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THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville

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<http://www.LWVnashville.org>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

October 14 through October 29, 2020. **Early Voting for the State & Federal General (Presidential), School board District 4, Belle Meade, Forrest Hills & Goodlettsville Municipal Elections.** All Locations. Check <http://www.nashville.gov/Election-Commission.aspx> for times and locations. For information about candidates, see <http://www.Vote411.org>.

October 17, 24, 31, & November 14, 2020. 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. **Achieving Health Equity for All Tennesseans in an Era of Change.** Tennessee Health Care Campaign Virtual Annual Conference Series. On Zoom. Click [here](#) for more information and to register.

October 21, 2020. 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. **LWV of Williamson County meets with Jeffrey Barrie, CEO of Tennessee Environmental Council.** Zoom meeting with Brentwood Library. All are welcome. Please register through Brentwood John P. Holt Library's adult programs.

October 24, 2020. **Vote Early Day.** Go to <https://voteearlyday.org/> for information about local efforts.

October 27, 2020. Deadline to submit your request for an **Absentee Ballot.** Click [here](#).

October 29, 2020. 11:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. **Medicaid: Who It Helps and Who Still Needs It.** Sponsored by the Tennessee Justice Center. Click [here](#) for more information.

October 29, 2020. 12:00 p.m. **Leading Through Covid.** Speakers: Dr. Alex Jahangir, Dr. James Hildreth, Dr. Mike Trause, and Mark Ezell. Sponsored by College of Leadership and Public Service, Lipscomb University. Live on WKRN.com.

November 1 to December 15, 2020. **Open Enrollment Period for Affordable Care Act.** For more information, call 844-644-5443 or click [here](#) for information on how to **volunteer**.

November 3, 2020. **State & Federal General (Presidential), School board District 4, Belle Meade, Forest Hills & Goodlettsville Municipal Elections.**

Check <http://www.nashville.gov/Election-Commission.aspx> for times and locations. For information about candidates, see <http://www.Vote411.org>.

November 6, 2020. 12:00 to 1:00 p.m. **Bridging the Public Divide.** Guest Speaker: Linda Heady of Braver Angels. On Zoom. Look for email to register.



President's Message



The gift of cooler weather and beautiful blue skies has come among us as we are in the midst of the 2020 Election Season. As has been pointed out by various commentators, this Election is unlike any other and Election Night will not be normal either. Different states started early voting in September and many states are continuing to vote early or through absentee or mail-in voting methods even now. The fact that so many people are choosing to vote by mail, choosing to vote early, or choosing to vote in person is a testament to the strength of our democracy.

November 3rd is Election Day, but the Election Night returns will not be complete, and the vote may not be fully tabulated for days. This is a message we also need to communicate to friends and family as well as strangers when we engage in conversations. Changing expectations is difficult, especially cultural expectations. At this time in our country, we are especially vulnerable. It is up to each of us individually and collectively to be a **sane** voice and a **stable** influence. We have had practice with this throughout our history and know what the word “endurance” means. This time will be no different

By now, all of us in the League have done all that can be done to register voters for the upcoming Election on November 3rd. Our next goal is to get the voting public to go to the polls. This is a challenge in the midst of Covid-19 but messaging is even more important this year. The **LWVN** has partnered with the **LWVTN** to “advertise” messaging on WMOT, a public radio station out of MTSU. **LWVN** has also purchased advertising on billboards around the city so look for them if you are driving in those areas. We are working with Nashville Neighbor 2 Neighbor to get out the message within each community. There is much to do.

I hope each of you will also connect anyway you can personally, by phone, Facebook, Instagram, or Twitter, to enhance our outreach. The message must be clear: **Each** vote is important, and each vote **must** count. Thank you for all you do.

Madeline Garr



Disinformation, Misinformation, and Each of Us

What is disinformation and what is misinformation? These are great questions. Disinformation is false information that is created to deliberately deceive. Misinformation is still false information but is transmitted primarily because what is said confirms one's own particular bias but it is not factual. Disinformation is intentionally spread by actors. Misinformation is **unknowingly** spread by others who have **no** intent of doing harm.

Below is a way to avoid spreading misinformation.



Vote 411.org

By Susan Mattson, VOTE411 Coordinator



VOTE411.org is live with candidate information for the November 2020 election. Check out the web page (www.vote411.org) to learn more about your candidates' positions in their own words. If any of your candidates have not responded, please contact them and politely ask them to respond the **League of Women Voters Nashville** on-line voter guide VOTE411.org.

Please share VOTE411.org with others for non-partisan information for the November 2020 election.



Metro Tax Referendum

State Advocacy Chair Debby Gould

While we are all focusing our attention on the presidential election on **November 3**, the Davidson County Election Commission (DCEC) is already looking at a **potential** special election as early as **December 15**. A group known as 4GoodGovernment has collected signatures

for a special Tax Referendum, which would, among other things, dramatically roll back the recent 34% Davidson County property tax and cap it at 2% annually.

This has created a real headache for **DCEC** regardless of the merits of the case. The problem for the commission in fulfilling its duty to schedule a referendum vote is that if the referendum passed, it would be unenforceable by Metro Government in its current form. The commission has requested a declaratory judgement from **Chancellor Mary Hobbs Lyle** to determine its appropriate legal responsibility. As stated in its court filing this week: *"There is no authority in the Tennessee Constitution, state law, or local law that requires the Election Commission to conduct a referendum on a proposed amendment to the Metropolitan Charter that would cause the Metropolitan Charter to conflict with the Tennessee Constitution or state law."* No date has been set for the hearing.

If this special election takes place, it would have both negative **financial** and **logistical** consequences. Every election costs the **DCEC** at least **\$800,000** to run. Furthermore, if the referendum in its current form were to pass, it would immediately trigger a number of legal actions by the state government and would certainly add to the legal burden for Metro Government in subsequent lawsuits. **Jim Roberts**, representing 4GoodGovernment, has already filed a lawsuit against DCEC claiming their actions abridged his first amendment rights.

Because DCEC is bound by the timing of the petition to take action to hold the election in December, they would need to have absentee ballots prepared by **November 4** -- a time when the presidential ballot counting will in all likelihood still be underway.



What is New in Williamson County?

By **Linda Sherman**

Environmental filmmaker **Jeffrey Barrie**, CEO of the Tennessee Environmental Council, will be guest speaker at the **October 21 at 1:00 p.m.** in a Zoom meeting of **The Williamson County League of Women Voters**. Mr. Barrie has produced award-winning documentaries, his most recent **"Kilowatt Ours"** in 2008. Mr. Barrie has defined his career by leveraging the power of documentary storytelling combined with public strategies for positive changes in the world.

Registration is available through **Brentwood John P. Holt Library's** adult programs at <https://www.brentwoodtn.gov/departments/library/library-programs/adult-programs>.



Voter Services Update

By **Voter Service Chair Perry Macdonald**

"I think we've made a real difference!"

Jennifer Westerholm, 2020 Voter Services Volunteer

Our voter registration season this year began in earnest on **July 19** and closed with two events on **October 3**. There were **26 events**, which works out to be an event **every three days**. In a pandemic! Nearly **forty** League volunteers turned out for their community...or someone else's. Several hundred voter registrations and updates were accomplished. Hundreds more questions

answered, carefully and respectfully. With a focus always on voter education and encouragement, this year we had to consider safety as well since, after all, we're in a pandemic. Talk about intrepid!

Although for the most part it was pleasant to be outside, to be in the hubbub of a farmers' market, these events required extra time and effort to set up and take down. (Tent, tables, chairs, banners, sandbags...you get the idea.) My heartfelt thanks to those who faithfully showed up early or stayed late to help me with "The Set." ([Susan Lane](#) and [Beth Gordon](#) particularly come to mind). I eventually named our weekly roster '**Cast and Crew**'. It just seemed to fit. An extra shout-out to those who 'struck the set' and held on to the carload of equipment on those occasions I couldn't be there for the take down.

Special commendation to [Maureen Organ](#) and [Amy Kurland](#) for an extraordinary effort at the Downtown Farmers' Market. And to [Donna Gruverman](#) and [Rita Bullinger](#) for finding, publicizing and arranging for single events in their areas and to everyone who recruited a friend to join us. To [Linda Halperin](#), who worked an event every week of the season, thank you for your engaging walkabouts and for nudging me to add one more farmers' market to the schedule. [Tracy Depp](#), [Madeline Garr](#), [Debby Gould](#) and [Lara Webb](#)...our "executive producers"...a salute to you as well. Could not have done any of it, let alone all of it, without you.

Hardly missing a beat after the close of voter registration, [Kerry Burke](#) stepped up to coordinate a [LWVNashville Voter Information Hotline](#). It went 'live' this week; a first for this League and we are thrilled for its launch. Supported by Tracy and a group of volunteers who are now being recruited (Please contact Kerry at kburke555@gmail.com), this dedicated phone/email (615-510-7077) will allow us to continuously assist voters right up to and through the November election.

So, [Jennifer](#), thank you for your email that I quoted at the beginning. As I look back on the last few months, I am quite certain you are right. We have made a difference.



Summary of October Hot Topic—Affordable Housing: A Local Perspective

By Co-Vice President Carole Kenner

On **Friday, October 2nd**, members of the [League of Women Voters Nashville](#) and the Nashville Community gathered on Zoom to learn about the importance of and barriers to affordable housing in Nashville. **Kay Bowers**, an affordable housing advocate, spoke first educating the group regarding definitions of commonly used terms. Affordability is defined as an individual spending no more than 30% of their income on housing costs, including utilities. Much of what is defined as affordable is based on AMI, a term meaning Area Median Income. The Federal government determines this figure and bases the amount on a regional determination. For example, the regional area here in Middle Tennessee encompasses 10 surrounding counties, including Williamson county. Therefore, the AMI for Davidson County is \$82,300. However, the **actual** median income for Davidson county is actually \$56,507.

In Davidson County, there are 305,849 housing units, which are a combination of owner and renter occupied. Before the pandemic, 23% of owners were cost-bound, meaning stressed, as were 46% of the renters. In all, 21.4% of Nashvillians live in poverty. A contributing factor to

this situation is that many Nashvillians are employed in jobs that don't pay enough to meet rent and other basic needs. Kay pointed out that after the 2008-2009 Recession, a majority of the jobs created have been low-wage jobs.

This issue around affordable housing **gravely** impacts children. In 2019, 55% Metro Public school children moved **three times a year**. Another 3500 to 4000 were homeless. Lack of a stable home is one factor contributing to **ACE** (Adverse Childhood Experiences) for children and can lead to health problems, mental illness, and substance abuse. Kay noted that for children to thrive, housing stability, opportunity and economic mobility are essential. Affordable housing is a non-partisan issue supported by **91%** of Democrats and **76%** of Republicans.

Kay was followed by Michael Kenner, who represented the for-profit perspective on this topic. He defined what affordable housing is from a developer's perspective and what finance mechanism are available to developers for building affordable housing. He explained that the non-government, non-profit entities are composed of **community development corporations (CDCs)**, organizations incorporated to provide programs, offer services and engage in other activities that promote and support [community development](#). CDCs usually serve a geographic location, such as a [neighborhood](#), and focus on serving lower-income residents. CDCs, through the local government housing authorities (MDHA), develop most of the moderate-to-low income housing.

For-profit developers have access to defined funding through Community Financial Development Institutions (CDFI), which provide access to leveraged funds from traditional banking institutions through the [US Treasury Department's CDFI Fund](#), which provides responsible, affordable lending. This funding is available for "work force housing." Private developers that do **not** use federal funding must look to the city for help. Michael explained that there are several "tools in the toolbox" but there is no city "tool keeper" to tell interested developers what is available or how it can be accessed. Michael has worked with state legislators to create funding sources for private developers through new and existing legislation and is currently working on local legislation called Payment in Lieu of Taxes (PILOT) through the Industrial Development Board (IDB). With this program a developer could take a newly erected building and create **33%** of its units as affordable by putting the property into the name of the IDB. The developer would then get a **tax deferral of 75% on taxable value with the other 25% going to directly to education, not the general fund**. Tennessee already allows Nashville the ability to do PILOTs, within a loose framework. Nashville has started talking about the implementation of an affordable housing PILOT through the IDB program. Michael concluded that if these measures had the support of groups like the [LWVNashville](#), that would nudge them closer to the finish line.

Although cranes dominate the Nashville skyline, Michael feels the city has dropped the ball on affordable housing. To change this situation, he advocates creating a **central Housing Authority department** staffed by civil servants with a robust knowledge of issues surrounding housing, not politicians or developers. He also feels we need **increased funding for our Housing Trust Fund** and to establish a **Community Social Impact fund**. Finally, Michael said we need **accountability** and **transparency** on all decisions and governance surrounding affordable housing.

Both speakers noted the significant effects of Covid-19. Although evictions are suspended until the end of December, landlords are prepared to evict after the suspension is lifted. Although \$10,000,000 of the Cares Act was set aside for housing needs In Tennessee, the need was so great that the United Way of Greater Nashville, which handles distribution of that money, was overwhelmed with requests. Currently, 30% of Tennesseans cannot pay their rent or mortgage.

Our speakers ended by recommending **three** actions the Nashville community could take to improve the housing situation. The first is to call your council person and ask their support for the IDB PILOT in order to create affordable housing. In addition, they asked that we encourage our mayor to act on the 10-year housing plan that has been created. Finally, neighborhoods and neighborhood organizations could exert greater influence over development and developers. Their message? Get involved!



November Hot Topic Preview **By Co-Vice President Ethel Detch**

Are you dismayed by the polarization of our country? Have you personally felt the loss of a relationship with a close friend or family member with different political views? Wondering if we can ever get back to “normal”—whatever that was? Then join for the League’s **November Hot Topic, “Bridging the Political Divide.”** Our speaker will be **Lynn Heady**, Tennessee Co-Coordinator of **Braver Angels**, a national organization striving to restore civic trust in the USA and healing wounds between the left and right. We will meet on **Friday, November 6th at 12:00 Noon** by Zoom. The meeting is free and open to the public but requires registration. Be on the lookout for sign-up information.



November 6, 2020

HOT TOPICS

Continues on ZOOM!

Bridging the Political Divide

With Lynn Heady of Braver Angels

**Be on the lookout for Zoom registration information
in your email.**

Register and tune in on Friday, November 6 at Noon.



Covid-19 Continues to Display Mystery

By Health Care/Public Health Co-Chair Constance Caldwell

Medical professionals have learned much about how to **treat** the virus and persons affected by it. Much energy and money are being poured into research and development of a viable vaccine. We continue to be **reminded** of the symptoms which may be present and what we can do to protect ourselves.

Right now, our nation is focusing on **elections**, the potential **selection** of a Supreme Court Justice, the **future** of the Affordable Care Act, the **future** of Roe vs. Wade, the **establishment** of a Medicaid Extension Plan and the **potential** for civil unrest. These distractions can cause us to forget details that may keep us safe from the virus.

Although much is known about this coronavirus, every day new things are discovered that still give us pause. Researchers have discovered that the virus **mutates**, which brings to mind the question of vaccine effectiveness against a potential mutant strain. For this reason, we should encourage essential testing and vaccine verification, even though it may take longer. Researchers in Britain and Australia have found that the virus can survive and remain infectious **up to 28 days** on glass (including cell phones), plastic banknotes (debit and charge cards), paper banknotes and stainless steel. This is about 10 days longer than the influenza virus, thus reinforcing the importance of hand washing and sanitizing surfaces prone to being exposed to the virus.

Scientists have **also** found that the virus survives longer at cooler temperatures, longer on smooth surfaces and longer on paper banknotes than on plastic banknotes. With this information, we cannot let down our guard as the weather gets cooler. Masking, social distancing, frequent hand washing, and disinfecting are the best tools we have at this time. The virus may be with us for a while.



Become a Member of the Environmental Committee

By Environment Chair Barbara Gay

We are looking for a few good women and/or men to serve on the **LWVN Environmental Committee** that **Barbara Gay & Russanne Buchi-Fotre** co-chair. Our goal is to have 5-6 folks that reach out into the community's present resources on environmental and climate change issues, represent the **League**, and bring us back information as to how we can serve as better stewards of our Mother Earth. If interested, please contact **Russanne** at russanne@comcast.net or **Barbara** at barbara.b.gay@gmail.com. We plan to schedule a committee zoom meeting in November after the election.

Tennessee Interfaith Power & Light (TIPL) is one of many environmental organizations in Davidson County. Its mission is *"to spiritually respond to the challenges of the climate crisis through upholding the sacredness of all life, protecting vulnerable communities, and caring for the Earth. We manifest our spiritual values by reducing our carbon footprint within our daily lives, releasing the spiritual power of our faith communities, and by advocating for effective*

climate protection policies." This is a national organization that has chapters across Tennessee. For more information go to <https://www.tennipl.org/>.



State Advocacy Report

By State Advocacy Debby Gould

COVID-19 has upended many aspects of our election process including our **LWVN** tradition of poll watching on Election Day. We certainly understand why many members feel that it would be unwise for them to participate this year. However, if you are interested in poll watching, please contact **LWVTN President, Marian Ott**, marian.t.ott@gmail.com. We are coordinating with other non-partisan organizations to maximize coverage of polling locations. The locations in Davidson County have already been covered. Interested **LWVN** volunteers will be assigned to polling sites in neighboring middle Tennessee counties and will receive training and poll watcher credentialing before Election Day.



October Membership Update

By Membership Co-Chairs Reba Holmes and Karen Hernan

It is with great delight that we announce the names of new and returning members who recently joined **LWVNashville**. It is our privilege to welcome these individuals to the organization: **Felisha Baquera, Ashleigh Brandmeyer, Molly Bronaugh, Kathleen Carlson, Ophelia Doe, Linnea Folger, Craig Anne Heflinger, Mary Hildebrand, Deb Page, Rachel Stallings, and Martha Trammell**. We are grateful to these members and all our members who support the League's activities, programs, and underwriting.

Membership Enrollment

Our membership continues to grow from month to month. As of October 2020, we have approximately **225 active members**. Exceptional job, and we are grateful.

As a **nonpartisan** group, we need an abundant number of activists to promote a safe and fair election process, fight voter suppression, expand access, and help dispel untruths through educating citizens. Help us safeguard and defend our democracy by inviting your family, friends, and co-workers to join the league. Please share this link to the various support levels, <https://lwvnashville.org/membership/>.

Social Media Hashtag (#) Tags

Use our **two** social media hashtags: **#nashvillevotes** and **#votenashville**. We hope you will find these useful and relevant during this voting season and beyond. Using them, you can find **LWVNashville**-related posts around voting events, themes, voter registration, and poll watching and working.

Comments from members as to why they joined the League

I joined because I can keep up with the state and local issues in my area. I believe in the league's approach to "diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice."



News from Metro Government

By Metro Government Chair Winnie Forrester

COVID-19 RELIEF IS AVAILABLE FOR INDIVIDUALS AND SMALL BUSINESSES IN DAVIDSON COUNTY

Have you personally or someone you know lost wages or been negatively affected by COVID-19? Davidson County residents, small businesses and live music venues may be eligible for relief. Applicants are encouraged to apply now!

NAVIGATING COVID-19

SUPPORTING OUR COMMUNITY THROUGH CRISIS

Nashville's COVID-19 Response Fund is administered by United Way of Greater Nashville and chaired by **former Senator Dr. Bill Frist**. More than \$5 million has been raised this year from corporate, philanthropic, and community gifts. Nonprofit organizations and service providers apply for funding and distribute the funds to residents who are experiencing lost wages or who become ill from the virus.

In addition, Metro Nashville was awarded **\$121 million through the CARES Act**. The majority of the funds have gone to Metro's emergency COVID-19 response (\$49 million) and remote learning support for MNPS students and teachers (\$24 million). The COVID-19 Financial Oversight Committee has been making recommendations for the remainder of the funds with approval through Metro Council resolutions.

In August 2020, Metro Council approved **\$10 million in CARES Act funds** to be administered by **United Way of Greater Nashville** to provide mortgage, rent, and utility relief for Davidson County residents affected by COVID-19. Grants are made to partner nonprofit organizations who will distribute funds to applicants. Individuals seeking assistance can still apply to numerous organizations listed at **[United Way's Nashville Response Fund website](#)**. As of October 8, 2020, **over \$6.5 million** has been distributed. Grants for amounts of \$400,000 and over went to **Affordable Housing Resources, Catholic Charities, Conexión Américas, Nashville Conflict Resolution Center, Needlink Nashville, New Covenant Christian Church and The Salvation Army**, along with many smaller grants to other non-profits.

At the most recent Metro Council meeting on October 6th, a resolution was approved for **\$4 million dollars of grants** to small businesses and independent live music venues impacted by

COVID-19. These grants will be administered by **Pathway Lending**. Applications opened on October 14, and the [Pathway Lending website](#) lists the following guidelines:

*Funds available to **small businesses** totaling \$2 million with 30% reserved for minority-owned businesses and \$600,000 for microbusinesses. Small businesses in Davidson County may qualify for grants up to \$10,000, and microbusinesses for grants up to \$5,000.*

*Funds available to **live music venues** totaling \$2 million. Live music venues in Davidson County may qualify for grants up to two months of operating expenses, not to exceed \$100,000.*

Applications will close once Pathway Lending has fully committed the grants. Pathway Lending will process applications, make award decisions, and disburse funds promptly with plans to announce Metro CARES Act grant awards as soon as possible after the funds are committed and before the November 15 deadline to disburse funds.

In addition, small businesses will be able to access the Nashville Entrepreneur Center's services at no cost through a citywide initiative called [Renew Nashville](#).



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



LWVN 2020-2021

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Health Care/Public Health: **Constance Caldwell and Clare Sullivan (on temporary leave)**

Membership: **Reba Holmes and Karen Hernan**

Metro Government: **Winnie Forrester**

Voter Services: **Perry Macdonald**

Voter Newsletter Editor: **Madeline Garr and Elise Lamar**

Williamson County Representative: **June Bond**

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

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