

Recollections of Dr. Deborah Ann Turner



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Dear Leaguers and Friends of the League,

You may have learned the shocking and heartbreaking news that the LWVUS President Dr. Deborah Ann Turner died on Sunday, January 28.

I first saw Dr. Turner as she chaired the LWVUS Convention in Denver, Colorado in June, 2022. The convention had barely begun when we received the devastating news of the SCOTUS decision overturning Roe v Wade. That evening, Dr. Turner led the assembly in chanting and singing and bearing signs in a protest march to the Capitol. I met her as we gathered under the gold dome and subsequently identified her to the surrounding news reporters from whom she graciously took questions.

Months later, I attended the 75th anniversary celebration of the Piedmont Triad in Chapel Hill at which Dr. Turner was the keynote speaker. She charmed and delighted the audience by opening, as she had done at the convention, with a joyful, inspirational song which we came to recognize as her signature for every speaking event. I was fortunate to have been seated across from her at the dinner following, and along with the other guests, was treated to her many personal stories and observations.

LWVCM hosted the North Carolina State League convention in May and once again, we were honored with her visit to our state. Attendees found her, as had I, down-to-earth, friendly, warm and always interested in the voices of others. Despite our National President being so very approachable, warm and responsive, one inevitably experienced the feeling of being in the presence of greatness. It was a supreme honor for me to have known her. Due to her frequent visits to our state, many North Carolina Leaguers have remarked upon our special feelings of affinity and connection with Dr. Turner.

Recalling Dr. Turner, the word "JOY" registers in my mind. Although dealing with very serious and profound issues, she approached her work with a joyfulness that was delightful and contagious. Doubtless, her legacy of "Keep on Keeping on" will remain with us through the next 103 years of the League as we empower voters and defend democracy coupled with a sense of determination and JOY inspired by this extraordinary woman and leader!

Suzanne Elsberry, President
 League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg



Dr. Deborah Ann Turner's Life and the LWVUS Plans to Continue Her Legacy

A fearless advocate for voting rights and women's rights, Dr. Turner devoted her life's work to impacting meaningful change in the lives of voters across the nation. As the twentieth president of our nearly 104-year-old organization, Dr. Turner played a pivotal role in fighting for a more fair and representative union while uplifting racial equity in the League's mission work.

Dr. Turner first joined the League of Women Voters of Metro Des Moines in 2010 and later served as president until 2015. At the same time, she also served on the LWV Iowa board as the state vice president from 2011 to 2015, becoming co-president in 2015. In her dual roles with state and local Leagues, Deborah devoted her leadership to strengthening relationships between local leagues and the state Board.

Dr. Turner practiced gynecologic oncology for 35 years, working directly with patients and teaching students and trained residents in university programs across the Midwest. She participated in a dozen international medical missions and served as the associate medical director of Planned Parenthood of North Central States.

The LWVUS Board, determined to move forward with the good work Dr. Turner started, met Sunday night in accordance with their bylaws, and Sania Irwin assumed the role of Board president. Additionally, Virginia Kase Solomon, the outgoing CEO, has agreed to stay on staff an additional week to help in the transition. As was already planned, Alma Couverthie and Kelly McFarland will take over as interim co-CEOs while the Board performs their search for a new CEO. Here, too, is [the initial statement made by the LWVUS Board](#).

Condolences may be sent electronically to lwv@lwv.org and in writing to the national office at 1233 20th Street NW, Suite 500, Washington, DC, 20036. All messages will be shared with Dr. Turner's family.