

# The Nashville Voter

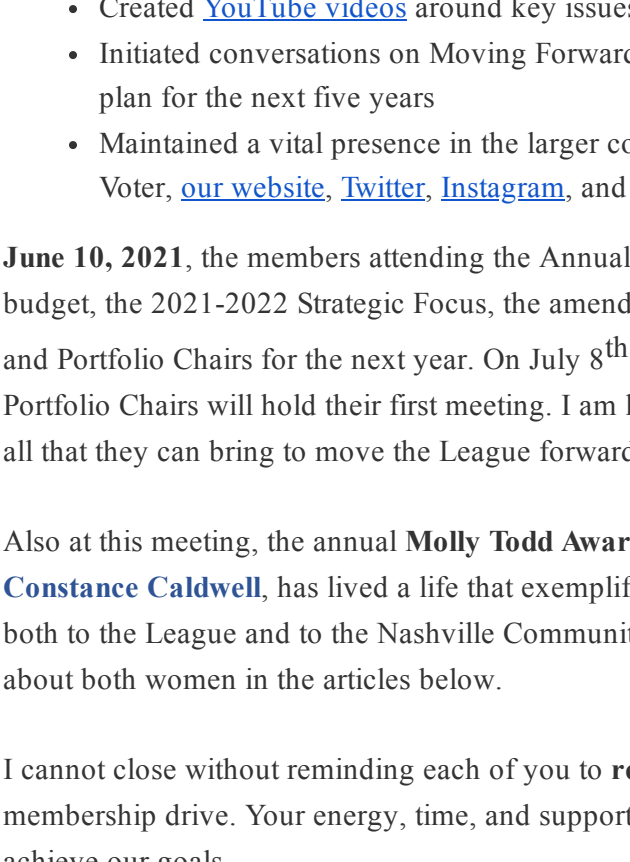
Volume 74, No 11-- June 2021

Welcome to this issue of the *LWN Voter*. You'll notice that the Emma page design allows you to access the LWN Calendar by pressing a button at the top of the page!

Please note, you can increase your screen size within your personal information manager (i.e., Microsoft Outlook). In the Microsoft Outlook Message Bar at the top of the e-mail page, choose "Other Actions" and then in the dropdown menu choose "Zoom." The Zoom window allows you to increase the file size; try 140% for easier onscreen reading.

Also, please note that if you want to share/forward this newsletter to others, you **MUST** click on the envelope icon at the upper right side of this emailed version.

## President's Message



As the League of Women Voters of Nashville's 2020-2021 year comes to a close, I want to thank the Leadership Board members who consistently met the demands that arose in the past year, a year of challenges and opportunities. Despite the pandemic, we were able to accomplish much with the help of you, the members of the League. Some of these accomplishments were:

- Held in-person voter registration events to register and educate voters
- Virtually celebrated the 100<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Passage of **Voting Rights for Women**
- Participated in the 21-Day Racial Equity and Social Justice Challenge
- Offered [Hot Topic sessions](#) the first Friday of each month
- Increased our membership in both Davidson and Williamson Counties
- Continued to support [League of Voters of Williamson County](#) in its development and monthly presentations at the Brentwood Library
- Initiated two committees within the Education and Healthcare/Public Health Portfolios
- Participated in State Advocacy efforts during the 2021 General Assembly
- Created [YouTube videos](#) around key issues
- Initiated conversations on Moving Forward with the goal of creating a strategic plan for the next five years
- Maintained a vital presence in the larger community through the Nashville Voter, [our website](#), [Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), and [Facebook](#).

**June 10, 2021**, the members attending the Annual Meeting approved the 2021-2022 budget, the 2021-2022 Strategic Focus, the amended Bylaws, and the Leadership Team and Portfolio Chairs for the next year. On July 8<sup>th</sup>, the new Leadership Team and Portfolio Chairs will hold their first meeting. I am looking forward to their energy and all that they can bring to move the League forward in the coming year.

Also at this meeting, the annual **Molly Todd Award** was announced. The recipient, **Constance Caldwell**, has lived a life that exemplifies all that Molly Todd represents both to the League and to the Nashville Community. Please take the time to read more about both women in the articles below.

I cannot close without reminding each of you to **renew** your membership in the annual membership drive. Your energy, time, and support continue to be key in our ability to achieve our goals.

**Madeline Garr**

## Who Was Mary Todd?

If you are not familiar with her name nor with her history and importance to the Nashville community and the League of Women Voters of Nashville and Tennessee, please do not feel alone. Neither was I some years ago when I first joined the League. For that reason, I would like to take some time to let you know why in 1995, the League of Women Voters of Nashville first established the annual Molly Todd award in recognition of a member of the League who has followed in Molly Todd's footsteps by providing service and leadership to both the League and to the citizens and voters of Nashville.

Mary Todd rarely held elective office. Her focus was on fashioning public policy in Nashville and in Tennessee in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. She mobilized support for reform in areas as diverse as birth control, racial integration, and metropolitan government. Her strategy centered on building alliances between like minded organizations, followed by voting strength on behalf of the reforms that had been targeted by the League and other organizations.

In 1948, as president of the **League of Women Voters of Nashville**, she led the league and other organizations in vigorous advocacy to develop government support for the overcrowded county schools, library services, a family service agency and child welfare. During this time, the League published the city's first brochure on voter education, worked to abolish the poll tax and engaged in efforts to consolidate city and county government services. Also a member of the Tennessee Council on Human Relations, she participated in the lunch counter sit-ins at Harveys, a target of the protests during the Civil Rights era. She was one of the plaintiffs in the Baker v Carr case at the Supreme Court in 1962. This case arose from a lawsuit against the state of Tennessee which had not conducted redistricting since 1901. The Court ruled that it was justifiable for federal courts to hear redistricting cases and subsequent rulings required the [United States House of Representatives](#) and state legislatures to establish electoral districts of equal population on the principle of [one person, one vote](#).

Throughout her life, Molly Todd continued to advocate for these and other issues from a state income tax, enforcement of strip mines and water control laws to the repeal of the death penalty.

As you can see from this brief overview, Molly Todd, like many other women and men who commit themselves to the mission of the League of Women Voters, was a force to be reckoned with, someone to imitate and admire.

## MOLLY TODD AWARD RECIPIENT 2021

**Constance Caldwell** received her BSN from North Carolina A&T State University and went on to achieve two additional degrees, a Master of Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and later a Master of Guidance and Counseling from Tennessee State University. Prior to arriving in Tennessee and just shortly after receiving her public health master's degree, she was recruited by the **Air Force Nurse Corps** to help develop their public health clinician services and eventually became Commander of her unit while stationed in Europe.

When she left the Air Force, she continued her work with service members as Community Health Coordinator for the **middle Tennessee Department of Veterans Affairs**, developing community and clinic-based services and resources for veterans suffering from the "big four" chronic public health issues pre-COVID: tuberculosis, sexually transmitted diseases, diabetes, and hypertension. Her community health nursing leadership has been recognized by many, including **Vanderbilt University School of Nursing**, who invited her to mentor nursing students as an adjunct faculty member. She also served all of us as a member of the **Tennessee Air National Guard**, "retraining" from the VA with 35 years of government service.

But her service to the League continues as an active member of the **NACAP, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority**, and **LWN Nashville**. On more than one occasion, you will find her assisting individual members of her church congregation who have just been discharged from the hospital or accompanying them to follow-up appointments. She is the person who takes on organizing as a response to identified needs. She is the person whom the pastor of Temple Church turned to twenty years ago when he was approached to respond to health care needs in Central America. Constance organized, nurtured, and developed the Temple Church health ministry to a point where they now mount two missions each year-one to isolated communities in Belize and the other in Haiti involving physicians, nurses, pharmacists, and other health professionals and students in these fields from several states. When the mission work was put on hold this past year, she has been putting her community health skills to use right here in Nashville, partnering with the health department to sponsor one of the first faith-based vaccine clinics in Nashville.

Constance has been serving as Co-Chair of the **LWN Nashville Health Care and Public Health portfolio committee** for the past two years. With Constance's urging and guidance the committee has expanded, is meeting regularly, and is developing an agenda focusing on addressing the health inequities revealed by COVID-19 pandemic in Davidson County. She has already made connections for our committee to talk with and learn from leadership of our Public Health Department and Public Hospital who deal daily with health and mental health disparities. **Congratulations, Constance!**

## Health Care/Public Health Committee

### By Health Care Co-Chair Constance Caldwell

#### Health Committee Expansion

The Health Care/Public Health Committee, in an effort to better understand local health issues and how the LWN can be involved, has expanded its membership. We are seeking to understand how decisions are made concerning local public health and public hospital policy. Such foci will require more eyes and ears. Current members are now: **Clare Sullivan, Co-Chair; Constance Caldwell, Co-Chair; Patricia Post; Dr. Jeanne Calender; Elise Lamar; Patti Scott; Dr. Linda Halperin**

If anyone else is interested in joining us, please contact us by email. We welcome our new members and look forward to working with them.

On the national level, the Supreme Court should be ruling on whether the ACA can stand without the individual mandate being enforced. Roe vs. Wade continues to be under scrutiny by the Court. Both of these issues can result in major consequences for the nation if voted down.

## Voter Registration

### By Voter Service Co-Chair Elect Rita Bullinger

#### Tennessee Voter Suppression Facts

Partisan bill SB1510, introduced by **Janice Bowling** (R-Tullahoma) and withdrawn (2/23/21), was an attempt to enhance Tennessee's reputation as "among the hardest states to vote in," writes Randy Brockway in an editorial in *The Tennessean* (March 2021). <https://www.tennessean.com/story/opinion/2021/03/03/tennessee-republicans-voter-suppression-election-turnout/6820290002/>

Why is Tennessee ranked among the top 5 most difficult states to vote in and 47<sup>th</sup> in voter turnout in the US? Here are a few reasons:

- 1) Tennessee's early voting period is two weeks – 16 states allow 3 weeks for early voting. However, TN's early voting turnout in last year was 37% higher than in 2016, from 1.7 to 2.3 million in 2020. While on election day, TN saw a 22% increase in voter turnout from 2.5 to a little over 3 million – which means 500,000 more TN voters made their voices heard. Some say this reflects a blue migration from western and eastern coastal states to the interior and south of the country where lower home prices and the cost of living as well as expanded employment opportunities beckon.

However, despite this increase only 68% of registered voters cast a ballot in 2020 which means 1.4 million Tennesseans did not vote. Looking at who, where, and why citizens of the volunteer state aren't voting might be a valuable activity for the LWN going forward.

- 2) Registration deadline cutoff is a month before election day in Tennessee. Twenty-one states allow same day voter registration. Some suggest that concerned citizens and groups call on TN's Secretary of State to review our current voter registration laws and our voting process to demand reform. For example, how many more people might have registered to vote in that month between TN closing voter registration and election day?
- 3) Outdated voting rules in TN require a reason to vote absentee. Thirty states do not require a reason to vote absentee and five states *only* have mail-in voting. According to statistics compiled by the National Conference of State Legislatures, 22 states have automatic voter registration through the Department of Motor Vehicles (DMV) registration and licensing process.

Other voting practices that may hamper voter turnout include voter registration restrictions, voter ID laws, and poll hours.

## Donations Can Make Things Happen

### By LWN TN President Debby Gould

It seems a long time ago —way before the pandemic — that LWN commissioned the Nashville Ballet to create an original ballet, *72 Steps*, to tell the story of women's suffrage. While our original plans for the 2020 centennial celebration of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment were limited by the pandemic, we were thrilled that *72 Steps* continued to have an impact on the next generation of Tennesseans.

During this past school year, the Nashville Ballet pivoted from its in-person presentations to virtual performances in schools. As a result, a total of 3,488 students in 24 middle Tennessee schools saw this moving performance and had the opportunity to have guided conversations about the continuing impact of this 72-year struggle to include women's voice in public life. We thank our many generous donors who made this possible.

## Education Legislation and Issues

### By Education Chair Jami Oakley

**Mary-Chair Dismukes** has officially joined the board of the LWN as Education Co-Chair. We're looking forward to lots of action in the education space next year, and happy to have grown the team. Our co-chairs will participate in a planning meeting of the entire MNPS social studies department in August, and hope to host a small discussion to reveal how the League can best support our social studies teachers for the upcoming school year and moving forward.

**Jami Oakley** served on a committee, led by District 8 School Board Member **Gini Walker**, that worked during the spring semester to find and select two new additions to the **MNPS School Board**. The final decisions were made the second week of June, and the two Student School Board Representatives will be announced this month. The first school board meeting that will include their participation is the August meeting, on Tuesday, August 10.

## New and Returning Members

### By Membership Co-Director Reba Holmes

With great delight, we announce and welcome our new and returning members that joined the **League of Women Voters of Nashville**. It is our privilege to welcome these individuals to the organization:

- Pam Atkins, Felisha Baquera, June Bond, Constance Caldwell, Kay Hancock Clarkson, Stewart Clifton, Teena Cohen, Sharon H. Cox, Glorwen Day, Ethel Detch, Carolyn D. Edwards, Anne-Garr, and Johnathan Farmer, Winifred Forrester, Faith Haber Galbraith, Anna Garr, Megan Gorb, Madeline and Tony Garr, Jan Giordano, Hindee Gold, Elizabeth (Beth) Gordon, Wanda Bruce Graham, Stephanie Hamilton, Reba Holmes, Charlotte Jackson, Ellen Elise Lamar, Jack McFadden, Hasina Mohyuddin, Jami Oakley, Barbara Owens, Patricia Post, Avi Poster, Gayle Ray, Dianna L. Scales, Patricia Scott, Sarah Seador, Johanna Singer, Sally Smallwood, Pamela Talley, Cynthia S. Whitl, Susie Wilcox, Lynn Williams, and Mary Womack.**

#### Anne Dallas Dudley Membership

- **Mary Dismukes**
- **Barbara and Volney Gay**
- **Debby Gould**
- **Jami and Paul Oakley**
- **Karen H. Weeks**

#### Susan B. Anthony Membership

- **Marian Ott and Craig Philip**

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

#### Annual Membership Drive

Our annual membership drive began **May 1, 2021**, and many of you have renewed or joined the **league** for the first time. Outstanding effort, and thank you!

Our collective voices will make a difference. We are counting on you to serve or continue to serve as an advocate to defend and protect our system of democracy and its foundations. We need more advocates like you; please encourage your family, friends, and co-workers to join the league.

Membership allows you to share a year's worth of experiences promoting democracy, educating others in the community, supporting redistricting reform and ending gerrymandering, registering new voters, participating in the overall political discourse, to name a few. Plus, the annual membership includes membership to the national, state, and local **LWN** organizations. Details regarding the various support levels may be found on our website <https://lwnashville.org/membership/>.

If you prefer to pay by check, please mail it along with a "**Membership Form**". The words "Membership Form" is an active link, if you click on it a form will appear for you to download or print.

#### Comments from members as to why they joined the League of Women Voters.

"I joined to work with others to ensure our elected leaders are transparent while serving their constituents. Simply put, I want to make certain legislators keep their oath of office. They must be held accountable."

## Summary of June Hot Topic – Tennessee's Public Funding Education Challenge

### By Co-Vice-President Ethel Detch

**Katie Cour**, President and CEO of the **Nashville Public Education Foundation**, addressed the **League** about the Foundation's efforts to raise awareness about problems with state support of public schools. The Basic Education Program (BEP) is Tennessee's formula used to allocate state dollars to local school systems. Developed in response to a 1988 lawsuit waged against the state government by 88 rural school systems, the BEP was created to improve the equity of funding for all school systems. In recent years, however, the formula has come under fire for providing too little funding to schools generally, particularly those in the state's urban systems.

The BEP has four basic components: Instructional Salaries and Wages, Instructional Benefits, Classroom Components, and Non-Classroom Components. Within these larger categories are many smaller ones, such as teachers, principals, assistant principals, school nurses, counselors as well as instructional supplies. As state officials are quick to point out, however, the BEP is a funding formula not a spending plan. This means that the formula generates certain amounts of money, but the local governments have some discretion in how it's actually spent.

In addition to state funding, state law requires local governments to contribute to public school funding; the required amounts vary according to each local government's ability to pay. Overall, the state funds about 66% of the BEP's total, and local governments fund about 33%. Because Nashville can raise more revenue than most other counties, however, it's also expected to contribute more to its schools. At the same time, many of Metro's students are more expensive to educate than students in other places, because of a higher number of economically disadvantaged, non-English-speaking children and special education students. Consequently, Metro receives less state revenue, but must spend more than many other systems to educate its students.

Ms. Cour pointed out some of the BEP's **flaws** particularly as they impact Metro Schools:

- The formula consistently underestimates the resources needed to run a school. For example, the actual number of personnel generated by the formula is about 11,000 positions less than what schools actually have. Nurses and Assistant Principals are particularly underfunded.
- The salary amount used in the formula is a state average. Because the cost of living in Nashville is so much higher than in other parts of the state, the local government must contribute much larger amounts to hire teachers than other places. Metro pays \$21,000,000 for teachers' salaries over what the BEP generates.
- Overall, the BEP formula generates per pupil funding that is less than most other states; Tennessee ranks 44<sup>th</sup> in the nation. The Education Law Center gives Tennessee an "F" in funding efforts for the percentage of GDP invested in education.

So what does the Nashville Public Education Foundation recommend that the state do to address these funding challenges?

- Adopt the recommendations of the BEP Review Committee, an advisory body of educational professionals and state officials. Each year the committee makes suggestions to improve the funding formula, but the General Assembly rarely adopts them.
- Migrate to a student-driven formula with an appropriate base, with weights added for more expensive students.
- Increase funding generally. Possible sources include limiting present exemptions to the sales tax, as well as drawing from the increased revenues now collected from taxes on internet sales.

The BEP was a major component of the Education Improvement Act, a wide-ranging piece of legislation passed in 1992 after two years of intense discussion by the General Assembly. Perhaps it's time to focus on Tennessee's children and their educational needs once more. The Foundation will roll out additional materials later this summer to raise awareness about this issue.

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://lwnashville.org/blog/>.

## NO HOT TOPIC PROGRAM IN JULY!!!!

While Hot Topic First Friday Programs are taking a vacation in July, we have a wonderful program already lined up for **August 6 at noon**.

**Dr. Alex Jahangir, Vanderbilt Medical Center**, will focus on where we have been in the past and are going in the coming year, addressing not just Covid but other health concerns as well. I have no doubt that he will be both interesting and most informative so mark your calendar now.

## The Urban League Gree Lab

### By Environment Co-Director Barbara Gay

Urban Green Lab was founded in 2009 in Nashville, Tennessee, and incorporated as a 501(c)3 nonprofit in 2011. The organization began as a group of passionate friends with a shared mission of sustainability education and an idea to build a brick-and-mortar center where the community could learn the basics of sustainable living. In 2013, Urban Green Lab hired its first executive director, and in 2016, shifted its outreach to a mobile laboratory that delivers sustainable living education citywide. Today, their mission thrives in systemic ways through our classrooms, households, and workplaces. Urban Green Lab transforms institutions like schools, businesses, and nonprofits into "labs" of learning that explore sustainable practice. They organize communities to exchange best practices. They train communities how to make sustainable choices. They connect communities to resources that make a difference. Urban Green Lab is partnering with organizations to develop and implement strategies and tools as models for cities across the country. The Nashville Environmental Justice Initiative is growing a movement of environmental justice learning that protects Nashville's most marginalized communities.

Metro Public Works and Urban Green Lab are partnering on a new educational web series "Sustainablein the City: Thinking Upstream" focused on how Nashvillians can better reduce, reuse, and recycle and live more sustainably. Hosted by Metro Public Works' Waste Reduction Program Manager Jenn Harman and Urban Green Lab's Sustainability Education Manager Patrick King, Sustainable in the City: Thinking Upstream features interviews, webinars, and panel discussions with Nashville's top experts in all areas of waste and sustainability.

Urban Green Lab's website provides a wealth of information and webinars about sustainability practices that each of us can do and describes their work in greater detail. Go to [urbangreenlab.org](http://urbangreenlab.org) for more information.

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

**Thank you!**

## Stay Informed about Upcoming Calendar Events!

If you get the **electronic** version of the Voter, we want you to know that the upcoming calendar events are available on our wonderful, new website – [www.lwnashville.org](http://www.lwnashville.org). When the calendar scrolls on the events of the current and upcoming weeks thanks to **Tracy Depp**, who keeps the calendar current. If you haven't taken a look, do so to make sure you mark your calendar so you won't miss a thing!

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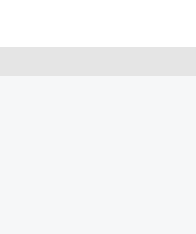
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