

The Nashville Voter

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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.



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We can hardly wait for our October 19th annual fundraising event at the historic Hermitage Hotel, Women's Suffrage and Beyond. It is a wonderful celebration not just of the victory, but also the struggle that brought women in America the right to vote. We are looking forward to hearing Chancellor Claudia Bonnyman, speak briefly about her great-grandfather, Tennessee's Governor Roberts, and his pivotal role in the history of the final vote for women's suffrage. Please join us for [Secure your reservation](#)

Funds from this event make it possible for us to fill our community with informed and engaged voters. This is especially important in Tennessee as we plan ahead for 2018. During the last mid-term election in 2016, Tennessee ranked 50th in rates of voter participation! In reviewing nationwide levels of voter participation, a political scientist professor at University of New Hampshire, Andrew Smith, reach a depressing conclusion. He stated that voter surveys by the U.S. Census Bureau identified the major reasons that people gave for not voting as "issues of convenience and non-interest."

We are thrilled this month that Tennessee is addressing the convenience issue with the launch of the state's long anticipated on-line voter registration system. This will make it more convenient than ever for citizens to register to vote for the first time or to change their address with their county election commission.

Now it is up to organizations such as LWV to build the level of interest and engagement in the political process to motivate citizens to go to the polls. As always, we appreciate your financial support and volunteer efforts to make that possible.

See you on October 19th!

Debby Gould



SEPTEMBER SPOTLIGHT

Community Oversight Board Proposed for Metro Nashville

By Melissa Holden, 1st Vice President

Perhaps you would be surprised to know that Nashville, unlike most other large cities in the US, does not have an independent board to receive, investigate and resolve civilian complaints against police personnel and monitor and review law enforcement policies. A coalition of local advocacy groups is seeking to change that by drafting an ordinance to create and fund a Community Oversight Board (COB) to supplement or replace the current Office of Professional Accountability which is staffed only by police personnel.

Attorney Kyle Mothershead and Nashville Organized for Action and Hope (NOAH) member Arnold Hayes shared details of Community Oversight Now's aims at the September Hot Topic meetings. The Community Oversight Now group's research indicates that about 700 complaints alleging serious misconduct (civil rights violations, excessive force or racial discrimination) are filed against MNPD by citizens each year, but 98.5% of the cases have been ruled in favor of police.

National studies show that in many communities, police usually investigate and decide what, if any, consequences their fellow officers should face in cases of police misconduct. Under this system, fewer than 1 in every 12 complaints of police misconduct nationwide results in some kind of disciplinary action against the officer(s) responsible. The Community Oversight Now group proposes that an independent citizen review body might help alleviate similar statistics for Metro Nashville by having primary jurisdiction to review and investigate allegations and having the authority to study Nashville's criminal justice system and make policy recommendations. The group's aim is to create a Metro agency governed by a community-representative board and staffed with professionals who will carry out "best practices" established by other successful communities which includes: a COB operating independently

from law enforcement, staffed with civilians, with adequate authority and a suitable staff size, and making regularly reports to the community.

Mothershead explained that many products and services have some type of independent regulatory body to monitor and investigate their industries (think of restaurant or meat processing inspectors). But if a citizen has a complaint about police treatment or policy, the only place to seek resolution is with the police themselves; a true of conflict of interest. To counter claims that citizens are not educated enough or lack the experience to evaluate complaints, he noted that there is no similar background requirement for any number of elected positions. He did note however that the Community Oversight Now group had also drafted board selection criteria to help ensure a demographically diverse and equitable board could be assembled.

His group is not the only voice calling for a COB. Earlier this spring District Attorney Funk expressed concern about oversight following the release of the Gideon's Army Driving While Black report last October. The federal Department of Justice Community Relations Services department has also made recommendations to Metro leadership following the fatal police shooting of a black motorist in East Nashville. In July, the DOJ advised Metro to perform a comprehensive study on policing in the black community, explore creating an independent oversight board, and consider drafting a long-term public safety plan.

A COB is not a cure, it is just one tool that can be used to provide a less harmful environment for all citizens, including police officers themselves. The proposed ordinance could be heard before year end.

LWVN TO PRESENT AT WRIGHT MIDDLE SCHOOL

By Hasina Akhtar Mohyuddin

The League of Women Voters' proposal to present at Wright Middle School's LEAF Nights has been accepted! LEAF Community Nights is a collaborative opportunity that offers international families free English classes and a diverse array of workshops every Wednesday night at Wright Middle School (180 McCall St, 37211). We have been asked to speak on Wednesday, October 25th. Our proposal is as follows:

The League of Women Voters (LWV) would like to propose a workshop focusing on civic engagement and voting rights for parents, especially those from minority and immigrant communities. We will review the process of voter registration, ID requirements, and the rights to voting assistance (including translation services). We

will also engage parents in discussing the opportunities that civic engagement holds at the local level, and the impact of local voting on policy decisions that shape our communities. In particular, we will use the May 1st referendum on transit funding as an example of how voting effects our daily lives.

We are welcome to join LEAF participants for dinner (5:30-6:00pm) but need to make sure we're at Wright by 5:45pm so we can start the workshop on time. Workshops are half an hour from 6-6:30pm. LEAF will try to provide interpreters for us (in the past, they've had at least one Spanish and one Arabic interpreter every week), but if any LWV members are bilingual, we would love to have you join us for the presentation. If you are interested in helping with this program, please contact Hasina Mohyuddin at hmohyuddin@comcast.net, or Tamanna Qureshi at tamanna13@hotmail.com.

PREPARATION TO BEGIN FOR NEXT LEGISLATIVE SESSION

By Barbara Gay, Action Chair

The LWVTN Action Committee is preparing for the next legislative session that starts in January 2018. Thank you so much to the members who have agreed to be Issue Chairs:

Education--Debby Gould

Elections--Hazel Thornton and

Lynn Questell Environment--

Barbara Futter

Government Finance--Ethel Detch

Health Care Reform--Pat Post and

Clare Sullivan Immigration--Mary

Ann Reeves

Open Government--Vivian Shipe.

The Action Committee will meet once a month in the fall and then every other Monday starting in January when the state legislature begins its second year of a two-year session. This means that bills that were filed last year may come up again. The work is done in legislative subcommittees and committees. Most bills pass when they are brought to the full floor. Our lobbyist, Stewart Clifton, meets with us on Mondays and sends a report on our issues every week to all members across the state. In September you received a survey inviting you to join the Action Committee that is open to all members. We are asking every League member to sign up to follow at least one of our seven issues. This means you will

be on the Issue Chairs' email list to receive information and action alerts from them. Every member receives statewide action alerts approved by the full committee. The more active we are the more influence we have. The Action Committee meets at Stewart's office, TN Alliance for Legal Services, 50 Vantage Way, Suite 250, Nashville, TN. You may also participate in the meeting by phone. Action Committee members receive a reminder email and the agenda for the next meeting. I hope all League members will participate in the Action Committee.



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS IN THE DIGITAL AGE

By Aftyn Behn

As the League eagerly greets the debut of online voter registration in Tennessee, I find it important to highlight that Tennessee ranks 29th in the country for broadband access, with 835,000 Tennesseans having no access to internet and therefore no ability to take advantage of the new tool.

Broadband, or lack thereof, has been a hot topic the past year in our State with two state agencies, the Tennessee Department of Economic and Community Development (TNECD) and the Tennessee Advisory Commission on Intergovernmental Relations (TACIR), both releasing reports on broadband accessibility and deployment earlier this year. Our very own Ethel Detch played an important role in the TACIR report, for which I would like to acknowledge her efforts. Results indicated that 34% of Tennesseans living in rural areas have less reliable and slower internet than their urban counterparts, and 834,545

Tennesseans still, in 2017, are completely without internet access. Responding to this challenge, Governor Haslam signed the Broadband Accessibility Act into law, which removed restrictions and allocated \$45 million in grants and tax credits to service providers to improve broadband availability in rural areas.

Broadband access has never been at the forefront of the State League's (nor any of its local affiliates) platform as it has not adopted a policy position on the issue. Fortunately, the State League, recognizing that broadband access is the foundation for e-civic engagement, identified a pathway to nimbly respond to this contemporary issue and maintain integrity in our League process. At the April convention, members voted to amend the bylaws in order to adopt policy positions from other states, rather than exhausting limited resources to execute studies. (Yes, even League-process-hard-liners voted "ay"!). This Fall, the State League will hear from TNECD's Director of Broadband and consider adopting the LWV Connecticut's media policy position that advocates for universal high-speed internet access for its constituency.

Broadband is essential for making democracy work, particularly for rural Tennessee: from increasing access to healthcare through telemedicine programs to ensuring a quality education through online learning programs, access to broadband is necessary for assuring equal access to our democratic system.

As I step off my soapbox, I would also like to commend the State League for its amenability to change. The inside League joke is that nothing happens quickly: but, as a millennial, I value institutions that can recognize an opportunity to grow in an ever-evolving socio-political landscape. The League will always be notorious for its methodological depth and adherence to good policy; and, now, with the blessing of the "Old Time Leaguers", we can add adaptability as our new competitive advantage. We're making democracy work... in the 21st century.

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!

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) and **Harriet Vaughan Wallace** (harrietvwallace@yahoo.com).

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Liaison to LWVTN Action Committee **Afyn Behn**

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