



THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville
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<http://www.LWVnashville.org>

*April 2021
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CALENDAR OF EVENTS

April 19, 2021. 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. League of Women Voters State Advocacy Committee. Look for Zoom invitation or join [here](#).

April 21, 2021 at 1:00 p.m. A Conversation with Robert Blair, Board Chairman of the Franklin Special School District. Sponsored by the **League of Women Voters Williamson County**. On ZOOM. Click [here](#) to register.

April 23 to April 24. League of Women Voters Tennessee Virtual State Convention. On Zoom. Look for an email to register and mark your calendars to attend.

April 24. Equity, Ethics, and Maternal Health in Tennessee Webinar. On Zoom. Sponsored by the Tennessee Health Care Campaign. Speakers include Briana Perry, Co-Executive Director of Healthy and Free Tennessee, Emilie Fauchet, Children and Family Services, and Ricki Martin, a social worker and doula. Register for this free event [here](#).

April 26, 2021. 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. League of Women Voters State Advocacy Committee. Look for Zoom invitation or join [here](#).

April 29. 12:00 p.m. YWCA Nashville and Middle Tennessee's Stand Against Racism. Join this virtual rally and hear health experts discuss why racism is a public health crisis and how communities of color can access the COVID-19 vaccine. Sponsored by YWCA of Nashville and Middle Tennessee. Register for this free event [here](#).

April 29. 6:00 p.m. People Powered Fair Maps: How to Fix Gerrymandering and the Redistricting System. Presenter: Kristen Eberhard. Sponsored by the League of Women Voters Tennessee. Register for this free event [HERE](#).

May 3, 2021. 11:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. League of Women Voters State Advocacy Committee. Look for Zoom invitation or join [here](#).

May 5-6, 2021. The Big Payback.

May 7, 2021. 12:00 p.m. Hot Topic: Redistricting 101. Presenter: Debby Gould. Look for an email to register and mark your calendar to attend.

President's Message



April has finally arrived and the hope of spring and new life is everywhere. Currently, vaccines are open to all people 16 and older, which is a positive move forward. Although COVID protocols such as masks and distancing are still vital to prevent transmission of the virus in all its forms, there may be light at the end of this path on which we have been traveling. Meanwhile, the **LWVNashville** continues its work. Here is what is happening in our near future!

Make sure you register for the **LWVTN Biennial Virtual Conference** April 23 (evening) and April 23, 2021. Use this link to register: <https://www.lwvtn.org/>

On **April 29** be sure to join **LWVTN** for a virtual presentation on **How to Fix Gerrymandering and the Redistricting System**. Presenter: Kristin Eberhard, Author of [Becoming a Democracy: How We Can Fix the Electoral College, Gerrymandering, and Our Elections](#). This event is part of the **People Powered Maps** effort.

Also, please mark your calendars and plan to attend the **May 7th Hot Topics** meeting on ZOOM when **Debby Gould** will introduce us to **Restricting 101**.

In May, **LWVNashville** will begin its annual membership drive. This is a time for **renewing** your current membership and for **reaching out** to ask others to become a member. Person-to-person recruitment is a powerful tool. Look for more information coming your way **in May**.

The **LWVNashville** annual membership meeting will take place this year on **June 10th** from **5:30 to 7:00 p.m.** on ZOOM. Look for an email with attached important documents for you to read in mid-May. At this meeting, the membership will vote to approve the **annual budget** for 2021-2022, approve the nominations of **new and returning board members**, and approve the **bylaws and strategic focus** of our organization.

With hopes that each of you have a healthy and happy month. Thank you for all you do.

Madeline Garr



State Advocacy Committee Is Hard at Work **By State Advocacy Chair Debby Gould**

This has been an extraordinarily active legislative session for the **LWVTN State Advocacy Committee**. While we are all frustrated by pandemic limitations to face-to-face interactions this year, they have pushed us to use our technology differently. Our weekly advocacy committee meetings on Zoom have expanded the number of participants from across the state, allowing members to add insight and energy to our efforts.

Absent our ability to meet in person with legislators, we have relied on periodic action alerts to

send them messages. So far this year, we have generated an amazing **15 action alerts!** Topics ranged from **absentee ballots** to **public meeting access** to **surprise medical billing**. Were we always successful in swaying opinions and altering votes? Decidedly no! However, we have had some notable successes, increased our organizational visibility as knowledgeable advocates, and developed new collaborative partnerships with other organizations around key issues that we will pursue in the future.

I will join our lobbyist, **Stewart Clifton**, to provide a more complete wrap-up of the bills we followed as part of our state convention on April 23-24. There is still time to register for the virtual convention at www.lwvtn.org. Hope you can join us!



What is Happening in Williamson County?

By Linda Sherman

The **League of Women Voters of Williamson County (LWVWC)** will meet **Wednesday, May 19th, at 1:00 p.m** on Zoom. All are welcome. Registration is available on the Brentwood Library Adult Programs website or this [link](#).

Senator Jack Johnson, TN District 23, will be the May 19 guest speaker. Sen. Johnson spent his early years in Texas, where he earned his degree in Education from Texas State University. He has been in the Tennessee State Senate since 2006 and served on several committees before being elected Senate Majority Leader in 2018. He currently serves on Gov. Lee's Economic Recovery Group in response to the Covid-19 pandemic. Sen. Johnson has 20 years of experience in finance and business in Williamson County.

The **LWVWC** hosted its first **“Conversation with Candidates”** event on the evening of April 6. Four candidates running for three seats on the Brentwood City Commission attended the meeting and answered questions from the moderator and attendees from the Zoom Chat.



Summary of April Hot Topic –Downtown Nashville

By Co-Vice President Ethel Detch

For the past six years, **Metro Councilperson Freddie O'Connell** has represented Nashville's downtown, an area that has undergone tremendous change in the past two decades and continues to change by the day. The downtown district includes several new high-rise buildings and has become a place where people can live, work, and play. Until the 1990's, creation of residential space in the area was prohibited, but now 14,000 people call downtown Nashville their home. Before the pandemic, 78,000 people worked downtown, and many are beginning to return. With all of these changes, balancing growth and preservation is a challenge.

Councilperson O'Connell noted that Downtown is “complicated.” He described several special zones and districts that overlay the central footprint to guide building height, historic preservation decisions, and energy use. Businesses within the Central Business Improvement District pay a property surcharge for extra services to keep the area clean and safe, while other

areas do not. In 2010, the Specialized Land Use Policy for Downtown, known as the “Downtown Code” was adopted, and it continues to guide decisions about changes in the central city.

Councilperson O’Connell elaborated on several challenges facing our city:

- **Affordability:** The downtown area has some incredible housing options, but many people still can’t afford to live there.
- **Homelessness:** Nashville has a 3-year plan to address this issue, but we are a long way from ending chronic homelessness.
- **Traffic and Parking:** The city struggles with traffic congestion; reasonably priced parking is scarce.
- **Tourism Impact:** Nashville has become a destination city for vacationers, but the resulting traffic congestion and noise are bothersome to some local residents.
- **Character:** Unfortunately, several older buildings have been torn down over the years or allowed to deteriorate. How do we better protect what’s left and incorporate “character” into future designs?

Although our city has challenges, it also has many opportunities:

- **The Cumberland River:** Even though we’re a city on a river, we’re still not really a “river city.” River access could be improved, and a ferry could help connect parts of the city that aren’t presently.
- **Noise abatement:** Construction noise downtown can be heard 24/7, which is a problem for downtown residents.
- **Energy efficiency:** Many downtown buildings are energy-inefficient. We need to encourage energy efficiency in new buildings.
- **Elections have consequences:** Our state will undergo reapportionment and redistricting in 2021—how will that impact Downtown? Will new council districts split Downtown into two council districts?
- **Jefferson Street:** The construction of I-40 profoundly disrupted connectivity between Jefferson Street and the rest of the city. Re-establishing that connectivity could help heal damage from that decision and improve the viability of its businesses.

Councilperson O’Connell fielded questions from the audience about mask mandates, state pre-emption, local regulation of scooters and party buses, mass transit, and other subjects.

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



May Hot Topic: Redistricting 101

By Co-Vice Carole Kenner

We are most fortunate to have someone we know and love as our First Friday speaker on **May 7 at noon. Debby Gould, President-Elect for LWVTN**, will present **Redistricting 101**. As Tennessee prepares for the redistricting process that could reshape national, state, and local political boundaries for the next ten years, **LWV** will be educating our members and the public about the process and how citizens can be engaged in it. This presentation will be the first in a

series this year on this important topic for the League. **Debby** knows as much about this process as anyone in the state and understands the importance of civic engagement. We look forward to her sharing her wisdom and insight on this topic.

May 7, 2021

**HOT TOPICS
Continues on ZOOM!**

Redistricting 101

Presenter: Debby Gould

**Be on the lookout for Zoom registration information
in your email, Facebook, or the League website.
Register and tune in on Friday, May 7, 2021 at Noon**



Education Legislation and Issues

By Education Chair Jami Oakley

The success of many education-related measures will require increased funding. Thus, the **LWVTN** has supported efforts to urge the Governor to dedicate more of the state's budget to public education. We recently distributed a media release stating our position that the state should alter the **Basic Education Program (BEP)** formula to adequately fund high-quality education for all Tennessee students. Our comments were featured in [The Tennessee Lookout's](#) deep dive into the history and challenges of the BEP, in a televised interview of **Debby Gould** and **LWV Memphis** member **Sherry Hewlett** on Memphis' **WREG-TV**, in an op-ed in [The Daily Times](#) in Maryville, and in several other places, such as [The Tennessee Tribune](#).

The **Governor** did release his revised budget on Tuesday, April 13, with no significant increase for public education. The next day, the **Tennessee Public Education Coalition** held a press conference that included Memphis **League** member **Peg Watkins** to express discontent with statewide education funding and call for greater funding in the future.

The **League** also issued an Action Alert regarding **SB0455/HB0535**, a bill that would have allowed for-profit corporations to manage public charter schools. That bill was dropped the following week due to lack of sufficient votes to pass through the House. Another bill to watch, which detailed a process for state takeover of schools due to academic performance, was [tabled until next year](#). Lawmakers have said they are communicating with superintendents and school board members about this bill and its implications. In other matters, the **League** sent a letter of support regarding **SB914/HB1020**, which would have required high schools to distribute voter registration information to seniors. That effort ended in disappointment, as the bill failed. We will keep it on our radar for next year and offer support to its sponsors.

Another bill to watch is **SB1216/HB0800**, which will make it illegal for any school to use textbooks or instructional material that “promotes, normalizes, supports or addresses lesbian, gay, bi-sexual or transgender issues or lifestyles.” The League does not support legislation that discriminates against people based on sexual orientation or gender identity. This bill has passed the House Education Instruction Committee and is on its way to the Finance, Ways and Means Subcommittee. Consider contacting your state representatives to oppose this bill.



Environmental News

By Karen Wieckert

Harpeth Conservancy Update

The **Harpeth Conservancy**, formerly known as the Harpeth River Watershed Association (HRWA), is a science-based, Middle Tennessee conservation organization dedicated to clean water and maintenance of healthy ecosystems for Tennessee rivers. In 2020, the **Richland Creek Watershed Alliance** (RCWA) merged with the **Harpeth Conservancy’s** programs, including a focus on urban water quality and monitoring water in the creek and its tributaries, which run through Belle Meade, Sylvan Park, and the Nations, on their way to the Cumberland.

On April 2nd, **Dorie Bolze**, the **CEO of Harpeth Conservancy**, gave a very informative lecture to the **Tennessee Women in Green (TWIG)** organization. She discussed the March flood event as well as water quality monitoring, stream clean-up and restoration projects, as well as other legislative and environmental issues of concern. The merging of the Harpeth Conservancy’s programs with the RCWA allows Nashvillians who enjoy the beauty and joy of the creek to become involved in programs to ensure its ongoing health. During the pandemic, **Richland Creek** has been a popular spot for families to bring their children and dogs, and for fisherman and other outdoor enthusiasts.

Solid Waste Region Board Update

At their March 24th meeting, the [Solid Waste Region Board](#) approved the annual **Progress Report**, heard an update from the **Mayor’s Sustainability Advisory Committee**, and considered a request for expansion of the Southern Services Landfill, located in the Bordeaux neighborhood, by Waste Management (WM). **Don Gentilcore**, from WM, presented that request. Board members responded and asked questions, as did community members and other interested parties, and the **Board** ultimately voted to **deny** the expansion. In doing so, Board members considered community input, which emphasized the historic inequities of placing such these kinds of facilities in historically African-American neighborhoods. They also cited **The Solid Waste Master Plan: Achieving Zero Waste**, adopted in August of 2019. That plan, available at the Board's web site, states: *Zero Waste necessitates a change in mindset and philosophy. Only then can the current reliance on landfilling be replaced with resource management practices such as waste minimization, reuse, recycling, composting, digestion, and waste-to-fuels technologies.*

Since that plan was adopted, **Nashville** has experienced a destructive tornado, a downtown bombing, and recent flooding. Along with increased demolition and construction due to Nashville growth, the Southern Services Landfill may be at capacity sooner than originally

projected. Although the Board denied the expansion, WM may challenge the decision. Davidson County and Middle Tennessee officials continue to consider alternatives and future needs for solid waste disposal, and this issue requires ongoing attention by the **League** and Nashville citizens.

Update: A few days after the Board decision, Waste Management informed the city it could not accept debris from the March 2021 flood.



April Membership Update

By Membership Co-Chair Reba Holmes

With great delight, we announce and welcome new and returning members who have joined the **LWVNashville**. It is our privilege to welcome these individuals to the organization: **Mary Louise (Maryl) Linn, Erika Thomas, and Cynthia Whitlow.**

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

We Continue to Grow

Monthly, our League Administrator **Tracy Depp** reconciles our membership roster. The official LWVN count for April 2021 is **264**, and with your help, we will continue to increase this number. While our membership grows each month, we need more advocates to defend and protect our system of democracy and its cornerstones.

Annual Membership Drive

It's that time again... Our annual membership drive will begin **May 1, 2021**. Be on the lookout for your renewal communication via email.

Membership allows you to share a year's worth of experiences promoting democracy, educating others in the community, participating in political discourse, and registering new voters, to name just a few. Plus, your annual membership includes membership to the national, state, and local **LWV** organizations.

Details regarding various support levels may be found on our website [<http://lwvnashville.org/join/>](http://lwvnashville.org/join/).

Comment from a member about what most excites them about the League of Women Voters.

"The League keeps me well informed about local and state legislative issues and public affairs. I love being active in my community through the League! Simply put, I love the League!"



Fundraising Update

By Fundraising Chair Anne-Marie Farmer

Mark your calendars for **The Big Payback, which runs from 6pm Wednesday, May 5, to 6 pm on Thursday, May 6!** This 24-hour online giving event, created by the **Community Foundation of Middle Tennessee**, helps local nonprofits raise funds and visibility for the work they do, and we are one of the participating groups.

Our campaign will focus on an effort to design, print, and distribute user-friendly, catchy materials targeted to eighteen-year-olds to equip them with information they need to exercise their **right to vote**. Materials will include information about absentee voting rules, voter ID requirements, and other facts that could easily trip up a first-time voter.

A successful **Big Payback** effort is measured not only in dollars raised but by how well we bring attention to important work of the **League**. We'll need your help for that! Social media engagement is essential for an effective campaign, and as **League** members, we can all assist by making sure that we engage with and share the **League's** social media posts related to this effort, to increase our audience. Please plan to do this on **May 5 and 6!**



*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**

1st Vice Presidents: **Ethel Detch and Carole Kenner**

2nd Vice President: **Open**

Secretary: **Elise Lamar**

Treasurer **Susan Mattson**

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Communications: **Lara Webb and Ophelia Doe**

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

Education: **Jami Oakley**

Environment: **Barbara Gay and Russanne Buchi-Fotre**

Fundraising: **Debby Gould and Anne Marie Farmer**

Health Care/Public Health: **Constance Caldwell and Clare Sullivan**

Membership: **Reba Holmes and Karen Hernan**

Metro Government: **Winnie Forrester**

State Advocacy: **Debby Gould**

Voter Services: **Perry Macdonald**

Williamson County Representative: **June Bond**

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

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