



LWV LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF ALABAMA

The Voter

December 2021 Quarterly Newsletter



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From the President's Desk

Please accept my warmest greetings and sincere hope that you are safe, healthy, and enjoying the company of your loved ones during the holiday season! As the year draws to a close and winter is just around the corner, I like to reflect on the year and look forward to the coming one. We can all agree 2021 has been a tough, often stressful, and very busy year. The League of Women Voters members continues to make a positive difference in Alabama as we strive to make democracy work for all of Alabama.

I am excited to share this LWV Alabama (LWVAL) Voter newsletter so you can catch up on many of the important activities and topics that folks have been working on.

Redistricting has been the primary focus again for this quarter. The LWVAL worked closely with Alabama Forward's Redistricting Table organizations and others to keep the focus on redistricting. We raised the awareness of the reapportionment process and what a fair voting map would/should include. As a part of that, we maintained a [comprehensive redistricting communications hub](#). There are several exciting articles in this issue of the Voter which provide the latest status of our long term commitment to achieving fair and equitable maps for all of Alabama, at all levels.

Re-enfranchising citizens who lost their voting rights is an ongoing priority for the LWV. The LWVAL Voter Rights Restoration (VRR) Network partnership with the Campaign Legal Center continues for the third year. The VRR Network is comprised of LWV members across the state who are expertly trained, with the necessary tools and on-going support, to be able to provide direct assistance to citizens across Alabama (via ongoing Thru text campaigns and face to face events). This virtual network will be an invaluable tool for all of our local leagues in the coming year, as we all get ready for the 2022 elections.

Our LWVAL Advocacy Team is preparing for the 2022 legislative session. The LWVAL Advocacy Team chair, Robin Buckelew, has written an informative article about the plans for the coming year. I'm especially excited by the connections and allyship we have established with organizations, institutions, and government officials that will help achieve our program goals and objectives. The LWVAL Advocacy Team members, coming from across Alabama continue to make our advocacy more effective!

Educating voters about the issues and how they can get involved, is another critical part of the LWVAL's mission. In the [Voices of our League blog](#) editor, Catherine Davies, provides important information and insights on many areas of emphasis, including redistricting. In this newsletter you will find an article by Pam Caruso about the many mapping forums we hosted in October and November, with the active participation of LWV members across Alabama, as well as many state and national voting rights groups. In October we co-hosted a Voting Rights educational forum, entitled "Voting While Blind – The Blind Experience," with the National Federation of the Blind of Alabama, who provided critical first-person perspectives on the barriers and hurdles that blind and visually impaired voters face. In December, we hosted the first of a series of environmental education forums, called "The Truth About Plastics," to educate voters about the issues that affect Alabama's environment and communities and to connect environmental issues to the political process. Please subscribe to our [LWVAL YouTube channel](#) so you will be notified when we post new content!

On November 8th, I was honored to be asked to provide remarks ([listen here](#)) on the continued importance of civic engagement as a part of the Alabama Department of Archives and History Museum's dedication of bronze busts of voting rights activists Pattie Ruffner Jacobs and Amelia Boynton Robinson. I concluded by calling for the passage of the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act.

This past summer when Judson College was unexpectedly shuttered, the Executive Director of the Alabama Department of Archives and History Museum asked us for assistance in preserving the collection of the [Alabama Women's Hall of Fame](#). The League of Women Voters has been a supporter of the Alabama Women's Hall of Fame since it started 50 years ago. So naturally, many of you stepped up to make monetary donations for packing and transporting the heavy bronze plaques to the Archives for storage. At the 2021 Women's Hall of Fame on November 16th, the League of Women Voters and all of our members were recognized and thanked for our generosity, which paid the entire cost of getting the museum plaques delivered to the Archives for safekeeping until they find a new home! Two more voting rights activists, Emera Frances Griffin and Vivian Malone Jones, were inducted on November 16th at the Women's Hall of Fame ceremony in Montgomery.

In the new year we will continue our work for voting rights, more effective advocacy, and a rich voter education series. Working with the local leagues we are developing a membership development process that helps members new and old find opportunities to use their talents and to help the League grow and become more diverse and inclusive.

If you see anything in this newsletter that sparks your passion, please reach out and get involved!

Kathy

Kathy Jones President, LWV Alabama

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Advocacy Team Report

From Robin Buckelew

The League of Women Voters Advocacy Team had a busy schedule this fall. We supported the redistricting hearings, with President Kathy Jones, Past President Barbara Caddell, and League members all over the state presenting testimony at many of the Legislature's public hearings. At the very first hearing (in Huntsville) President Jones presented an example map developed by the League demonstrating how counties could be kept intact for Congressional districts, thus preserving communities of interest. Prior to and during the special session called to create new district maps, the League's Pam Caruso moderated a number of fora discussing map making, criteria for a "good" map, and a number of issues directly affected by how districts are drawn, such as care of the environment. Alabama Forward, Alabama Values, ACLU, Southern Coalition for Social Justice, NAACP Legal Defense Fund, and The Ordinary People Society co-sponsored and participated in each forum. Recordings of these sessions are available on our [Youtube Channel](#). See Ms. Caruso's article in this issue.

Looking forward into 2022 and the upcoming legislative session, Advocacy plans to support progress on several fronts. Several league members, including President Jones, met via Zoom with State Senator Arthur Orr on Monday November 22. Senator Orr plans to introduce, once more, an "Open Records" bill to improve public access to information about government activities in all governing bodies across the state. The League believes such access is foundational to all we do: if the public can't find out what is going on in government, there is very little that can be done to make the public's voice heard. This coming session may also feature an "Open Meetings" bill with the same general intent.

The League is working with other organizations in support of voter rights restoration legislation, to make it easier for formerly incarcerated people to get their voting rights restored. We are currently coordinating with the Alabama Voting Rights Coalition to establish what constitutes a meaningful bill. We intend to pursue progressive voting legislation, including easier absentee voting, easier voter registration, and better access to polling locations. The need for these changes has been brought into sharp focus by the covid pandemic. We plan to support Appleseed in their efforts to promote legislation to prevent people from driver's license suspension for non-driving offenses. These licenses are often a voter's only form of valid ID. We are discussing potential legislation with the National Federation of the Blind of Alabama. The purpose of this legislation would be to make it easier for blind voters to cast absentee ballots without the assistance of sighted people. As a member of Alabama Arise, we have proposed several issues which have been adopted by the group as focus efforts for 2022. Advocacy issues include racial equity, environmental protection, and access to healthcare for all Alabamians.

While the redistricting lines have been drawn by the state Legislature, the activity is not yet over. The League will be monitoring several lawsuits challenging the new maps, which appear in our analysis to be significantly gerrymandered.

The bottom line is that LWVAL Advocacy plans to be very active in 2022.

Membership Development

By Carol Prickett, Second Vice President

In the summer of 2021, President Kathy Jones asked me to begin a new, more formal organization for Membership Development for LWVAL. Creating an organizational path that will serve the entire state is a challenging and enlightening endeavor.

At the time we initially discussed this, our dreams were big and our ideas were unfocused. Nevertheless, we anticipated that the worst of the covid era was behind us. The return of a spike in cases in late fall has at least served the purpose of focusing my work into immediate priorities.

For the past 18 months, the President/Spokesperson of each of our 9 local leagues have convened each month for one hour via zoom to share information and ideas, with the aim of supporting each other and furthering communication across the state. The most important fact I've gleaned from these gatherings is that each of our local leagues is unique. Their structures, their membership demographics, their formats for participation, the pool of active members—each of these groups is truly distinct. The good news? The willingness of everyone to share and to support each other hasn't lost any momentum, despite the ongoing challenges that isolation and disruption have brought.

Two clear priorities for immediate action have risen to the surface:

Assisting the local leagues for whom the global pandemic has drained energy and participation to regain their previous strength and move forward. To this end, we are sharing strategies and tools to bolster each league's needs. In early 2022, I will visit, in person, with the leadership of each local league, listening and advising as they build on their unique strengths.

Coordinating statewide initiatives, devised from grassroots input from the local leagues, that reflect the unity and shared goals of the local groups that compose LWVAL.

Growing and developing our units so that they serve their areas in the way they wish is the foundational step for building more statewide service and leadership. We see clearly that there is no one-size-fits-all model for a unit of LWV, but there is great strength in building a foundation on the hopes, dreams, and achievements of local leagues whose commitment has been maximized.

Open Records Update

by Rebecca Jackson

As League members, we believe that good democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens, and that an informed and active citizenry requires an open and accessible government. Unfortunately, that is currently not the case in Alabama.

Alabama's state agencies and local governments can choose to ignore, deny, or charge exorbitant fees for citizens to access records. While current Alabama law establishes that "every citizen has a right to inspect and take a copy of any public writing of this state," governments in Alabama can

make it difficult, if not impossible to exercise this right. These records, which are created by public employees—using our tax dollars—to document the work of public agencies belong to the public and should be open, accessible, and affordable. In order for our governments to be transparent and accountable, public records must be open to the people and the press.

There is concern from state agencies and local governments about the capacity to handle records requests from the public. However, these concerns should not be used to circumvent the rights of its citizens to access public records that, in reality, belong to the public. And unfortunately, we see case after case of financial or ethical violations from public officials who think they can get away with crimes because no one is watching. Open records help keep public officials accountable. And other states have disproved the hypothetical concern about overburdened governments—not a single small town or county has been forced into bankruptcy due to someone asking for excessive copies of meeting minutes or lists of permit applications. It is the paid duty of clerks to produce these items, and other states with similar laws show us that we'll be just fine after the law is improved.

A better Open Record law would ensure that government records are accessible to citizens, the press, and watchdog organizations. Alabama needs reasonable timelines for governments to respond to records requests, restrictions against unaffordable costs for acquiring records, clear guidelines on which records are confidential to protect privacy and security, an impartial observer who will decide if a records request denial was warranted or unjustified. There also need to be real consequences for governments for failing to comply with this law. People shouldn't have to resort to going to court to coerce a government entity to provide public access to records.

Community Mapping Forum Report

From Pam Caruso

The AL LWV organized two forums to focus attention on the Alabama Redistricting Process. The first forum was held on 13 October, and was a very successful collaboration with Alabama Forward, Alabama Values, American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) Alabama, the NAACP Legal Defense Fund (NAACP-LDF), The Ordinary People Society, Alabama Election Protection Network (AEPN), and the Southern Coalition for Social Justice (SCSJ). After the conclusion of the statewide hearings in September, we all worked together to design a multi-part forum which we titled "Community Mapping Forum".

The first forum was focused on building a common understanding on mapping and what constitutes a "fair" map. We wanted this forum to be an aid to the community in preparing their own maps to be better equipped to provide comments to the Alabama Legislature on the maps that they would be releasing.

Dr. Moorer, from Alabama State University moderated the event, and we had briefings from Tish Gotell Faulks, the legal director for ACLU-Alabama on Redistricting 101, along with discussions from Dr. Tonya Farrow Chestnut from the NAACP-LDF, on How Maps are Created. Evan Milligan from Alabama Forward gave an overview of what constitutes a fair map (including criteria which we would use to evaluate the goodness of the state's maps), and Felica Scalzetti, SCSJ/AEPN Crowd Fellow gave a very informative briefing of the gerrymandering in the current 2011 Alabama maps and what we should be looking out for in the new maps.

We had 5 maps that were then presented by community members and organizations. We asked them to please give us an overview of their maps along with what were their objectives for the map they developed. This was very informative; we believe it helped community members and organizations gain a better understanding of the many ways to develop a “fair” map and the limitations and obstacles that they must deal with.

After the first forum, we quickly went into planning with the same coalition partners on the development of a second forum which would cover the maps that the legislature released during their special session. The objective of the second forum was to evaluate the “goodness” of the released maps from the legislature to determine how the citizens are impacted by the new maps. Other objectives included educating the public, calls to action, and engagement of the organizations to provide a united response. Because of the quickness that the maps were released from the legislature we ended up splitting the forum into four parts to cover the Congressional Map, and the State House and Senate maps.

October 28th was the first evening of the Second Community Mapping Forum. We focused this discussion on what had happened during the legislation session which was provided by Alabama Values. On November 1st, 2nd, and 3rd we held three more events which focused specifically on the released maps, one evening was the State House maps, another evening we focused on the State Senate Maps and the last evening we focused on the Congressional Maps with legal experts to discuss the ramifications of the “whole county” map along with discussions and strategy on mapping in Alabama.

In addition to reviewing the maps, we also had round table discussions with noted experts during each night of the part 2 forum to highlight the impacts that gerrymandering has on issues such as environmental justice, climate change, health care, and medicaid expansion. On day four of the second forum, the State legislature had passed all of the voting district maps. So we concluded our forum with nationally recognized redistricting legal experts who provided insights on issues with Alabama’s congressional and legislative maps and potential next steps.

These mapping forums were very successful in meeting the objectives that the collaborative partners set in advance of the forums. This was an excellent way to work collaboratively with the community of partners that agreed to work together, who all contributed with their expertise, including experts, media releases, videos and informed presenters.

Review of the North Alabama State Redistricting Maps

From Pam Caruso

On 30 October, four LWV members (Kathy Jones, Patricia King, Pam Caruso and Robin Buckelew) met at Robin Buckelew’s home to review the AL State House and Senate maps. We spent several hours reviewing the maps and trying to figure out a way to evaluate the maps in a manner that would be both analytical and would give insight into how the maps could affect citizens in our area. What we finally figured out was to look at the distribution of population, and to go down to the precinct level to look at community of interests. Our evaluations showed there is a dilution of urban votes. This can be seen by the fact that the urban area of Madison County is

broken into 9 House districts and each of these representatives has a larger than ideal number of voters in their districts, compared to the rest of Alabama. The ideal size of a state representative voting district is determined by the total population of Alabama divided by the number of house districts). The combined overage in number of voters in Madison County is over 20,000 citizens. We consider this a dilution of urban voters.

Limestone County is broken into 5 Districts, an equal distribution for a county of this size would be 2.1 representatives. Each of the 5 House representatives in Limestone County voting district have a larger than the ideal number of citizens. The rural areas surrounding Madison and Limestone County have fewer than average citizens for their representatives. This means that the rural areas surrounding Madison and Limestone County votes are amplified while the urban areas are being minimized. We also noted that of the 5 representatives for Limestone County, only one lives in the county.

On the State Senate maps, we were pleased to see that Oakwood University would be represented by District 2 instead of District 1, which combines the community of interest around Oakwood University together instead of being split as they were in the 2011 maps.

We noted that Madison County has 5 Senators and each has a larger than ideal number of citizens. The ideal size of a state senate voting district is determined by the total population of Alabama divided by the number of senate districts). Three of the Senators districts have 4.8%

Join the Fight!

Alabama has one of the weakest open records laws in the nation. While current Alabama law establishes that “every citizen has a right to inspect and take a copy of any public writing of this state,” governments in Alabama can make it difficult, if not impossible to exercise this right. State agencies and local governments can choose to ignore, deny, or charge exorbitant fees for citizens to access records. Alabamians deserve better!

Alabamians need...

- Government that is open and accountable to the people it serves
- Access to records created by public entities that utilize tax revenue
- Reasonable time-lines for governments to respond to records requests
- Access to government records, regardless of format
- Restrictions against unaffordable costs for acquiring records
- Clear guidelines on which records are legitimately closed or confidential to protect privacy and security
- An arbiter who will decide if a records request denial was warranted or unjustified
- Resolution on records requests without having to take the case to court
- Real consequences for governments who fail to comply with this law

Alabama needs a new open records law!

above average number of citizens (the limit is 5%). And we noted that the rural areas have a lower number of citizens they are representing. Again, this shows a dilution of urban voters as compared to rural areas.

An issue we found is that Alabama A&M, a Historically Black College, had been split into two Districts (7 and 8) in the new Senate map. Previously Alabama A&M was in District 7, and District 8 now has the precinct where the majority of the students vote. The Senator in District 8 lives in Jackson County, which has a minimal black population, - under 4%.

We provided our data to Representative Laura Hall, a LWV in Huntsville who is on the Alabama Permanent Reapportionment Committee. The one thing we all realize after going through this review, is this isn't cut and dry, it takes time and an understanding of your community to fully review how the new redistricting maps affect the voters.



Join the Fight to Improve **OPEN RECORDS** in Alabama!

Email Advocacy Director,
Robin Buckelew at
rbuckelew@lwval.org
to connect with fellow
LWV members who care
about this issue!

Review of South Alabama Maps

From Sue Carney

Much like the North Alabama group, five LWV Mobile members got together at the Ben May Main Library in Mobile on Oct. 30. Barbara Caddell, Shalela Dowdy, Rose Johnson, Suzanne Schwartz, and Sue Carney reviewed the proposed maps for the State House and Senate. We looked at the current maps and compared them to the proposed 2021 maps using Dave's Redistricting and local knowledge of communities of interest.

Three members of LWVM testified at the public hearing of the Legislature's Redistricting Subcommittee in Mobile on Sept. 8, 2021. They were Barbara Caddell, Shalela Dowdy and Sue Carney.

Mobile County lost population according to the 2020 census, thus in order to meet population quotas, a change in senate districts had to be made. Baldwin County gained population. The change proposed by the Legislature's Permanent Reapportionment Committee added population from Baldwin County into a current Mobile County Senator's district. This diluted a long-standing community of interest. The Baldwin County constituents were not pleased with the change of districts either, as this generally rural population would now be joined with an urban Mobile population. A fourth senate district now has a presence in a small part of northeast Mobile County, in the Mount Vernon area. This change in the map carved out a predominantly Democratic area and incorporated it into a majority Republican voting Senate district.

Southern Alabama House districts were changed in minor ways. Minority-majority House districts in South Alabama were essentially unchanged.

The Mobile City Council districts will also be updated to address the new census numbers. By statute the mayor is charged with presenting a redistricting plan to the Council. He has 6 months from the time the census numbers were released, August 12, 2021, to present his plan. The Council then has 6 months to accept it or propose their own plan. If they take no action, the mayor's plan is automatically adopted. At this writing the mayor has not yet proposed a plan.

Currently the 7-person City Council has 3 minority members, although the new census numbers indicate a 59% minority-majority total population (Black + Hispanic + Asian + Native). The city is seriously considering annexing property and people to increase the total population. This would potentially affect the racial mix of the city. The SPLC has sent a letter to the Mayor and City Council cautioning them that an annexation of a majority white population could violate Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act.

The process of reviewing the redistricting maps was educational and challenging for all involved, re-enforcing the thought that "all politics is local".

Redistricting in Auburn Update

by Kim White, President of the LWV of East Alabama

LWV of East Alabama is supporting Lee County NAACP Branch 5038 and the Hometown Organizing Project's push to include at least two majority-minority wards in Auburn. Auburn's population grew 43% between the 2010 and 2020 censuses. With the city's overall minority population of 36.8%, two or perhaps three of the eight wards would be expected to be majority-minority. The current wards and the new ward map proposed by the City include only one. At an Auburn City Council meeting on December 7, members of the NAACP, Hometown Organizing Project, LWVEA, and the Auburn Alumnae Chapter of Delta Sigma Theta Sorority spoke in support of attempting to have more majority-minority districts, and a map developed by the NAACP was proof the concept was feasible. The issue was expected to be on the City Council's agenda for December 21. Liz Noel serves as LWVEA's local point of contact for redistricting matters.

Natural Resources Coordinator Board Position Established

We are excited to announce that Nancy Muse, from the League of Women Voters of the Shoals, has been appointed to be the LWVAL Natural Resources Coordinator (NRC).

The LWVAL Education Fund Board has established an LWVAL Natural Resources Coordinator (NRC) position to identify and understand environmental issues affecting Alabama's people, air, land, and water. The LWVAL NRC will collaborate with local leagues to develop educational materials and forums to help voters understand Alabama's environment related issues as well as gaining a "big picture" perspectives to understand why these issues are so difficult to solve. The LWV wants voters to understand how they can create positive change and see why voting is key.

Communications Update

From Elsa Roberts

LWVAL had a busy year, despite the continued pandemic. We've communicated important updates and calls to action early in the year during the legislative session, ensuring members are apprised of the decisions being made by our legislators and offering opportunities for them to speak up to their representatives. Jean Johnson has kept members informed about activities and events throughout the state through our social media accounts and through updates on our website, including the redistricting events organized by Local Leagues. This year we also founded the Voices of The League blog, run by editor Catherine Davies (see her report below), publishing an in-depth series on the complex topic of redistricting in addition to other educational articles ([check out the blog](#) to see more!).

We are actively seeking additional volunteers interested in helping to post and create content for our social media accounts, writing for our blog or editing articles, and those interested in assisting with newsletters and eblasts. If you'd like to be involved in these efforts please email Elsa Roberts at elsaleighroberts@gmail.com.

STATE BLOG UPDATE

From Catherine Davies, Blog Editor

In 2021 we did our best to educate voters about redistricting in advance with a series of ten posts that explained the complex process, contextualized the issue for Alabama, and provided resources for citizen engagement. Blog posts will soon resume as our issues are taken up in the legislature. We will also, of course, provide updates on the litigation that various groups have filed concerning the maps that the legislature approved. We welcome requests for posts on particular LWVAL issues. Email cedavies08@gmail.com to share your ideas. If members are passionate about particular issues and feel moved to write a post, we would be delighted (and will help you with editing).

Local League Reports

LWV GREATER TUSCALOOSA

From Carol Prickett, LWVGT Spokesperson

Monthly membership meetings via zoom:

- September: Work session with Dr. Zillah Fluker
- October: Tuscaloosa Safe Center (rape crisis center) Executive Director
- November: West Alabama Food Bank's Efforts Against Food Insufficiency
- December: Holiday social
- Note: (October and November meetings may be viewed on LWV Tuscaloosa's YouTube channel.)

Our Activities

- Membership renewal drive: Appears that the net number of individual and household members will remain as they were in 2021 and in 2020. This is a relief, in that we have not had a meeting in person since March, 2020.
- Fully enrolled 15 UA students as student members.
- Although a state representative position became available this fall, we realized when we read the newspaper that no election was held, since only one candidate filed to run. The person was sworn in before we were aware that there would be no formal election.
- Since early summer, three LWVGT Board of Directors members have resigned for reasons of personal health.

- Plans for “Meet Your Legislators” in January, as well as participation in the MLK Day activities are underway.

LWV THE SHOALS

From Nancy Gonce, President and Nancy Muse, Vice President

Despite the continuing challenges presented by the pandemic this past year, the LWV of the Shoals made much progress. Our activities and goals include:

- opened a new bank account at Progress Bank of Florence
- updated and refined our bylaws
- partnered with other groups such as the University of North Alabama Women’s Center for voter education
- held voter registration at UNA and in the community
- working with a local business that requested we be a resource for voter registration for their employees
- discussed and worked on our organizational structure
- communicated with representatives of other groups who attended the Redistricting Hearing at Shoals Community College
- held our annual meeting in November
- held officer elections: President, Nancy Gonce, Vice President, Nancy Muse, Secretary, Peggy McCloy, Treasurer, Marilyn Curry
- held monthly Zoom meetings with LWV of the Shoals except when redirecting our members to attend other LWVAL Zooms occurring on or near the same time
- discussed plans moving forward with new committee chairs
- stressing that all participants are mindful of DEI in all our endeavors with plans to have educational programs on this topic
- increasing awareness among ourselves and in the community that the LWV operates as a non-partisan organization
- will have guest presenters to speak on environmental issues, starting in January with leaders from the Shoals Citizens Climate Lobby
- will pursue ongoing involvement with restoration of voting rights and will make additional efforts to connect with other agencies involved with issues related to the judicial system.
- will pursue facilitating presentations for groups such as the Institute for Learning in Retirement program at UNA will continue virtual meetings during the ongoing pandemic

LWV MOBILE

From Suzanne Schwartz, President

The Mobile League of Women Voters has had a very active summer. Our Municipal Elections held in late August saw an extraordinary number of candidates throwing every Council seat and the Mayor’s office in contention. In all there were 36 candidates running for one of seven Council

seats as well as the position of Mayor. The outcome of the election left us with three Council seats undecided and headed for a September run-off election. Shortly after the election, one of the run-off candidates (and the incumbent) passed away very suddenly and unexpectedly. In the 39 year history of our mayor/council form of government, nothing like this had ever happened. It threw the community and especially the affected District for a loop. The League took a leadership role to research the state statutes and precedents after such an event. It's surprising how many times this happens throughout the country that a candidate whose name is on the ballot passes away prior to the election. We wrote a letter detailing our research and explaining how the election would be conducted.

Immediately upon the release of the census data on August 12th, we launched into the Reapportionment process holding zoom meetings, discussion groups and general educational opportunities on the Reapportionment process, educating people on Fair Maps and the consequences of the Reapportionment decisions made by the legislature. Our Crowd Fellow, Shalela Dowdy was a tireless and valuable asset to our League and our citizens. While the outcome of the statewide Reapportionment process was disappointing—not only in the outcome but as importantly, the lack of transparency to the process—we learned valuable information that we can use in the local redistricting process. We attended and addressed two Public Hearings by the Reapportionment Committee, one in Mobile County at Bishop State and one in support of the Baldwin County League at their public hearing at the Fairhope campus.

Currently, we are working on our local redistricting process. The City of Mobile is under scrutiny from SPLC as the census data suggests that our council should have 4 minority/majority seats on the Council as opposed to the three that currently exist. The reapportionment process in Mobile is not a transparent process and we are working with one of the newly elected Councilors to assist in the development of a Resolution creating a transparent process that ensures citizen participation. Further, we are standing ready to hold workshops, discussion groups and presentations to educate the citizens on the process and the importance of redistricting and the impact it has on funding and kitchen table issues of importance to them in their city government.

We are waiting for the Mayor to present his iteration of the council district maps based on GIS data from the census. He has until February 12th to present it to the Council. The Council will then have 6 months to either adopt the Mayor's proposal, draft a new proposal or take no action—in which case the Mayor's map is adopted automatically.

During the past quarter we have held several voter registration events with a big push just before the deadline to register for our August Municipal elections. Most recently we held a very successful event at the University of South Alabama with the Universities student Delta sorority sisters. They are eager to work more with us and this will be a part of our Voter Services Strategic Plan.

The Mobile League's Public Relations Portfolio Manager and the President have been working on a Voter Engagement campaign for the State League. It is a work in progress and we hope to have it completed to launch in January of 2022 to inform, educate and motivate voters for the upcoming mid-term elections. Stand by—we think it's exciting.

We are organizing a bus trip to Montgomery in January to attend floor debate on bills coming out of committee. We hope to get an update from our friends at Alabama Arise and to visit the State Archives to see the suffragist display. All aboard!!!

Lastly, we continue to plan strategically for the remainder of this fiscal year with our program development and for our Voter Services projects through the November election cycle. It is our hope that Covid will become less of a threat so that we can finally hold our membership recruitment event which was cancelled last September.

Things are brewing in LA (Lower Alabama). All of us in the Mobile League of Women Voters wish all of our friends in the League the very happiest of holidays and a healthy, successful and prosperous new year.

LWV GREATER BIRMINGHAM

From Dana Ellis, President

As usual, the wonderful members of the LWVGB have been very active. It is so gratifying to work with people dedicated to the work we do.

Highlights of the quarter include:

- Elect Fest in Linn Park on 8/7. League members were present to assist citizens with voter registration.
- Judy Johnson, along with several volunteers, coordinated the vote411 effort for the Birmingham municipal elections.
- We have continued our voter rights restoration work at the Pardons and Paroles Field Offices in Birmingham and Bessemer. Along with volunteers from Greater Birmingham Ministries and Faith in Action Alabama we have registered over 100 voters and educated others on the process for restoring their rights. Special thanks to Becky Laurent, Connie Arnwine, Julie Reese, and Yvonne Brakefield-Knowles.
- For National Voter Registration Day on 9/28, we once again collaborated with America's Thrift Stores and staffed tables in Alabaster, Bessemer, Gardendale and Huffman. Thanks so much to Voter Services Co-chairs, Julie Reese and Jan Carlson for organizing this important event.
- At the invitation of the UAB Student Government Association, League volunteers provided assistance at a voter registration drive which took place 10/26-28. It was exciting to see the enthusiasm of the students. Again, thanks to Jan and Julie for coordinating volunteers for this event.
- At our August program, we screened the documentary "Line in the Street" and have a great discussion about redistricting.
- Our November program on 11/30 was a discussion of the important topic "Transparency in Government."

LWV BALDWIN COUNTY

From Lynne Switzky, Co-president

Current Membership: 24. Twenty members have confirmed renewal, four are new members, two have not rejoined due to health, one member died, and 12 have not renewed yet. I expect that 6-8 of the late renewals will return.

We are continuing our monthly planning meetings and committee meetings by Zoom. We hope to resume voter registration activities at Prodissee Pantry, the largest food pantry in the County, and at a thrift shop after the first of the year. We have not decided when we will return to in person meetings.

For National Voter Registration Day in September, we supplied the 13 libraries in the Baldwin County Library Cooperative with voter registration materials, posters, voting rights restoration information, and the updated flyer with information on LWVBC. We held voter registration drives at the Fairhope Library and at Homestead Village, a retirement home in Fairhope.

Co-president Freya Sonenstein testified on September 16 at the Baldwin County Community Meeting of the Permanent Reapportionment Committee. Many of our members attended the LWVAL Zoom meetings on reapportionment and fair maps.

The information sheet on LWVBC was updated and distributed to the Welcome Centers in Daphne and Fairhope. We are working on increasing our visibility in the County which decreased during Covid quarantine. Our latest project is to donate a book on Women's Suffrage to every high school library in Baldwin County. We have not picked out the book yet, and we are waiting for the schools to agree to accept the donation.

LWV OF SEAL

From Emily Heersink, President

September

- member spoke at redistricting community hearing at Wallace Community College
- Leadership meeting

October

- VR Table at "Halloween Trunk or Treat" at Betty Dickens Center
- 1 member participated in VRR ThruText campaign
- Nominating committee selected for upcoming annual meeting
- 1 member participated in state redistricting efforts
- Instagram account activated
- Website launched
- Dothan City Clerk, Wendy Shiver presented at membership meeting

November

- 1 member participated in VRR ThruText campaign
- Nominating committee convened and selected Board nominees for 2022-24
- Leadership meeting

December

- VR Table at "Saddle Up Santa"
- 1 member participated in VRR ThruText campaign

- paperwork submitted to ask for local league recognition from the state Board
- Board nominees for 2022-24 announced at membership meeting
- Kathy Jones, LWV AL President presented at membership meeting

LWV TENNESSEE VALLEY

Submitted by Kathleen Leonard, President

Local Redistricting:

- Local redistricting Social Media Awareness Campaign reached 7,244 Facebook and Instagram users
- Letter to Madison County Commission encouraged and resulted in more structured/transparent redistricting process
- Membership surveys conducted for comments and concerns regarding City, County, and State Maps

Advocacy

- Letters to the Huntsville City Council regarding police reforms and revised city council public speaking procedures - available on LWVTNV website lwvtnv.org under NEWS

Voter Services:

- Voter Drives at Calhoun Community College, Pride Festival, Senior Center, Pomeroy Historic Marker Dedication in Decatur, Pride Party, Pomeroy Marker Dedication in Huntsville
- Planning ongoing for Madison County High School Mock Elections

Education:

- Two Braver Angels skills workshops held and more in planning queue
- Two teachers completed Harvard Case Study training, public case study planning in progress
- Voter Girl planning for 2022 launch

Membership:

- Held monthly socials at outdoor venues and will resume when weather permits
- Held monthly book club meetings and will resume after the holidays - for book list see LWVTNV website lwvtnv.org under 2021 Book Club
- Getting ready for the holidays! Will be back next year better than ever