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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

**January 16, 2021. 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. 21 Day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge.** Look for an email to register for the Challenge and for a Zoom link.

**January 25, 2021. 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. First meeting of the League of Women Voters' State Advocacy Committee.**

**January 30, 2021. 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. 21 Day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge.** Look for an email to register for the Challenge and for a Zoom link.

**February 13, 2021. 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. 21 Day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge.** Look for an email to register for the Challenge and for a Zoom link.

**February 17, at 1:00 p.m. A Conversation with Charles Sumner, Founder of the Nashville Chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State.** Click [here](#) to register.

**February 27, 2021. 8:30 a.m. to 10:00 a.m. 21 Day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge.** Look for an email to register for the Challenge and for a Zoom link.



## President's Message



As I sit down to write this message to the **LWVNashville** community, I am filled with a combination of sadness and hope. **Sadness** because the events of these past few months since the election culminating in the events at the Capitol on January 6<sup>th</sup> have torn at the very foundations of our democracy and trust in our systems. **Hope** because I know that people like you have worked for years to build this country by protecting the vulnerable among us, registering people to vote, and advocating for open and transparent government and will **not** be deterred from continuing these efforts to protect our democracy in this time of crisis.

As the **League of Women Voters** has done for over the last 100 years, we will continue to ensure that **all** have a voice, that **each** vote is counted, and that **our** democracy stands.

**Madeline Garr**



## Join the State Advocacy Committee By State Advocacy Chair Debby Gould

The State Legislature has convened for the 2021 year and legislators have lost no time in plunging into significant legislation. While we won't be able during this pandemic season to have a physical presence at the legislature, **LWV's** members can **still** have an impact and make their collective voices heard.

All **LWV members** are welcome to participate in the **LWVTN State Advocacy Committee** meetings that will be held **bi-weekly** beginning **Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m.** If you wish to receive agendas and notices of upcoming meetings, contact [lwvtenn@gmail.com](mailto:lwvtenn@gmail.com). We focus our attention on the bills that reflect our legislative policy priorities including elections and voting laws, healthcare, education, and the state's environment. We are most effective when we pool our individual areas of expertise and our passions for strengthening state government so that it responds to the needs of our fellow citizens. **Please** join us if you can.



## What is New in Williamson County? By Linda Sherman

The **Williamson County LWV** will meet **Wednesday, February 17, at 1:00 p.m.**, welcoming speaker **Charles Sumner**, founder, 20 years ago, of the Nashville chapter of Americans United for the Separation of Church and State. He has been a Nashville resident since 2000, having moved from Rochester, New York, where he was in the pharmaceutical industry. Prior to that, he served in the United States Air Force. He is a graduate of Cornell University and member of Phi Kappa Sigma. He and his wife, Marjorie, have three grown children, two in Nashville and one in Massachusetts and five grandchildren.

Mr. Sumner is a former elder in the Presbyterian Church (USA) and currently attends a Unitarian Church. In Rochester, he was for several years, chair of the local Interfaith Impact (organized by the New York State Council of Churches) for 60 Presbyterian churches and those of other progressive denominations in Genesee Ecumenical Ministries. He was a member of Monroe Citizens for Public Education and Religious Liberty, co-chair of the Monroe Coalition for Democracy, and a founder of the Rochester Chapter of Americans United for Separation of Church and State.

In his Nashville retirement, he has been a member of its National Leadership Council and is on its speaker's bureau. He is recipient of an award from the **Tennessee Alliance for Progress** and is a supporter of the **Nashville L-Club** and **Nashville Peace and Justice Center**. Mr. Sumner believes with Thomas Jefferson "*...that our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than our opinions in physics or geometry...*" and that equality before the law is essential to our democracy in which no one's religious beliefs should be used to harm one's neighbors. All are invited to attend the presentation and discussion.

Registration is available on the Brentwood Library website "Calendar."



## Summary of January Hot Topic – Looking Forward to the 2021 Legislative Session

By Co-Vice President Ethel Detch

Tennessee's 112<sup>th</sup> General Assembly opened at the State Capitol in Nashville on Tuesday, January 12th. The League's registered lobbyist, **Stewart Clifton**, was the January "Hot Topic" speaker, sharing his thoughts of what the new legislative session may bring. Speaking the day after the attack on the US Capitol, Stewart noted how important the **League's** work is to free and fair elections and to the education of America's citizens.

Stewart opened with some state government basics—the numbers of senators and representatives, how a bill becomes a law, and a "who's who" of legislative leadership. This year's legislature has **10 new representatives** and **two new senators**, including **Heidi Campbell** from Davidson County. **Lieutenant Governor Randy McNally** and **Speaker of the House, Cameron Sexton**, will likely be re-elected. **Ferrell Haile**, who represents a portion of Davidson County, will likely continue to serve as Speaker Pro Tempore of the House. **Vincent Dixie**, of Nashville, has been elected the new Democratic Caucus Chair.

Tennessee's General Assembly has a nationally recognized website, noted for its ease of use. (Found at <http://www.legislature.state.tn.us/>) Stewart encouraged audience members to become familiar with it. From the website, it is possible to track bills, watch committee and floor hearings, and identify which districts various legislators represent.

So, what's expected this year?

- **Redistricting:** The General Assembly will use the **2020 Census data** to re-draw Congressional and General Assembly districts. Attempts may be made to split Davidson County so that it does not have its own US Representative.
- **Elections and Voter Registration:** The League will continue to focus on immediate reinstatement of voting rights for felons. Multiple bills affecting registration and voting are expected as a result of changes made for the 2020 election.
- **Open Government:** Improving government transparency is always a League focus, but the pandemic has added new challenges.

Although the pandemic has drastically changed the ways the public can interact with the General Assembly, Stewart listed **several** ways to stay informed about the General Assembly's activities. These include using the website to monitor and evaluate legislation, developing relationships with legislators, working through other organizations, engaging in timely communication, and watching committee meetings. He noted that researching legislators before contacting them is helpful, as well as using social media appropriately. **Always** be respectful and courteous. Stewart suggested that many of the legislators are open to doing virtual "**meet and greets.**"

The General Assembly will likely take up legislation affecting a number of issues of interest to the League.

- **Health Care:** Bills are expected encouraging Medicaid expansion, surprise billing and medical debt, as well as authority over health policy decisions at the county level. Bills

prohibiting mandatory Covid vaccinations or local government restrictions on the number of people who may congregate are also likely.

- **Education:** Governor Bill Lee has called a special legislative session beginning on **January 19<sup>th</sup>** to address pandemic-related education issues.
- **Environment:** Bills are expected to ban single-use plastics, improve tire recycling, address recent changes in water protection regulations, and combat lead in drinking water in schools.
- **Immigrants and Refugees:** Bills affecting immigrants and refugees are likely.
- **Criminal Justice:** Legislation will be introduced to encourage community-based alternatives to confinement.

In closing, Stewart reminded members that when approaching legislators, building relationships is very important. He offered these helpful tips:

- **Don't** overstay your welcome. Legislators have many demands on their time.
- **Be** courteous, not threatening.
- **Don't** "burn bridges." Just because a legislator disagrees with one issue, doesn't mean they may not be supportive of one in the future.
- **Don't** attack legislators personally or their positions.

League members are welcome to attend the **LWVTN's** Advocacy Committee meetings which will begin on Zoom on Monday, January 25<sup>th</sup> at 11:30 a.m. If you're interested, please e-mail Debby Gould at [debbygould@bellsouth.net](mailto:debbygould@bellsouth.net).

This Hot Topics meeting, as well as others, was recorded and can be watched on the **League of Women Voters Nashville's** website at <https://lwvnashville.org/blog/>



## **February Hot Topic: The State of Music City** **By Co-Vice President Ethel Detch**

This past year Nashville has been rocked by a devastating tornado, summer protests, and a Christmas Day bomb on historic Second Avenue, all while a global pandemic rages. How bad is the damage to the "It City"? What does the future hold? On **Friday, February 5<sup>th</sup>**, at **12:00 Noon**, please join us on Zoom to hear Councilperson-at-Large, **Burkley Allen** reflect on the state of Nashville and where the city is headed. The meeting is free and open to the public but requires registration. Be on the lookout for sign-up information.

**February 5, 2021**

**HOT TOPICS**  
**Continues on ZOOM!**

**The State of Music City**

**Presenter: Burkley Allen: Councilperson-at-Large**

**Be on the lookout for Zoom registration information  
in your email, Facebook or the League website.  
Register and tune in on Friday, January 8, 2021 at Noon.**



## **Updates on Balanced Billing, TennCare Block Grant, Vaccines, and Proposed Legislation**

**By Health Care/Public Health Co-Chairs Clare Sullivan and Constance Caldwell**

### **Restriction of Balance Billing**

**State Senate Bill 0001** and **House Bill 0002** would finally restrict balance billing by out-of-network providers in Tennessee. House Bill 0002 was passed last year unanimously but the Senate bill failed to get out of committee. [*“Balance billing” is the term used to describe situations in which an insured consumer pays an in-network facility-based provider the co-payment required by their insurance plan, but then gets another bill requiring additional payment far above the rate negotiated by the insurer because the provider had not agreed to be “in-network”*].

This Tennessee legislation would complement balance billing prohibitions contained in the recently passed **December 2020 COVID Relief Package**. The federal mandate in this package would apply to all large employer-based plans but **not** to individuals who have plans purchased through the individual insurance market, the small business market or the Affordable Care Act.

**Both** federal and state legislation would prohibit balance billing in emergency situations whether at an in-network or out-of-network emergency room and would also prohibit balance bills by out-of-network providers at in-network facilities, unless the consumer knowingly chose an out-of-network provider to treat them.

If the General Assembly passes **State Senate Bill 0001** and **House Bill 0002** this year, consumers would only be responsible for paying the copayment rates specified by their insurance policy. **Any** disputes between a provider and an insurance company over the amount the insurance policy paid would be resolved in an **independent dispute resolution** process. Air ambulance billing would be covered by the federal legislation **but**, currently, land ambulance services are **not** in the state bill. Both state and federal legislation also provide for independent dispute resolution of bills between uninsured persons and providers, but details are to be worked out by regulation.

**Approval of TennCare III, formerly the modified block grant waiver request, Amendment 42 to TennCare ii**

The **last-minute** CMS approval of Tennessee's request to implement a modified block grant for a portion of TennCare enrollees came as a surprise to many advocates—not just because of the timing of the approval—but because the terms and extent of the approval **differed** so much from what the state had requested. The CMS approval **limits** the amount of additional funding the state could achieve under the original proposal by changing the nature of the spending cap, **prohibits** any lessening of benefits or eligibility, and **provides** more quality oversight and accountability than the state had reckoned for. On the other hand, it applied its approval to an **overhaul of the entire TennCare program**.

The details and implications of these changes are still being digested, but nevertheless, the state legislature **hastily** approved the terms of the waiver over **LWVTN** requests that they carefully weigh options and wait to talk with the incoming administration to avoid costly, contentious, and distracting lawsuits. There are definite legal challenges to the process that could be made, and the incoming administration could perhaps renegotiate the waiver approval, but as of this writing it is **not clear** where all this stands, how recipients will be impacted, and how it affects efforts to expand TennCare to the over 300,000 low-income Tennesseans who remain uninsured and in the Coverage Gap.

An additional source of information for those interested is the Sycamore Institute's analysis: <https://www.sycamoreinstituten.org/tenncare-iii-tennessees-medicaid-block-grant/>.

### **Continuing the Battle with COVID-19**

It is great to know that the nation has two vaccines available to combat the ravages of COVID-19, which **has taken** lives, **disrupted** the nation's economy, **torn** families apart and **become** a source of political weaponry. **Johnson and Johnson** may soon be the **third** provider of relief for the nation, as they have reported progress in their vaccine development.

Despite help on the horizon, the nation is behind in the production, distribution, and delivery of vaccine to patients in what needs to be a massive effort. Nashville is **no** different. One of the issues, as reported by the Mayor's Task Force, is that the **amount** of vaccine delivered to the area is not adequate. Front line care providers, nursing home residents, and other citizens seventy-five years and older are the initial receivers and rightfully so. However, we must move faster if we are to achieve the **Herd Immunity** required for control of this infection. As the number of cases in our area continues to rise along with associated deaths, we must be purposeful in our efforts.

Local citizens are confused as to **when, where and how** to receive the vaccine as there appears to be **no** coordinated effort to disseminate information. Many have found it necessary to go outside of the Metro area to get information as well as the vaccination. Vaccines are scheduled by appointment in most areas of the country in order to control the crowds and to ensure that medication is not wasted. For that reason, the following contact information is being shared to help the public and to expedite the administration process. You may call the following numbers that will help you register and get scheduled: **(615) 862-7777 (Metro Health)** and/or **(615) 327-6348 (Meharry)**. Currently, the Metropolitan Public Health Department is vaccinating people on Saturdays and Sundays. Remember to continue to **wear your masks** after you are vaccinated and follow the other guidelines as outlined by the CDC.

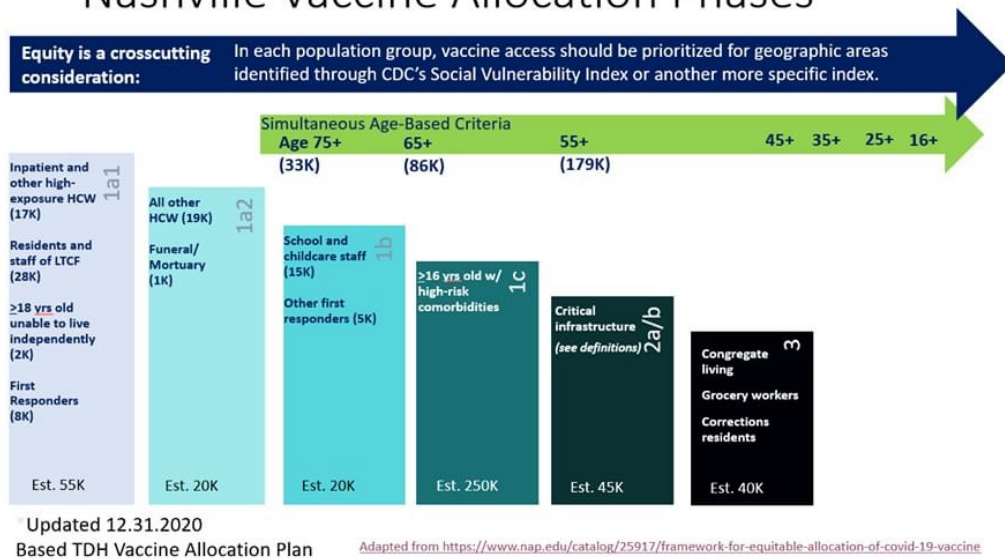
On another note, legislatively, bills have been introduced that would **take away** the power of public health officials to issue stay at home orders, mandate masks, or close schools. This would place such responsibility on elected city councils or school boards, respectively. We will keep you posted.



## Davidson County Covid Vaccine Update

Metro Health has begun taking COVID vaccination appointments for residents **75 and older**. Appointment slots open up periodically. To sign up for an appointment or to get on the wait list, [visit Metro's COVID website](#) or call 615-862-7777 between 7 a.m. and 7 p.m., seven days a week.

### Nashville Vaccine Allocation Phases\*



## Upcoming Environmental Legislation in the General Assembly By Environment Chair Barbara Gay

**Stewart Clifton**, the **League of Woman Voters'** lobbyist, shared his thoughts about upcoming activity in this current state legislative session last week. In case you missed his presentation, he anticipates the following environmental bills:

- Single use plastics ban
- Tire recycling improvements
- Efforts to reduce water protection regulations
- Removing lead in drinking water in public schools.

Stewart also lobbies for the **League of Conservation Voters**, a national organization. **LWVTN** is a member of the Tennessee group and he will keep us informed about these bills through the **Advocacy Committee**. If you would like to follow this legislation, please join the Advocacy

Committee's biweekly meetings beginning **January 25th at 11:30 a.m.** by contacting **Debby Gould**, Advocacy Chair.

*"Tennessee Conservation Voters is a coalition of state conservation groups and individuals dedicated to raising voter awareness, advocating for stronger laws, and holding our elected leaders accountable for safeguarding the environment of Tennessee."*

For more information go to: <https://www.tnconservationvoters.org/about-us>.



## **News from Metro Government** **By Metro Government Chair Winnie Forrester**

### **Metro Council Considers Use of License Plate Readers:**

License Plate Readers (LPRs) are designed to take time-stamped snapshots of license plates. When used as a law enforcement tool, specific license plates are recorded and police have the capability to receive alerts for issues such as stolen cars, Amber alerts, or speeding vehicles.

The Brennan Center for Justice has written [a report](#) on privacy concerns noting enormous databases are being created using innocent motorists' location information raising serious civil rights and civil liberty concerns. **In Nashville**, several bills moving through the Metro Council have created concern among many members of the community, including the Community Oversight Committee. The concern is that it would create a situation of **over-policing** for members of our black and brown communities.

License Plate Readers are already used across the Mid-State according to a [Tennessean article](#) dated **January, 5, 2021**, including in the cities of **Belle Meade, Hendersonville, Brentwood, Gallatin, Franklin, and Mt. Juliet**. In addition, the Tennessee Highway Patrol has readers inside Davidson County. They have become increasingly popular in neighborhoods and for private businesses as the cost has decreased considerably in recent years.

Some communities are **in support** of LPRs. Haynes Park Neighborhood Association, a predominantly African American community in Bordeaux, raised \$4,500 over 3 months last year to purchase cameras for their neighborhoods in response to an increase in crime.

Several bills are making their way through Metro Council to **allow** the use of LPRs. CM Joy Styles originally introduced a bill to create a six-month pilot program as a solution to address the issue of street racing. She withdrew the bill at the last Metro Council meeting but intends to continue to work on the issue. Two other related bills were deferred until **February 2** to allow for more community input. A summary of those bills is below:

[BL2020-581](#) creates an exception for law enforcement vehicles from the current prohibition on LPRs. This bill is sponsored by Councilmembers **Dave Rosenberg, Freddie O'Connell, Sandra Sepulveda** and **Zach Young**.

[BL2020-582](#) would allow Metro to own or operate LPR on public right of way for a broader category of uses, including law enforcement and parking violations. It spells out more



specifically how data should be protected and puts in place an oversight and audit requirement to include the race and ethnicity of every traffic stop conducted to prevent abuse of data for uses other than solving specific crimes. It is sponsored by Councilmembers **Courtney Johnston, Russ Pulley, Bob Nash, John Rutherford, and Kathleen Murphy.**

## **Metro Budget Series 101 Continues**

Councilmembers **Kyonzè Toombs** (Chair) and **Delishia Porterfield** (Vice-Chair) of the Metro Budget and Finance Committee will continue to host a virtual **Metro Budget 101 Series** over the next few weeks. All sessions, beginning at 6 p.m., will provide transparency and education for the general public concerning Metro Nashville Davidson County's revenues, finances, and the budget process. Previous meeting session topics were **Property Taxes, Sales Taxes, City/State Revenue, Metro Nashville Public Schools, Metro Public Works and Metro Parks.** All are recorded and [posted here](#) for later review.

This series of sessions provides helpful information, and we hope you will participate. Questions from the public may be submitted to [kyonzte.toombs@nashville.gov](mailto:kyonzte.toombs@nashville.gov) by 5 p.m. on the day before the session. All questions must be on-topic.

## **Upcoming Sessions**

### **How the City Spends Money**

January 21, 2021 – Nashville General Hospital ([Join January 21 meeting](#))

January 28, 2021 – Public Safety (Metro Nashville Police Department, Sheriff's Office, District Attorney's Office) ([Join January 28 meeting](#))

### **Community Panel Discussions**

February 4, 2021 – Community Panel Discussion ([Join February 4 meeting](#))

February 11, 2021 – Expert Panel Discussion ([Join February 11 meeting](#))

February 18, 2021 – How the Budget Process Works ([Join February 18 meeting](#))

February 25, 2021 – Participatory Budget with Councilmember At-Large Zulfat Suara ([Join February 25 meeting](#))

Members of the public may also watch the following meetings live online at [stream.nashville.gov](http://stream.nashville.gov), and Metro Nashville and Davidson County residents can view Metro Nashville Network on Comcast channel 3, AT&T U-verse channel 99, Google Fiber channel 3, and streaming on the Metro Nashville Network Roku channel.

## **Openings on Metro Board and Commissions**

Metro has **over 75 boards and commissions** that use **expert** citizens on a volunteer basis to make recommendations and rulings on everything from beer permits to zoning requests. The Mayor's office appoints members of these boards with final approval by the Metro Council. Registered voters in Davidson County interested in serving on a board can submit a resume to

their district council member to be relayed to the Mayor's office for consideration. For a full list of all boards and commissions, see the [Metro.gov website](#).



## January Membership Update

By Membership Co-Chairs Reba Holmes and Karen Hernan

With great delight, 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: **Rosalyn Daniel, Elizabeth Holmes, Marybeth Shinn, and Carol Westlake.**

We are grateful to these members and all our members that support the League's activities, programs, and underwriting.

### Share a **LWV** membership:

**Monday, January 18, 2021**, the nation will pause to reflect on and celebrate **Dr. Martin Luther King's** legacy. Please encourage your friends and family to consider joining the **League of Women Voters**. Now more than ever, we need more advocates to defend and protect our system of democracy and its cornerstones.

Membership allows you to share a year's worth of experiences of promoting democracy, educating others in the community, participating in political discourse, and registering new voters, 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](#).

### Comments from members as to why they are excited about **The League of Women Voters**:

*I am excited about the **League of Women Voters** because of the "work." My work to register new voters during election time and the in-between seasons. My work to help voters get to the polls. My work to build tools to keep elections accessible. I get excited about collaborating with other grassroots organizations. I get excited about keeping an eye on local, state, and national initiatives and issues. I get excited about defending our democracy.*



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 Board of Directors**

President: **Madeline Garr**

1<sup>st</sup> Vice Presidents: **Ethel Detch and Carole Kenner**

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: **Open**

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Treasurer **Susan Mattson**

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Communications: **Lara Webb** and **Ophelia Doe**  
Community Connections: **Sabina Mohyuddin** and **Tamanna Qureshi**  
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Fundraising: **Debby Gould** and **Anne Marie Farmer**  
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Metro Government: **Winnie Forrester**  
State Advocacy: **Debby Gould**  
Voter Services: **Perry Macdonald**  
*Voter* Newsletter Editor: **Madeline Garr** and **Elise Lamar**  
Williamson County Representative: **June Bond**  
Nominating Committee Chair (2020): **Senator Brenda Gilmore**

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Nominating Committee Members: **Betsy Walkup, Constance Caldwell, Hasina Mohyuddin, June Bond, and Brenda Wynn**