

Empowering Voters.
Protecting Democracy.

Newsletter for August 2023

REACHING LWVCM

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Charlotte Pride Festival & Parade to Host a Record Number of LGBTQ+ Allied Organizations

The Charlotte Pride Festival and Parade will return to the streets of Uptown Charlotte later this month from August 19-20. This year marks more than 20 years of Charlotte Pride and more than 40 years of Pride legacy in the Queen City.

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg will once again participate in this important event to show support for our LGBTQ+ community by hosting a voter registration and education booth both days and marching in the parade on Sunday, August 20.

Leaguers interested in registering and educating voters at the booth may sign up for 2-hour time slots using [Sign Up Genius here](#). There are still slots remaining for both days. Volunteers must be League members to register voters. The booth will be stocked with LWV giveaways, membership brochures, voter registration forms, general election information, details about this year's election law changes, Voter ID information and our "What's on Your Ballot" primer. For questions about the voter registration booth, contact Regan Aduddell: raduddell61@gmail.com.

Those wishing to walk in the Pride Parade with the League may [register here](#). Members should feel free to bring friends and family to the parade! Please register for all who will be walking so an accurate headcount may be reported to the organizers. Marchers will receive more information about the recommended arrival time, meet-up location, and what to bring as the date approaches. For questions about marching in the parade, please email: communications@goleaguego.com.

League parade monitors will have some beads, fans, stickers, buttons, and small Pride flags. [Check out the League shop](#) for more LWV Pride-themed gear to get ready for the Festival & Parade like a LWV Pride shirt and hat!

Please remember that the LWV does not endorse or oppose political parties or candidates. Therefore, participants are welcome to join our activities if their participation is nonpartisan in nature and they are not currently running for elected office. Partisan signs, buttons, hats, banners, and rhetoric are prohibited at our events.



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Find updates for League action and activities at goleaguego.org



Coming Events

Coming Up in August, September & October

- **Aug. 12, 10am:** [Keep Charlotte Beautiful Street Cleanup](#) (741 Kenilworth Ave)
- **Aug. 19-20:** CHARLOTTE PRIDE FESTIVAL [Voter Registration](#) and [Parade](#) sign ups
- **Aug. 23:** *International Day for the Remembrance of the Slave Trade & its Abolition*
- **Aug. 26:** Women's (In)Equality Day: Special Video Presentation Release
- **Aug. 26, 11am:** New Board Member Orientation (MPBC, Conf. Room 250)
- **September:** *Hispanic Heritage Month*
- **Sept. 4:** *Labor Day*
- **Sept. 12:** Primary Election for City of Charlotte
- **Sept. 14, 10am/6pm:** Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Training for Board Members/Team Leads: Module 1
- **Sept. 15:** *International Day of Democracy/Rosh Hashanah begins*
- **Sept. 19:** *National Voter Registration Day*
- **Sept. 19, 7pm:** League Talk: Meck. Co. BOE Director Michael Dickerson (Zoom registration TBA)
- **Sept. 22:** *National Native American Day*
- **Sept. 24:** *Yom Kippur*
- **Sept. 26:** LWVCM Book Club
- **October:** *Breast Cancer Awareness Month/Domestic Violence Awareness Month*
- **Oct. TBD:** Huntersville Commission Candidate Forum
- **Oct. 3, 6:30pm:** Board Meeting
- **Oct. 9:** *National Indigenous Peoples' Day*
- **Oct. 10:** Second Primary Election for City of Charlotte-If Needed
- **Oct. 10:** *World Mental Health Day*
- **Oct. 11, 11:30am:** Lunch with the League: Social Justice Poets (MPBC, Conf. Room 250)
- **Oct. 12, 10am/6pm:** Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Training for Board Members/Team Leads: Module 2

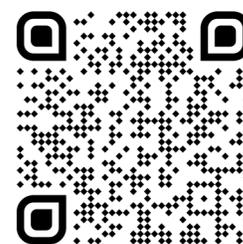
League Announcements

Follow us on our [League in Action](#) app! See what Actions you can take for the League and our Democracy. Current Actions include: spreading the word about the [new Voter ID requirements](#) in NC; pushing for the publication of the [ERA](#); learning about the [LWV's Fight for the National Voter Registration Act](#); and opposing public funding of private schools.



LIA for Google

To try this new, easy way to engage with the League. Scan the QR code to get started with our League in Action app. It only takes seconds to join. And many of the actions our chapter has listed take just a few minutes to complete. League members and volunteers wanting to stay connected will find this digital tool simple to use. Just hop on and start taking action for LWVCM and even the LWVUS. This powerful tool is perfectly suited to add capacity and magnify our efforts to empower voters and defend democracy. **Try it today!**



LIA for Apple

League Action & Happenings

LWVCM Education Team Facilitates CMS Listening Session on 2029 Strategic Plan

The LWVCM Education Action Team worked with the Charlotte Mecklenburg Schools Board of Education to engage community members and education advocates in a Listening Session. The Education Team reached out to 23 community allied organizations to encourage them to provide information about the event to their members.

The CMS Listening Session was held on July 27 at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center with a total of 34 people participating in the session which was held in-person and online.

Two CMS School Board candidates Liz Monterrey and Monty Witherspoon, and a candidate for NC House Representative Lisa Jewell (District 98) attended the session.

Jennifer De La Jara, Summer Nunn, and Lenora Shipp, CMS Board members, asked participants to respond to questions related to “what they hoped students would know and be able to do by the end of elementary, middle and high school.” Additionally, participants were invited to share their thoughts on “what our school system is doing well and what they are not doing well.” A good discussion ensued with some of the most vocal respondents being teachers. Responses were recorded and the CMS School Board will consider them as they develop new goals and guidelines.

Several League Public Education allied organizations had a representative in attendance including the NC Black Child Development Institute, Communities in Schools, MeckMin and MeckEd.

Five more Student Outcomes Focused Governance (SOFG) Listening Sessions will be held during the next two weeks. See the [CMS calendar](#) for details.

School Board Member De La Jara says, “the viewpoints and ideas expressed by participants are invaluable to the BOE as it embarks on reevaluating its Goals and Guardrails, the metrics by which the Board evaluates itself and the Superintendent. The BOE will be hosting another SOFG workshop on Saturday Aug 19 at the Government Center, which is open to the public and will also be live streamed. This is the next step in the process of synthesizing the collective community feedback and working alongside the Superintendent to develop CMS’s next strategic plan. A heartfelt thank you to the League of Women Voters and your community partners for sharing your vision and values with us.”

CMS Board of Education created a short survey to gain community input to help them determine their next set of priorities. [Complete the survey today!](#)

Women’s Equality Day Commemorated by the LWVCM in Special Video Presentation

On August 26, the day the LWV now refers to as Women’s (In)Equality Day, members of the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg will receive access to a special video presentation narrated by Suzanne Elsberry, featuring abolitionist and American hero Harriet Tubman as portrayed by member DonnaMarie Woodson.

The presentation is an excerpted version of a script written by Mary Lou Bennett of the LWV-Moore County. We both acknowledge and thank her for permission to adapt one of her scripts from “Lunch with Legends,” her annual series that has been running for 15 years.

An Organizational Assessment of Our League Chapter Is Underway

The LWVCM has embarked on a guided organizational assessment to identify key areas for improvement, growth and best practices/principles. This systematic review is being conducted with the help of a consultant from Executive Service Corps of the Triangle (ESC) based in Durham. ESC conducted a similar, successful review for LWV-Wake County.

Moral Monday Comes to Charlotte

Several members of the LWVCM Education and Voter Service Teams participated in the Moral Monday rally on June 24 in Uptown Charlotte. Many concerned citizens came out to support the Poor People’s Campaign event titled “Wake the Sleeping Giant”. Reverend Dr. William J. Barber made an appearance to the delight of the crowd gathered at the Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center. Barber called out NC Legislators on an “extreme and violent agenda.” Read more about [Barber’s remarks and the event here](#).

Board Members and Team Leads of LWVCM to Partake in Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Training

Members of the Board and Action Team Leads will participate in DEI Training. The five DEI training modules created by the LWVUS will be used to guide two groups of approximately 10 participants through thoughtful activities and conversation at once-a-month, in-person meetings in September, October, November, January and February.

LWVCM to Co-Host Huntersville Candidate Forum

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg is making plans to co-host a Candidate Forum ahead of the Huntersville municipal election in November. Organizers of the nonpartisan forum intend to solicit questions from Huntersville residents ahead of the hybrid event. They will also record the forum in order to share it on LWVCM and Huntersville social media. *The LWVCM is available to facilitate other nonpartisan political forms.*

League Action & Happenings

Board of Elections Director Dickerson to Address the LWVCM During League Talk Next Month

Michael Dickerson, Director of the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections will be the featured speaker at our next League Talk on September 19 at 6:30 PM (via Zoom). Mr. Dickerson will give us an update on the changes in voting laws—for example, the North Carolina Photo ID requirement. (Please see the [Voter ID](#) page on the State Board of Elections site for details prior to the next election on September 12.

Many of you may be familiar with Mr. Dickerson if you have attended our popular Civics 101 program. He has generously offered his time and expertise to present to Civics 101 participants about All Things BOE.

Mark your calendars for what promises to be a very informative talk. Members should feel free to invite others they think would like to attend. Registration information will be on our Events page in the coming days.

Biography

Michael Dickerson is the director of the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections. He is responsible for administering the election process for the U.S. citizens of Mecklenburg County, including voter administration, precinct management, absentee and early voting, candidate registration, and campaign finance.

He joined the County in 1998 as director. Previously, he served as a deputy assistant staff director for the Federal



Michael Dickerson

Election Commission in Washington, D.C.

He holds a bachelor's degree from Guilford College.

The Mecklenburg County Board of Elections Needs You!

The Mecklenburg County Board of Elections needs volunteers to staff the upcoming elections. In particular, they are looking for people to work as Chief Judges, Judges, Provisional/Transfer Assistants and Equipment Assistants. Training will be provided. More information about these positions can be found on the [BOE website](#). If you are interested in working at the polls on Election Day, you may access the [application form here](#). If you are able to work at Early Voting, [use this application form](#).



Lunch with the League to Feature Two North Carolina Poets

The October Lunch with the League meeting will feature two North Carolina poets—Barbara Conrad and David Radavich—for selected readings of their poetry focusing on Social Justice.

[Barbara Conrad](#), a League member of the LWV-Asheville-Buncombe County chapter, writes poetry, some of which focuses on the “hard truths of social injustice.” In addition to her work as a poet, she teaches workshops, conducts readings, and writes books and articles. Her books are *Wild Plums*, *There Is A Field*, *The Color Of Gravity*, and (as editor) *Waiting for Soup*. Her latest book, in process, is *Never Live Under A Tulip Poplar*.

David Radavich is a socially



David Radavich



Barbara Conrad

committed poet, playwright and essayist. He has served as president of the Thomas Wolfe Society, the Charlotte Writer's Club and the

North Carolina Poetry Society. David currently administers the Gilbert-Chappell Distinguished Poet Series. His poetry collections include two epics, *America Bound* (2007) and *America Abroad* (2019), *Middle East Mezze* (2011) and *The Countries We Live In* (2014). His latest book is *Unter der Sonne/Under the Sun: German and English Poems*. (Deutscher Lyrik Verlag, 2021). David and his wife, Anne, live in Charlotte and are members of League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg.

Registration details will be sent out to members and friends of the League soon. But mark your calendars for October 11 now. Invite friends and colleagues to join. This event is open to members and the public alike. Lunch will be held in Conference Room 250 in the Education Building of Myers Park Baptist Church at 11:30 AM.



Preserving Our Fundamental Right: The Right to Vote

“The right to vote is a fundamental right, preservative of all other rights. If the right to vote is undermined, it renders illusory all ‘other rights, even the most basic’ ...”

—Justice Anita Earls, Associate Justice of the Supreme Court of North Carolina

Ideally, our state government should be about assuring its citizens easy access to the ballot box versus placing impediments to their constitutionally guaranteed right to vote. The League supports free, fair and accessible elections for all eligible Americans, and strongly opposes the creation of obstacles preventing full participation in our democratic processes.

Following the reversal of the North Carolina Supreme Court's declaration that the requirement of voter photo identification is unconstitutional, voters in our state will once again be asked to show “acceptable Photo ID” to cast a ballot. The new voting law will commence with the September 12 Primary Election for the City of Charlotte. Absent this identification, in-person voters are required to complete a form showing a “reasonable impediment” to submit a provisional ballot (counted only if the form is deemed accurately completed.) Voting by mail also requires the enclosure of an ID photocopy or the completion of an exception form.

The implementation of this new law is a costly and unnecessary attempt to address the nearly non-existent problem of voter impersonation. For example, in 2016 there was 0.00002% credible instances of in-person voter fraud in our state translating to one fraudulent vote out of nearly 4.8 million cast. This solution in search of a problem will doubtless lead to the potential disenfranchisement of tens of thousands of citizens, the majority of whom, according to recent studies, are eligible rural and minority voters.

The League is working to ensure voters will have the necessary information about changes in the voting process in advance of the upcoming elections. Please go to www.Vote411.org and the North Carolina State Board of Elections website (ncsbe.gov*) to obtain up-to-date comprehensive information on all aspects of voting.

Voting is the most basic democratic right of Americans to exercise an equal voice in the way in which they are governed. Any barriers to this constitutional guarantee pose a dire threat to our democracy.

As we begin our fiscal year and move into our 104th anniversary, I thank our new Board, Action Team Leaders, members, donors and partners for their invaluable contributions helping to make us the strong and robust organization of today. Our membership roster has continued to grow over the years from 153 members in 2017 to our current number approaching 280! I urge you to invite friends, co-workers and relatives to join the League and help us in our mission to empower the vote and defend democracy!

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

*The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg assumes no responsibility for the currency, accuracy, or legality of content of external websites.

League News

Welcome to New League Members

New Members in July

Gail Williams	Sarah George
Anne Zahlan	David Radavich
Monty Witherspoon	Edna Huneycutt
Ali Cem Saydam	

Member News

In June and July, many people renewed their memberships. To those who had not renewed, reminder postcards were sent and calls were made.

ClubExpress Support



Phone: 1-866-457-2582

Email: support@clubexpress.com

Support hours : 7:30 AM to 10:00 PM, M-F

A Brief, Recent History of the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg added a brief, recent history of our community engagement and advocacy to our website. It is visible to the public. A historical summary is shared in bullet points through the years (2000-2022), with a link to the full report for those who want to learn more about specific events and advocacy work. Many activities included partnering with other chapters in NC as well as the state organization. League members can take pride in the hard, important work that has been accomplished! The League plans to use this summary to raise public awareness of the League and all it does, as well as encourage residents of Mecklenburg and surrounding counties to join the League. [“Click here”](#) to review our recent past actions and take pride in the part you played in making it happen! Share the [“link”](#) with friends and family. We hope to inspire people to join and get engaged in the important work of empowering voters and defending democracy. Share your feedback at goleaguego@gmail.com.



Communications Team Volunteer Opportunities

The Communications Team wants you! Join us to help with our monthly newsletter ([Voter](#)), support our social media outlets ([Twitter](#), [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [League in Action](#)), or join our strategy committee to offer a member's perspective.

VOLUNTEER AS:

*Co-Editor of the LWVCM Newsletter, the *Voter*

*Social Media Coordinator

*Communications Strategy Team Member (Member POV)

If you are interested in these opportunities in more detail, please email: communications@goleaguego.org.

Op-Ed: “Democracy Straining to Survive” by Harry Taylor

Despite the normal once-per-decade election map redrawing for U.S. House, N.C. Senate/House, all will be reconfigured prior to 2024 elections. Legal decisions and the state supreme court swing to GOP control in 2022 opened the flood gates for the legislature to make generous use of severe gerrymanders across the board. A tactic used by both parties over the years.

Expect U.S. House seat distribution to change from current 7-7 to 10-4 or 11-3 in favor of the GOP. State senate and house maps will further cement the Republican's super-majorities. Coupled with the openly partisan state justice system, there will be no avenue to force map reconfigurations through the courts. The sole exception could occur if map-drawers trip up and create districts that disadvantage minorities.

Of concern, the U.S. Supreme Court (SCOTUS) ruled that Alabama must redraw Congressional maps to create a second minority district. That state legislature thumbed its nose at the court, and redrew the maps without that district. Across the country, we see GOP controlled legislatures defying state and federal constitutions, state courts, and even SCOTUS.

All this chaos to suppress voting and rig elections is straining our democracy, a strain not confined to the U.S. Italy, Brazil, Venezuela, Hungary, and now Israel no longer operate as democracies. One of our two political parties has been “going to school” on those disasters. Enthralled with Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán's *illiberal democracy*, the Conservative Political Action Committee (CPAC) has twice traveled to Budapest to hear Orbán share how to achieve such electoral success. How does that go over with Hungarians? Take a moment to read [It happened there: How Democracy Died in Hungary](#). Former parliament member Zsuzsanna Széleányi says “Hungary is not a democracy anymore; parliament is a decoration for a one-party state. Most observers **didn't understand what Orbán was up to until it was too late**. He benefited from the supermajority so quickly that no one really realized” what had happened.

If “until it was too late” prompts a double take...yes...that's an apt observation of how most of America is treating these non-stop threats to democracy.

The views expressed in this op-ed are those of the author and not those of the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg.

The League in the News

League Leadership Interviewed for Sharon View Place Resident Human Interest Project

Sharon View Place residents Suzanne Elsberry and Margaret Howe-Soper share more than just a neighborhood. They share a passion for politics and volunteering with the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg.

Suzanne joined in 2012 after relocating to Charlotte. She has been president of the Charlotte Mecklenburg chapter since June 2021. “I am involved with the League 24/7,” says Suzanne. “I just love it. I am a people-person and I have always been very interested in politics.”

The LWV is committed to protecting and expanding voting rights and to ensuring everyone is represented in our democracy. “The league is nonpartisan,” says Suzanne. “And we are very careful not to endorse candidates or political parties. Our goal is to educate and advocate for voters.”

One educational offering is Civics 101, six once-a-week classes led by current and former government officials and local media. The sessions cover the Mecklenburg County Board of Elections, County Government, Charlotte City Government, CMS Board of Education, Mecklenburg County Courts, and local media, giving participants an overview of how local government works. “Thanks to the grants we have secured,” notes Suzanne, “we offer the sessions for free. We have also found that after taking the class, people are interested in running for local office.”

The League also offers Vote411, an online resource committed to providing voters the information they need to successfully participate in elections. Information on candidates and their positions on issues is also available on the website. “We stay very busy finding assistance and resources for voters,” says Suzanne. “Currently, we are getting ready to educate people about the changes in N.C. laws for absentee ballots and voter ID.”

One area Suzanne is most proud of is her participation as liaison last year between N.C. league chapters and The Carter Center, a global entity working to ensure the integrity of elections around the world. The Carter Center funded a series of town halls held in each of N.C.’s 14 congressional districts to educate citizens about the electoral process drawing on the knowledge of cybersecurity experts, election officials, and election law attorneys from both political parties. “It was a very rewarding experience,” says Suzanne.

Margaret first joined the League in the 1970s and then took a 35-year hiatus while working and raising a family. After retirement, Margaret relocated to Charlotte and immediately re-joined the League. “It fits in with a lot of what I believe in,” says Margaret. “I like knowing what is going on politically. I want to do more than just vote and the league has a lot of different possibilities for volunteering. I also like that the League is nonpartisan and studies the issues before taking a position on them.”

Margaret has been membership chair and roster-keeper for seven years. At this year’s biennial convention, she won the state award for Outstanding League Board Member. “These awards are very prestigious,” says Suzanne. “We are so proud that one of our members is a recipient of this award. And of course, she earned it!”

When new members join, Margaret invites them to coffee as an orientation to the League. “Every chapter has its peculiarities based on its local community,” says Margaret. “This allows new members to test the waters before they decide where they will fit best.”

Margaret also enjoys working with the League to register new citizens to vote. “It is such an uplifting time for everyone,” says Margaret. “When you realize what our new citizens have been through to become citizens, it makes you grateful to be a part of their journey to be voters and to know that democracy has become stronger. Registering new citizens is the best thing I have done with the League.”

She is also involved with the League’s Education Action Team. “Public schools are a hot topic in N.C.,” says Margaret. “I have two grandchildren in public school so I have a vested interest in supporting our local schools and doing the best we can for them.” A professional librarian, Margaret volunteers in a local school’s media center and has been a reading buddy for five years.

And although it is called the League of Women Voters, men are involved with the League as well. “There was some discussion of changing the name,” says Margaret, “but the League decided against it. However, men are welcomed and we have a few serving in leadership positions in our local League. We are very happy to have them.”

“We welcome all new members,” says Suzanne. “Despite varied interests, we offer something for everyone.”

“I like that the local League is so diverse,” says Margaret. “We have members from all over the country who now live in Charlotte. The League is big enough for everyone. But what I like best is that the League gives me something to think about. And it provides a way for me to make friends and have fun.”

To learn more about the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg and volunteering opportunities, you can visit their website – <https://www.goleaguego.org>

—Excerpt reprinted with permission from the Summer 2023 Edition of the Sharon View Place HOA Newsletter



Women's (In)Equality Day is August 26! The LWVUS demands lawmakers restore and protect our rights by: 1) Passing voting rights legislation; 2) Adding the ERA to the Constitution; and 3) Restoring reproductive rights to women and those who can become pregnant.

LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG

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