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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Marian Ott, President

Debby Gould, Vice-President

[president@lwvtn.org](mailto:president@lwvtn.org)

[629-777-5677](tel:629-777-5677)

The League of Women Voters of Tennessee is disappointed today that the Senate has passed SB971 to regulate voter registration activities. These regulations will have a chilling effect on voter outreach in all areas of the state.

Voter registration drives play an important role in registering and engaging Tennessee citizens in the voting process. Despite numerous amendments that purport to exempt organizations that use only unpaid volunteers in their registration drives, this legislation still has the potential to seriously impact the work of civic groups like the League of Women Voters. The vague language of the regulations still exposes organizations like the League and its volunteers to civil and criminal penalties, in addition to burdensome administrative steps and required disclosures on communications to voters. As such, if signed by the Governor, these regulations would negatively impact and discourage both in-person voter registration drives as well as online efforts to promote voter registration and general voter engagement by well-established civic organizations such as the League.

There are alternatives to the issues SB971 purports to address. Rather than penalizing civic organizations that actively seek to expand civic participation, the priority should be to provide greater resources to our existing elections administration to help them deal with registration surges. Efforts should be made to create and staff support systems on both the state and county election commission level that promote large-scale voter registration activities through free and available training and broad-based cooperation.

League of Women Voters of Tennessee President **Marian Ott** stated, "Tennessee ranks 45<sup>th</sup> in the nation for rates of voter registration. This legislation does a disservice to would-be voters by discouraging the important outreach efforts needed to change those statistics."