



# THE NASHVILLE VOTER

The League of Women Voters of Nashville

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

[www.LWVnashville.org](http://www.LWVnashville.org)

Volume 71, No. 67

December 2017

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**January 5, 2018, 11:30-1:00 p.m. First Friday Hot Topics: TN Legislative Kick-off.** Stewart Clifton will provide an update on what we might expect out of this year's session at the **Tennessee State House**. **New Location:** Goodwill of Middle Tennessee Corporate Office Center, 1015 Herman St., Nashville, TN 37208. Open to the public.

**January 10, 2018, 6:00 to 7:00 p.m. Second Wednesday Hot Topics Encore Program: TN Legislative Kick-off.** Stewart Clifton will provide an update on what we might expect out of this year's session at the Tennessee State House. Green Hills Public Library – Community Room, 3701 Benham Avenue, Nashville, 37215. Open to the public.

**January 20, 2018, 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Women's March 2.0 Power Together TN.** For more information, please go to <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/womens-march-20-power-together-tn-tickets>

**January/February, 2018. How to help motivate a registered voter to vote.** Small group conversations for LWVN members. RSVP at [lwvnash@gmail.com](mailto:lwvnash@gmail.com).



### President's Message

#### *How do we help motivate a registered voter to vote?*

LWVN faces a big challenge in 2018. We know how to register voters and provide election information. But our real challenge now is how to motivate voting.

During January and February, we will be hosting a series of small group conversations for **LWVN members** to brainstorm ideas to address this dilemma. We hope **you** will attend a session that is convenient to you. (In case, Metro Schools is closed for bad weather that day, we will re-schedule.) **RSVP** at [lwvnash@gmail.com](mailto:lwvnash@gmail.com).

Thanks to these members for hosting conversations:

**January 13, 2018, Saturday - 10:00-11:15 a.m.**

Home of Debby Gould  
1817 Beechwood Ave, Nashville 37212

**January 16, 2018, Tuesday - 11:30 a.m.-1:00 p.m.**

Home of Hazel Thornton  
405 Charlesgate Ct, Nashville 37215

**February 6, 2018, Tuesday - 7:00-8:15 p.m.**

Home of Debbie Meredith  
1103 Shelby Avenue, Nashville, 37206

**February 7, 2018, Wednesday - 11:30-1:00 p.m.**

Home of Jan Sobotka

6442 Currywood Drive, Nashville 37205

We will be asking these key questions:

- ***Why do you think registered voters are not voting?***
- ***What do you think would energize a passive registered voter?***
- ***LWVN will promote a public information campaign to “Vote Local” for the May and August 2018 elections. What do you think we can do to make it successful?***

A number of organizations will be hosting “**Women’s March 2.0**” on **January 20, 2018**. LWVN is not one of the official sponsors; of course, individual league members may choose to march. LWVN will be registering voters with the messaging that “marching is good – voting is better”.

Two of our [wonderful board members](#) will be leaving us this month. Our thanks to **Melissa Holden**, our first vice-president, for her spectacular job in organizing our popular Hot Topics programs. **Lynn Questell**, co-chair for voter services, has also been a fantastic resource for election issues and voting. Both of these women have added greatly to the strength of our board and will be missed.



## **December Hot Topic Follow Up -- Felony Disenfranchisement**

**By 1<sup>st</sup> Vice President – Melissa Holden**

According to the criminal justice advocacy organization, **The Sentencing Project**, 6.1 million Americans across the country are barred from voting due to felony disenfranchisement and other laws restricting voting rights for people with past criminal convictions. Florida alone accounts for one quarter of the national number of Americans denied the right to vote due to felony disenfranchisement. The numbers are even more staggering when analyzed by race: **1 in 13** black men in this country are no longer permitted the right to vote, compared to **1 in 56** non-black men. Looked at in one more way, **7.7% of all black adults** (male or female) are disenfranchised.

**Dr. Pippa Holloway** shared her research on felon disenfranchisement (the historically accurate term) with a rapt crowd in these final **Hot Topic sessions of 2017**, and as they say, the more you know, the more you know. With recent elections hinging on sometimes fewer than a hundred votes, EVERY vote counts.

Holloway’s book, ***Living in Infamy***, examines the history of disenfranchisement for criminal conviction in the United States during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. She spent the sessions with us examining this past, exploring the present, and providing insight to the future of voting restoration efforts.

Early efforts to limit the rights of citizenship naturally arose in the **aftermath of the Civil War** when Southern Democrats sought to prevent the newly freed slaves from having a voice. The infamous **Whipping Campaign in North Carolina** in 1866 focused on the intentional convictions of nearly all African-Americans and charging them with crimes that would then prevent the exercising of newly granted suffrage. Astute observers will note this practice can be linked to present day mass incarcerations tactics that show how less than 200,000 citizens were incarcerated in the US in 1974 and the jump to nearly 1.5 million prisoners by 2015.

Additional voter suppression efforts began in earnest after the Civil War with the introduction of literacy tests and increased poll taxes, followed by the sweeping expansion of petty crimes laws. As one might imagine, felon disenfranchisement has a major impact on the political process. The ‘voice of the people’, as expressed through the voting process, is often skewed to Caucasians. **Felon disenfranchisement** mainly affects people of

color, particularly black people, who are disproportionately convicted, and wrongly convicted of crimes [more often](#) than their white counterparts.

Only two states, **Maine and Vermont**, permit full voting privileges for those convicted of a felony, while 15 states restrict voting for those during the felony incarceration period. Another four states do not allow those who are in prison or on parole to vote while 18 states do not permit voting by those in prison, on parole, or probation. There are 12 states that **permanently** disenfranchise felony convicts whether they have served their time in prison, gotten out on parole, and completed their probation.

**In Tennessee disfranchisement is built in the state Constitution in Article IV, Section 2:**

*Laws may be passed excluding from the right of suffrage to persons who may be convicted of infamous crimes.*

The pathway to restoring the right to vote for a **Tennessean** includes payment of all fines, court fees, restitution, and child support arrears after fulfilling their sentences. Some **160,000** Tennessee citizens are in this suffrage limbo and restoration efforts have bogged down due to the challenges of repaying the fees, especially by those who are often minimally employed due to their felony record.

Restoration advocates are making some headway however with groups such as Project Return and the Nashville Bar Association offering assistance on the expungement and restoration efforts to clients trying to make their way through the state's byzantine regulations. In **Virginia**, Governor Terry McAulliffe recently restored the voting rights for 168,000 citizens.



## The League of Women Voters of Nashville

Presents

**FIRST FRIDAY**

**Hot Topics at LUNCHTIME**

**Friday, JANUARY 5, 2018— 11:30 am to 1:00 pm**

**(NEW LOCATION!)**

**Goodwill Administration Center  
1015 Herman Street, Nashville 37208**

**Parking is Easy & Free!  
BYO brown bag lunch**

and

**Second Wednesday Evening Encore**

**Wednesday, January 10, 2018— 6:00 pm to 7:00 pm**

**Green Hills Public Library Community Room  
3701 Benham Ave. Nashville 37215**

**TN LEGISLATIVE KICK-OFF**

Mark your calendar now to join us for the kick-off of the 2018 Hot Topic series when League of Women Voters

lobbyist **Stewart Clifton** will provide an update on what we might expect out of this year's session at the Tennessee State House.

- **Remember that the role of legislators is to represent and to lead.** Our active League membership and Board can help them with both roles.
- **Showing up is most of the battle.** The voice of the League is important. People take notice and can count on us for factual, non-partisan information. Your personal visits, Letters to the Editor, and our advocacy presence on the Hill really do make a difference.
- **Relationships trump content much of the time.** Our legislative coffees, voter forums, fundraising events help build those relationships based on trust. We can use these opportunities to share information and bring clarity to League priorities.
- **Expect the unexpected and Start Early.** You just never know.

For additional information about Hot Topic programs, contact Debby Gould [debbygould@bellsouth.net](mailto:debbygould@bellsouth.net) or (629)777-5650

*For additional information, contact [LWVNash@gmail.com](mailto:LWVNash@gmail.com)*

*Please remember to LIKE the LWVN on Facebook*

*<https://www.facebook.com/LWVNashville?ref=ts>*



## **LWVTN Action Committee – 2018 Legislative Priority Issues**

**By 2nd Vice President – Barbara Gay**

The **LWVTN Action Committee** met on November 27th and December 11th to prepare for the legislative session that begins on **Tuesday, January 9th**. Thanks to loyal members who participated this busy time of year.

Our lobbyist, **Stewart Clifton**, has presented programs for Leagues across the state including Memphis, Jefferson City, Chattanooga, Knoxville, Nashville, Oak Ridge, and Hendersonville. Stewart will not be providing his usual open to the public training event in January of this year, thinking that he has already reached many interested people.

He reported that the legislators have moved to the **Cordell Hull building**. The arrangements there will make informal conversation with legislators more difficult because they will not have to walk in the halls. They will have back doors to exit hearing rooms as well as private elevators. Parking for League members will also be more difficult. We may want to explore public transportation and car- pooling.

**Few bills** have been filed since the legislature convened in spring 2017, although Stewart reminded us that any bill filed in the first year of the legislative session may be revisited during the second year of the session. Stewart anticipates a shorter session in 2018 since legislators who are running for office may not fund raise during the session.

We will be following **Elections and Open Government** very carefully. **ALEC** is supporting a bill to disenfranchise voters who fail to show up for jury duty. **Restoring voting rights for felons** is also an issue the League supports. Some city governments are not allowing citizens to use their cell phones to copy records. We hope to have rule changes rather than legislation to solve these problems. We need more transparency in the legislative process because bills are amended without citizen knowledge. There is a dash- board that is

sent to legislators and staff but not the public. Marian is drafting a letter to our legislative leaders urging more transparency.

**Health Care Reform** is uncertain until we know what the federal government will do. **CHIP**, which provides health care to children who do not qualify for Medicaid but whose family cannot afford health insurance, has not been reauthorized. Tennessee has enough funds to cover these children until **May** and then, if CHIP is not reauthorized, the state will have to take it over or let it lapse. Schools may lose federal funds for nurses and other services because of cuts to Medicaid. Help for opioid addiction may be an issue as well.

**Vouchers** will still be the major education legislation to follow. Support for **Community Schools** may be another effort that we want to track and possibly support. There may be continued deregulation of **environmental protections**. There is concern that corporations leave behind toxic sites and the state has no funds to clean them up. There is a very hostile attitude toward any bills to help immigrants, such as in state tuition for undocumented students brought here as children that almost passed in the past.

The **Action Committee** will next meet on **Monday, January 15th** and will continue to meet *every two weeks* during the session. Members will receive a weekly report from Stewart. He will shorten these reports and instruct us how to follow bills of special interest on line.

I hope everyone has a restful, energizing holiday and will join us to promote useful public policy in the New Year. If you have not joined the Action Committee and would like to do so, please contact Barbara Gay at 615-297-4145 or barbara.b.gay@gmail.com.



## What is Happening in Voter Service? By Voter Service Co-Director Hazel Thornton

Board members **Hasina Mohyuddin** and **Tamanna Quereshi** have put together a clever Power Point Presentation, which they debuted at a **LEAF** (Linking, Empowering, and Advancing Families) workshop recently. The intended audience is immigrant families who have children attending Metro Public Schools, and it reflects our continued focus on increasing voter participation. Translators were available to help non-English audience members.

The Wednesday morning voter registration at **NES** continues to average 5 registrations per week—not too shabby! There are also a lot of inquiries regarding the restoration of voting rights for felons. Many thanks to the following people who make it possible: *Amanda La Bonte, Amy Kurland, Anne Plummer, Barbara Futter, Barbara Kurland, Brenda Butka, Janice Tracy, Kathy Masulis, Madonna Stepbach, Maureen Organ, Mildred Tilley, Perry MacDonald, and Tanya Neales.*

**On December 19**, a List Maintenance Policy Update will be given at the Davidson County Election Commission meeting. This policy provides the guidelines for determining which names should be removed from the pollbooks because of moves out of county, felony convictions, deaths. I will report on that in the January Voter.



## Updates on Healthcare Access By Health Care Co-Director Rashonda Lewis

**Friday, December 15<sup>th</sup>** marked the last day for 2018 Affordable Care Act open enrollment in Tennessee. Despite this year's shorter enrollment period and slashed marketing budget, 4.7 million people have signed up for health insurance through the ACA Marketplace as of last Saturday. This number exceeds last year's

enrollment for the same time period by 650,000 people. About 80% of Tennesseans will be eligible for subsidies that will offset the cost of rising premiums. People who are not eligible for subsidies are seeing premium hikes of 20-35%.

Although total enrollment numbers are expected to be lower than the 9.2 million people who signed up last year, a few things are certain. Millions of people have shopped healthcare.gov, qualified for subsidies that make healthcare affordable, and have chosen coverage for themselves and their families, driving down the number of uninsured people.

**Congressional Republicans**, with the support of President Trump, will likely slow this progress by voting within the next few days on a tax bill that **eliminates the ACA individual mandate tax penalty**. Current law requires people to carry health insurance or face a tax penalty. This reform, if passed, is expected to **increase** the number of uninsured by 13 million people by 2027.

Lawmakers have yet to renew federal funding for the **Children's Health Insurance Program (CHIP)**. CHIP covers 72,000 children in Tennessee whose family incomes are too high to qualify for TennCare. Four states will run out of funding by the end of this month and 27 more by the end of March, according to a report by the Medicaid and CHIP Payment and Access Commission. Tennessee has reserves that will carry the program through next Spring. **Now** is the time to contact your legislators and ask them to move on renewing funding for CHIP.



*May the coming days be full of peace and hope.  
Happy Holidays!!!!*



### 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](http://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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