

Empowering Voters.  
Protecting Democracy.

**REACHING LWVCM**

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Find updates for League action and activities at [goleaguego.org](http://goleaguego.org)



Newsletter for December 2022

## Civics 101 Program to Take Place in the New Year

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg will run its popular Civics 101 Program on six consecutive Wednesday evenings from February 1 through March 8. Sessions will cover the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections, Mecklenburg County Government, City of Charlotte Government, CMS/Board of Education, the Court System, and a panel on Media Literacy.



## Learn How Local Government Works Civics 101

- Become Informed
- Know where to direct your energy
- Inspire change

**Register today!**

### WEDNESDAY EVENINGS

**2/1-3/8/2023**

6PM-8:30 PM

CHOOSE IN PERSON OR  
VIRTUAL LEARNING

<https://my.lwv.org/north-carolina-state/charlotte-mecklenburg/civics-101-registration-now-open>

Though the sequencing of presentations may change, the dates will not. The tentative order of presentations is as follows:

<b>February 1:</b>	<b>Mecklenburg County Board of Elections</b>
<b>February 8:</b>	<b>Mecklenburg County Government</b>
<b>February 15:</b>	<b>City of Charlotte Government</b>
<b>February 22:</b>	<b>Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Board of Education</b>
<b>March 1:</b>	<b>North Carolina Court System (District 26)</b>
<b>March 8:</b>	<b>Media Panel</b>

Thanks to a generous donation, the program will be free of charge. Registration will begin in mid-December, and participants may choose to attend either in person or online. Prior to registration, interested parties may send an email with any questions to: [lwvcmcivics101@gmail.com](mailto:lwvcmcivics101@gmail.com).

Visit our [CafePress Shop](#) online for fun LWV-themed gifts. Support the League while you shop!

## Coming Events

### Coming Up in December, January & February (and in to March!)

- **Dec. 1, 4-7pm:** In-Person Holiday Party (Margaret Fritze's Home)
- **Dec. 6, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting
- **Dec. 7:** Registration for Civics 101 Opens
- **Dec. 7, 11 am:** Press Conference on Moore v. Harper Case (Government Center)
- **Dec. 8:** *Latina Equal Pay Day (LEPD)*
- **Dec. 15:** *Bill of Rights Day*
- **Jan. 3, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting
- **Jan. 9:** *Carrie Chapman Catt Birthday*
- **Jan. 16:** *Martin Luther King, Jr. Day*
- **Jan. 17, 7pm:** League Talk
- **Jan. 31, 7pm:** LWVCM Book Club
- **Feb. 1, 6pm:** Civics 101 Program: Mecklenburg County Board of Elections
- **Feb. 7, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting
- **Feb. 8, 6pm:** Civics 101 Program: Mecklenburg County Government
- **Feb. 15, 6pm:** Civics 101 Program: City of Charlotte Government
- **Feb. 20:** *Presidents' Day*
- **Feb. 22, 6pm:** Civics 101 Program: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Board of Education
- **Mar. 1, 6pm:** Civics 101 Program: North Carolina Court System (District 26)
- **Mar. 8, 6pm:** Civics 101 Program: Media Panel

## League Announcements

- Follow the LWVCM on [Outreach Circle](#)! See what Actions you can take for the League and our Democracy. Current Actions include applying for the [LWV Specialty License Plate](#) and advocating for the [ERA](#).
- **ClubExpress** Trainings will begin in December, dates TBD.
- Mark your calendars for the **LWVNC Convention** which will be held in Charlotte at the DoubleTree Southpark from May 19-21.
- All **meetings/events to be held at the League office** and conference rooms may be booked through LWVCM President Suzanne Elsberry ([dessuz@bellsouth.net](mailto:dessuz@bellsouth.net)).
- Support the League by visiting our [Cafe Press Shop](#) for LWVCM t-shirts, hats, magnets, pins, ornaments, mugs and more! They make great gifts!



## League Action & Happenings

### Nov. League Talk Breaks Attendance Record

On November 15, the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg hosted a public engagement session “Impact on Equity: How Will the CMS Comprehensive Plan Improve Educational Opportunities for Students?” at the Government Center. Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools embarked on a period of public engagement reviewing major building projects, changes in magnet programs, and alterations to school boundaries and student assignment that ended on November 30.

A moderated panel of CMS staff organizing this review including Dennis LaCaria, CMS Facilities Consultant; Walter Hall, Director of Magnet Programs; and Dr. Claire Schuch, Director of Planning Services (Student Assignments and Boundaries) presented an overview of the plan and entertained questions from the hybrid audience of nearly 80 attendees including current CMS Board Members Elyse Dashew (Chair), Jennifer De La Jara (At-Large) and newly elected CMS Board Members Melissa Easley (District 1), Gregory “Dee” Rankin (District 3), Stephanie Sneed (District 4) and Lisa Cline (District 5).



A Subcommittee of the LWVCM Education Action Team worked with the following cosponsors for this event:

- ◇ **CharlotteEAST**
- ◇ **Latin American Education Committee**
- ◇ **MeckEd**
- ◇ **National Alliance of Black School Educators**
- ◇ **NAACP Charlotte-Mecklenburg Branch**
- ◇ **National Black Child Development Institute**
- ◇ **NC International Minority Coalition**

The CMS staff will now work to incorporate the feedback they gathered prior to presenting a revised plan to the Board of Education in January.

### Why Is Moore vs Harper So Important?

December 7 is a day that “lives in infamy,” not only for the reason of which we are so familiar, but because that is the day the United States Supreme Court will hear oral arguments for the case [Moore v Harper](#). The Court’s decision will decide if state legislatures have the right to draw gerrymandered congressional districts, suppressing the vote, and subverting election results.

This compelling issue was thoroughly examined in a November 16 program presented by the United Universalists Social Justice Group and attended by nearly 100 participants, including LWVCM Redistricting Committee Chair Harry Taylor and 1st VP Linda Levy. Speakers were the plaintiff and Common Cause Board Member **Rebecca Harper** and attorney **Chris Shenton** of the Southern Coalition for Social Justice.

Noting years of gerrymandered voting districts, in 2019, SCOTUS ruled in [Rucho v Common Cause](#) that federal courts are not able and/or will not address **partisan** gerrymandering, but that the state courts can through their own state constitutions. In 2021 and 2022, the North Carolina Supreme Court—in *Harper v Hall*—struck down the NC legislature’s [gerrymandered](#) congressional and legislative districts maps, and ruled that remedial congressional district maps must be drawn. The Court, unsatisfied with the legislature’s subsequent remedial congressional map, turned the task over to a three-member panel of special masters. The resulting map, in accordance with the NC Constitution, was only in effect for the just-completed midterm election. Therefore, the NC General Assembly will redraw the congressional map for the all-important 2024 election.

Shenton explained the plaintiff’s legal team will argue that, contrary to the NC General Assembly claims, state legislatures do NOT have the right to set districts for federal elections—unfettered by state courts. The defendants—under the *Independent State Legislature Theory*—would have total control over voting rights and process in federal elections. Such a decision would eliminate the protection of checks and balances inscribed in our democracy and the North Carolina Constitution.

On October 26, the LWVUS and League chapters from all 50 states and the District of Columbia filed an [amicus brief](#). “Giving states unchecked power to set rules for federal elections is an assault on the American voter,” said **Virginia Kase Solomón**, CEO of the LWVUS.

The speakers’ concluded that “we’ve a long struggle ahead of us.” A ruling from SCOTUS could come quickly, but no later than the end of the Court’s term in June.



## League Action & Happenings

### Leandro Update: A Positive Yet Uncertain Step Forward for Public School Funding

On November 4, the North Carolina Supreme Court issued an opinion ordering that the state provide sufficient funds to satisfy the financial needs for years two and three of the Leandro Plan in order to “to guard and maintain the constitutional rights of North Carolina schoolchildren.” This is a significant and positive step forward. However, there is uncertainty. Will the transfer of funds happen before the end of the year? What will happen when the change in partisan composition of the Supreme Court voted on in the midterms takes effect in January? Statements from legislature leadership show a continued resistance to provide these funds.

LWVCM’s advocacy efforts for adequate public school funding will continue with a focus on educating local elected officials and the community on the financial benefit that this ruling will have on students in Mecklenburg and Union counties. [Every Child NC](#) has created a [powerful tool](#) to estimate how state funding will change each district upon implementation of the Leandro Plan. The infographic (at right) shows what the impact full funding would have on Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools. This can encourage more voices to advocate for funding at the NC General Assembly. In addition, LWVCM will continue to support the funding of years four through eight in the Leandro Plan.

### Meeting the educational needs of EVERY CHILD

**The Leandro Plan**  
Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools

North Carolina's legislative roadmap for delivering the constitutional standard of education

Since 1994, the *Leandro v. State of North Carolina* court case has consistently shown that children are being deprived the sound basic education guaranteed by the state constitution.

**PROBLEM:** State funding hasn't kept pace with student needs, forcing districts to cut back on staff, services, supplies, technology, and facility upgrades.

**SOLUTION:** The Leandro Plan shows the state how to provide the required education standard by ensuring adequate funding and targeted support for the unique set of student needs in each district.

### HOW LEANDRO WILL SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY

*Under the Leandro Plan, the state would supply the following funding amounts by 2028:*

**Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools**  
K-12 PUBLIC EDUCATION

**\$278 MILLION** **30% budget increase**

that funding could provide:

- 762 MORE** teacher assistants
- 24** Community School Coordinators
- 826 MORE** nurses, psychologists, counselors & social workers (Instructional Support Personnel at industry-recommended levels)
- 140%** increase in funding for textbooks, supplies & instructional materials
- \$1,421** per teacher for professional development

**Mecklenburg County**  
EARLY EDUCATION - programs for children birth to age 5

**\$90 MILLION**

that funding could provide:

- 2,610 MORE** slots for NC Pre-K
- 362%** increase in funding for Smart Start
- 7,068 MORE** children in the Infant-Toddler Program

**The Leandro Plan**  
maps out how **YOUR DISTRICT** can give children the education they're owed. **YOUR VOICE** is needed to convince lawmakers to enact the plan.

Learn how to advocate for children in your district:  
**Every Child NC**  
[everychildnc.org](http://everychildnc.org)

Published 3-30-2022 © Every Child NC, 2022. All rights reserved.



### The CMS Comprehensive Review Plan: What's Next?

The public engagement period for the [CMS Comprehensive Review](#)—during which time the LWVCM hosted a successful panel and Q&A—has now ended. The November 15 League Talk "Impact on Equity: How Will the CMS Comprehensive Plan Improve Educational Opportunities for All Students?" featured CMS staff discussing their comprehensive review of boundaries and student assignment, magnet programs, and facilities ahead of a proposed bond referendum in 2023. A link to the recording may be found [here](#).)

So what is next? And what can concerned citizens do to support the school district's stated goal of achieving greater equity for students? The CMS staff led by Facilities Consultant Dennis LaCaria, Director of Programming Dr. Claire Schuch and Director of Magnet Programs Walter Hall will use the several weeks to create a DRAFT Comprehensive Plan, incorporating valuable feedback they have received from the community. Questions and feedback may still be shared with the staff by sending an email to: [cmsreview23@cms.k12.nc.us](mailto:cmsreview23@cms.k12.nc.us). Further feedback may also be provided via the CMS [Survey](#). CMS Board Meetings pertaining to the revised Comprehensive Plan will be held on February 14 (Presentation/Discussion) and February 28 (Vote). Board meetings are held at the Government Center at 6pm and are open to the public.

## LWVCM President's Perspective



### **“With the Midterms in the Rearview Mirror, Our Democracy Has Endured”**

*As did many fellow citizens, I feared profound threats to our democracy which was essentially at stake on midterm election ballots. Considering this, I urged working together to turn out the vote so that all citizens would be assured a voice. Some of these perceived threats included: bombardment of misinformation and disinformation; manipulative redistricting efforts; special monied interests and dark money in elections; poll worker shortages; false claims of voting fraud; denials of election legitimacy and conspiracy theories directly leading to threats of violence and disruptions at the polls; laws attacking voting rights; polling place closures effecting access of communities of color; violence towards election officials and their families; decrease of voting hours and early access; elimination of women's privacy and reproductive rights; and the underfunding of the 2020 Census resulting in an undercount of low-income populations and people of color.*

*With the midterms in the rearview mirror, it appears our democracy has endured. Our country did not capitulate to the predicted distrust or violence. The election, viewed by most as free, fair and trusted, ran efficiently, owing in large part to the professionalism and dedication of election officials and workers. Overall, most election deniers did not win; candidates espousing extreme beliefs were unable to convince voters; and compared to the 2020 election, disinformation wielded less of an impact.*

*U.S. citizens, in record numbers, expressed their opinions with their votes. The Election Commission estimates that a total of 12,065,803 voters, representing 56.7% of the registered electorate, exercised the franchise. Attempts to suppress early and mail-in voting seem to have failed noticeably. And early estimates report the highest turn out of young voters (approximately 31%) in 30 years.*

*The League of Women Voters, true to its mission to empower the vote and to protect democracy, contributed in no slight way towards the positive outcomes of the election. League members from more than 750 chapters devoted many months preparing for the primary and midterm elections, working diligently to register voters; raise awareness through VOTE411 to reach 4.6 million voters; train volunteers; manage GOTV initiatives; serve as poll workers; and litigate for the protection of the rights of 17.7 million voters.*

*Many elected officials, however, still demonstrate a willingness to favor their political party over country. Speaker of the U.S. House, Nancy Pelosi, recently cautioned Americans to “remain fully committed to our shared fundamental mission, to hold strong to our most treasured democratic ideals...and **to always put our country first.**” I hope that this threat of compromising democratic ideals for partisan gain will quickly cease to exist.*

*Post midterms, when democracy appears to have overcome a dangerous trial, the question remains: Can America sustain a history of free and trusted elections? Based upon the administration of this election and the innate good judgement shown by large numbers of our electorate, I would venture the answer is yes.*

*During this holiday season, the LWVCM Board and Action Team Leaders extend sincere appreciation to our members, donors and partners for their invaluable support and loyalty to the mission and work of the League.*

*As we progress toward our 103rd year (February 14, 2023) of empowering the vote and defending democracy, we send the warmest of season's greetings and best wishes for a joyful and prosperous new year for all.*

**President, League of Women Voters  
Charlotte Mecklenburg**

## League News

### Welcome New League Members

#### New Members in November 2022

Peg Chapin (renewed)  
Christopher Winston

#### To Tweet, or Not to Tweet...

The LWVCM Board will consider our chapter's continued participation on Twitter at the next board meeting on December 6. Concerns have surfaced about the rise in harassment, mis/disinformation and the likelihood of a hostile environment for marginalized and at-risk people on this social media platform. Twitter teams devoted to ensuring content moderation and human rights have recently been eliminated leading to the exodus of many advertisers and users. Between October 27 and November 3, more than 875,000 accounts were deactivated and a half million users were suspended. The abusive content resulting from the lack of moderation is inconsistent with the League's policies, goals and philosophy, particularly as our organization seeks alignment with Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in principle and practice.

We are soliciting member perspectives on this question to enhance our board discussion and decision. Email League President, Suzanne Elsberry, at [membership@goleaguego.org](mailto:membership@goleaguego.org) by December 5. We value your input and look forward to receiving your feedback.

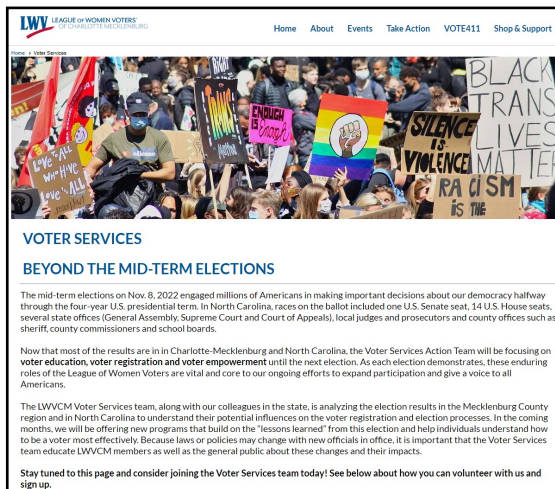
#### LWVCM Nominating Committee Calls for Candidates for 2023-2024 Slate

The LWVCM Nominating Committee, chaired by Donna Armbrister, will soon begin the process of identifying Candidates for the next slate of Officers and Directors for the chapter's 2023 Election. Elections are held during the Annual Meeting in June, therefore the committee wants to get an early start on the selection process.

The committee is seeking potential candidates for both Officers and Board of Directors positions. Those interested in serving, whether a seasoned member or new to the League, should contact Donna Armbrister via email: [darmbrister44@gmail.com](mailto:darmbrister44@gmail.com).

#### Our New Member Engagement Platform Is Now Live!

LWVCM has transitioned to our new member engagement platform, [Club Express](#). Many Leagues across the nation have made the transition to this new platform as a way to increase member engagement, have access to better data tracking, and provide better customer services to members.



Now that the new member engagement platform is live:

1. You should have received an email directly from Club Express, welcoming you to the new Club page and platform. This email includes your username and temporary password. You are now able to change your password to one you select once you access the site. This email also provides directions on how to add your interests and set up your profile on the site. If this sounds daunting, don't worry. Our site web address is unchanged: [www.goleaguego.org](http://www.goleaguego.org). You can access the calendar and action team information right away.
2. We encourage you to explore the site to become familiar with the layout. This is a new platform, so know that the information will be updated and will change over time. No need to email us if you see things like picture placeholders with peculiar images. This is a work in progress as we fully transition to this new member engagement platform over the coming year.
3. For those who need additional support, we plan to host training sessions beginning in December and into the new year to support your learning. If you have questions or concerns feel free to email [webmaster@goleaguego.org](mailto:webmaster@goleaguego.org).

Please be patient as we launch this new tool to take our League's engagement with each other and the community to the next level.

-Shanda Martin, LWVCM Webmaster and Board Member

#### Club Express Corner: Member Profile Setup & Calendar

We have launched ClubExpress as our member engagement platform. In Phase 1 of our rollout, we are focused on setting up member profiles and using the Calendar. Take a moment to watch this [Tutorial Video](#) on setting up your profile. If you have technical issues logging in, please reach out to ClubExpress Support at 1-866-457-2582 or email them at [support@clubexpress.com](mailto:support@clubexpress.com). Their support hours are 7:30 AM to 10:00 PM, Monday-Friday.



## Public Education Advocacy

### LWVCM Education Action Committee Takes Strong Stance on Public Education

Public education is the foundation for a successful society. Employment demands increasingly more sophisticated skills that include calculation, understanding, problem-solving, and clarity of expression. These basic skills are the building blocks of a prosperous economy. But education is more than that, it instills the basic appreciation of government and civil society that students will use the rest of their lives. Thomas Jefferson put it most distinctly; “know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them but to inform their discretion.”

In a time of competing sources of information, education instills the critical skills necessary to evaluate the authenticity of facts and the quality of sources. Education teaches us to judge the reliability of information sources, the logic of arguments, and the empirical evidence supporting claims.

Public education performs another function by including the children of all the families in the community to work together and play together in common purpose. The value in learning other life perspectives provides a resource for students living in an increasingly international community. Cultural differences and language differences may keep us apart, but public schools provide the opportunity to move past these differences and find a commonality of humanity.

To achieve these goals, we need to have an effective public education system. Quality education requires several components. Money is a necessary but not sufficient condition for a good education. Being able to pay teachers and staff a competitive wage and respecting their service and skills goes a long way toward assuring the education our children require. Teachers need support staff around them such as librarians, counselors’ nurses, and teaching assistants to meet the multiple needs of students. Finally, the leadership of boards and administrators is a vital component of quality education. Making effective use of resources while providing an environment that is welcoming and supportive for students, families and staff builds a vibrant learning community.

The steps that need to be taken to maximize public educational effectiveness differ by community and school. Each school needs the flexibility and leadership necessary to meet local needs. However, there are some general guidelines that can help us think about what we need to do.

- Support developmentally appropriate early childhood education.
- Improve the quality of teaching through such means as master teachers to support new teachers, effective teacher training programs, and competitive salaries.
- Support citizen participation through formation of school site and district school advisory committees.
- Provide all students with affordable access to online learning tools.
- State funding for private education needs to include requirements that assure a rigorous education.
- All North Carolina students should have a chance to develop skills necessary for employment or further education after graduation.
- Equity should be a guiding principle which means providing resources adequate and appropriate to each student’s needs.

It is easy to think about what should be done but the work of doing it is ongoing and difficult. So much in our communities work against effective education. Chronic poverty, housing insecurity, the recent COVID intrusion in our lives, and the presence of political conflict in schools all complicate the education process. The difficulty of the task should not dissuade us from making the effort. We all benefit from a well-educated population. Whether it is the mechanic that services our car, the doctor that cares for our body, or the minister that feeds our soul, we live better if they have the learned the skills that make them effective.

Think of education not as a cost but as an investment that will grow and provide dividends in the future. All of us will live better lives if we do not have to bear the heavy costs of welfare and crime that are the direct result of under educating our youth. Education cannot achieve these goals in isolation, but it is a necessary condition for success.

“If a seed of a lettuce will not grow, we do not blame the lettuce. Instead, the fault lies with us for not having nourished the seed properly.” – Buddhist proverb

Board members Margaret Howe-Soper, Jane Hoffmann, Suzanne Elsberry, Margaret Fritze, Sara Baysinger, Linda Levy, Pam Liebman, and John Lee attended the December 1 LWVCM Holiday Party.



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**Dated Material**

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