

Empowering Voters.
Protecting Democracy.

Newsletter for February 2023

REACHING LWVCM

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Important Voting Rights Case at the NC Supreme Court

On February 2, the North Carolina Supreme Court will hear oral arguments for Community Success Initiative (CSI) v. Moore, to determine if formerly incarcerated people on probation, parole, or post-release supervision can keep their right to vote. Travel to Raleigh to show your support!

CSI v. Moore was the case brought back in 2019 that claimed the state law denied tens of thousand of state residents the right to vote until they were “unconditionally discharged,” referring to the conditions of probation, parole, having a post-release sentence, or owing fees to the court. In this last instance, the remedy was akin to a Jim-Crow era poll tax.

A March 28, 2022 NC Superior Court ruling (upheld by the NC Court of Appeals on April 21, 2022), decreed that following that year’s primary election, “if a person otherwise eligible to vote is not in jail or prison for a felony conviction, they may lawfully register and vote in North Carolina.” Citing the Equal Protection Clause and Free Election Clause, the Court declared the disenfranchisement unconstitutional. This was the largest expansion of voting rights in North Carolina since the Voting Rights Act (1965).

The LWVNC’s partners at [Forward Justice](#) are asking for a show of support before the hearing. If you can travel to Raleigh the morning of February 2, plan to arrive by 8:30AM to be able to clear security ahead of the hearing.

See the following from Forward Justice:

“Discriminatory voting rights legislation has no place in our democracy. We’re starting Black History Month in front of the NC Supreme Court fighting for 56,000+ people to keep their voting rights. NC must ensure equitable access to the ballot for ALL. #UnlockOurVoteNC

“Limiting access to the ballot for any group of people is the antithesis of an inclusive democracy. When a period of incarceration ends, voting rights should be immediately restored.”

“Felony disenfranchisement mainly served two purposes in North Carolina in the 1950s and 1960s — as a threat for would-be offenders, and as a justification for the state’s resistance to voting rights legislation.”

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XOXOXOXO
XOXOXOXO
XOXOXOXO
XOXOXOXO

HAPPY VALENTINE'S DAY FROM
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

PACK THE COURT!



CSI v. Moore Oral Argument

Thursday, February 2nd - 9:30 AM

NC Supreme Court Courtroom

2 E Morgan Street, Raleigh, NC

#UNLOCKOURVOTENC 

Coming Events

Coming Up in February, March, and April *(italics indicate national holidays/events)*

- **February:** *Black History Month*
- **Feb. 1:** *National Freedom Day*
- **Feb. 1, 6pm:** [Civics 101 Program: Mecklenburg County Board of Elections](#) (Hybrid)
- **Feb. 7, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting (Zoom)
- **Feb. 8, 11:30am:** [Lunch with the League: US Attorney, Western District of NC, Dena J. King](#) (MPBC)
- **Feb. 8, 6pm:** [Civics 101 Program: Mecklenburg County Government](#) (Hybrid)
- **Feb. 14:** The League of Women Voters Turns 103 on *Valentine's Day!*
- **Feb. 15, 6pm:** [Civics 101 Program: City of Charlotte Government](#) (Hybrid)
- **Feb. 20:** *Presidents' Day*
- **Feb. 22, 6pm:** [Civics 101 Program: Charlotte-Mecklenburg Schools Board of Education](#) (Hybrid)
- **March:** *Women's History Month and Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month*
- **Mar. 1, 6pm:** [Civics 101 Program: North Carolina Court System \(District 26\)](#) (Hybrid)
- **Mar. 7, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting
- **Mar. 8, 6pm:** [Civics 101 Program: Media Panel](#) (Hybrid)
- **Mar. 9:** *International Women's Day*
- **Mar. 9, 7pm:** [New Member Orientation](#) (Zoom)
- **Mar. 14:** League Talk: National Popular Vote, LWV Asheville President Suzanne Fisher (Zoom)
- **Mar. 15:** *Equal Pay Day*
- **Mar. 22:** *Ramadan Begins*
- **Mar. 25, 10am:** [Keep Charlotte Beautiful Street Cleanup](#) (741 Kenilworth Avenue)
- **Mar. 28, 7pm:** LWVCM Book Club: [Invisible Women... by Caroline Criado Pérez](#) (Zoom)
- **April 4, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting (Zoom)
- **April 5:** *Passover Begins*
- **April 9:** *Easter*
- **April 12:** Lunch with the League
- **April 22:** *Earth Day*

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](#), upholding voting rights by [Packing the Court](#) on in Raleigh on February 2, and advocating for the publication of the [ERA](#).



- We are looking for swag for the welcome bags for the **LWVNC Convention** to be held at the Doubletree Suites in Charlotte-Southpark from May 19-21. If any of you have contacts with businesses, organizations or teams that might wish to donate items, please contact LWVCM Vice President Linda Levy (levyollie@aol.com) and/or Secretary Pam Liebman (plcgovt@gmail.com).

League Action & Happenings

Civics 101 Enrollment Exceeds Expectations

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg kicks off its signature Civics 101 Program this month with 120 participants, exceeding the one hundred person goal. Fifty of those registrants have opted to attend in person, with the rest joining via Zoom. The Civics 101 Team aims to attract new members through this offering, as most of the attendees are not yet a part of the League.

The six-week program begins with a session focused on the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections, and will continue with sessions focused on Mecklenburg County government, City of Charlotte government, NC Courts (District 26), Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools (CMS) Board of Education, and Media. Elected officials as well as administration leaders participate in formal presentations as well as interactive discussions with the audience. Journalists from various media (print, radio, digital, TV) will share insights at our final session. They are: Ann Doss Helms, Education Reporter (WFAE/NPR); Joe Bruno, Politics and Breaking News Reporter (WSOC-TV/ABC); Katie Peralta, Charlotte Editor (Axios); Herbert White, Editor-in-Chief (*The Charlotte Post*); and Diego Barahona, Editor (*La Noticia*).

“We could not do this without the support of our volunteers!” says Civics 101 Lead Jane Hoffmann. “Ten League volunteers have worked diligently for several months planning this program, and will support this important educational offering every week in person.”

The volunteers endeavor to ensure all participants have a satisfying experience while learning how local government works and becoming inspired to engage in local politics.

Interested in attending a future Civics 101 Program? To join our waitlist, email us at: civics101@goleaguego.org

LWVCM Nominating Committee Calls for Candidates for 2023-2024 Slate

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg 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. Do you know of someone who would make a great leader? Do you wish to make an impact yourself? Those interested in serving, whether a seasoned member or new to the League, should contact Donna Armbrister via email: darmbrister44@gmail.com.

Feb. Lunch with the League to Welcome U.S. Attorney for the Western District of NC

The LWVCM is thrilled to welcome Dena J. King as our speaker for Lunch with the League on February 8 in room 250 of the Myers Park Baptist Church.

Use the League website Events page to [register here](#). Participants may bring their own lunches or order them at the time of registration. Lunch options and instructions for ordering are on the event page.

U.S. Attorney King was officially sworn in as United States Attorney for the Western District of North Carolina on November 29, 2021. She has more than 15 years in public service, and leads an office of approximately 100 federal prosecutors and staff, located in Charlotte and in Asheville, that serves more than three million residents throughout North Carolina's 32 westernmost counties, including residents of the Eastern Band of Cherokee Indian Reservation.



U.S. Attorney King joined the U.S. Attorney's Office in the Western District of North Carolina in September 2020, as Deputy Criminal Chief overseeing the Violent Crimes and Narcotics Section, and as Lead Task Force Attorney for the Office's Organized Crime Drug Enforcement Task Force (OCDETF) program.

U.S. Attorney King graduated magna cum laude from North Carolina State University in 2003, where she received a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Management. Ms. King received her Juris Doctor in 2006, from North Carolina Central University School of Law.

League Action & Happenings

18 Groups Join LWVCM Push for Equity in CMS

On January 26, the League hosted a public engagement session “Impact on Equity: How Does the CMS Revised Comprehensive Plan Improve Educational Opportunities for ALL Students?” at the Government Center. The Comprehensive Plan is a multi-billion-dollar proposal to renovate and replace facilities, to add or change magnet programs across the district, and to change student assignments. Sharing a concern that the plan must address the district’s goal of Equity—providing opportunities and resources needed to ensure that all schools are high-achieving—eighteen fellow public education advocates joined the effort, including: **NC Black Child Development Institute; Carolina Jews for Justice, Charlotte; Charlotte Clergy Coalition for Justice; Charlotte Minister’s Council; CharlotteEAST; Communities in Schools; Friendship Missionary Baptist Church; Latin American Education Committee; MeckED; Metro District United Women in Faith; NAACP Charlotte Mecklenburg Branch; NC International Minority Coalition; NC Association of Black School Educators; Reimagining America Project; Unitarian Universalist Community of Charlotte; United Missionary Baptist Association; Urban League of Central Carolinas; and YWCA Central Carolinas.**

Concerns over increasing inequities have spurred advocates to apply a laser focus to the plan. While acknowledging the value of renovating or replacing facilities that no longer meet a minimum standard for a safe and effective learning environment for all schools and communities, the revised plan does not yet ensure Equity, especially in currently low-performing schools. Specifically, advocates asked CMS to create more magnet programs and school boundary changes to strengthen SES diversity and provide rich educational opportunities needed in these schools to improve student achievement.

The plan which now includes 40 major building projects, changes in magnet programs, and alterations to school boundaries and student assignments is scheduled to be presented to (2/14) and voted on (2/28) by the CMS Board of Education. An original list of 125 projects with an estimated cost of \$5.3 billion has been reduced to 40 projects with a projected cost of \$2.88 billion. The school board will need to decide which projects to put in front of the Board of County Commissioners in March for consideration for a November bond referendum. Once the BOCC puts a final dollar amount on the referendum, it will be in the hands of Mecklenburg County voters.

Also in January, LWVCM President Suzanne Elsberry addressed the BOCC during their Budget Hearing (1/18) on the value of public education. She was accompanied by Education Action Team Co-Leads Jeanne Smith and Linda Traum, and resident BOCC sage Lucille Howard.

Where Do We Go from Here?

The League encourages fellow public education advocates to continue to engage with CMS Staff, Board Members and the BOCC throughout the process of the plan revisions, approval, determination of the bond’s size, and finally educating your community to support the passage of the bond referendum on Nov. 7.

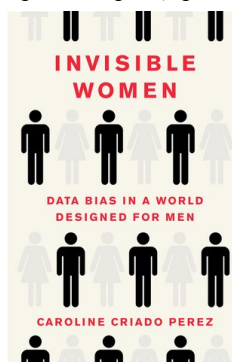
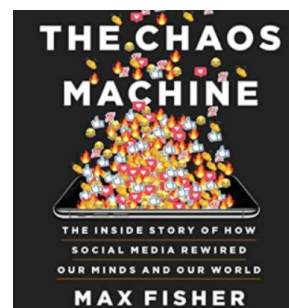


Ways to Continue to Engage

1. Attend [remaining meetings](#) between now and Feb. 8.
2. Continue to ask questions and give feedback to CMS staff by email to: cmsreview23@cms.k12.nc.us or using this [form](#).
3. Educate yourself and others about the plan with this [presentation deck](#) and [video presentation](#).
3. Attend CMS Board Meetings on Comprehensive Plan: Tuesday, February 14: Presentation/Discussion
Tuesday, February 28: Vote
4. Advocate for the Construction Bond in your community.
5. Attend Board of County Commissioners Meeting in March (date TBD).

LWVCM January Book Club Recap

A group of book-loving leaguers gathered on Zoom on January 31 to discuss “The Chaos Machine: The Inside Story of How Social Media Rewired Our Minds and Our World” by Max Fisher. A worthy read was the general consensus. Participants have been recommending it to friends and family. If you have the stomach for feeling outraged, grab a copy.



March Book Club Preview

For the March 28 meeting, we will read *Invisible Women: Data Bias in a World Designed for Men* by Caroline Criado Pérez.

League Action & Happenings

LWVCM January League Talk Explored the Historic Nature of the 2022 Midterms

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg was pleased to welcome Dr. Michael Bitzer, Professor of Politics and History at Catawba College to speak about the results of the 2022 Midterms with a particular focus on the judicial races for North Carolina's Supreme Court. Professor Bitzer's most recent book is entitled [Re-districting and Gerrymandering in NC: Battlelines in the Tar Heel State](#). Numerous local, state and national news outlets have sought his professional analyses over the years and political devotees follow his blog: [Old North State Politics](#). Dr. Bitzer can also be found on Twitter [@BowTiePolitics](#).



Dr. Bitzer is cautious about gazing ahead to make any predictions. "I will admit my crystal ball got cracked in 2016, and I haven't found anyone able to repair it," he shared. He did, however, offer an interesting analysis of the historic nature of the recent midterms. Generally reliable indicators—the party in power in the White House suffers in midterms; economics, especially inflation, make the midterm election a referendum on the president's party; and Presidential approval aligning with seats lost—were all out the window in 2022. And polarized politics was more a sign than anything else.

Those interested in listening to Dr. Bitzer's talk, can find it on our [LWV of Charlotte-Mecklenburg YouTube channel](#).

"Critical Race Theory" by Jonathan Harris Captures Global Attention

Detroit artist, Jonathan Harris painted this piece entitled "Critical Race Theory" in answer to the formerly academic topic examining the ways racism is entrenched in American legal systems and rules. Now in the hands of a private collector, a thousand prints of the painting have been sold worldwide.

The painting features the collective portraits of three of America's foremost civil rights advocates—Martin Luther King, Jr., Harriet Tubman, and Malcolm X—being "literally wiped out" by a blonde figure applying white-wash. Harris's work reflects the attempt to not only obscure the figures, but the "inherent ugliness of our history of slavery, oppression and structural racism" as well.

The piece, which at first blush may appear radical, was inspired by the fact that thirty five states have bills pending meant to restrict the teaching of Critical Race Theory because the bills' sponsors deem it as a "divisive topic."

Harris says he was inspired by the possibility of these bills being passed stating: "I fear if we don't push back as these bills are getting passed, this painting could be our future."



Photo courtesy of Jonathan Harris. Originally appeared in [ARTNETNEWS](#) article by Sara Coscone.

League News

Welcome New League Members

New Member in January 2023

Emily DeAugustino

New Member Orientation

On March 9 at 7pm, the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg will host its New Member Orientation via Zoom. If you have not attended an orientation, please feel free to join us! You may register on the events page of our website: goleaguego.org or by clicking [here](#). Videoconference information will be provided in an email once registration is complete.

Attendees will learn from Chapter Board Members and Action Team Leaders about the League of Women Voters' culture, respective roles, goals and activities.

An interactive Q&A will be featured to offer our new members the opportunity to learn more about engagement in their areas of interest and other topics.

Special guest Ernie Mowell of LWV of Henderson County will inform us about League nonpartisanship policy.

Please mark your calendars now and plan to attend this very informative, not to be missed event!

We look forward to seeing you!

Reminders

- You can now go to our updated website at www.goleaguego.org to pay dues and to sign up for Interest groups.
- For the February meeting of [Lunch with the League](#), you will be able to order lunch or bring your own. Payment will be by cash or check at the door. The event page details menu offerings and how to order.

ClubExpress Corner: Evites and Website Email Function

We are sunsetting Evite. Our new engagement platform has internal features that allow us to streamline platforms we use. To ensure that you are connected to all events, we will align and utilize all current communication tools and platforms to sunset Evite and share event information.

This past month, you may have noticed that the Voter calendar highlighted upcoming events. A few days later you received an email blast with the events listed and links to the website to registers. Until we get accustomed to checking the calendar independently, we will continue to use the Voter and one comprehensive email to share upcoming events.

The internal event email system batches communications by two categories, those who have registered for an event and those who have not.

If you register for an event, within 15 minutes you will receive a confirmation email. This email details the event logistics. You can also expect to receive two more emails leading up to the event; one reminder a week out and another 1-2 days before the event. Each email will again share location/Zoom information.

If you have not registered for an event, two weeks out from the event, you will receive a reminder email that there is an upcoming event. This is to ensure that you did not miss it and that you are up to date on any events that are happening.

Currently, these practices will be in place for all events, except Civics 101, which requires a more detailed and customized communication process for participants.

If you feel like you are receiving too many emails, there is an opt out feature at the end of the reminder emails. Please note, if you chose to opt out, LWVCM website administrators will not be able to confirm or change the level of your settings. You will have to reach out to customer service to adjust that or do so in your member profile.

We encourage you to activate your account and to login when you register for events. Currently, you do not have to login to register for events. But as we engage more with the community and non-members, having members to login will support our membership database record keeping.

Look for more tips in the next Voter.

-Shanda Martin, LWVCM Webmaster and Board Member



Phone: 1-866-457-2582

Email: support@clubexpress.com

Support hours : 6:30 AM to 9:00 PM Central

(7:30 AM to 10:00 PM Eastern)

Monday-Friday



Thoughts & Concerns about Washington's 118th Congress

After the fifteen-round election circus, Kevin McCarthy (R-CA) finally realized his dream of becoming Speaker of the U.S. House. He's now begun to "pay the piper" for his ruthless rise to power through the exchange of votes for top-level House Committee assignments. Unfortunately, the American people will assume the burden of his corrupt bargain with the extremists, insurrection supporters and election deniers of his conference.

McCarthy appointed Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) to the coveted Homeland Security Committee which has traditionally required a background in intelligence and/or military experience and years of congressional service. This is a travesty of the highest order as Taylor Greene possesses none of these qualifications and worse. Due to her promotion of racism, anti-Semitism, violence and conspiracy theories, she was stripped of her committee assignments in 2021. It should be noted that a Secret Service report on January 24 stated that a quarter of mass shootings in the U.S. can be credited to conspiracy theories or hateful ideologies prominent

in our current political discourse. Many of her constituents attempted to disqualify her midterm candidacy owing to her involvement in the failed attempt to overthrow the 2020 election results.

Taylor Greene's second assignment to the House Oversight and Accountability Committee, which is responsible for Congressional investigations, places her in the ideal position to inflict her long-held desire for vengeance upon members of the opposition. Serving with her, is a disreputable cadre of election deniers and right-wing extremists, including Gary Palmer (R-AL), Lauren Boebert (R-CO), Scott Perry (R-PA), and Byron Donalds (R-FL). An additional affront to the legitimacy of these committees is the re-appointment of Representative Paul Gosar (R-AZ). Gosar, as did Greene, previously lost his committee seats in Congress for using social media to threaten Democratic legislators. These appointments bear no relation to oversight or quality governance, but only empower legislators who seek revenge and who plan to sabotage and impugn the current administration.


First term Representative George Santos (R-NY) received two appointments: the House Committee on Small Business and the House Committee on Science, Space and Technology. Santos, who lied audaciously in his campaign about key elements of his background, is considered by many in his party and constituency as unqualified for office. There is a strong call for his resignation. Admitting him to Congress with the grant of a top-secret security clearance is not only folly, but a threat to the country's security. Appallingly, due his party's slim vote margin, he's likely to retain his House seat and committee assignments.

Speaker McCarthy's threat to hold the debt ceiling captive to spending cuts to Social Security, Medicare and other social programs amounting to \$130 billion mirrors his bargain with his extremist members. His alignment with their demands fails to signify fiscal responsibility and creates hostages of U.S. and world economies. Failure to lift the debt ceiling to pay our established debts also risks increasing the current unemployment rate from 5 percent to 9 percent, a possible recession, higher interest rates and a potential loss of approximately 6 million jobs. Apparently, to Speaker McCarthy, these threats to the well-being and good standing of our country and to the state of the global economy are negligible compared to the directives of the House majority's fanatical right wing.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Suzanne Elsbury".

President, League of Women Voters
of Charlotte Mecklenburg

The League of Women Voters turns 103 this February 14. Celebrate this anniversary by [joining the League!](#)



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

103 YEARS

**OF EMPOWERING
VOTERS AND
DEFENDING
DEMOCRACY.**

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
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Dated Material

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