# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS\* OF CHARLOTTE MECKLENBURG

# Voter

# **Empowering Voters.** Protecting Democracy.

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Find updates for League action and		
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# **ELECTION INFORMATION** YOU NEED



# Happy 104 Birthday, Dear LWV!

Wednesday, February 14 is Valentine's Day and also the League of Women Voters' 104th birthday! We celebrate the birthday of an organization which stemmed from the suffrage movement as a "mighty political experiment" to assist 20 million women with their newly won voting rights. Over the ensuing century, the League has progressed into a powerful and respected nonpartisan oraanization with more than 700 state and local chapters influencing public policy and promoting informed civic involvement.



Newsletter for February 2024



Founded by Carrie Chapman Catt in 1920, the League was most recently led by our dearly departed 20th president Deborah Ann Turner. Dr. Turner's passing was a shock to us all and she will be greatly missed. "She was a tireless advocate for voting rights and women's rights," said Voter Service Chair Regan Aduddell. "As we move forward, I keep thinking of something she would say at the end of her speeches: 'we need to keep on keeping on'. And in her memory, that is what we at the League will doreach out and engage voters in our community."

In that spirit, the LWVCM is making its final push for the primary. Next Friday, February 9 is the last day to register voters. Regan and her team is working across the county from college campuses to Crisis Assistance, from Creative Mornings to Sarah Stevenson Tuesday Forum. Outreach is centered around registration and information about the new photo ID requirements. Volunteers may learn about the new registration form by watching the video prepared by state. If you can join Voter Service's efforts now through February 9, please contact Regan at <u>aduddell@lwvnc.org</u>.

## VOTE411 Is Live!

Our VOTE411 Team led by Carolyn Lyons has been hard at work in Mecklenburg, Union, Gaston, Cabarrus, Iredell, and Rowan (new!) counties on our VOTE411.org online voter guides. In addition to candidacy information, the guide includes one-stop, in-person early voting sites and hours for the March 5 elections. Voters can find their sample ballot ahead of the election. The guide also provides information about new photo ID requirements. If you see a candidate has not responded, call on them to do so.

# Coming Events

Coming Up in February, March, and April		
•	February:	Black History Month
•	Feb. 6, 6:30pm:	Board Meeting (LWVCM Office)
•	Feb. 7, 10am:	Education Action Team Meeting (LWVCM Office)
•	Feb. 8, 10am/6pm:	DEI Training for Board Members and Action Team Leads (Zoom)
•	Feb. 9, 5pm:	Voter registration deadline. (Voters may still same-day register during early voting.)
•	Feb. 12, ópm:	2024 Primary Candidate Reception (Innovation Barn, 932 Seigle Avenue, Charlotte)
•	Feb. 14, 11:30am:	LWVUS 104th Bday: "Empowering Our Democracy in 2024!", register here.
•	Feb. 15:	In-person early voting begins.
•	Feb. 15, 10am:	Be Know Dos (BKDs) Meeting (LWVCM Office)
•	Feb. 15, ópm:	Dry Run for Nonpartisan Candidate Forums (Friendship Missionary Baptist Church)
•	Feb. 20, 3pm:	DEI Policy and Practices Webinar
•	Feb. 20, 5:30pm:	LWVNC Communications Workshop: 2024 GOTV Communications Strategies (Zoom)
•	Feb. 20, 6:30pm:	Nonpartisan Candidate Forum: Gov/Lt. Gov/AG/Supt. Public Instruction (Hybrid)*
•	Feb. 21, 6-8:30pm:	2024 Civics 101 Winter Program for 6 consecutive Wednesdays (Hybrid)
•	Feb. 22:	Leandro Day of Action (Raleigh)
•	Feb. 22, 6:30pm	Nonpartisan Candidate Forum: US Congress/NC Senate and House/BOCC (Hybrid)
•	Feb. 27, 5pm:	Absentee ballot request deadline
•	Feb. 27, 6:30pm:	Nonpartisan Candidate Forum: NC Supreme Court/NC Court of Appeals/Secretary
		of State, Treasurer, Auditor, Commissioners of Agri., Insurance and Labor (Hybrid)
•	March:	Women's History Month
•	Mar. 2, 10am:	Mass Poor People's & Low Wage Worker's Moral March to State House Assemblies
•	Mar. 2, 3pm:	In-person early voting ends
•	Mar. 5:	Primary Election Day
•	<b>Mar. 5</b> , 7:30pm:	Absentee ballot return deadline
•	Mar. 6, 10am:	Education Action Team Meeting (LWVCM Office)
•	<b>Mar. 26,</b> 7pm:	LWVCM Book Club I Swear: Politics Is Messier Than My Minivan by Katie Porter
	Apr. 2, 6:30pm:	Board Meeting (Virtual)
•	<b>Apr. 3</b> , 10am:	Education Action Team Meeting (LWVCM Office)

#### **ANNOUNCMENTS:**

The Board is seeking an **Events Coordinator** to help facilitate chapter-wide speaker series, events to engage new members, the annual holiday party, and generate new ideas! Contact <u>membership@goleaguego.org</u>

**Nonpartisan Candidate Forums** will be held at Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (3400 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte) and are cosponsored by the LWVCM Chapter President Suzanne Elsberry will moderate the first forum on February 20 which will include candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Superintendent of Public Instruction. Voter Service members are encouraged to sign up to do voter registration at these events. Look for a SignUp Genius link for this and other volunteer opportunities soon.

#### February 2024

#### League Action & Happenings

#### LWVCM Partners with Friendship Missionary Baptist on Nonpartisan Candidate Forums

Our League chapter will again partner with FMBC's Social Justice Ministry to put on nonpartisan candidate forums ahead of the March 5 Primary. Our own Suzanne Elsberry, President of LWV Charlotte Mecklenburg will moderate the first forum on February 20 at 6:30 PM which will include candidates for Governor, Lieutenant Governor, Attorney General and Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Other forums will take place on Feb. 22 (US Congress, NC Senate and House, and Mecklenburg and Feb. 27 (NC Supreme Court, NC Court of Appeals, Secretary of State, Treasurer, Auditor, and Commissioners of Agriculture, Insurance and Labor.

League members will have the opportunity to volunteer for voter registration tables and other roles as the forums approach. A dry run is scheduled for Thursday, Feb. 15 at 6 PM at Friendship Missionary Baptist Church (3400 Beatties Ford Road, Charlotte) where all forums will be held.

#### LWVNC Tax Policy Review Team Update

Part two of the LWVNC Tax Policy Review Committee presentations leading to a refined tax policy position for advocacy will take place Tuesday, February 20 at 7 PM (Zoom). LWVNC member Dr. Kenneth Klase of Greensboro will talk about the types of state and local taxation, pros/cons and issues of equity.

Register for the webinar using this link.

Supporting an equitable and efficient system of taxation in North Carolina that will adequately fund needed services at both the state and local levels is at the top of LWVNC's current fiscal policy position.

Future sessions will include a discussion of drivers lowering corporate income taxes and working toward member agreement on a revised tax policy position.

If you missed the introductory webinar reviewing NC tax policy with NC Budget and Tax Center Director Alexandra Sirota, you can watch it on the LWVNC YouTube channel at <u>this link</u>. —Lucille Howard

#### Watch Public Schools First NC Webinar

On January 11, <u>Public Schools First NC</u> hosted Professor Jon Hale who engaged in conversation with Dr. Heather Koons (Director of Communications at Public Schools First NC) about Dr. Hale's book <u>The Choice We Face</u>: How Segregation, Race, and Power Have Shaped America's Most Controversial Education Reform Movement. Please find a recording of the book <u>talk here</u>. Education Action Team members have copies of the book that they'd be happy to share. Interested? Reach out via <u>goleaguego@gmail.com</u>.

#### LWVCM to Join Day of Action for Education Rights

Members of the LWVCM Education Action Committee will travel to Raleigh on February 22 to join with our longtime advocacy partners Every Child NC for a Day of Action for Education Rights. That is the day that the North Carolina Supreme Court will (re)hear oral arguments on the Leandro school funding case. To be clear, there has been no material change to the facts of the case. The court's move to reopen a settled case is most unprecedented.

Addressing the UU Social Justice Action Hour, Sarah Montgomery of <u>Every Child NC</u> Coalition and a Senior Education Policy Advocate at the <u>NC Justice Center</u>, briefed attendees about the current state of the Leandro case. "Leandro was designed to disrupt the inequities baked into a business as usual public education funding model. It is intended to lift up those students and communities who have been historically underserved."

Montgomery and her team see two likely scenarios for the case: 1) an uneventful hearing with the justices kicking the case back to the lower courts, or 2) Leandro gets overturned, calling nearly 30 years of established law into question. She was quick to say that, "No matter the outcome, the court cannot take away the constitutional right of a sound basic education for every child in North Carolina."

David Hinojosa from <u>Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights</u> in DC—whose expertise in systemic racial justice work in public education makes him a perfect advisor to Every Child NC—indicated that the November 2022 ruling that ordered the NC General Assembly to immediately transfer funds owed was one of the strongest rulings he had seen. The victory has been in peril every since. In fact, Every Child NC sees the recent legislation that expands the use of vouchers as a cynical response to the Leandro ruling. "Voucher expansion is the other side of the Leandro coin," Montgomery stated.

For those who can travel to Raleigh on February 22, contact Education Action Team Co-chairs Jeanne Smith and Linda Traum at: <u>goleaguego@gmail.com</u>. A bus is being organized. If you cannot make the trip, consider calling your elected officials to request they sign the <u>Candidate Commitment to</u> <u>Leandro</u> to pledge their support for Leandro compliance.



#### League Action & Happenings

#### LWVCM Joins RAP for Healthcare Justice Series

The Reimagining America Project (RAP)—supported by <u>Health Care Justice NC</u>, Coalition for Truth & Reconciliation and the LWV of Charlotte Mecklenburg—hosted a two-part series on "Caring with Strength and Unity: Improving Maternal Health for Black Women."

Those who missed the opportunity to engage live may view the sessions on RAP's YouTube Page using the links below.

#### Session 1:

"Transforming the Maternal Continuum of Care" featured a forum on current efforts to resolve disparities in the care of Black women across pregnancy and postpartum care. Session 2: "Public Policy, Legislation, and Advocacy" covered the disparate Black maternal health outcomes problem.



#### LWVCM March Book Club to Read "I Swear"

March is Women's History Month and also the month when North Carolinians head to the polls to vote in the March 5 Primary Election. In light of these factors, we will read an account of one woman's experiences serving in the US House of Representatives. We invite you to join us in reading and discussing the New York Times bestseller I Swear: Politics Is Messier Than My Minivan by Katie Porter.



**Goodreads:** An honest, inspiring, and laugh-out-loud funny memoir about reenergizing our politics and standing up to corporate America—while carting three kids around in a minivan.

Never having run for office before, Katie Porter charted a new path in 2018 when she was elected to Congress as a Democrat in historically conservative Orange County, California. Underestimated as a single mom and chided

for her progressive values, Katie defied expectations. Then, using her signature whiteboard, she began to take CEOs and corrupt government officials to task in Congressional hearings. The videos went viral, introducing Americans to her no-bullshit style, and making her a coveted guest on cable news and late-night television. (<u>Read more here</u>.)

#### 2024 Civics 101 Program Is Three Weeks Away

Civics 101 starts Wednesday, February 21 for six successive weeks. Topics include: Board of Elections, Mecklenburg County Government, City of Charlotte and towns, CMS Board of Education, NC Courts and a Media Panel. A terrific team of volunteers will make this year's Program a success! Three people who completed Civics 101 in the past two years are on the team based on the impact of their experience. (See testimonial from Mary Hicks.) Lots of new ideas will make this Program better than ever. Members are encouraged to consider attending and inviting friends and family as well. There is no charge to participants who may choose between attending in person or virtually via Zoom. Financial gifts are welcome! The League is dedicated to continuing to offer the program to the public at no cost.



#### Register now for Feb/Mar 2024

Topics covered: Mecklenburg County Board of Elections, Mecklenburg County Government, Charlotte City Council, CMS Board of Education, Local Media, and North Carolina Courts



#### **Participant Testimonial**

"From my own experience being in this program, I can tell you that Civics 101 not only gives you access to the tools and information necessary to make informed decisions when you vote, but it also provides the rare opportunity of meeting local officials who are the ones making a

DIRECT impact on our communities, schools, transportation, and so much more in our daily lives!"

—Mary Hicks, LWVCM Member and Co-Founder of Heartfelt Fashion

Mary and her husband Heartfelt Fashion co-founder Granger Hicks also created a fun video expressing their enthusiasm for the program. <u>Watch it here!</u>

#### February 2024

#### LWVCM President's Perspective



#### Recollections of Dr. Deborah Ann Turner (1950-2024)

I first saw Dr. Turner as she chaired the 55th 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 Orange-Durham-Chatham chapter 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 104 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!



20th President of the LWVUS Dr. Deborah Turner; LWVCM President Suzanne Elsberry and former LWVNC President Jo Nicholas at the LWV-ODC 75th anniversary celebration on September 15, 2022.

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President, League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg



LWVCM at Power the South: Voter Service Chair Regan Aduddell, Communications Lead Sara Baysinger, President Suzanne Elsberry and First Vice President and Education Team Co-Chair Linda Traum

#### LWVCM Members Attended Power the South: North Carolina

Dozens of League leaders from across the state gathered in Greensboro on January 26 and 27 for <u>Power the South: North Carolina</u>. Hotel accommodations and meals were provided by LWVUS.

The idea behind Power the South is to connect League members, encourage thought partnership, and find new ways to support each other.

Informative and engaging sessions – led by LWVUS team members including Southeast Regional Organizer Demetrius Fisher and Chief of Programs Alma Couverthie – focused on what's anticipated for 2024, get-out-the-vote strategizing, ways to combat mis- and dis-information, membership recruitment, and more.

At the closing of Power the South, participants reflected on what they would take away, and the consensus was clear: With gratitude, pride, and passion, the League is ready to double down its efforts as it works to build community in this critical election year!



#### League News

#### Welcome to New League Members

#### **New Members in January**

Christina Caldwell
Helen Wood
Donna Proffit
Jennifer Diesa

Amanda Raymond Heather McLarney Jennifer Staples

#### **Membership Updates**

January 31, 2024 marked the reconciliation of our local roster with the LWVUS roster. Our membership team completed the task on time and with the keenest eye to detail. As of the reconciliation, we are 227 members strong and growing!

Going forward, all members will renew within ClubExpress. Members will receive two renewal notices prior to the anniversary of their join date, and one after. The 60 day grace period is shorter than with our previous system. Once the grace period has passed, if a member has not renewed they will be required to register as a new member once again to maintain contact with the League.

Upon renewal, all members should confirm their contact information is correct within ClubExpress as addresses, phone numbers and emails understandably change over time. Help the League keep in touch with you by double checking your contact details.

#### Carolyn Ruppenthal (Oct. 7, 1936-Jan. 8, 2024)

The LWVCM extends our sincere condolences to the loved ones of Carolyn Ruppenthal. Messages may be shared with the <u>family here</u>. A beautiful remembrance may be <u>read here</u>.

#### The LWVCM Seeks Future Leaders

Interested in serving on the LWVCM Board of Directors? The nominating committee seeks to identify future League leaders to be elected at the Annual Meeting in June. Members of the League's board are committed to promoting its mission of empowering voters and defending democracy by participating in board governance, planning and decision-making. **The League is a great place to get involved and make a difference in your community.** If you'd like to work together with other dedicated volunteers to further the growth and development of our League or know someone who fits this description, please contact <u>Linda Levy</u>, 2024 LWVCM Nominating Committee Chair.

#### You Are Invited to Shape the Be Know Dos (BKDs)

The inaugural meeting of the LWVCM 60+ members held at the League office on January 18 was a huge success!

The 18 participants who attended the kickoff meeting enjoyed fellowship with League members and delicious treats from Mary Condon, our new Membership Engagement Chair. (Thank you, Mary!!!)

Attendees also heard guiding principles—including nonpartisanship, flexibility, connection for fellow 60+ members, rotating administrative roles—from our President Suzanne Elsberry and Mary Condon.

The next meeting of BKDs is scheduled for Thursday, February 15 at 10AM with optional socializing afterwards at the League office at MPBC. Those wishing to attend should RSVP by February 8 to <u>Allison Honeycutt</u>. Look for an optional electronic calendar link soon.

#### League In Action (LIA) Is Here

LIA relational organizing tool is being used by our League to spread our message and provide opportunities large and small for getting involved and supporting the League's mission. The free app can be downloaded wherever people get their apps and there is no need to be a League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg member to download and follow us on League In Action. Join our local and national league circles. Encourage your networks to join today!



Help us empower voters and defend democracy.



Join LWVUS and LWVCM League in Action today!



LIA for Apple

#### February 2024

#### League Action & Happenings

#### Eye on the Environment: The Problem with Plastics

Plastics are cheap to produce, convenient to use, and comprise multi-billion dollar industries. Climb the earth's highest mountains or sink to the deepest ocean trenches and you will find plastic, in the form of waste. Plastic waste is ubiquitous in our oceans, our waterways, on our streets, and our landfills. Scientists have detected plastic particles in human tissue, brains, blood, heart muscle and pregnant women's breast milk and placenta.

A report published in the <u>Annals of Global Health</u>, conservatively estimated that Americans spent more than \$250 billion on health costs related to plastics in 2015.

Worldwide production of plastic has doubled in the past 20 years, and evidence is mounting that plastics are bad for our health, costing us money, and polluting the earth. What can be done?

According to Beyond Plastics President and former EPA Regional Administrator Judith Enck, "It will take changes at every level of our economy and civil life to stem the tide of plastic pollution, including grassroots advocacy, corporate pressure, legislation, and global cooperation." Enck testified at the Senate Committee on the Environment and Public Works' Subcommittee on Chemical Safety, Waste Management, Environmental Justice, and Regulatory Oversight in 2022. It was the first time such a hearing was convened to discuss the plastic pollution crisis.

What can we as individuals do? Support Legislation that reduces production of petrochemicals in food packaging, where chemicals migrate from packaging to food. Nearly half of all plastics manufactured today are single use items and packaging. Lawmakers must regulate the chemical content and toxicity of plastic. Citizens must demand plastic-free options. Demand Producer responsibility. Stop the production. Plastic producers are filling demand for easy, cheap single use packaging. Only an estimated 8% of plastic waste is recycled. Do an audit of the plastics in your home. Avoid single use plastics such as straws, cutlery & plates. Use your own shopping bag & support plastic bag bans. Buy cans and cartons instead of single-use plastic bottles. **Carry** a reusable water bottle. Wear clothing made from natural fibers. Recycle right. (See Meck County Recycling Rules.) Follow and support organizations who advocate for an end to the plastic pollution crisis. An online search will produce many. Here are a few: Beyond Plastics is a grassroots advocacy and education organization. Break Free From Plastic is a global multiorganizational movement working to bring about systemic change by tackling plastic pollution across the whole value chain - from extraction to disposal - focusing on prevention rather than cure. Plastic Oceans advocates for global change with local actions and fosters sustainable communities through changes in consumer behavior, corporate practices, and public policy. -Margaret Fritze

#### **Board of County Commissioners Update**

If you missed the public hearing and want your voice heard about the FY2025 Mecklenburg County budget, take a few minutes to participate in the commissioners' budget priority survey. The Board of Commissioners is in the process of preparing next year's budget right now and you can give your opinion here: FY2025 Resident Budget Priority Survey.

The annual resident budget priority survey provides residents the opportunity to share their perspectives on the County's budget and investments. Responses are collected to support their decisionmaking during the budget development and priority setting process.

Four League members of the LWVCM Education Team spoke to the board at its January 17 public hearing about supporting teachers, emphasizing the need for competitive salaries to fill the hundreds of CMS vacancies and to retain them after they are hired. President Suzanne Elsberry, Sara Baysinger, Carol Gray-Adler and Jeanne Smith, co-chair gave powerful presentations about teachers' needs and obstacles. They emphasized that beginning teachers cannot afford a one-bedroom apartment in Charlotte on their current salary.

"And though our community cannot alleviate all the stress points that teachers feel, the one thing we can do is help validate their worth by providing them with adequate pay," Sara told the board.

The board met at the end of the month for its three-day retreat hearing updates on its priorities and investments as it starts preparing the 2025 budget. —Lucille Howard





Vote! And Make Sure Your Vote Counts! Use VOTE411 to make your voting plan today! Check your registration. Discover what's on your ballot. Know the dates and deadlines for mail-in, early and day-of voting. Help your friends and family make their plans, too!



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