

From the President, Marian Ott



For League members election season is exciting...and exhausting! Leagues across the state have been of enormous service to Tennessee voters; through the end of September we have:

- Registered 100s of voters and helped countless more with change of address, etc.
- Conducted candidate forums (virtual of course)
- Provided voting information and candidate information through VOTE411.org
- Advocated for expanded absentee voting and maintained up-to-date information on the ever-changing details as part of the League's voter service information
- Aggressively used social media to inform people about voting requirements and deadlines

These League efforts engaged 1000 voters at in person and virtual events -- and over 100,000 received information through League social media posts. (This is not counting VOTE411 which will likely see the League impact be doubled). By Election Day the numbers will be even more impressive!

Thank you, Thank you to all League members! Especially those responsible for organizing and staffing these events but also every member whose dues and \$ contributions are supporting these efforts!

From the President (continued from page 1)

Of course, the League's work is not done. Through Election Day the League will continue to engage voters in **Get Out The Vote** efforts. And on Election Day the League will have poll watchers to provide confidence in the election process.

Thank you for the privilege of being President. You are all AWESOME!

Marian Ott
President

Redistricting in Tennessee

People Powered Fair Maps

By Mary Ann Reeves, LWVTN Director

Problematic Redistricting

The League of Women Voters of the United States has long been concerned about state redistricting efforts for their state congressional seats (both House and Senate) and also U.S. Congressional seats.

Political and racial gerrymandering by state political parties have taken the one person-one vote concept and have distorted it to disenfranchise many voters. Since most states regulate their own redistricting plans, the political party in power uses this power to re-district according to their specific political whims.

The League of Women Voters of the United States has initiated a two-year program to strengthen this process to protect more voters. The League of Women Voters of Tennessee has received a substantial grant to implement the strategy and statement of work that we have proposed. We will strive for more transparency and more public input into this process that does not currently exist.

Redistricting in Tennessee (continued from page 2) The League Position

Congressional districts and government legislative bodies should be apportioned substantially on population. The League opposes partisan and racial gerrymandering that strips rights away from voters.

Background - National

The U.S. Constitution has equal protection requirements for its citizens under the 14th Amendment. These requirements have been firmly established for voting districts through a Supreme Court case (1962) that require population equivalency with voting districts to effectuate one person, one vote.

An additional law, the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA), section 2, prohibited ***discriminatory*** voting practices and procedures of protected classes of people. A key provision of the Act provided for federal enforcement that prevented states (pre-clearance states) from making changes to voting laws and practices if the states had a history of voting ***discrimination***.

Unfortunately, in 2013 the U.S Supreme Court ruled that the formula for deciding which states and localities have a history of voting discrimination was unconstitutional. This severely gutted the bill and weakened the federal government's oversight of ***discriminatory*** voting practices.

The Voting Rights Advancement Act, H.R. 4 was passed in 2019 along party lines. It has never been allowed to be brought to the floor of the Senate for a vote. It was later re-introduced in the Senate and named the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. It is still sitting there.

Since the Supreme Court's 2013 decision, states and localities (particularly those who had been under pre-clearance) have brazenly pushed forward ***discriminatory*** changes to voting practices, such as changing district boundaries to disadvantage select voters; instituting more onerous voter identification laws; and changing polling locations with little notice. These laws especially disenfranchise young people, people of color, the elderly, low-income people, transgender people and people with disabilities.

Redistricting in Tennessee (continued from page 3)

However, **political** gerrymandering (which has been defined as the practice intended to establish an unfair political advantage for a particular party or group by manipulating district boundaries) has also become a major issue in redistricting. While **political** gerrymandering has been in existence for many decades (and practiced by both political parties), it has taken on far more sophistication with modern computer and tracking technology.

In 2019, the U.S. Supreme Court basically ruled that the federal courts had no jurisdiction over state redistricting even when it is clear that **political** gerrymandering occurred. The states and their individual political dynamics can now determine their own districts without risk of federal oversight or federal court interference.

The Problem(s)

While the **discriminatory** gerrymandering and the **political** gerrymandering have some differences - they are irrefutably linked.

Discriminatory gerrymandering was controlled, but not eliminated, by the Voting Rights Act of 1965. Now free from federal oversight and federal control by the Supreme Court ruling of 2013 (which gutted much of the VRA of 1965), many states have enacted voting barriers that, for the most part, have targeted for discrimination those citizens with the least amount of political power.

This will not change until the Voting Rights Advancement Act (or something similar) is passed. This bill has passed Congress along partisan lines and has not been allowed to the Senate floor for a vote.

Court cases to control **political** gerrymandering won some early court rulings - many of which the League was either co-plaintiff or prepared court amicus briefs. However, the appeals process took these cases to the Supreme Court which ruled in 2019 that federal courts had no jurisdiction in **political** gerrymandering. In their view, no Constitutional authority was being violated

The intersection of these two kinds of gerrymandering is that, many times, they target the same people.

In **discriminatory** gerrymandering, targeted are those legally defined as being in the protected classes: color, gender, age, place of origin, sexual identity, etc. These classes of people are currently unprotected under current rulings.

In **political** gerrymandering, some states may view these same classes of people as also more likely to vote for the minority party. This explicit bias lends itself to redistricting to dilute the votes of these classes. The system also allows retaliation of both same party or opposing party legislative members.

Coming Next: Tennessee's redistricting methods

For Sale - League Centennial Bags

**\$22 each (includes shipping anywhere
in TN)**

Please mail check to:

**LWV M/SC
P.O. Box 383291
Memphis, TN 3818**

**Please make check out to:
LWV M/SC**



AROUND THE LEAGUE

News from Blount County

Like other organizations, our usual activities including in-person voter registration and community educational programming have been upended in the past seven months. However, in rethinking our outreach as well as our influence in Blount County, we have created and/or participated in several reimagined activities.

We began January with our last public event, a successful “Get the Vote Out” workshop. In February we published a guest editorial in our local paper, The Daily Times, celebrating the 100th anniversary of The League of Women Voters.

- Beginning in March, we continued monthly meetings via Zoom and participated in the following:
- We prompted The Daily Times to solicit and publish testimonials called “Why I Vote”.
- We co-hosted a Car Parade with AAUW Maryville on August 18 commemorating the centennial of Tennessee’s ratification of the 19th Amendment. Over 75 decorated cars participated in the parade through downtown Maryville.
- LWVBC members participated in the Knoxville area project called “Every Woman Vote”, a collection of interviews with 100 women celebrating the 19th Amendment by describing what voting means to them. The interviews can be found at <https://everywomanvote.me>.
- We have stayed connected with Blount County’s Election Administrator as guidelines for the November election have changed, being sure to provide the latest factual information to our distribution lists and on our website, www.lwvblountcounty.org.

News from Blount County (continued from page 6)

- We are currently distributing 200 “I VOTE!” yard signs throughout the community as a nonpartisan way to encourage friends and neighbors to vote.
- Board members of LWVBC have also participated in LWVTN and LWVUS virtual gatherings during the pandemic to stay connected.

Along with others, we look forward to “normal” but are grateful for the lessons we have learned about innovation and accessibility during the COVID 19 era. We send best wishes and good thoughts to our LWV partners across the state.

Submitted By Glenda Eastridge, LWV of Blount County President

News from Chattanooga

It's All About Partnerships

Voter Services for the League of Women Voters of Chattanooga is uniting with other groups in a non-partisan way to encourage and facilitate getting out the vote during this election season. These partnerships encourage registration, education, and informed voting for all eligible voters.

Some of the partners include AARP, Delta Sigma Theta Alumnae, Hamilton County Voter Coalition, Hamilton County Department of Education, La Paz, National Coalition of 100 Black Women, MocsGoVote, Psi Chi Honor Society, several neighborhood associations, and the Women, Gender, and Sexuality Studies Department at UTC. These connections increase and grow stronger by the day.

We are stronger together!

Submitted by Lisa B. Hyder, LWV of Chattanooga President

News from Chattanooga (continued from page 7)

LWVChatt Voter Services' Action Plan to Get Out the Vote

The Voter Services committee, under the guidance of Chair Sharon Alexander, has so far utilized over 70 volunteers and received both grants and donations to support a printing and postage effort directed toward voter registration education, and turnout. Volunteers give time and financial support to safely register voters and inform prospective voters of the process for a successful voting experience.

Alexander organized volunteer opportunities with an eye to safety. These are identified as in-person, outdoor events, wearing a mask, for volunteers willing to assist in in-person voter registration drives; limited contact registrations where volunteers deliver materials to schools and housing; and no contact efforts to reach registered voters through thousands of phone calls and postcards to offer polling information, and encourage voters to make a voting plan.

So far, in the period leading up to the election, eleven in-person voter registrations have been held or are scheduled. Other pop-up registrations also occur when the opportunity arises. This compliments the solid voter registration efforts that have taken place from the beginning of 2020. Adaptability as the landscape shifts on guidance from health officials for safe contact has made this a nimble committee, tap-dancing to different conditions, often on a dime. Luckily, many of those dimes have been contributed to support these efforts with donations for postage and printing of more than \$2,300 in gifts and grants.

Several outreach programs target groups that can benefit from assistance in the voting process. One such effort involves a faith group outreach as the LWV, NBCW, and Delta Sigma Theta joined forces to share with members and assist in the process. Ruthie Walker, Psychology Professor at UTC, and the members of Psi Chi, the psychology honors society at UTC, have volunteered to contact all nursing homes in Hamilton County to ask their activities directors to provide absentee ballot request forms and help their residents vote and to post a notice to that effect.

Nursing homes also are included in this effort as activities directors are provided with printed ballot request forms, as guided by the Hamilton County Election Commission, and notices to enable residents to successfully cast a ballot in the time of pandemic.

Submitted by Lisa B. Hyder, LWV of Chattanooga President

News from Jefferson County

LWV of Jefferson County Honors Freida Burts Self

The Jefferson County league made a donation to the LWV of Tennessee lobbyist fund on the occasion of Freida Burts Self's 100th birthday. Freida was the founder of the local league in Jefferson County. How fitting that Ms. Self and the League of Women Voters turn 100 in the same year! What an appropriate and generous gesture for the Jefferson County league to honor one of their own.

News from Knoxville/Knox County

LWVKKC uses multiple methods to promote voter registration, voting

Love it or hate it, Zoom seems to be a permanent communications tool now. There are some advantages to the platform, as LWVKKC has discovered.

This season, LWVKKC held three virtual forums with 11 candidates for local, state and national offices. While the number of attendees might fluctuate for various reasons, posting the recordings definitely increases the reach of these efforts. These



League of Women Voters of Knoxville/Knox County

September 29 at 1:14 PM · 🌐

Charter Amendments for the upcoming election:

Knox County Charter Amendment 1

YES A "yes" vote would be a vote to change the Knox County Charter to provide that the Knox County Law Director would be appointed by the county mayor, subject to county commission approval. This amendment would also allow the county commission and the school board to hire their own attorneys.

NO A "no" vote would be to retain the Knox County Law Director as an elected position.

Knox County Charter Amendment 2

YES A "yes" vote would be a vote to add language to the Knox County Charter which would require the county mayor to provide the county commission with a full copy off any contracts that the mayor approves which involve amounts less than \$100,000.

NO A "no" vote would be a vote not to add that requirement to the charter.

Facebook is a useful tool for explaining yes and no votes on the ballot as shown in this post regarding two charter amendments in Knox County.

News from Knoxville/Knox County (continued from page 9)

three forums reached 10,500 potential viewers, and more than 4,000 people watched at least some portion of the videos.

Facebook has also provided the Knoxville/Knox County League a forum to explain some amendments on the ballot. The explanation reached almost 6,000 people, with almost 10% engagement. The post has also been shared 35 times, which helps establish the League as an important source of election information.

LWVKKC has chosen some innovative ways to reach voters, especially in low voter turnout areas. Through a partnership with the Howard H. Baker Jr. Center for Public Policy at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, the League distributed door hangers with voting information in three low turnout districts. Voter service members also worked with school officials to send voting information to parents of elementary school students and even held drive-through registration drives. League efforts also targeted some of the newest voters with dissemination of information via email at Pellissippi State Community College and having brochures available at early registration at the University of Tennessee.

As Election Day approaches, the League's efforts now focus on voter protection through signs posted at early voting locations that will later be moved to polling locations. The League also put voter registration information up in lights at the Bijou Theatre in downtown Knoxville. (See Photo) Needless to say, the League will continue to serve as a resource for voters.

Submitted by Kathryn King, LWV of Knoxville Media



The League purchased space on the Bijou Theatre marquee in downtown Knoxville to promote voter registration and early voting.

News from Memphis/Shelby County

During this pandemic our League's Action Committee, led by Robin Pearl, has stepped forward to serve the community by creating several new handouts including FAQ's on Absentee Voting and The Who & How of Absentee Voting. Also, they developed a helpful brochure for college students titled Voting Information for College Students. This brochure provides vital information including the ins and outs of voting "in state" and "out of state." This material has been shared with over 25 community media outlets and many other non-profit organizations across the mid-south.



The Commercial Appeal, our one and only citywide newspaper, printed our LWVTN "Letter to the Editor" recently that encouraged everyone to create a plan to vote with our easy 4 Steps to Vote plan. Voter service members held a weeklong voter registration event at one of the largest assisted living locations in Memphis, Trezevant Manor, and provided a training session for their volunteers to help.

Finally, below is an overview of our Women Vote Early Collaborative Campaign Event encouraging all women to VOTE EARLY. As we move forward, despite the obstacles, we continue to serve our members and citizens of Memphis & Shelby County.

"WOMEN VOTE EARLY"

There were 26 early voting locations across Shelby County and many voters took advantage of the extended hours.

The 2020 "Women Vote Early" campaign was led by the League of Women Voters of Memphis and Shelby County, Memphis Area Women's Council, National Coalition of 100 Black Women Memphis Chapter, Women United, Women's Foundation for a Greater Memphis and Wundher Inc., along with many partners among committed women and women's organizations throughout Memphis and Shelby County.

News from Memphis/Shelby County (continued from page 11)

Women are about 60 percent of Shelby County's voters and have led steadfastly in voter turnout here and nationally in recent elections. Still, research by the Rutgers University Center for American Women and Politics says nearly four out of 10 women do not make their voices heard by casting a ballot. And another study found that 30 percent of women believe they do not know enough about politics to be more involved.

The non-partisan Women Vote Early campaign highlights the impact and importance of women getting to the polls safely and in strong numbers even during these times of spiking COVID-19 cases. Women Vote Early encourages all women regardless of race, culture or political affiliation in Memphis and Shelby County to **VOTE** and **VOTE EARLY**.

The issues in this year's election will have a significant impact on the lives of women, their families and the non-profit organizations that support women's causes. The devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on voting rights, women's employment, the gender pay gap, violence against women and girls, access to complete and affordable healthcare are a few of the crucial issues that make voting so important for women today.

The collaborative partners and other community activists held a socially distanced press conference at Mississippi Boulevard Christian Church (an early voting location) to discuss issues impacting women and the vote early campaign. Several media outlets covered the event and while live streaming, it was reported we had 15,000 viewers. We distributed "WOMEN VOTE EARLY" yard signs, information cards listing times & locations of early voting and masks with the printed campaign logo. We encourage everyone, especially women to make a plan and **VOTE!**

Submitted by Peg Watkins, LWV of Memphis Vice President/Voter Education



left to right - Vice President - Peg Watkins, President - Sherry Hewlett and Secretary - Phyllis Gay

News from Nashville

October 5th has come and gone. By now, all of us in the local Leagues across the state have done what we could to register voters for this election season. LWVNashville had a group of 37 volunteers led by Perry Macdonald who showed up from June to October 5th at Farmers' Markets, church/temple and requested events. Not only did people register at these events, but also their questions were answered by trained League Volunteers, requests for printed information were fulfilled, and many downloaded the VoteTN app. Congratulations and thank you to all who ventured out and fulfilled this critical function of the League.

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 still matters. The LWVN has partnered with the LWVTN to "advertise" messaging on WMOT, a public radio station out of MTSU. LWVN has also purchased advertising slots on billboards to advertise Vote411 as a source of non-partisan and reliable information. We are also working with Neighborhood groups to get out the message on Neighbor to Neighbor. One very important message we are trying to communicate is that election night returns will not be complete, and the vote may not be fully tabulated for days. This is a significant challenge as changing expectations is a process and not one that happens immediately. We believe each of us individually and collectively can be a sane voice and a stable influence.

We are also excited about the growth of membership in Williamson County. Under LWVNashville mentorship, a group of dedicated women have begun to hold monthly meetings on Zoom as well as to reach out to the Williamson County population to encourage voting, educate voters, and recruit membership. Currently, they are excited that they have recruited 39 active members for their effort and look forward to even more.

Finally, in the midst of this pandemic, our Board continues to meet on Zoom each month. We are learning how to manipulate this resource more effectively and we are also using Zoom to offer our Hot Topic Series to both the League and the Nashville community. Our programs have covered issues regarding public health and Covid-19, local efforts at preserving our environment, and Affordable Housing in Davidson County.

As we move toward this election and the months that follow, the League remains a stable entity that supports our democracy in this delicate time.

Submitted by Madeline Garr, LWV Nashville President

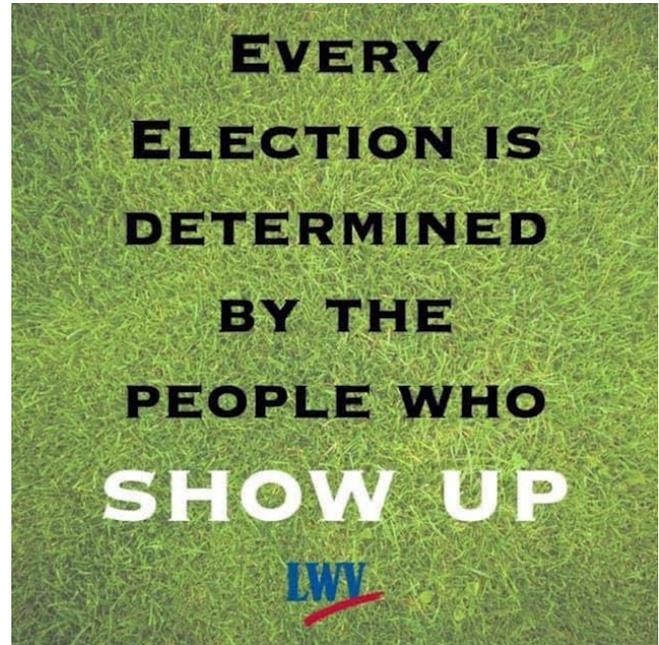


PO Box 158369
Nashville, TN 37215
p: 629.777.5677
e: lwvtenn@gmail.com
w: <https://www.lwvtn.org/>

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