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# Voter

Newsletter for February 2025

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

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Hello from the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg! We're glad you're here. We hope you enjoy the new look and feel of our newsletter! You can also access this newsletter via the [LWVCM website](#).

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## Presidents' Message

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It is often a helpful strategy to look back in history to gain understanding of the challenges that we face in the present. In honor of Black History Month, we wanted to consider the many powerful Black women who contributed to the women's rights movement in the United States. For example, did you know that Anna Julia Haywood Cooper was born into slavery in Raleigh, NC, in 1858? After her husband died, only two years after they were married, Ms. Cooper decided to pursue a college degree at Oberlin College in Ohio on a scholarship. She earned a Bachelor of Arts in 1884 and a master's degree in mathematics in 1887. After graduation, Cooper taught at universities and an African American high school in Washington, D.C. She published her first book, [\*A Voice from the South by a Black Woman of the South\*](#) (1892), in which she called for equal education for women. Cooper also established and co-founded several organizations to promote black civil rights causes, including the Colored Women's League in 1892. Ms. Cooper resumed graduate study in 1911 at Columbia

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at the Sorbonne University in Paris, France. In 1925, at the age of 66, Cooper became the fourth African American woman to obtain a doctorate of philosophy. She was a truly courageous woman. We encourage our members take time to learn more about and honor the many African American women who made a difference. To get started, we encourage you to take the [Women of Black History Quiz](#) originally published by [ThoughtCo](#).

—Linda Traum, *Co-President*

Recently, I came across this poem by a much-loved poet of mine. Having always found it inspiring, I decided to share it here given the challenging work we have before us as Leaguers now and in the coming days.

—Suzanne Elsberry, *Co-President*

## To Be of Use

The people I love best  
Jump into work head first  
Without dallying in the shadows  
And swim off with sure strokes almost out of sight.  
They seem to become natives of that element,  
The black sleek heads of seals  
Bouncing like half-submerged balls.

I love people who harness themselves, an ox to a heavy cart,  
Who pull like water buffalo, with massive patience,  
Who strain in the mud and the muck to move things forward,  
Who do what has to be done, again and again.

I want to be with people who submerge  
In the task, we go into the fields to harvest  
And work in a row and pass the bags along,  
Who are not parlor generals and field deserters  
But move in a common rhythm  
When the food must come in or the fire be put out.

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But the thing worth doing well done  
Has a shape that satisfies, clean and evident.  
Greek amphoras for wine or oil,  
Hopi vases that held corn, are put in museums  
But you know they were made to be used.  
The pitcher cries for water to carry,  
And a person for work is real.

—Marge Piercy (b. 1936), activist/feminist/writer

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## LWVCM Events Calendar



[Subscribe](#)[Past Issues](#)[Translate ▼](#)**FEBRUARY:** [Black History Month](#)•2/7, 10am: [Member Social](#) + LWVUS Renewal Portal Demo (Innovation Barn)

•2/11, 6:30pm: LWVCM Board Meeting (Zoom)

•2/12, 6:30pm: [Member Social](#) + LWVUS Renewal Portal Demo (Ballantyne)•2/14, 10:30am: [League 105th Anniversary Watch Party](#) (LWVCM Office) •2/17: *President's Day*•2/19, 6pm: [2025 Civics 101 Program: Board of Elections](#) (Hybrid)•2/20, 10am: ["Food-Climate Change Nexus"](#) w/Ted Volskay (Hybrid)•2/25, 1pm: [Member Social](#) + LWVUS Renewal Portal Demo (LWVCM Office)•2/26, 6pm: [2025 Civics 101 Program: City of Charlotte](#) (Hybrid)•2/27: *Anniversary of SCOTUS upholding 19th Amendment*•2/28, 5pm: [Member Social](#) + LWVUS Renewal Portal Demo (Dilworth)**MARCH:** *Women's History Month*•3/5, 6pm: [2025 Civics 101 Program: Board of Education/CMS](#) (Hybrid)•3/7: *Anniversary of Bloody Sunday*•3/8: *International Women's Day*•3/12, 6pm: [2025 Civics 101 Program: County Courts](#) (Hybrid)•3/19, 6pm: [2025 Civics 101 Program: Mecklenburg County](#) (Hybrid)•3/20, 10am: [Environment Team Planning Meeting](#) (Hybrid)•3/26: *Anniversary of SCOTUS [Rucho](#) arguments*•3/26, 6pm: **NEW!!** [2025 Civics 101 Program: NC State Government](#) (Hybrid)•3/29, 9:30am: **DATE CHANGED** [LWVNC Western Regional Meeting](#) (Hickory)•3/31: *International Transgender Day of Visibility***APRIL:** *Arab American Heritage Month/National Volunteer Month*•4/2, 6pm: [2025 Civics 101 Program: Local Media Panel](#) (Hybrid)•4/20-26: *National Volunteer Week*•4/22: *Earth Day*

## Civics 101 Media Panelists Confirmed

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**Civics 101 Media Panelists** (clockwise from top left): Dr. Amanda Sturgill (moderator); Mary C. Curtis; Joe Bruno; Herb White; Tony Mecia; and Diego Barahona

The League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg will once again host its hybrid “Civics 101” program—a series of sessions covering local and state government for the citizens of the greater Mecklenburg County area. These educational classes will cover voting; city, town, county and (**new this year!**) state governments; CMS and the Board of Education; the county court system; and media literacy. Participants will hear from current and former office holders, civil servants, and local reporters to gain an in-depth knowledge of the workings of their local and state government.

The program will be offered in person and online for seven consecutive Wednesdays from 6:00 PM to 8:30 PM, February 19-April 2. In-person attendance is offered on a first come, first served basis. The program costs \$50, but is free for students.

The final session will feature a panel discussion by journalists from the Charlotte area—Mary C. Curtis ([Roll Call's Equal Time](#) podcast and frequent contributor to [WFAE](#) and [Slate](#)); Herb White ([Charlotte Post](#)); Diego Baharona ([La Noticia](#)); Joe Bruno ([WSOC-TV](#)); and Tony Mecia ([The Charlotte Ledger](#)). The discussion will be moderated by Dr. Amanda Sturgill, Associate Professor of Journalism at Elon University, where she specializes in breaking news and fake news on social media. She is the author of [Detecting Deception: Fighting Fake News, #WeAreAltGov: Social Media Resistance from the Inside](#), and editor of multiple other works, as well as the host of the [UnSpun](#) podcast, which covers news literacy and critical thinking.

For those interested in the LWVCM 2025 Civics 101 Program, you are invited to

## Membership Updates



**League Leaders** (from above left): Mary Condon (Membership); Laura Cooper (Education); Harry Taylor (Redistricting); Carol Gray-Adler (Education); Margaret Howe-Soper (Environment); Stacey Jenkins (Civics 101); Debora Arnold (1st VP); Sara Baysinger (Communications)

### NEW MEMBERS IN JANUARY 2025

The League welcomed nine new members in January! We extend a warm welcome to Ann Clarke; Kim Brattain; Jessi Harris; Jeanne Alexander; Kara Evans; Diane Fabro; Mary Warren; Stacy Hancock; and DeWitt Crosby (rejoined).

### NEW LWVUS MEMBERSHIP PORTAL

In the coming days, you will receive an email from LWVUS about the new membership portal all Leagues are adopting on February 3, 2025. As we've communicated previously, members do not need to do anything in the near term. (Members will primarily interact with the portal to join/renew one year from their join date.) After the go-live date, and at your leisure, you can access the portal to create your profile via a Join/Renew tab that will appear on the [website navigation bar](#). There you will also find

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those preferring in-person instruction, any and all questions will be answered at each of the four [Member Socials](#) occurring in February.

### WHAT'S NEXT ON YOUR LEAGUE JOURNEY RECAP

On January 23, 2025, members of the League of Women Voters Charlotte Mecklenburg came together for an in-person event designed to help members deepen their involvement with the League. The event took place in the inviting community room at the South Boulevard Library, creating a perfect setting for collaboration and inspiration. The evening began with refreshments and warm conversations. Team Leaders shared updates on their recent initiatives, highlighting the positive impact members have already made. They also introduced upcoming opportunities for involvement, emphasizing that contributions of all sizes—small or large—are valued and essential.

A networking session followed, where members connected with leaders to discuss next steps in finding meaningful ways to contribute. The feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with many attendees appreciating the focus on teamwork and collaboration. To close the event, members reviewed a comprehensive list of opportunities to engage with the League across the Charlotte region, sparking ideas for new ways to get involved.

For those who couldn't attend, League Leaders will share a streamlined version of this program during [Member Socials](#) in February. To explore current opportunities and get involved, check out this list: [League Engagement Opportunities](#). For questions, feel free to email Membership Chair Mary Condon at [membership@goleaguego.org](mailto:membership@goleaguego.org). Together, we can continue advancing the League's mission and empowering our community.

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## Join the League's 105th Year Celebration



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On Friday, February 14, the League will celebrate its 105th anniversary! LWVCM members are invited to gather at the League Office for the [League 105th Anniversary Watch Party](#). Join with other members to honor our accomplishments and uplift our commitment to empowering voters and defending democracy. We'll hear from CEO Celina Stewart, Esq., President Dianna Wynn, and more leaders from the League and beyond. Coffee and baked goods will be provided. Register using the above link. We hope to see you there!

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## League Leaders Speak Up for Public Schools



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Mecklenburg County Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) is beginning the budget process for the next fiscal year. It is critical that the BOCC and the Charlotte Mecklenburg School (CMS) Board of Education work together to provide the best for Charlotte Mecklenburg students. The County is responsible for the school buildings, but also supplements state funding, including increasing per pupil allotments and teacher salaries.

During the January 22, 2025 Budget Public Hearing for fiscal year 2025-2026, two League leaders addressed the BOCC. Laura Cooper, Co-Lead of the Education Team, urged the Commissioners to continue to fully support the Charlotte Mecklenburg School Board's budget request as they have done for the last two years. Cooper pointed to recent gains made in reducing teacher shortages bolstered by the BOCC supplements. She highlighted that the dollars available for retaining excellent teachers is every bit as important, if not more important, as recruiting new teachers. Susan Harden, LWVCM Treasurer and former County Commissioner, made an impassioned plea for the BOCC to make a long-term plan for CMS funding provided the "critical juncture" the county faces with the erosion of both state and federal support for education. Their remarks can be found at 2:41 and 3:44 of the [recording of the Budget Public Hearing](#) and on the [Education Action Team page](#).

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## BOCC Observers Report

### CHETTY STUDY ON CHARLOTTE'S ECONOMIC MOBILITY

It turns out that one of the highest predictors for improving economic mobility for low-income children is assessing parental participation in the workforce because not only are economic resources increased but interaction with the community provides social networking within and outside the community. That is a significant conclusion of Harvard researcher Raj Chetty's renewal study of Charlotte's economic mobility presented to Mecklenburg County Commissioners recently.

Further, Commissioners learned that so many actions and programs it has started and/or supported in the past several years are exactly what Chetty recommends that cities do

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Chetty's first study, of low-income children born in 1978 and followed some 30 years in 50 large US cities, ranked Charlotte 50th in economic mobility. His renewal study of children born in 1992 and followed for 27 years, ranked Charlotte 38th. And Charlotte was ranked #3 on economic mobility progress for moving faster than its peer cities. Mecklenburg County was the only county where low-income white children experienced no decline in economic mobility. In Charlotte, the average change in household income for black and brown children was almost 5%, according to A. J. Calhoun summarizing the report for commissioners.

While LWVCM has never taken a position on "economic mobility" in the county, action teams over the years, especially the Education Action Team, has studied and lobbied for several of the recommendations that the Chetty study has made, including universal pre-K, early childhood education and equitable educational resources.

Commissioners were told that social interaction is the primary driver of outcomes for low-income children. That interaction results from employed parents being involved in a community that crosses social class lines with interaction outside the job, such as connecting those with opportunities to those without. Commissioners were told that the Brooklyn Village concept, even though delayed, is the kind of project that should be supported.

For more information on the study results, see the county's [Opportunity Compass here](#).

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In a noteworthy action for the Charlotte Mecklenburg Board of Education, commissioners approved the procedure of tying school board members' compensation to pay adjustments for all school employees. When teachers get a raise, school board members get an equivalent increase.

### **BOCC BUDGET RETREAT**

The BOCC budget retreat began on January 29 in Winston-Salem. The financial update, economic outlook, and economic development strategies were all covered on day one.

Budget priority goal discussion is set for January 31 in the afternoon. A detailed agenda is on the [legistar system](#).

Want to know more about the Board of County Commissioner's work?

[BOCC 2025 Legislative Priorities](#)

[BOCC 2025 Meetings](#)

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## Education Advocate Marks 100th Birthday



Last year, on the occasion of Charlottean Julia Teamer's 107th birthday, the Mecklenburg County Board of Commissioners honored her lifetime of service by proclaiming "Julia Ann McKnight Teamer Day." Several League members enjoyed the privilege of being in the audience, and were duly inspired.

*The Charlotte Post* recently paid Ms. Teamer the following tribute:

Teamer, a longtime education advocate and teacher who co-founded Teamer Religious and Educational Enterprises with her husband Bishop James Teamer, was born Jan. 16, 1917, the seventh of 11 children. She graduated Second Ward High School in Charlotte's Brooklyn neighborhood and attended Barber-Scotia College in Concord



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courses at New York and Columbia universities as well as the University of Pennsylvania, where she earned a master's degree.

Julia and James Teamer, who were married 52 years before his death in 1997, co-founded Cosmopolitan Community Church in the 1970s along with Teamer Religious and Educational Enterprises, a religion school in the Lincoln Heights community that provides a continuing education alternative for underprivileged Black youth. In 1985, the Teamers were recognized by U.S. Rep. Alex McMillan in the Congressional Record for "meeting community needs mentally, physically, socially, and spiritually."

Julia Teamer was a Charlotte-Mecklenburg elementary school teacher for 38 years, where she was twice named teacher of the year on a pair of campuses. She taught at Fairview, Double Oaks, Oaklawn, and Allenbrook before retiring.

Afterward, Teamer advocated for nurturing students as well as encouraging them stay in school while devoting her time, energy, and resources to mentoring. She also worked as a Girl Scout leader, elementary school reserve leader, camp director, and was one of the first Head Start program instructors.

Teamer was the youngest member of The Phyllis Wheatley YMCA Board of Directors, Superintendent of church school at Cosmopolitan Community Church, and Bible school instructor.

—by Herbert L. White, Editor-in-Chief, *The Charlotte Post*

*Reprinted with permission. Originally published on January 16.*

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## Environment Team Tackles Food & Climate

The Environment Team cordially invites all members to join its standing meetings every third Thursday of the month at 10AM either in the League Office at the Myers Park Baptist Church or via Zoom.

Next up on February 20, members will learn about the [Food-Climate Change Nexus](#) and be introduced to a new way of thinking about the food we eat and its impact on the climate. Speaker Ted Volsky, currently hails from Greenville, SC and is a U.S. Navy

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Force bases; remediation of soil and groundwater contaminated by PFAS (forever chemicals); and legal compliance with various federal/state environmental acts. He holds degrees in chemistry (U. of South FL 1981), environmental systems engineering (Clemson University 1988) as well as anticipating graduating in sustainable water management (U. of S. FL, May 2025). Ted has been a member of the Greenville SC LWV for 29 years and is currently a member of the LWV of Henderson, NC.

On March 20, members can join an [Environment Team Planning Session](#)! Bring your ideas and interests to help shape future meetings and initiatives.

## Humanitarian President: Honoring Jimmy Carter's Legacy



*"America did not invent human rights. In a very real sense, it's the other way around. Human rights invented America." — Jimmy Carter's Farewell Address to the Nation*

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## A Man For the Ages...

It is with a sense of profound sadness and respect that we join the nation in mourning the loss of our 39th and oldest living former President, Jimmy Carter, who died yesterday at the age of 100. President Carter, the 2002 Nobel Peace Prize recipient, will be remembered by Americans and citizens throughout the world as a beloved statesman and humanitarian, who worked stridently for world peace, health, and democratic principles.

Perhaps best known for his revered and historic post-presidency, President Carter with his wife Rosalynn founded the Carter Peace Center, a not-for-profit NGO, in Atlanta in 1982. The following years of their lives constituted a partnership of almost unceasing efforts towards peace, \*eradication of disease, and building hope in communities throughout more than 80 countries of the world. (\*In January-June 2024, reported cases of the orphan parasitic disease, the Guinea Worm, fell from 3.5 billion to just three.) The Carter Center has achieved remarkable advances in resolving conflicts, promoting free elections, and promoting human rights and mental health care.

President Carter and his wife were also dedicated advocates for Civil Rights and the E.R.A. It has been said that as President he “supported the E.R.A. at every turn including signing a law that extended the timeline for the E.R.A. to be ratified. “They both worked diligently with Habitat for Humanity constructing homes for the underserved. President Carter believed “we have an ethical obligation...to prevent suffering wherever we can.” (House of Lords Lecture, London, 2016).

The Carter Center has monitored worldwide elections for decades in trouble spots such as the Middle East and Africa and eventually brought its expertise home to the U.S. targeting four states, including our own in 2022. I was privileged to serve as the LWVNC Liaison in our partnership with the Carter Center’s NC Initiative for Fair, Safe, and Secure Elections chaired by Jennifer Roberts and Robert Orr. Since then, NC League chapters have assisted as key partners with the Carter Center’s town halls to educate voters on the issues of election violence, and assure confidence in the fairness and integrity of the voting process.

Illustrative of President Carter’s immense body of work on behalf of humanity, President Biden said in his remarks on the passing of President Carter that he “lived a life measured not by words, but deeds.” The Carter family’s request that his memory be marked with “Acts of Service to Humanity” is a remarkably

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—Suzanne Elsberry, Co-President

*Reprinted from December 30, 2024 League Communication*

In Jennifer Roberts' own tribute to the late president, she shared, "It has been a bittersweet beginning to the New Year, with President Carter's passing at the end of December and the first days of this year filled with media coverage of his presidency, his legacy, and the many memorial activities that are still taking place for him. Our hearts go out to the extended Carter family, as we know they have lost a light, a beacon, and an inspiration in the person and example of Jimmy Carter, beloved husband, father, uncle, grandfather, and role model for millions. It has been an honor for me to work for the Carter Center over the past four years."

Jennifer included a tribute video to President Carter that was compiled by the Carter Center: [A Tribute to President Carter \(Nora Jones singing "American Anthem"\)](#), as well as an interview she did with Rob Schofield about Carter's legacy and our continued work here in N.C., and you can listen to that [here on NC Newsline](#).

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## LWVCM to Host Fundraiser Luncheon

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Please mark your calendars for Saturday, May 17, 2025 to attend the League of Women Voters of Charlotte Mecklenburg's first annual "Empower and Protect the Vote Award" Fundraiser Luncheon. Our 2025 honoree is Jennifer Watson Roberts (pictured above), former Mecklenburg County Commissioner, Charlotte's 58th mayor and Co-Lead for the Carter Center's North Carolina Network for Fair, Safe and Secure Elections and Strengthening Democracy Project. LWVCM has chosen to recognize Jennifer, a long-time League member, author and speaker, in celebration of her dedicated efforts to inform voters and reestablish their trust in the election process. Her efforts perfectly align with the League's belief that empowering voters is the ultimate key to maintaining our democracy.

Further details are forthcoming, but meanwhile please save Saturday, May 17 on your calendars to attend this exciting and memorable event!



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