



THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville
PO Box 158369, Nashville TN 37215 | 615-297-7134
www.LWVnashville.org

Volume 70, No. 12

May 2017

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- June 2, 11:30 to 1:00 p.m. First Friday Hot Topics: Adverse Childhood Experiences and their Long Term Impact.** Second Harvest Martin Distribution Center in Metro Center 331 Great Circle Road, Nashville 37228.
- June 3, Noon to 2 p.m. League of Women Voters Nashville Voter Registration Event.** Greater Bethel Church (corner of South St. and 12th Ave. South).
- June 8, 5:00 p.m. League of Women Voters Nashville Dessert Reception and Annual Membership Meeting.** Home of Judy and Pat Raines, 625 Georgetown Drive, Nashville, TN 37205.
- June 14, 6:00-7:00 p.m. Second Wednesday Hot Topics: Adverse Childhood Experiences and their Long Term Impact.** Green Hills Library Meeting Room, 3701 Benham Avenue, Nashville 37215. Introducing our encore evening program of the monthly hot topic.



President's Message

Our community forum on April 28th, “**Fundamentals of Democracy: The Vote, The Right, The Barriers**” could not have been more timely. Our speakers presented the historical case for the creation of the Voting Rights Act in 1965 and the recurring obstacles that many voters face through restrictive ex-felon voter restoration procedures and photo ID laws. Our thanks to **Linda Wynn, Doug Johnston, Charles Grant, and Shanna Singh Hughey** for their inspiring presentations.

This week, **President Trump** created, by executive action, an **Election Integrity Commission**. It will focus on the false narrative of widespread voter fraud in the past presidential election. The national **LWV President, Chris Carson**, wrote in her objection, “*this is an unnecessary distraction from the real work to protect against foreign hacking and interference in our electoral process.*” LWV is deeply concerned that the work of this commission will result in further actions leading to significant voter suppression. As an organization with a focus on elections and voting issues, our voice is more important than ever. Our ability to present non-partisan, fact-based information to the public is a very important contribution to public discourse.

Next month, we will be sending out a membership survey to get your ideas on where our organization of volunteers should best focus its energies and how you personally would like to be involved. I also hope that you have already marked your calendar to our dessert reception and annual membership meeting on **Thursday, June 8th** at the home of **Judy and Pat Raines**. In addition to the business of approving our upcoming board slate and the budget and announcing our Molly Todd recipient for 2017, the meeting gives us a great opportunity to highlight our accomplishments for the past year and begin these important conversations.

LWVN was greatly honored to be awarded the **E. Bronson Ingram Award** by **PENCIL Foundation** for our instrumental role in the creation of that organization. We truly have helped created a lasting contribution to the life of our community and its public schools. Please view the photo below.

Debby Gould



LWVN members at the PENCIL Foundation Award Event



Dessert Reception and Annual Membership Meeting

Thursday, June 8, 2017

7:00-8:30 p.m.

Home of Judy and Pat Raines

625 Georgetown Drive

Nashville, TN 37205

\$10 per member

RSVP lwvnash@gmail.com or leave a message at (615) 297-7134



May First Friday Follow Up -- MNPS Budget

By 1st Vice President – Melissa Holden

First Friday attendees were all ears when Metro Nashville Public Schools **Chief of Staff, Dr. Jana Carlisle**, and **District 5 School Board Representative Christiane Buggs** discussed “**Exceeding Great Expectations**”, the MNPS Strategic Plan at our May meeting. Attendees gained a practical understanding of the strategic framework that drives the annual budget request as well as the realities of revenue at the state and local level that can sometimes challenge those aspirations.

Hard copies of the **Strategic Plan** were available for all who attended, but Voter newsletter readers can also visit <http://www.mnps.org/strategicplan> to read it and a number of other great resources about our public schools. The Strategic Plan was developed through 5 months of data gathering and input from families, staff, local community leaders, and national education experts and includes goals for **4 key areas: Students, People, Organization and Community**. Each goal is described along with several identified key strategies to achieve the goal, including detailed Performance Measures to target results and High-Level Actions that drive those results.

As many of you may know, with 86,633 students, **MNPS** is the second largest school district in the state and ranks in the Top 50 in terms of size in the US. There are 168 schools across the district (a 520-square mile area!), and approximately 11,000 employees. A few other demographics include: 49% of MNPS students live at or below

the federal poverty level (\$24,600 for family of 4). It is also important to note that the 2017 HUD Fair Market Rent rate for Davidson County is \$959/month for a typical 2-bedroom apartment. More than 120 languages other than English are spoken by students, with approximately 1000 English Learner students coming into the district each year. Additionally, more than 16,000 MNPS students have diagnosed disabilities or chronic illnesses, with at least 1000 also challenged by depression and anxiety diagnoses.

Last year (2016-2017), the district's operating budget was **\$843.3 million**. An ambitious request for an **additional \$59.5m** was submitted to the Mayor for the Metro budget "ask". However, the entire request was **not** funded. School administration officials and School Board members are now working on how to best allocate the available resources to continue moving forward with implementing the strategic plan and fully staffing safe buildings with highly qualified educators and support staff.

Some immediate challenges include an overall drop in enrollment in the Metro public school system, which impacts the total amount awarded by the state per pupil. Readers should note that there are 22 schools operating with less than 300 students attending them, so operating efficiencies are really under pressure for those facilities.

Additionally, the state allocation per pupil is among the **lowest** in the country. U.S. states' education spending averaged \$10,700 per pupil in 2013 with a high of \$19,818 per student in New York state and a low of \$6,555 in Utah. Part of this wide spectrum is of course related to huge differences in costs of living. However, it is important to understand that the cost of living influences everything from teacher salaries to the cost of building and maintaining school facilities. Another reason for the variation in funding allocation is due to political decisions to invest more or less in schools with many states also doing more or less to equalize education spending across low- and high-income areas. If you're interested in the statistics, you will find **Public Education Finances: 2013 Economic Reimbursable Surveys Division Reports** by the Educational Finance Branch of the US Census Bureau (Issued June 2015) <https://www2.census.gov/govs/school/13f33pub.pdf> an interesting read.

Another challenge for MNPS (and many other districts) is the increase in enrollment in charter schools. **Watch for an upcoming Hot Topic on this subject soon!**

Inflation factors such as deferred maintenance and the need for competitive salary ranges for teachers, administrators, and support staff also exert pressure. Part of the budget request had been for 3% raises for teachers, which has been dialed back to 2%, incentive pay for hard-to-fill positions, and an increase in substitute teacher pay (we're competing with retail, warehouse and hospitality wages) to gain the ability to have permanent subs available in a building or cluster.

Dr. Carlisle and Ms. Buggs also shared details on the implementation of **STEM** (Science, Technology, Engineering and Math)- based learning and initiatives throughout the district and the emphasis on Learning Technology Specialists to best utilize, train, and deploy technology in the classroom. We also learned about the District's investment in Literacy by placing a Literacy Specialist in each elementary and middle school in the district, the successful effort to reduce the counselor to student ratio, Social and Emotional Learning and Behavioral Intervention Programs.

A public hearing on the MNPS budget will take place on May 16, 5-6 pm at the MNPS offices. You are urged to attend.



The League of Women Voters of Nashville

presents
FIRST FRIDAY
HOT TOPICS & LUNCH
Friday, June 2, 2017— 11:30 am to 1:00 pm

Plan to join League members and guests at the May 5th Hot Topic session:

Adverse Childhood Experiences and Their Long Term Impact

Plan to join League members and guests at the June 2 Hot Topic session when representatives of the **Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth**, will discuss preventing Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) and the neurological impact that ACEs can have on a child's future. Early experiences directly impact how the brain gets built; exposure to ACEs harm the developing brains and bodies of young children and lead to poor mental and physical health across their lifespans. Preventing and mitigating these experiences benefit all Tennesseans by reducing crime, violence, substance abuse, unhealthy behavior and physical disease.

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.

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

Please remember to LIKE the LWVN on Facebook

 <https://www.facebook.com/LWVNashville?ref=ts> Please remember to LIKE the LWVN on Facebook
<https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=lwvnashville>



The League of Women Voters of Nashville
presents
Second Wednesday
HOT TOPICS

Wednesday, June 14 2017— 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm

Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACEs)

Plan to join League members and guests at the June 14 Hot Topic session when representatives of the **Tennessee Commission on Children and Youth**, will discuss preventing Adverse Childhood Experience (ACEs) and the neurological impact that ACEs can have on a child's future. Early experiences directly impact how the brain gets built; exposure to ACEs harm the developing brains and bodies of young children and lead to poor mental

and physical health across their lifespans. Preventing and mitigating these experiences benefit all Tennesseans by reducing crime, violence, substance abuse, unhealthy behavior and physical disease.

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

Green Hills Public Library Community Room
3701 Benham Ave. Nashville 37215
Parking is Easy & Free!

For additional information, contact LWVNash@gmail.com

Please remember to LIKE the **LWVN** on Facebook

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LWVTN Action Committee – Thank you and an Update

By 2nd Vice President – Barbara Gay

Thanks very much to every LWVTN Action Committee member and to **everyone** who attended meetings, sent letters, emails, and made visits and phone calls to state legislators and government officials. **You** made a difference.

We influenced the passage of a bill that allows email requests of public records with specified exceptions for past inaction. **Courtney Rogers**, a conservative legislator from Sumner County, sponsored this bill. We appreciate having the opportunity to work with members of **both** political parties.

The League helped prevent the passage of a bill that would have mandated nonpartisan judicial elections in just two counties, Davidson and Shelby. **Diane DiIanni** met with the sponsor, **Senator Steve Dickerson** and persuaded him not to pursue passage of the bill. We felt we could support state wide nonpartisan elections, but not unfair requirements for just two cities.

Our state President, **Marian Ott**, met with **Trey Hargett**, Secretary of State, and **Mark Goins**, Coordinator of Elections, to create legislation to improve the process used to purge voter rolls of infrequent voters. We were pleased it passed. The League has also worked for online voter registration. That should become available this fall.

We had success in preventing bills that would further reduce or eliminate revenue sources. The League actively opposed **three** different general voucher bills that did **not** pass. We supported the passage of the Governor's Improve Act to raise gasoline taxes to fund road and infrastructure needs. If this legislation had not passed, other programs would have been in jeopardy at the first economic down turn.

To our great disappointment some bills did not pass. In spite of hard work by **Clare Sullivan**, **Pat Post**, and the **TN Health Care Campaign**, no bills to expand health insurance coverage were successful. We were not able to achieve in-state tuition for undocumented students brought here as children. Expansion of **Forever Green Tennessee** funding failed while a bill to weaken water quality and runoff regulations succeeded.

With the help of **Jamie Dobbs** and **Lance McCold**, the Action Committee continues to monitor the Governor's

plan to privatize university and state park staff. The latest information is that no companies have submitted bids.

For more details, please see the latest report by [Stewart Clifton](#), our lobbyist. The Action Committee will continue to meet during the summer. Subcommittees will explore how best to follow and support health care at the Congressional level as well as address government process relating to caption bills. Our US Senator, **Lamar Alexander**, is chair of the **Health Care Committee**, and we will hone our strategy to support our US League position. Caption bills are introduced at the state level and allow amendments and unrelated issues to be introduced at the last minute in ways designed to be unnoticed by advocacy groups. We will explore how to educate ourselves and better follow these bills.

Again, **thanks** for all your hard work. I hope that you will continue to help us plan for the next legislative session.



From our Treasurer

By Treasurer Winnie Forrester

Our fiscal year is coming to a close on **June 30, 2017**, and we will be asking our members to approve our new budget for fiscal year 2017-2018 at our annual membership meeting on **June 8, 2017**. How exciting to have a projected surplus for next year that we will be able to use for more Voter Service projects! I look forward to seeing all of you at the meeting.



Voter Service

By Voter Services Co-Directors Hazel Thornton and Lynn Questell

We are conducting a voter registration on **June 3** in conjunction with **Gun Violence Awareness Day**. The event will take place at Greater Bethel Church (corner of South St. and 12th Ave. South) from **noon until 2pm**.

After exploring possible options for voter registration training, it has been decided that we will continue our **present practice** of training volunteer registrars at voter registration events.

For those of you who would like us to register voters at your event, please give us as much notice as possible. We were disappointed to have to turn down a recent request because we didn't have enough notice.

If possible, we will resume offering voter services at the monthly downtown **Art Crawls**. Stay tuned!



The Environment

By Environment Co-Director Jennifer Tulmak Westerholm

Mother Nature Demonstrates Own Plans on Earth Day

Nashville's Earth Day Festival was scheduled for Earth Day itself, **April 22**. Mother Nature had other plans, however. Celebrating her day in a dramatic show of force, intense storms ruled the day and caused the festival to be cancelled.

Mayor Barry's **Spring Clean** events, more than 80 of which had been planned, were also called off, save two. Many attended the **March for Science**, held at Legislative Plaza. While the march around downtown was

punctuated by the occasional thunderclap, the several hundred people who participated made an impressive showing on a rainy day.

Local Environmental Gains

During a time in which climate science and international agreements are under attack by the Trump administration and the U.S. has abdicated its leadership on the issue, it is encouraging that our city is taking a leading role on environmental issues.

Our local electric utility, **Nashville Electric Service**, applied for and was granted permission by Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) to build and operate two megawatts of “community solar” power. TVA granted six other utilities capacity totaling 8 MW. Community solar creates concentrated photovoltaic (PV) infrastructure to allow customers, who buy “shares” in this “solar power plant,” to receive the carbon-free power. Community solar can be more practical and affordable than residential rooftop solar.

Nashville recently completed a greenhouse gas inventory (based on 2014 emissions) of both citywide and Metro government-specific GHG emissions. Emissions for the city were up slightly from the year 2011, which can be attributed to both population growth and a richer dataset in this latest analysis. Completion of a GHG inventory is a requirement for participation in the [Compact of Mayors](#), to which Nashville is a signatory. Next steps include creating and implementing a plan to curb GHG emissions.

On April 26, Mayor Barry presented the **54th State of Metro address**, which included several environmental wins, mostly related to transit and mobility. The Mayor’s proposed budget includes:

- \$7M increase in the Metro Transit Authority operating subsidy, the largest single-year increase ever, to fund the elimination of transfer fees to transit riders, access ride and mobility on demand pilots to include crosstown connections and after-hours service, and extension of the Music City Circuit to Tennessee State University along the Jefferson Street corridor;
- More than \$35M in capital funds for MTA to purchase 31 new hybrid buses to replace aging diesel fleet, upgrading fare collection system, new all-electric bus for expansion of Music City Circuit, and planning money to implement the nMotion strategic plan;
- \$1.5M in improvements for Metro Public Works to fund transportation planning to improve traffic and prepare for a 21st Century mass transit system in Nashville, roving trash truck to meet intermittent demand, keep our streets and alleyways clean from trash; and downtown glass recycling program to improve the environment by reusing glass bottles that currently end up in landfills;
- \$65M in capital spending for sidewalks and road paving, \$3M just for sidewalks connected to schools, \$2M for bikeways (a doubling over previous allocations), and doubling funds for the Mayor’s Intersection Improvement Program;
- \$500,000 to launch a Conservation Assistance Grant Program to leverage effective partnerships in conserving public and private lands and resources of conservation value in Davidson County.

Finally, the Mayor came out with a bold proposal for light rail lines serving 5 major Nashville pikes, beginning with Gallatin Pike, which sees the highest levels of ridership and transit oriented development. The Mayor said there will be a referendum in 2018 to shore up funding for these pikes.



Metro Government

By Metro Government Co-Director Michelle Steele

Deborah Fisher, Executive Director of the **Tennessee Coalition for Open Government (TCOG)** and Chair of Excellence in **First Amendment Studies at Middle Tennessee State University**, addressed the LWVTN Convention on April 29, 2017. Observing that a viable democracy depends on citizens' access to government activities and information, Ms. Fisher described TCOG as a nonpartisan non-profit organization focused on advocacy and research related to open government. She noted that TCOG is an **alliance** of many organizations including news media, LWV, Common Cause, ACLU and the Beacon Center. TCOG's advocacy includes a help line to advise those seeking access to public records. TCOG also provides a newsletter on open government.

Ms. Fisher summarized some of the open government highlights of the 2017 legislative session. One success, supported by both TCOG and LWVTN, was legislation to allow open records requests via email. Another bill proposed an exception to the blanket exemptions to the **Open Records Act** possessed by the Tennessee Bureau of Investigation to allow access to records of TBI investigations of local law enforcement shootings after completion of prosecutions. Ms. Fisher noted that a wholesale review of the many exemptions included in the Open Records Act had been called for by legislative leadership.

Ms. Fisher reported that TCOG was conducting an audit being designed to review the status of open government in Tennessee and the availability of government information to the public. The audit is to be conducted this summer. TCOG is looking for volunteers. You can reach TCOG through its website: <http://tcog.info/>.



Health Care Legislation Alerts

By Health Care Co-Director Rashonda Lewis

Six weeks after failing to pass the first version of the **American Health Care Act (AHCA)**, the U.S. House of Representatives revised and narrowly passed the bill on **May 4th**. Now the bill must go to the Senate, which shows early signs of dissatisfaction with the bill in its current state. According to **Senator Lamar Alexander**, the Senate may “borrow some ideas.” The Senate also appears willing to start from scratch, if necessary.

There are a few hot button questions the Senate must consider as it wrestles with and possibly transforms the current version of the AHCA bill.

Will people with pre-existing conditions be able to get insurance and if so, at what cost?

The current version of the bill eliminates the insurance mandate, meaning people are no longer **required** to have insurance that meets ACA standards either through the marketplace created by President Obama's Affordable Care Act (ACA), private insurance, or insurance provided by employers. The bill also eliminates the tax penalty for failing to have this coverage. Unlike the **ACA**, the new bill does not prohibit insurance companies from charging more for pre-existing conditions by giving insurance companies a loop hole to allow them to charge up to 30% more for pre-existing conditions if coverage lapses for more than 63 days. People with pre-existing conditions may also be subject to premiums based on health status instead of community rating. Under community rating, a key feature of the ACA, persons of the same age in the same geographic region, must be charged the same premium, regardless of health status. Under the new bill, states can seek an exemption from community rating and if the waiver is granted, states can then allow insurers to based premium costs on individual health status.

These loopholes allow the **AHCA** to pay **lip service** to covering pre-existing conditions while allowing an easy out for insurers. According to data from a 2016 Commonwealth Fund report, the proposed upcharge penalty could

affect as many as 30 million Americans. According to a Kaiser Family Foundation report, Pre-existing Conditions and Medical Underwriting in the Individual Insurance Market Prior to the ACA (December 12, 2016) <http://kff.org/health-reform/issue-brief/pre-existing-conditions-and-medical-underwriting-in-the-individual-insurance-market-prior-to-the-aca/>, **one in four (27%) American adults** have health conditions that would leave them uninsurable. In Tennessee, that number rises to almost **1 in 3, or 1.2 million people**.

What will happen to essential health benefits (EHB)?

The ACA required health plans in the individual and small group markets to cover **ten** essential health benefits. These benefits include maternity and newborn care, mental health and substance use disorder services, preventive and wellness services, e.g. mammograms, and chronic disease management. The new bill relaxes the EHB requirement by allowing states, beginning in **2020**, to seek an exemption from the essential health benefits requirement. States with an approved waiver will be able to decide what benefits insurers are required to cover.

Will premiums go down?

If you are young and healthy, probably. If you are older with a lower income, not so much. Under the ACA, 85% of people who enrolled in marketplace plans received **Premium Tax Credits** that lowered their premiums. The new bill eliminates these ACA tax subsidies and replaces them with age- and income-based tax credits. The **Kaiser Family Foundation and the Congressional Budget Office** found that, on average, older people with lower incomes would be worse off under this plan compared to the ACA. Younger, healthier people will fare better under the new bill.

Will the number of people uninsured go up?

Probably. The number of uninsured is likely to rise due to both the AHCA's proposed restructuring of Medicaid funding and drops in private market enrollment that will accompany elimination of the individual and employer mandates. According to a CBO report on the first version of AHCA, the Medicaid provision alone would reduce the number of covered people by 14 million. By 2026, the number is expected to rise to 24 million people. In Tennessee, 578,000 people are expected to become uninsured under this legislation.

What happens to Medicaid?

The bill cuts Medicaid by more than \$800 billion over ten years. It restructures Medicaid by (1) eliminating funding for the ACA Medicaid expansion and (2) implementing a **per capita cap** on Medicaid spending for states. According to the **Kaiser Family Foundation**, *"the proposed changes to Medicaid under AHCA would disproportionately affect low-income individuals and people of color for whom the program is a central source of coverage."*

In a recent news article on passage of the AHCA, the author reminded the reader that unlike members of the house, our senators represent the entire state, not specific districts. Their outlooks should be less partisan, wider and with greater consideration of how this bill affects everyone.

This is the time to call on and write to our senators and explain that this bill does **not** work for Tennessee. Please keep in mind that Senator Lamar Alexander chairs the **Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions**. **Representative Jim Cooper** deserves a thank you or two for his "No" vote on this bill.

Senator Lamar Alexander
Nashville Office
615-736-5129

Representative Jim Cooper
615-736-5295

Senator Bob Corker
Nashville Office
615-279-8125



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!



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