



THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville

PO Box 158369, Nashville TN 37215 | 615-297-7134

www.LWVnashville.org

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January 2017

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

February 3, 2017- 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. First Friday Hot Topics- Tennessee Health Insurance and the ACA, Second Harvest Food Bank – Metro Center, 331 Great Circle Rd., Nashville, TN 37228. Guest Speaker: **Katie Alexander**, Tennessee Justice Center.



President's Message

Debby Gould

In the aftermath of this past election season, many individuals have told me that this is definitely *the* year that they want to step up their efforts to have their voices heard on the federal, state and local levels. We are happy to welcome our newest members and ready to have them join us in taking action as informed and effective advocates.

If you or your friends missed hearing **Stewart Clifton**, our LWVTN lobbyist, earlier this month, there is one more chance. *"The How and Why of State Legislative Advocacy"* will be held at the East Park Community Center, 700 Woodland Street, 6:00-7:30 p.m. on **Tuesday, January 31st**. Stewart will use this opportunity to give helpful tips on how to be effective advocates for League policy positions and provide a brief preview of the upcoming legislative session. Come join us and learn how your voice can make a difference. The event is free and open to the public.

While our organization is staunchly non-partisan, we have always advocated for responsible and open government that adequately addresses the needs of the public. When the state legislature reconvenes at the end of this month, we want to be prepared to follow bills addressing the election process, open government, public education, health care access and the environment that are part of our current LWVTN policy priorities. For timely legislative updates, contact **Barbara Gay**, State Action Chair, Barbara.b.gay@gmail.com

As a mirror to the **Women's March on Washington**, Power Together TN will be the community march in Nashville that will shine a spotlight on women's issues. On **Saturday, January 21st beginning at 10 a.m.** participants will march from Cumberland Park to Public Square Park. Further information is available at www.powertothertn.com. While LWV is not one of the official sponsors of this grassroots effort, we do encourage members who wish to participate to wear their League buttons. This is a non-partisan event and all are welcome to participate. If you wish to walk with other League members, contact **Hazel Thornton**, hazethorn@gmail.com.





Melissa Holden with Stewart Clifton, LWVTN Lobbyist

January First Friday Follow Up – Legislative Update 2017

By 1st Vice President – Melissa Holden

Our January First Friday is always a well-attended session and we are thankful for this reminder of the passionate advocates in our community! Fifty people gathered at the rescheduled First Friday to hear lobbyist **Stewart Clifton** explain what we might expect in the coming session of the **110th General Assembly**. We were fortunate to also hear from some special guests: TN League President **Marian Ott**, Sycamore Institute Executive Director **Laura Berlind**, and Juvenile Court Judge **Shelia Calloway**.

But before I recap the meeting, I'd like to take this opportunity to provide a quick refresher on Tennessee government: The TN General Assembly was established as a bicameral legislature and consists of 33 members in the Senate and 99 members of the House of Representatives. The representatives are elected to 2-year terms while the senators are elected to 4-year terms, which are staggered. Districts with even numbers hold elections in the year of the Presidential elections and districts with odd numbers elect officials in the years of Tennessee gubernatorial elections.

Each session is limited to ninety "legislative days" per two-year term, plus up to fifteen days for organizational purposes at the start of each term. The weekly schedule is also limited to no more than three days a week during the session. Legislative sessions in both the House and Senate occur on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays. Tuesdays and the majority of Wednesdays are used primarily for committee meetings and hearings rather than actual sessions.

Sessions begin each year in January (this year it was 1/10/17) and usually end by May but of late, we've seen that pushed back to mid-April.

This January, the Senate elected **Republican Randy McNally** (Oak Ridge) to the office of Lieutenant Governor after **Ron Ramsey** retired having held the role since 2007. The state is served by 28 Republican Senators and 5 Democrats; 74 of the 99 Representatives are Republican.

Stewart began our 2017 session with an explanation of the issues advocates face in support of positions that enhance the common good. Among the strategy concerns: a Super majority in both the House and Senate, the potential for legislative power grabs from other branches and levels of government, the increasing influence of national and-of-state interest groups on campaigns and legislative agendas (i.e. **The Heritage Foundation, ALEC**), and revenue shortfalls combined with reductions to revenue sources.

To counter these potential de-railers, the League supports developing individual and organizational relationship building with elected officials and their staff, working through organizations that have resources and structures devoted to advocacy efforts, and engaging in timely communication with policy makers by providing research, data, facts and talking points

What everyone (no matter what their political party affiliation is) should be aware of while watching this session is the likely continued friction between the state and local governments, the impact of the Trump Presidency, (especially in light of Governor Haslam not supporting Trump), and the surprising legislative and interest group alliances that emerge.

For the League, bills impacting Open Government (related to Open Records, police body cameras, and privatization among others) will continue to be closely monitored. Learn more at Tennessee Coalition on Open Government, www.tcog.info .

The League of Women Voters continues to be concerned about governmental finance and ensuring adequate revenue sources for funding essential services and providing good governance. While the state currently enjoys a budget surplus, this is related to reductions in basic services and creates a misunderstanding of adequacy, a false sense of the need to reduce revenues, and the impact on tax fairness. The Sycamore Institute's Laura Berling gave a brief overview of the organization's non-partisan public policy research center's budget analysis work and circulated their recently published Budget Primer. You can view the full report at <http://www.sycamoreinstitute.org> as well as sign up for their mailing list and Laura's blog.

Marian Ott shared with us state advocacy efforts to revise the Voter purge (list maintenance) process that removes voters from the official Registration lists with limited notice. The LWV-TN also continues its work on lessening the impact of discriminatory Photo ID laws and supports an independent redistricting process.

Environmental issues will also be on the front burner with items such as a proposal to increase Gas Tax and allocation of the collected revenue. Last year, a bill was introduced to prohibit any of that money being directed to Transit spending.

For a full review of local, state and national LWV Legislative Priority Issues, please visit: <http://lwvnashville.org/advocate/>

Stewart also prepared 10 Basic Tips for the occasional lobbyist (that might be you, dear reader!) and are applicable for citizen advocates who want to impact legislative and administrative decisions. I've paraphrased them here:

1. Develop a relationship with the policy maker before you need the vote or action
2. Do your homework on the lawmaker and the issue
3. Respect the official and the office
4. Provide short, clear information
5. Provide accurate information
6. Never threaten
7. Know that there are no permanent friends or enemies
8. Know the formal and informal rules
9. Discuss one issue at a time when possible

10. Give the issue/opportunity the same time and effort you would give to other important tasks in your life.

Visit Stewart's Clifton Government Relations website at <http://www.stewartclifton.com/>

We've had such great feedback on Stewart's annual kickoff that we wanted to provide an evening opportunity for those who were not able to attend our lunchtime session. Mark your calendar and share with others that the League will host a repeat performance on this important Hot Topic on **Tuesday, January 31 at 6:00PM at the East Community Center, 700 Woodland Street, Nashville.**



The League of Women Voters of Nashville

Presents

FIRST FRIDAY HOT TOPICS & LUNCH

Friday, February 3, 2017— 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

TN Health Insurance and ACA Update

Plan to join League members and guests at the February 3 Hot Topic session when **Katie Alexander**, Field Director at the **Tennessee Justice Center** will update us on the group's collaborative efforts on closing the health care coverage gap in Tennessee amidst the recent federal legislative action to repeal the Affordable Care Act.

Second Harvest Martin Distribution Center in Metro Center 331 Great Circle Road, Nashville 37228 Parking is Easy & Free!

Enjoy the Second Harvest Friday Lunch Buffet at \$12/person or byo brown bag.

For additional information about First Friday programs, contact Melissa Holden at meholden01@comcast.net or 217-257-5193.

FOOD DRIVE: *Second Harvest is always in need of food items. Together we can make a big difference by bringing one item per person to each meeting. The items most needed are Peanut Butter, Canned Meat (Chicken or Tuna), Canned Vegetables, Canned fruit, Pasta and Cereal.*

For additional information, contact LWVNash@gmail.com

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The LWVTN ACTION Committee Update

By 2nd Vice President - Barbara Gay

Calling all Members! The LWVTN Action Committee needs your help. There is a new climate at the state legislature since we have a super majority in both our state and federal governments. It is critical that citizen voices insist on a balance in public policy.

The **League of Women Voters of TN** Action Committee will be meeting every other **Monday** until the end of this legislative session. The meetings are open to everyone and you are welcome to join us or call in. You may also just follow issues you care about without participating except to answer alerts. The **2017 Legislative Priorities** list is posted on the state LWV web site. If you are not already on the Action Committee email list, please contact **Barbara Gay, barbara.b.gay@gmail.com or 651-297-4145.**

Stewart Clifton, our lobbyist, gave us a preview of possible upcoming legislation at our January First Friday meeting in Nashville that was postponed until January 13th because of snow. At this point not many bills have been filed. Committees and their Chairs are being appointed. The legislature will reconvene on January 30th.

Ways you may volunteer as much time and effort as you choose:

- **Join** the Action Committee by contacting Barbara Gay.
- **Attend** or call in to Action Committee meetings that will take place every other Monday at 11:30 a.m. Central Time at Stewart's office, TN Alliance for Legal Services, 50 Vantage Way, Suite 250. The phone number is 712-832-8330 and the access code is 1299058. You may just listen if this is a new experience or share what you know. The next meeting will be Monday, January 23rd.
- **Read** the reports that Stewart will send out weekly.
- **Sign up** for one, some, or all Issue Subcommittees to follow your main concern(s) closely. Subcommittee Chairs keep their members up to date on hearings and legislation.
- **Call, email, or write** legislators based on information you receive.
- **Respond** to all statewide action alerts.

Legislators do not hear from that many constituents and your voice is powerful. Please join us.



From our Treasurer

By Treasurer Winnie Forrester

We are half-way through our fiscal year, and we are **17%** above our projected income for our 2016-17 budgeted fiscal year income. Our expenses are under budget by 35%; however, additional future Voter Service projects on the drawing board will increase our expenditures, which would be a good thing, of course!



Member Services

By Membership Co-Director Reba Holmes

Welcome New and Returning Members

Many thanks to all the members that renewed their **2017** membership. Also, we are delighted to welcome everyone who has recently joined the organization. Your support and commitment will help us accomplish much of our mission: making democracy work for **everyone**.

Directories Mailed

The Membership Committee has recently mailed the Nashville membership directory. If you did not receive your copy or your information contained in the directory needs modifying please contact us at, lwvnash@gmail.com. During the next couple of months, we will send an addendum to the directory containing the revisions.



Metro Government Update

By Metro Government Director Michelle Steele

Gideon's Army Meets with the Metro Council to Deliver Report on Policing

Last fall, **Gideon's Army**, a local grassroots community organization that advocates for children and focuses on keeping them out of the criminal justice system, released *Driving While Black: A Report on Racial Profiling in Metro Nashville Police Department Traffic Stops*. In a specially called meeting of the Metro Council on Monday, **January 9**, representatives of the organization presented their findings to the council. The report, which demonstrates in detail the disproportionate number of people of color that are subjected to traffic stops and warrantless roadside searches, has been **refuted** by the Police Department. The Department has defended their work noting they respond to calls for service and that their vehicle stops target high-crime areas. Nonetheless, the researchers found that the police rarely find incriminating evidence. So the tactics amounts to "stop and search harassment of thousands of drivers." Members of Gideon's army are requesting institutional and policy level changes within the department. To review the report, click [here](#).

Seat belts on School buses?

Last month, the Metro Council unanimously passed a resolution requesting **Metro Nashville Public Schools** replace every bus in the fleet with seatbelts. Resolutions are non-binding, however worthy of discussion in light of the school bus crash that happened in November 2016, killing six children in Chattanooga, TN. The **Metro Nashville Board of Education** took up the issue at its January 10, meeting. At press time, the minutes from the meeting were not available on line. Of note, The Tennessean reports "Grayline, a Nashville based motor coach operator, plans to install seatbelts in school buses serving local charter schools in response to the fatal Chattanooga bus crash" (Barchenger, 2016).



Updates on Education

By Education Co-director Lisa Mingrone

Standardized and high stakes standardized testing demands are changing in Tennessee and across the country. What are they, what are the problems, and where do we go from here? A primer for the new year ahead:

- <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/mar99/vol56/num06/Why-Standardized-Tests-Don't-Measure-Educational-Quality.aspx>
- https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/study-says-standardized-testing-is-overwhelming-nations-public-schools/2015/10/24/8a22092c-79ae-11e5-a958-d889faf561dc_story.html?utm_term=.046636215044
- <http://standardizedtests.procon.org/>

At the federal level there has been some acknowledgement of the public's dissatisfaction with the emphasis on standardized testing. This is also good news for special education students and English language learners. Please click on the following for additional information.

- <http://www.pbs.org/newshour/bb/new-education-law-shifts-federal-influence-over-public-schools/>
- <http://neatoday.org/2016/06/30/special-education-essa/>
- <http://www.ascd.org/publications/educational-leadership/feb16/vol73/num05/Fair-And-Square-Assessments-for-ELLs.aspx>

The Tennessee State Board of Education's changes to testing for the 2016/17 year show some movement after the last year's disaster for our kids.

- <http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/tn/2016/04/04/tennessee-to-shorten-tnready-amid-widespread-complaints-about-overtesting/>
- <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2016/07/06/tennessee-picks-new-tnready-test-company-phase-online-exams/86748558/>

And here are all of the standardized tests Tennessee students will take this 2016-2017 year:

- <http://www.chalkbeat.org/posts/tn/2016/09/01/here-are-the-standardized-tests-memphis-students-will-take-this-year/#.V8ilFpMrI0s>

In Metro Nashville Public Schools, as in most large school districts, there are additional standardized tests administered. Dr. Shawn Joseph the new Director of Schools looks to reduce that number. For further information and to get more information, please check out the links below:

- <http://www.tennessean.com/story/news/education/2016/09/01/nashville-schools-survey-eyes-testing-hope-guide-changes/89658686/>
- <http://www.npr.org/sections/ed/2015/01/22/377438689/the-past-present-and-future-of-high-stakes-testing>
- <http://www.today.com/parents/more-parents-joining-opt-out-movement-against-standardized-tests-t85906>



Health Care Access and Tennesseans

By Health Care Co- Director Rashonda Lewis

What are the Republicans doing exactly to the Affordable Care Act?

Good question. When **President Obama** introduced the Affordable Care Act, Capitol Hill Republicans promised to block passage of the law. Once the law had passed and was enacted, Republicans kept **"Repeal Obamacare"** on repeat and at the top of their playlist. Republicans have now gained control of both houses and with a new presidency on the horizon have officially kick-started efforts to dismantle the Affordable Care Act. Last week, the House of Representatives and the Senate voted to instruct committees to draft legislation by January 27th that would repeal the 2010 **ACA**. The vote was mostly along party lines in both houses. No Democrats supported the initiative. Nine Republicans voted against the measure.

So what happens next?

No one is sure. While Republicans enthusiastically agree that the **Affordable Care Act** should be repealed, the party has not managed to craft a unified replacement plan or timeline. President-elect **Donald Trump** is calling for an immediate repeal/replace, which has made many GOP members nervous. The Affordable Care Act is an incredibly complex law, with multiple interlaced provisions -- a law that cuts the number of uninsured people in the country in half. Despite their enthusiasm to dismantle the law, lawmakers appear to appreciate that healthcare reform takes time. **Tennessee US Senators Lamar Alexander and Bob Corker** have voiced concerns about repealing the entire law without a replacement for its most popular provisions. Both Senators, however, voted to proceed with a plan to repeal ACA.

What's at stake?

A lot. But here are just a few.

- About **231,705 people** in Tennessee have coverage through the ACA Marketplace, with the vast

- majority receiving subsidies to help cover the cost of coverage.
- There are more **than 2.7 million people in Tennessee who have a pre-existing health condition.** Before the Affordable Care Act was enacted, insurers could deny these people coverage or charge considerably more for coverage.
- The ACA requires that **women pay the same as men.**
- The ACA requires that plans **provide preventive care** like flu shots, cancer screenings, contraception and mammograms **at no extra** cost to consumers.
- If Tennessee accepted the Medicaid expansion provision of the ACA, the state could be getting \$2 billion in federal funding to provide low-income adults with health care. We are currently spending \$190 million on uncompensated care.

What can I do?

Call our US Senators. They have expressed concern about a quick repeal, which means they may be willing to hear what voters have to say. The vote last week was not a vote to **repeal** the Affordable Care Act. It was a vote to **craft a plan by January 27th to repeal it.** This means we still have time to let the Senators know that we stand with the Tennesseans who need coverage and those who are at risk of losing coverage if ACA is repealed without replacement of its key provisions.

US Senator Lamar Alexander
Nashville Office
(615)269-4803

US Senator Bob Corker
Chattanooga Office
(423)756-2757

The **Tennessee Justice Center** is also welcoming volunteers that are willing to help them preserve the progress we have made to cover more Tennesseans.



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.lwvnashville.org. On the right side of the home page 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!



THANK YOU! THANK YOU!

The League of Women Voters of Nashville gives a special shout out to the Nashville **YWCA** for continuing to welcome the LWVN Board for monthly meetings in their offices at 1608 Woodmont Boulevard, Nashville.



ATTENTION: *The Nashville Voter* is a digital publication. If you have received this copy of the *Voter* in the mail, it means the League of Women Voters of Nashville does not have an e-mail address for you. Please help us by sending your e-mail address to LWVNash@gmail.com. Being on the LWVN e-mail database ensures your receipt of all LWVN newsletters, event invitations, meeting announcements, and Call to Action alerts. Thank you, *Nashville Voter* Editor **Madeline Garr** (mgarr2@gmail.com).



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