag bans to billboard regulations, now is the time to catch up on anything you missed. After the presentation, there will be a chance for an open Q&A session, so stay tuned!

To sign up, please go to TCV's website: tnconservationvoters.org or go to **Tennessee Conservation Voters** on **Facebook** and check the date which you would like to attend. You will be sent a confirmation email with a link and password for the webinar of your choice. We look forward to having you join us! You can also email us at admin@tnconservationvoters.org.

Stewart did two webinars in April and they can be accessed on TCV's website. tnconservationvoters.org*

Instagram? What's on Instagram?

Tennessee Conservation is on Instagram! We are at **tnconservationvoters** on Instagram. Since we've all been staying at home, TCV has been having biweekly Instagram interviews. These are on the Instagram app and consist of live interviews every two weeks on **Fridays at 12:30**. The next one will be **May 29** with longtime environment advocate **John Noel**.

If interested, download the Instagram app ahead of time. Then on the **Friday at 12:30**, the TCV app will appear with a red circle. Touch the circle and the interview will start. Past interviews of Colleen Gill, board members Everett Davis, Angel Fowler and Barbara Futter can be found on YouTube.

Thank you all. I look forward to working with you in other ways...

I will be leaving the Nashville **LWV** Board in June 2020. In **January**, I started serving as the Board Chair of Tennessee Conservation Voters. The LWV is a member group of TCV, so I won't be going too far away. I will always remain a dedicated and supportive LWV member and will help in any way that I can. I have enjoyed serving with this wonderful group of women advocates. I've learned so much history, written monthly articles for the newsletter, participated in policy discussions at the monthly meetings, learned about workings at the state level, and with other state LWVs, and so much more. I feel very lucky to have been part of LWV at this

important level. I want to thank all **League of Women's Voters** members for giving me the opportunity to serve on your board of directors. I look forward to seeing you in the future and working with you again in other ways.



LWVN 2019-2020

Board of Directors

President: **Barbara Gay and Madeline Garr**
1st Vice President: **Ethel Detch and Carole Kenner**
2nd Vice President: **Clare Sullivan**
Secretary: **Elise Lamar**
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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 **Senator Brenda Gilmore**

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