

# The Nashville Voter

Volume 74, No 12-- August 2021

Welcome to this issue of the *LWVN Voter*. You'll notice that the Emma page design allows you to access the LWVN 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

## Calendar of Events

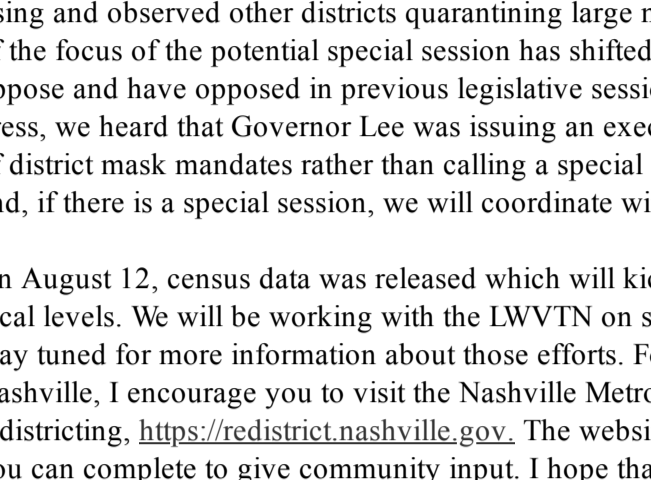
**Wednesday, August 18, 2021. 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Williamson County August Hot Topic. David Kumatz, board member and Secretary of Citizens for Brentwood Green Space. Register [here](#).**

**August 19, 2021. 6:00 p.m. to 7:00 p.m. Social Media Training from LWCTN. Visit this [link](#) to attend the training.**

**August 21, 2021. 11:00 a.m. Women's Equality Day Celebration at the Tennessee Women's Suffrage Monument in Centennial Park hosted by the Tennessee Women's Suffrage Monument Board.**

**September 3, 2021. 12:00 p.m. to 1:00 p.m. September Hot Topic: First Friday with Renee Pratt - Executive Director of Metro Nashville Social Service. Zoom registration coming soon.**

**September 15, 2021. 1:00 p.m. to 2:00 p.m. Williamson County September Hot Topic. Melanie Bull will speak on public policy issues. Zoom registration to follow.**



### August's Co-President Message

Welcome to August! I am honored to serve as Co-President with Madeline Garr this year. I joined the league several years ago because I appreciated the focus on civic engagement. I have been so inspired working with this group! I appreciate that I can rely on so many knowledgeable people to help keep me informed about important policy issues.

We are off to a great start with our new and returning board members this year. I want to thank all the board members for diving right in as there are many issues to follow. The board members are rolling up their sleeves and getting to work. One topic of interest to the board was whether or not there will be a special session of the Tennessee General Assembly. Originally, Speaker Cameron Sexton said that he would call a special session if school districts mandated that students wear masks. In the last week, many school districts have mandated masks as they have witnessed COVID numbers rising and observed other districts quarantining large numbers of students and teachers. Some of the focus of the potential special session has shifted to legislation for vouchers, which we oppose and have opposed in previous legislative sessions. As the newsletter was going to press, we heard that Governor Lee was issuing an executive order to allow parents to opt out of district mask mandates rather than calling a special session. We will continue to monitor, and, if there is a special session, we will coordinate with the LWV of Tennessee.

On August 12, census data was released which will kick off redistricting efforts at the state and local levels. We will be working with the LWVTN on state-wide efforts around redistricting. Stay tuned for more information about those efforts. For league members who live in Nashville, I encourage you to visit the Nashville Metro Government website about redistricting, <https://redistrict.nashville.gov>. The website explains the process and has a survey you can complete to give community input. I hope that you will take the time to complete the survey and encourage others to participate. We will be monitoring the process in Nashville as it will affect our city council districts and school board districts.

As COVID numbers have increased in the last couple of weeks, both Nashville and Williamson County Hot Topic programs will continue to be virtual. I hope that all of you continue to stay safe and well!

Thank you for all you do!  
**Lara Webb**

## Membership Committee By Reba Holmes

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:

**Craig Anne Heflinger, Linda Lee, Donna L. Michel, Alice Sanford, C. S. Sanford, Katherine Sanford, and Judy and Joe Shank.**

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

### Annual Membership Drive Continues

Our annual membership continues, and many of you have renewed or joined the league for the first time. You matter and your involvement in all we do makes a difference. 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 cornerstones.

**We need more advocates like you! Please encourage your family, friends, and co-workers to join the league.**

*Why join the League of Women Voters? Here's what one of our members said:  
 I wanted to join so I could help move the final passage of the For The People Act. Fair representation for all is critical legislation.*

Tell us why you joined the league and share your comments with us by emailing [lwnash@gmail.com](mailto:lwnash@gmail.com)!

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 LWV organizations. Details regarding various support levels may be found on [our website](#).

If you prefer to pay by check, please mail it along with a "[Membership Form](#)." Please [click here](#) to access the Membership Form.

## News from League of Women Voters Williamson County By Linda Sherman

September brings Melanie Bull, a lobbyist, to Williamson County's LWV. **Please register with the Brentwood Library for the Zoom link, for September 15 at 1:00 p.m.** Ms. Bull's experience ranges from working as an intern with the Tennessee State Government to representing the Disability Coalition as its Public Policy Director to working for the Tennessee Primary Care Association. Ms. Bull grew up in East Tennessee, and has called Nashville home for the past 16 years. She attended Belmont University and received her degree in Political Science with a minor in Economics. Ms. Bull has a breadth of policy experience from healthcare and education, to local issues such as voting and accessibility. She is familiar with statewide public policy issues, the process of TN General Assembly legislation and various aspects of voting issues. She has also worked in several different local, state and federal election cycles. Join us, and please register at the John P. Holt Library website. This meeting is a virtual event. All are welcome!

## September Hot Topic: First Friday with Renee Pratt, Executive Director of Metro Nashville Social Services By Co-Vice-President Carole Kenner

**Renee Pratt**, Executive Director of Metro Nashville Social Services, will be the speaker for our First Friday program on **September 3rd at noon**. She has worked with the department since 1992 and has served as the Director since 2009. This lady has seen some things! A native Nashvillian, she obtained her B.A. at Trevecca University and her M.P.A. from Cumberland University. Under her leadership the **Community Needs Evaluation**, a comprehensive data resource for the planning and coordination of social services, has been conducted and published. Earlier this year Metropolitan Social Services released this evaluation, highlighting ways that Nashville residents experienced severe economic hardship in 2020 as well as throughout the past decade.

Ms. Pratt will discuss some of the findings with us including:

- Our unprecedented unemployment rate topped 15.9%.
- Almost 40,000 workers have full-time jobs that pay average wages under \$12 an hour.
- 41,000 Nashville adults lack a high school diploma.
- Nashville's poverty rate was higher than the U.S. average for seven of the past nine years.
- Nashville experienced the most consistently high poverty rate over the past decade compared to its peer cities.
- Nearly 1 in 5 children in our city live in poverty.

The 2020 **Community Needs Evaluation** presents data showing the continued erosion of well-being for many Nashville residents throughout the last ten years. While Nashville experienced rapid economic growth and change, research demonstrates that growth did not produce equitable prosperity for many neighborhoods and households. The report discusses the reality that local decisions have enormous influence in advancing or hindering action or change related to economic and social well-being. The roles of local land use policy, economic and workforce development priorities, transportation systems, and zoning and permitting of businesses are cited as key factors that shape the quality of life for local residents.

[The 2020 report is available at Metro Nashville Social Services 2020 Community Needs Evaluation Report.](#) You are encouraged to look it over before the meeting.

We hope to get back to "in person" First Friday gatherings sometime in the not too distant future. Stay tuned and stay well!

## Health Care/Public Health Committee By Committee Co-Chairs Constance Caldwell and Claire Sullivan

Where do we stand on COVID?

We are watching the number of COVID-19 cases rise in our country and in Tennessee. As we see it wreak havoc on our health care system and its resources, the question is where can we make a dent in its progress? With Fall and Winter approaching, the prospect of Influenza and a rise in Respiratory Syncytial Virus (RSV) threatens public welfare. The status of vaccinations against COVID continues to be dangerously low in our area and the issue of masking has become too political.

It becomes necessary to reinforce the education and the efforts we have started in order to control and slow the rate of these life-threatening infections. We each have a responsibility to do so. It is not an issue of personal rights but an issue of **public health**. Vaccines continue to be available. Social distancing is always an option. Hand and overall environmental hygiene still works.

The Delta variant is getting more and more invasive, causing the current increase in cases. A large percentage of our cases is taken in persons who have chosen not to be vaccinated. It behooves every person to seek care of their personal health so you are encouraged

- to get your vaccine, especially your influenza now
- follow CDC guidelines of masking, especially when inside
- limit the amount of large crowd interactions
- use common sense decisions that will protect your unvaccinated children
- share the scientific knowledge you have gained with others so that they can make healthy decisions

We have other health care issues which need to be addressed such as drug addiction, mental health intervention, high infant mortality rates, and gun violence, but our focus right now is to get control of the COVID issue.

The LWVNashville Public Health Portfolio committee continues to meet and to monitor public health issues for our county. We worked with the state LWV to prepare a letter to the Governor last month urging him and his administration to take a clearer and stronger position on COVID protections for children returning to schools in August. Our committee also sent an op-ed to the USA Today Tennessee Network Opinion Editor expressing our concern over the state's COVID response, which was published in the Knoxville affiliate paper.

If anyone interested in joining the work of the Public Health Portfolio Committee, please contact Clare Sullivan ([clare.d.sullivan@gmail.com](mailto:clare.d.sullivan@gmail.com)).

## Education Committee By Education Co-Chairs Jami Oakley and Mary Claire Dismukes

School is back in session, and the two hottest topics this month are masks and Critical Race Theory. **Governor Bill Lee** is considering calling a special session to discuss who has the authority to issue a mask mandate for public school systems in the state. Currently, that authority lies primarily with the locally-elected school boards, and 13 of the state's school districts (as of August 13) have followed the recommendations of the **American Academy of Pediatrics** and the **CDC** to implement mask mandates, particularly in elementary schools, where students under the age of 12 have not yet been cleared to receive a COVID-19 vaccine. **Speaker Sexton** has indicated that he would consider voucher legislation that would allow parents to move their children and tax dollars to private schools if their local public school requires masks, so we will monitor the issue and keep you updated as it continues to unfold. *Update: Instead of calling a special session, Governor Lee issued an executive order stating that parents could opt out of mask mandates.*

The **state legislature** passed the bill last session banning the teaching of critical race theory in public schools. The issue was fraught with controversy, particularly because "critical race theory" isn't actually taught in public schools. Opponents fear that the legislation will stop social studies teachers from teaching a complete picture of the history of the United States without fear of being reprimanded. The state department of education issued guidance in the form of a proposed rule this month that outlines how the legislation, which prohibits the teaching of ideas surrounding concepts like systemic racism and privilege, will be enforced. We will follow the evolution of the proposed rule, which was open for public comment for ten days (August 1- 11) before discussion was to begin again.

If you're interested in joining the **Education Committee** as a general participant, or if you'd like to focus on advocacy surrounding just one of the primary topics we plan to follow this year – critical race theory legislation and state level funding surely being two of them – let us know! We also will work closely with the Voter Registration Committee to plan high school registration events, so if you'd like to serve as a liaison between our two groups, we would welcome that! Reach out to **Jami Oakley** ([jami.oakley@gmail.com](mailto:jami.oakley@gmail.com)) to talk more.

## Environment Committee By Environment Co-Chair Russanne Buchi-Fotre

Since 1999, the **Harpeth Conservancy's** mission has been to restore and protect clean water and healthy ecosystems for rivers in Tennessee.

The **Harpeth Conservancy**, in middle Tennessee, is a science-based conservation organization dedicated to clean water and healthy ecosystems for rivers in Tennessee. They employ scientific expertise and collaborative relationships to develop, promote and support broad community stewardship and action.

Supported by a broad network of volunteers, donors, and professional staff, **Harpeth Conservancy** has expertise in a range of disciplines including water quality science, environmental and conservation law and policy, sustainable land use planning, agricultural best management practices, volunteer and community engagement, and others.

**They will be hosting their 18<sup>th</sup> annual fundraising dinner, The River Swing, on September 18, 6pm - 10pm.**

**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). On The calendar scrolls on the events of the current and upcoming events 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!

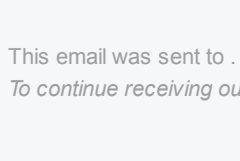
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## 2021-2022 LWVN Board of Directors

- Co-Presidents: **Madeline Garr and Lara Webb**
- 1<sup>st</sup> Vice Presidents: **Carole Kenner and Karen Weikert**
- Secretary: **Elise Lamar**
- Treasurer **Susan Mattson**
- Portfolio Chairs**
- Communications: **Ophelia Doe and Jack McFadden**
- Community Connections: **Sabina Mohyuddin and Felisha Baquera**
- Education: **Jami Oakley and Mary Claire Dismukes**
- Environment: **Barbara Gay and Russanne Buchi-Fotre**
- Fundraising: **Ann Marie Farmer**
- Health Care/Public Health: **Constance Caldwell and Clare Sullivan**
- Membership: **Reba Holmes**
- Metro Government: **Pat McCauley and Karen Hernan**
- Voter Services: **Beth Gordon, Alison Haymer, and Rita Bullinger**
- Williamson County Representative: **June Bond**
- Nominating Committee Chair: **Senator Brenda Gilmore**

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

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