

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTH CAROLINA
STATE BOARD REPORTS
APRIL 2009 TO MAY 2011 IN REVIEW**

May 2011 marks the League of Women Voters of South Carolina's 30th biennial convention. In every odd-numbered year since 1951, LWVSC Convention has been a time to: review and evaluate the past biennium's achievements in light of goals set by delegates at the previous convention; plan the League program of study and action for the next two years; elect a new board and adopt a budget to make it all happen; and gather with League leaders from across the state for networking, learning, celebration and reflection. Following is an overview of the past two years—our challenges and successes, as well as goals that we continue to strive to achieve.

PRESIDENT – Barbara Zia

Serving as president over the past four years has been an honor and a pleasure. Throughout my two terms in office I have been reminded again and again of the ways in which today's League leaders in South Carolina stand on the shoulders of great leaders who preceded us. The dedication and sacrifice of these women—and men too—shaped the League into one of the most trusted and respected citizens organizations in South Carolina. We continue to build on that firm foundation. Indeed, in these highly-charged, politically-polarized times, the League is one of the few places where citizens can put aside partisan differences and come together around issues of shared importance to our civic life.

In 2011 we celebrate the 60th year since the LWVSC was formally authorized by the national League. As this convention theme declares, we continue to be *Empowered for Action: Staying True to Our Mission*. In South Carolina, the League of Women Voters was constructed on a foundation of hope by our state's foremost suffragist leaders—hope and belief that engagement in our democracy should be expanded to include all citizens. Consistently, the League is ahead of its times and leading the state forward.

Historians in our ranks—and we South Carolinians do love our history—will remind us that the League was first formed in South Carolina in 1920 by the intrepid women who led the fight for suffrage here. The “South Carolina League of Women Voters” worked to register and educate new voters, organize local Leagues, train leaders, and advocate for reform on issues like jury service for women, raising the age of consent, and maternal and child welfare. In 1932, the South Carolina League succumbed, perhaps a victim of the Depression that gripped the state. It was revived when local Leagues organized in Charleston, Columbia and Spartanburg in 1947. From this leadership nucleus, the state League as we know it today formed. “The rest is history,” as the saying goes. The League in South Carolina, at both the state and local levels, continues to be a nonpartisan force for progress.

LWVSC launched the 2009-2011 biennium enthusiastically at Convention 2009, hosted by the League of Women Voters of Greenville County at the Hyatt Regency Hotel in downtown Greenville on April 18 and 19. There were 71 voting delegates and non-voting observers attending.

Over the past two years, the dedication, talent, and courage shown by state and local League leadership teams have been nothing short of extraordinary. These leaders have demonstrated repeatedly their willingness to tackle the toughest issues in our state and against incredible odds. We have learned from and inspired one another as we tackled the challenges of making democracy work in the 21st century.

By tradition, the state Board meets annually following Spring Convention and Council (in even-numbered years) to identify goals for focus in the year ahead and develop a strategic plan for achieving them. In July 2010, the state League leadership team gathered at Peggy Appler's home on the Edisto River for a retreat. Following discussion on how we want the League in South Carolina to be perceived, the Board agreed on the following vision:

LWVSC is a respected, influential creator of positive change that benefits all of South Carolina and connects citizens to government.

State leaders share a strong belief that the League in South Carolina should continue its movement in the current direction. Our roadmap includes the study and advocacy priorities that delegates at Convention 2009 set for us:

- *Two studies:*
 - The structure and governance of South Carolina's school districts
 - South Carolina's water supply
- *Action priorities:*
 - First Tier: Education, Voter Access, Tax Reform
 - Second Tier: Criminal Justice, Natural Resources, Reapportionment

The League's core mission of voters service and citizen education, study and advocacy, and membership growth remain constant. But our strategic action plan is clearly directed toward action and empowering our members and all citizens for advocacy. Here are some key goals and strategies that are being undertaken to reach them. The reports that follow from state board and off-board leaders provide a more detailed look at how we're doing.

1. *Build members & develop leaders in numbers and skills to support our goals--*
 - Retain members and increase net membership five percent(;))
 - Share membership recruitment strategies with local Leagues
 - Increase services to local Leagues and all members
 - Work across Leagues: state to local, local to local

Strategies:

- We were honored to be selected to participate in LWVUS Membership Recruitment Initiative that provides coaching, training and resources to help leaders grow and strengthen their Leagues.
- We provided leadership and organizational training to League leaders at statewide League events (e.g., League Leaders Day) and local League meetings
- Periodic regional meetings and conference calls for local and state League leaders were organized. These have proven helpful in connecting leaders from across the state and sharing ideas.
- Sheila Haney serves as coordinator for MAL units and responds to requests from communities that are interested in organizing local Leagues.

Despite the impressive achievements of the South Carolina League, both state and local, in 2009-2011, membership has declined. A major factor in the decrease are the serious economic challenges that citizens face in our state. The fledgling Member-at-Large Unit in Aiken and the local League of the Bluffton Area disbanded because they lacked members willing to lead them. However, there are hopeful signs, such as the LWV of Hilton Head Island's expansion as the LWV/HHI-Bluffton Area, and the strong local

League leadership that is emerging across our state. The LWV of Greenville County's increased membership shows that membership growth is possible.

2. *Serve and educate voters—*

- Produce voters guide and candidates debates for select statewide races
- Support local League candidate debates as requested
- Undertake statewide initiative to increase independence and diversity in state judicial system

Strategies:

- We produced the *VOTE411* on-line voters guide for 2010 statewide races.
- In collaboration with local Leagues, we organized televised forums for 2010 Congressional races in the Upstate.
- The *Judicial Initiative*, launched in Fall 2010 and partially funded by LWV Education Fund and the Transparency and Integrity Fund of the Open Society Institute. This major undertaking for our state and local Leagues focuses on promoting independence and diversity at all levels of the state judiciary to enhance the legitimacy of our system of justice in the eyes of an increasingly diverse public. Grant support will continue through 2012. Partnering on the Initiative are a broad-based, diverse group of state non-partisan organizations.

3. *Increase League communication and visibility—*

- Increase impact and visibility with the public and officials about what we do through marketing, advocacy, collaborations and media

Strategies:

- Our *SC VOTER* newsletter, edited by Laurel Suggs, is published quarterly. The paper version reaches all LWV members and state legislators; the electronic version is available at www.lwvsc.org.
- A key communication tool is our website, www.lwvsc.org, which is coordinated by Duncan Buell. We use League Easy Web, a cost-effective LWV-based service from California. A new feature of the website is a page devoted to the Judicial Initiative. Jean Wood coordinates the state League's judicial webpage and helps local Leagues post information on their sites about judicial issues and League-sponsored activities on a fair and impartial judiciary.
- Sheila Haney continues to work to update LWVSC's history, *Proud Heritage*.
- Sales of our signature publication *Know Your State: A Guide to South Carolina Government* continue apace.
- The much-in-demand *LWVSC Advocacy 101 Handbook*, a nuts and bolts explanation of how the General Assembly works and how to advocate on issues, is available for free in print form and on the LWVSC website for download.
- A project that was launched to gather oral histories from past state League presidents is expected to be completed in Summer 2011.
- We increased our effectiveness by working in coalitions and partnerships made up of non-partisan organizations that share the LWV mission on particular policy issues. These groups included: S.C. NAACP, Conservation Common Agenda, S.C. Policy Council, Common

Cause, AARP, S.C. Fair Share, Appleseed Legal Justice Center, ACLU SC, Fair Elections Legal Network.

- Local League presidents and MAL Unit chairs receive periodic *League Leaders Updates* electronically and are encouraged to share them with their leadership teams and members. These emails are designed to inform local League leaders about upcoming events and opportunities.
- We were honored with visits by two national League presidents: Mary Wilson came to Columbia in Fall 2009 as part of the LWVUS-Oxfam America Sisters on the Planet climate change project; Elisabeth MacNamara came to Charleston for the Fall 2010 conference that launched our Initiative on Judicial Independence and Diversity. Both leaders' visits included public speaking, media events, and meetings with local and state League leaders.

4. *Study and advocate on League priority issues—*

- Define the LWV in South Carolina in terms of *action*
Define(,) focus, analyze, strategize, maintain close focus on priority issues
Track legislative action on priorities
Issue-area directors connect with local Leagues and members via statewide communication networks
Get member “buy-in” on taking action via communications and trainings
Conduct advocacy training workshops
Hold legislative advocacy day focused on specific action that is desired
Collaborate with like-minded organizations

Strategies:

- Committees for the two LWVSC studies adopted at the 2009 Convention have worked diligently:
 - Study on water resource issues—Following 18 months of research and educating members about the state’s water supply, the Study Committee, chaired by Mullen Taylor and Joan Kinne-Shulman, determined that existing state and national League positions are sufficient to allow action. The Committee prepared *Quenching South Carolina’s Thirst: A Report on South Carolina’s Water Resources*. This comprehensive paper on water issues will be distributed to members, the general public, and legislators.
 - Study on school district governance and structure—The Study Committee, chaired by Holley Ulbrich, prepared background information papers that were published in the *SC VOTER* and online, and spoke at local and state League meetings. Consensus questions that emerged from the study were distributed to local Leagues and a report was presented to the LWVSC Board. The new positions will be considered at Convention 2011.
 - Under the direction of Carole Cato, we activated an Advocacy Team made up of volunteer League members who observe, advocate, and present testimony at the Statehouse on priority issues. *Our aim is to be proactive, persistent, agile and quick in taking action.*
- Calls to action are emailed to members, asking them to contact their state legislators on issues like recycling, school voucher, and voter

photo ID bills. We are utilizing *Salsa*, an online advocacy application that is provided to us at no charge by the national League to support our voting rights advocacy in South Carolina.

- We held press conferences and sent “to the editor” and “op-ed” articles on League priority issues—such as voter ID, judicial selection, conservation, campaign finance and voting systems. Our submissions were picked up by print, TV, radio, and electronic media outlets throughout the state. *When the League speaks, people take notice.*
- Legislative Advocacy Day on children’s issues was held in Columbia in February 2010 and 2011. Our partners were again the S.C. American Association of University Women and S.C. School Improvement Council. At the 2011 event, we added United Methodist Women as a partner, and attendance reached 400.
- In early 2011, we partnered with School Improvement Council on Advocacy Workshops in the Midlands and Upstate that drew enthusiastic voters who wanted to hone their advocacy skills.
- At the March 2011 Board meeting, LWVSC adopted a Task Force to consider and recommend an alternative voting system for the state’s current electronic voting machines. For several years, the League has taken a proactive role in advocating for a voting system that ensures every eligible voter can vote and have that vote counted fairly. Public support for League concerns has increased after recent vote count irregularities that were uncovered by a citizens committee working under LWV auspices.

5. *Activate a development committee to obtain resources needed to support projects and activities:*

Identify needed resources

Increase revenues to a level sufficient to support our strategic plan

Strategies:

- Grant funding enables us to undertake a number of projects, including our Judicial Initiative and Membership Recruitment Initiative, and action on climate change.
- League members continue to respond generously to our annual financial appeal

With Gratitude

Since Convention 2009 there have been changes in the state League leadership team:

- *Chuck Gibbs* resigned as Vice President, Voters Service and Citizen Education; he assumed presidency of LWV/Sumter County. *Laurel Suggs*, Vice President, Issues and Action, took Chuck’s board position. *JoAnne Day* stepped in as VP, Issues and Action. *Carole Cato* assumed the position of Advocacy Director.
- *Jon Butzon* replaced *Sheila Gallagher* who resigned as K-12 Education Director in order to run for partisan political office.
- *Rita Paul* came on board as Early Care and Education/Child Welfare Director, replacing *Janet Marsh* who had ably served in that position for several years.

Amazingly, these changes all took place without causing even the slightest disruption in the League’s work.

As the 2009-2011 biennium draws to a close, I’d like to express my deepest

appreciation to all of our state and local League leaders whose dedication and hard work makes our achievements possible. Thanks go in particular to those leaders who are stepping down from state board and off-board positions:

- *Agnes Edwards* has been our superb Secretary since 2005, never blanching or losing patience in the face of even the most spirited, complex board decision making. Previously, Aggie served as Juvenile Justice Director for the LWVSC.
- *Peggy Appler* did an extraordinary job as Vice President, Community Relations, since 2007.
- *Mullen Taylor*, serving as Natural Resources Co-Director since 2007 and Co-Chair of the 2009-2011 Water Supply Study, has made enormous contributions to our understanding of water issues in South Carolina.
- *Joan Kinne-Shulman*, as Water Supply Study Co-Chair, brought critical organization skills and a unique understanding of coastal water issues to the project.
- *Brusi Alexander* has served as Natural Resources Co-Director since 2007 and coordinated our Conservation Common Agenda activities.
- *Rebecca Lambert*, as Healthcare Director, has brought fresh insights to our understanding of health issues, particularly as they pertain to women and children.

Of course, all of these activities were carried out by volunteers who share a passion for making democracy—and the League of Women Voters--work in South Carolina.

VOTERS SERVICE/CITIZEN EDUCATION- Laurel Suggs

Educating our members and citizens is a challenge in this age of information overload but we know being an informed citizen produces citizens who want to take action. We must educate so we can advocate.

We communicate with our members with the quarterly mailing of the SCVOTER newsletter. This is also posted on our www.lwvsc.org website, and prior SCVOTER issues are also available on the site. We are grateful that our League leaders routinely provide substantive and timely articles to keep members informed on important issues. The SCVOTER is also given to every member of the SC General Assembly.

Many SC major newspapers have responded very favorably to printing op-ed pieces written by President Barbara Zia and other Board members on a host of important issues. This has helped tremendously in getting the League's positions on issues out to the public.

The 2010 Primary and General Election season was a busy one for LWVSC with many debates airing on TV. Our partners were AARP – SC, WIS TV in Columbia and WYFF4 in Greenville/Spartanburg.

We held primary runoff debates for the Republican Candidates. (There was no Democrat runoff required.) We conducted general election debates in the 3rd and 4th Congressional Districts. We were unable to get a commitment for general election debates with the gubernatorial candidates, Nikki Haley and Vincent Sheheen, after trying for many months.

Our most challenging Voters Service Project was the partnership with vote411.org. This was an exciting way to get candidate information in the hands of all citizens. Karen Utter and JoAnne Day were tireless workers on this project and they give a thorough examination below of the successes and challenges for this year and future years.

VOTE411 - LWV Voter Information Website, www.vote411.org

Karen Utter, LWVSC Project Coordinator
JoAnne Day, LWVSC VP, Issues and Action

The League of Women Voters of South Carolina took part in the national League's effort to launch a much improved VOTE411 website to provide a one-stop shop for voters looking for information in this last election.

Leagues in 27 states used VOTE411 in 2010. VOTE411 is unique in that it provides voters with any and all information needed to vote, from registration, to finding their polling place, to entering a home address and receiving a sample ballot with their legislative district's candidates and information about those candidates.

The major challenge in launching a voter information website is getting candidates to respond. The VOTE411 software is fully automated and enables mass candidate communication via email. Obtaining good email addresses for candidates was not an easy task and was very time consuming. Follow-up emails and calls to encourage participation by candidates were also very time consuming.

So, how did we do? First, let's look at some basic numbers for the South Carolina 2010 General Election. For this first effort at launching VOTE411, the state League focused on all federal and state constitutional and legislative offices, and also included amendments to the state Constitution. No local races were covered. That resulted in a total of 224 candidates contacted. All of the State House of Representative seats (124) were up for election in 2010. Of the 123 House seats to be decided in this election (one race was delayed), 76 were uncontested and two of the state's constitutional offices were also uncontested (State Treasurer and Adjutant General). Voter turnout in the 2010 General Election was 51.89%. Of the 47 contested state house races, only five of these races had a ten point or less spread between the winning and losing candidates. So, the conclusion might be that we had very few competitive elections for the SC state house. The federal and constitutional office races were somewhat more competitive.

Intensive effort at contacting candidates resulted in 58 candidates responding to the policy questions posed to them by LWVSC. In contacting candidates, approximately 50 of the initial 214 emails sent to candidates were verified, meaning they were opened. The other 164 emails were not opened, went to spam, bounced with mailbox full or bad email addresses. Phone calls were made to the candidates with unverified email to attempt to obtain good email addresses, and invitations to participate were resent. After extensive effort to obtain good email addresses, approximately 100 candidates were verified as having opened the VOTE411 information. Ten candidates did not have emails or would not give an email address. Letters were sent to these candidates.

The 58 candidates that responded resulted in a 26% response rate. If we consider only contested races the rate response rate improves to approximately 39%. By way of comparison, Delaware reported a response rate of 45-50% and Maryland reported well over 75% response from candidates. There are probably many reasons for the low response rate in SC, but we can only speculate. One of the most obvious reasons is the lack of contested races – candidates have little incentive to respond to questions if they have no competition or they have a weak challenger. There is also the fear factor for candidates that anything they say can be taken out of context and used against them. And, this was the first year we have used VOTE411 so it is not a well-known entity among either politicians or the public.

According to data from the national League from Google analytics, there were 13,238 visits to the voters' guide data related to South Carolina from 124 cities. These visitors reviewed 476,966 pages of information. These traffic numbers do not reflect the total number of visits and page views from all South Carolina visitors to VOTE411, just visits to the voters' guide information. It is difficult to know how to interpret this data, but it can certainly

be used as a benchmark to gauge increase or decrease in traffic for VOTE411 for the next election cycle. There are 2,631,459 registered voters in South Carolina so there are a lot of potential customers for VOTE411.

Where do we go from here? The League in SC will need to decide first of all whether to participate in VOTE411 for the 2012 general election. If we decide to do so, there will be opportunities and challenges to be addressed by the state and local Leagues.

In 2012 the Primary as well as the General Election will need to be covered. In a state with so many uncontested and non-competitive races in many districts, the primary election is, in effect, the election. Also, coverage of local elections will increase the value of VOTE411. The down ballot races frequently have less information available to the public. Starting early on election preparation will be one of the keys to success. Some suggestions are listed below.

- *Publicity and Partners* – Focus early in the Election cycle on finding media partners and organizations willing to publicize VOTE411 on websites, newsletters, etc. In 2010 WIS TV in the midlands and WYFF in the upstate put the VOTE411 logo on their websites. The more name recognition we have, the better the response from candidates.
- *Manpower-VOTE411 Standing committees.* State and local leagues will need a committee dedicated to these elections efforts: identifying races to be covered, developing question sets for candidates, gathering emails addresses for candidates, contacting candidates, contacting media.
- *Candidate contact and contested races.* Contact candidates earlier in the election cycle with calls to candidates educating them on VOTE411 and alerting them that questions will be coming to them. When time is tight, focus on contested races. The bulk of the effort with VOTE411 is candidate contact and response.

MEMBERSHIP - Janie Shipley

At each biennial convention, LWVSC recognizes the local League that has experienced the greatest membership increase in the past two years. This year, the award goes to LWV of Greenville County, the only local League that has increased its membership in the past two years.

In 2009, South Carolina had 2 MAL units, Aiken and Horry County. The Horry County group continues to be strong while the Aiken unit ceased to exist in 2010.

Membership in LWVSC dropped in the past two years from 709 members in 11 local Leagues in '09 to 606 at the beginning of 2011 in 10 local Leagues, a 14% decrease. At the end of 2010 the Bluffton League disbanded. The Hilton Head Island League has officially changed their name to LWV of Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Area. Hilton Head members are actively working to expand their service area to include Bluffton and recently hosted a public meeting featuring a presentation by Bluffton's Mayor Lisa Sulka which drew approximately 60 people. There are current efforts to establish a MAL unit in the Rock Hill area. A recent move by LWVUS is expected to have a negative impact on our ability to reach members who do not live in a community served by a local League; it is no longer possible to join the League through the national website, thus eliminating the membership category Nationally Recruited Member.

In 2010, the LWVUS expanded its Membership Recruitment Initiative (MRI) to include 21 states. South Carolina was chosen as one of those states that received intensive training

in this organizational program to build membership and develop leadership. The program is designed as a partnership for LWVUS, state Leagues and local Leagues. Pilot programs have found that focusing on a target audience, increasing visibility, improving relationships with media and other community organizations result in net membership growth. Emphasis in the MRI project is also given to the importance of engaging current members as a growth strategy while serving to enhance leadership development. The national project is built on a network of coaches. A coach from the national level guides state coaches who work with local membership teams. The 2010 SC state coaching team consisted of Gini McGirr, national coach from Arizona, Janie Shipley, State Coordinator and coaches, Joyce Franklin, Rebecca Lambert and Sue Myers. In 2011 Vera Stang assumed the assignments of Sue Myers who had to step down from her role as state coach. Local Leagues were invited in 2010 to apply to participate in the program and 7 Leagues were chosen: Charleston, Clemson, Columbia, Darlington, Georgetown, Greenville, and Hilton Head Island. The state coaching team meets monthly; state coaches meet monthly with local membership teams to whom they have been assigned, working on ways to reach new members, engage current members, promote League activities and enhance leadership development. The goal of each participating League is to see a net increase in membership of 5%. Several Leagues are on their way to meeting their goal.

Another member of the state membership effort is Sheila Haney who continues to serve as MAL coordinator and works in development of new Leagues.

STATE LEAGUE HISTORY PROJECT - Sheila Haney

This history is an incorporation of the previous history which concludes in 1977, *Proud Heritage*. After a year and a half of my weekly trips to the University of South Carolina's libraries for research, this history will include interviews, several local histories, photos, and cartoons, that are being organized based on League issues and positions. Four lengthy interviews of past presidents were taken by the university graduate student who was assisting me in the project, Mickie Blakeley, then were transcribed after her untimely death to incorporate in the text as appropriate.

The author has been supported by many thus far, League leaders and the state board, a U.S.C. Press editor, and published authors who were contacted and offered advice. Other's information and experience are welcome.

The history's projected number of chapters is seven with the initial draft nearing completion of the third chapter. It is impossible to report a projected publication date as hurdles remain, such as publisher acceptance of the draft.

As in my presidency, I would continue to encourage state and local League leaders to record and share their histories for posterity. Although this has been an intensive effort, I am enjoying the work to preserve our state's League history.

ISSUES AND ACTION – JoAnne Day

In 2010, I began my term as Issues and Action Vice President. This position oversees all aspects of League program, both study and action/advocacy. Every two years, we, the grassroots local Leagues in South Carolina, meet together at state Convention to set the priorities for action for the next two years. It is at Convention that the state League seeks the guidance and direction of our members to set our agenda.

In the past two years the state League has made advocacy at the General Assembly a priority. Under the dynamic and farsighted leadership of our President, Barbara Zia, we established the position of Advocacy Director on the state board approximately three years ago. Under the energetic and successful direction of Carole Cato, Advocacy Director, and other volunteer advocates, the League has definitely established a presence at the state legislature. The League lobby team regularly attends subcommittee and committee meetings, delivers testimony, and regularly speaks with legislators on issues of importance to the League. On many issues, we have acted in coalition with like-minded organizations to hold meetings and organize press conferences.

Another tool the state League uses for advocacy is an automated software system, "Salsa," to issue action alerts to our members and supporters, giving them the information and the tools they need to contact their legislators. This software has been provided by the national League to our state League to help us in our efforts to advance voter protection issues in South Carolina. Voter access and protection, as well as fair and equitable funding for education, health, and child welfare, have been League priorities in the past two years.

This year the League also expanded our traditional Education Advocacy day to include more partners: the United Methodist Women (UMW), American Association of University Women (AAUW), and the School Improvement Council (SIC). This year's effort drew more than 400 participants to learn about citizen advocacy at workshops and also visit the General Assembly and put the advocacy learning into action, lobbying for more funding for education and children. We hope to do more partnering in the future to help advance the issues important to the League.

In addition, the state League adopted two studies at the last convention: (1) water supply issues in South Carolina and, (2) a study of structure and authority of school districts in South Carolina. These studies have been completed and results will be presented at Convention.

It's impossible to be an expert on all the positions that the League espouses and I am very fortunate to work with so many League members on the state and local level who share their time and expertise on issues that are important to us.

The directors listed below keep abreast of current issues in each of their areas and help alert and guide our responses to current legislation or other opportunities where our voice needs to be heard. They continually provide their expertise to our members by writing quality articles for the SC VOTER, writing testimony for hearings, and providing input for action alerts.

Brusi Alexander, Natural Resources
Peggy Brown, Natural Resources specializing in energy issues
Carole Cato, Advocacy
Robin Kimbrough-Melton, Criminal Justice
Jon Butzon, K-12 Education
Eleanor Hare, Voting technology
Rebecca Lambert, Healthcare
Sarah Leverette: Education, Taxation and Governance
Rita Paul, Child Welfare/Early Care and Education
Susan Richards, Transportation
Mullen Taylor, Natural Resources specializing in water issues
Holley Ulbrich, Education, Taxation and Governance

More about the League's advocacy efforts will be reported by our Advocacy Director, along with specific reports in their area of expertise by our LWVSC area directors.

ADVOCACY – Carole Cato

As expected, the 2011-12 legislative session has many bills similar to those that failed during the 2010-11 session. Voter Photo ID shot out of the gate, a priority of both houses, but due to so many disagreements landed in a Conference Committee led by Senate President Pro Tempore McConnell. Opposition to photo ID has been at the top of the League's advocacy list for the past two years. We have walked with it every centimeter of its journey. There is no way to tell how long it will take the committee to hammer out the vastly different versions of this bill, or if the bill will suffer the same good fate of dying without action, as it did last session .

As the list of issues has grown, so has the number of volunteer members of the League's Advocacy Committee, especially the frontline volunteers that live in the Columbia area and give so much time at the Statehouse. We have worked with voting rights, education and child welfare, women's rights, healthcare, criminal justice, judicial selection and environmental issues. We tend to devote less time to issues that have single-issue groups working for specific legislation. In these cases, the League is part of a coalition and has certain days for advocating on behalf of the coalition.

Members of the committee act in unison or alone, depending on the kind of work that needs to be done and what they like to do most. Some of the activities members have been involved in during the past two years are the celebration of Women's Equality Day at the State House on August 26, 2010; testified before numerous sub-committee hearings using League positions; attended and spoke before the Legislative Democratic Caucus, the Legislative Black Caucus and the Senate Democratic Caucus (Republican Legislative and Senate Caucuses are closed.); compiled and distributed, with the help of the House and Senate Democratic caucus directors, information on issues via email and print; participated in Legislative Advocacy Day with United Methodist Women, School Improvement Council and AAUW in February 2011; participated in two workshops with School Improvement Council; helped coordinate and speak at a number of press conferences; did two TV interviews and one 30-minute NewsWatch TV show with an AARP representative on Voter ID; did two radio interviews and numerous newspaper interviews; attended many committee meetings and at least two legislative sessions each week; devoted many worthwhile hours to researching the most current information on issues and making sure it reached the best people for the best results; monitored legislative debates closely, and when needed, furnished League information to legislators.

Most of all, the Advocacy Committee worked hard to build relationships and trust not only with legislators and their staffs, but also with lobbyists, employees and other advocacy groups at the Statehouse. We can learn so much from others who have been there much longer and know all the ropes and who pulls them. We are learning to frame issues in a new way that promotes conversation rather than shutting it down. Our strength lies in our strong, untarnished legacy. There is great respect for the League and the excellent work we do, whether people agree or disagree with our positions. Let's face it: Our positions are usually years ahead of anything many legislators are willing to think about, much less put into legislation. Perseverance over the long pull is the name of the game.

One area where our advocacy is not meeting League standards is in member responses to action alerts. When members receive an alert, it means your League at the Statehouse needs your help in the worse way within a short time period. Our work has much less impact on decisions if the legislators receive few or no emails, calls or personal visits from our members. Let's work to increase our alert response rate. We realize some

members are unable to be as active as others, but everyone should be able to respond to action alerts. We are the League. *Action is what we do.*

CRIMINAL JUSTICE – Robin Kimbrough-Melton

The Criminal Justice Committee's work in the last two years has focused on the deliberations of the General Assembly's Sentencing Reform Commission (SRC). After one year of hearing expert testimony and studying sentencing practices around the country, the SRC issued its recommendations in February 2010 and began developing legislation to implement the recommendations. The CJ Committee monitored the work of the three SRC subcommittees and provided oral and written testimony to the SRC on proposals. S. 1154 was passed by the General Assembly in May 2010 and signed by the Governor on June 2, 2010.

The Committee also is monitoring S. 385, a proposal to merge the Departments of Corrections and Probation, Parole and Pardons. Supporters of the proposal argue that the merger is important for the full implementation of Sentencing Reform. In particular, the merger would create opportunities to begin shifting funding to support low-level offenders in community-based alternatives such as intensive probation.

At the national level, the Committee and the LWVSC have been supporting the National Criminal Justice Commission Act, which was reintroduced by Senator Webb in February 2011. The Act would create a bi-partisan, blue ribbon committee of experts to undertake an 18-month review of the nation's criminal justice system and offer recommendations for reform.

The Committee is becoming more active on juvenile justice issues. We are monitoring the "disturbing schools" statute. Attempts to modify it in 2010 were not successful. The statute accounts for the bulk of referrals to the DJJ system. We are also beginning to explore a role for our Committee in the discussion about factors that contribute to a "school to prison pipeline" and strategies for addressing this.

The CJ Committee also organized educational sessions for League members on *Women in the Corrections System and their Children* and *The School to Prison Pipeline in South Carolina*. Representatives of the Committee also participated as panelists at the Symposium on Crime and Punishment, organized by the Charleston Law School and Riley Institute at Furman in February 2010.

NATURAL RESOURCES – Peggy Brown

The LWVSC continues to participate in the Conservation Common Agenda with Conservation Voters of South Carolina (CVSC) and other partners. We take part in yearly meetings to determine legislative priorities. For the 2011 legislative session the five priorities are to: 1) ban phosphorus use in dishwashing detergents, 2) eliminate chronic waste water sewage spills, 3) increase jobs in clean energy, 4) establish ABC licensure recycling, and 5) secure Conservation Bank funding and removal of the death clause (Conservation Bank ending in 2013). The League also participated in "Conversations with Our Legislators" which scheduled briefing time with House and Senate members on Common Agenda priorities. On March 2, 2011, I testified at the Judicial Subcommittee in support of S. 461 ABC Recycling Bill, which is currently on the Senate calendar.

The LWVSC will again sponsor 2011 Annual Conservation Lobby Day. In 2010, we displayed a LWV table at the Oyster Roast which offered a great opportunity for visibility among the conservation community and with policy makers.

LWV's Environmental Lobby Day was held on February 15, 2011. CVSC held a briefing at the Nickelodeon Theater before members set off for the Statehouse. We had a good showing of enthusiastic advocates: Shelia C. Gallagher, Carol Kososki, Ryan Nevius, Brown, Rev. May M. Finklea, Becky Carr and Brusi Alexander. Other attendees were Pam Greenlaw, Ann Jennings, Ivey Kaiser, Caitlyn Ruble, Karen Crane and myself.

The main bills we advocated for were the Phosphorus Bill ([H.3470](#)), and the Three Strikes Sewage Polluter Bill ([H.3617](#)). We had good interaction with targeted legislators, and even got a commitment from Rep. Nathan Ballentine (R- Dist. 71) to be a bill co-sponsor. We attended the House Agriculture and Natural Resources Subcommittee where both bills were discussed and testimonies heard. The Phosphorus Bill was voted favorably and moved to House Agriculture Committee. Amended H.3617 and H.3470 moved out of the House Ag. Committee to the House calendar, on April 12. H.3470 would prohibit the use, sale or manufacture of dishwashing detergents containing phosphates, a harmful chemical found in lakes and rivers. Phosphorus is already banned in 15 states because it kills fish and lowers recreational revenues and home values. H.3617 is aimed at reducing threats of sewer spills. The bill will require that a management plan be developed for domestic wastewater treatment operations that have repetitive significant spills.

In September 2010, I testified in Charlotte, NC, at the EPA public meeting to request the EPA to regulate coal ash under Subtitle C in the Resource Conservation and Recovery Act (RCRA). The proposal would replace a patchwork of uneven — and in many cases weak — state regulations with new national standards. It would formally designate coal ash as a hazardous waste under federal law, require industry to phase out porous sludge ponds, and replace them with sturdy, leak-proof facilities, and take other protective steps.

In the latter part of 2009, Johnson Controls (JC) announced plans to build a battery recycling facility in Florence County. After lengthy research and meetings with industry leaders and city and county officials, concerns were raised regarding air emissions and the air quality modeling. In February 5, 2010, the DHEC Bureau of Air Quality issued an *Air Synthetic Minor Construction Permit*. The LWVSC, along with Coastal Conservation League, requested that the Best Available Control Technology BACT be used at the facility for pollution control and asked for a formal DHEC Board Review of the permit. DHEC granted the review and after four hours of debate granted the permit but strongly suggested JC to that it work with our expert witness/scientist to improve the air quality monitors. It had been more than 20 years that a battery recycling facility has been permitted in the U.S. The review caused a pause in the process that allowed time for the experts to develop an air monitoring strategy that increased the monitoring to a level that exceeds EPA requirements and will further safeguard residents and the environment. In January, I was asked to take part in the ground breaking, along with Senators McGill, Leatherman and Williams, Florence's Mayor Wukela, and Nancy Cave, from CCL, my friend and conservation colleague.

I have attended several county zoning hearings across the state attempting to give special zoning variances for coal ash ponds, and mega dumps. It is evident, by the large numbers of citizens turning out, that South Carolinians across the state are guarding their land, water and air resources from city, county and state politicians who at times are persuaded by big business and the dollar, rather than ensuring a high quality of life and a healthy environment for their constituents.

WATER RESOURCES STUDY COMMITTEE – Joan Kinne-Shulman, Co-Chair

In 2009, delegates to the LWVSC Convention voted to set up a two-year study on “Water Resource Management in South Carolina” to determine whether new state League policy positions on water issues should be developed.

A committee was appointed to carry out the study. Members were: Mullen Taylor, and Joan Kinne-Shulman, Co-Chairs; Peggy Brown, Opal Brown, Chester Sansbury, Elizabeth Weems, Andy Yasinsac.

After researching the subject and producing articles for the *SCVOTER*, the committee determined that current state and national League positions allow the SC League to take action on any water issues that may arise. No new positions needed to be developed.

The committee decided to prepare an informational report on South Carolina water sources, laws, usage, quality, quantity, and interstate issues. The published report, *Quenching Our State’s Thirst: A Report on South Carolina’s Water Resources*, will be available at the state Convention in May and thereafter.

EDUCATION K-12 – Jon Butzon

For the past two years, public education has been under heavy pressure from the budget meat axe. This year will be no different. There are fewer teachers in the classrooms, but no fewer students. Programs are being eliminated right and left. And even “sacred cows” like sports and band are under consideration for reduction or elimination. School districts are trying desperately just to stay afloat. In that context, improving student outcomes seems ludicrous.

At the same time public education is wrestling with massive funding cuts, the need for improved results is as great as it’s ever been. As the economy, drivers of innovation, and the market-place become increasingly more competitive and more global in nature, the need for high levels of education for EVERY child will grow, too. We need to be preparing every child for college regardless of whether or not they go, and we need to make college more affordable. If it is not already, public education will become the leading indicator of the state’s ability to compete with the rest of the world. As goes public education, so goes the rest of the state.

There is no more crucial time for the League of Women Voters in South Carolina to put its collective shoulders to the wheel on behalf of children and their future, but also on behalf of all of us and our future as a socially, politically, economically viable state. The payoff from investing in quality early childhood education for every child has been researched and demonstrated so many times that it is now almost a cliché. The importance of investing in and ensuring teacher effectiveness should be a “no-brainer” for everyone. The absolute necessity of cutting the state’s dropout rate without also cutting its educational standards is unarguable.

At the same time, the absurdity of taking more money from our public schools is more and more apparent. We build our long-term future by optimizing our investment in educating our children well, not by cutting back to and below “minimally adequate.”

Thoughtful, visionary people can all see it and they can all connect the dots of what will happen if we are not successful in ensuring a complete and competitive education for every child. We have to help every South Carolinian, especially policy makers, see and understand it. This short report then becomes less a report and more of a call to action for every member of the League of Women Voters.

EARLY EDUCATION and CHILD WELFARE – Rita Paul

Efforts continue in the areas of legislation and outreach:

- **Early Education.** Continued to follow proposed legislation on the expansion of 4-year-old kindergarten, notifying members and others on action needed. Testimony was given at a special K-12 Senate committee on behalf of LWVSC, encouraging the legislature to keep funding for 4K for at-risk children high on the priority list and to consider funding beyond the original 37 school districts.
- **Child Welfare.** Informed League members about child welfare programs and issues through the *SC Voter*. Prepared and distributed information on early education/child welfare legislation at Legislative Advocacy Day, which included
- **Guardian Ad Litem Program.** The GAL program in South Carolina is a volunteer program that trains caring adults to be child advocates. These volunteers represent abused and neglected children in Family Court. The program is seeking an additional 300 volunteers to join this effort. If you or members of your local Leagues are interested in becoming a volunteer with this very important program, go to www.sccgal.org for more information. You may also call 1-800-277-0113. GAL staff are also interested in meeting with local Leagues to share information.
- **Update.** The Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) program is administered at DSS and is a safety net for needy parents as well as a path to employment. The agency has already lowered payments from \$270 to \$216 per month for the average TANF client effective February 1, 2011, seriously jeopardizing needy family's ability to continue on the path to employment and self-sufficiency.

What can you do? Contact your legislators and encourage them to invest in children and families. Ultimately the League recommends working with policy makers at both the state and federal levels to identify dedicated funding for the child welfare program as opposed to the current funds at the state and national level that are cobbled together for child welfare services. While this is certainly not a great time to be talking about new dollars—federal or state—it is important to keep these issues on the table and out front.

STATE and LOCAL TAXATION - Holley Ulbrich

This was an active biennium in terms of tax issues. The Tax Realignment Commission (TRAC) report last fall was not welcomed by the General Assembly, despite its solid recommendations (most of which we support) and the fact that the commission was made up largely of conservative business people. However, LWVSC is part of a broad-based coalition to continue to press for comprehensive tax reform, and we are hopeful that these efforts will eventually pay some dividends. We have to focus on the reform aspect rather than the issue of additional revenue if we want to be heard by most of our legislators. Our key issues: broaden the base of the sales tax (especially services and internet purchases), review the 53 credits and other revenue-loss features of the income tax, index excise taxes for inflation, and protect the integrity of the property tax base.

It appears that the long-awaited change in the Index of Taxpaying Ability to restore the distribution of EFA funds to what it was before Act 388 will pass this legislative session. The battle on point-of-sale is not over, but as the session wanes it appears likely not to pass.

Point of sale eliminates the requirement that property be reassessed at sales price when it is sold, even if that price exceeds the 15% cap. Both of these issues are important for school districts, and point-of-sale also affects cities and counties. The League supported the change in the ITA and opposed the change in point of sale.

As one might predict, the aftermath of Act 388 is pressure from owners of other classes of property for similar relief, especially owners of rental property but also the business community in general. The already wide gap between taxes on an owner-occupied house and a rental house was greatly increased when homeowners got 100% relief from school taxes and other property did not. Business firms pay the extra penny of sales tax on their purchases but received no tax relief in exchange, nor did homeowners whose homes were worth less than \$100,000. The property tax relief created in Act 388 has also been a drain on the General Fund since the extra penny of sales tax did not generate enough revenue to fully fund the promised tax relief. Although there is great resistance to any changes to Act 388 by legislators, the League will continue to nibble around the edges of some its worst consequences.

TRANSPORTATION – Susan Richards

LWVSC has worked hard over the past several years to increase awareness on the state and local levels about the need to provide better support for public transportation. It is still an uphill battle but we are finally seeing some progress. Thanks to the efforts of the Horry County MAL unit, a November 2010 referendum to provide funding for the COAST system in Myrtle Beach passed. Also the success of the LWVSC May 2009 Statewide Community Transportation Day, prompted Easter Seals Project ACTION agreed to return to South Carolina for the 2010 Transportation Association Conference. Representing the LWVSC, I moderated a repeat of the popular customer panel that was originally part of the May 2009 event.

In the fall of 2010, SCDOT and Transportation Association of SC (TASC) partnered to produce a video about the benefits of public transportation that will be shown across South Carolina to local and state officials as well as to the public. The League's past education efforts were recognized and we were asked for input about how the video should be structured. The League's support for public transportation was mentioned at the debut of the video during the 2011 TASC Conference in Myrtle Beach. Additionally, as part of a session on transit marketing, I distributed copies of the post cards we developed for our education campaign. Finally, I will represent the League as a panelist at the opening session of the 2011 Commuter Transportation Association Conference in Charleston on June 6.

NUCLEAR WASTE - Suzanne Rhodes

Updating Mary Kelly's "The Aging of the Nuclear State" continues to be my focus. The ever-changing status of South Carolina's nuclear future includes Aiken-area SRS boosters' recent "invitation" to the industry to bring spent commercial reactor fuel for temporary storage and perhaps reprocessing at SRS. This has been a persistent goal of SRS supporters, and rose in prominence after the closure of the troubled Yucca Mountain site for permanent storage of high-level commercial (and defense) wastes. As a representative of LWV South Carolina, I spoke against this proposal at the US Department of Energy Blue Ribbon Commission on America's Nuclear Future on January 7th, 2011, and will testify at an

April DOE hearing on the suggested importation of “Greater than Class C” wastes to SRS. I have attended meetings in South Carolina, Charlotte and Georgia of citizens and SRS oversight groups. I am focusing on a “South Carolina’s Nuclear Summer of 2011” type of report, as important issues will come into focus starting this summer, including the Blue Ribbon Commission’s and the Government Accountability Office’s anticipated reports on alternatives to Yucca Mountain and on alternative spent fuel management strategies.

Georgia’s Southern Company and SCANA may be on a trajectory to accept federal fund guarantees to develop two each additional reactors in Fairfield County and across the river from the Savannah River Site at Plant Vogtle. Other candidates for federal subsidies for new reactors apparently have been withdrawn, probably due to inability to convince local regulators that ratepayers should pay for the nuclear construction costs in advance, and because of the economic slowdown.

As we go to press, the problems at the Japanese Fukushima Daiichi Plant seem to be barely under control. U.S. reactors similar to the Japanese design may be shut down for temporary safety review (as they were during the Three Mile Island nuclear accident), but no shutdowns are expected in S.C. The same design used in the Fukushima Daiichi Plant is estimated to produce 3% of U.S. electricity. Spent fuel storage practice and certain earthquake conditions will be reviewed. Continued circulation or other cooling problems in Japan could result in a worst-case situation for the U.S. The Japanese, especially those working at the nuclear sites, are in far greater peril than are people in the U.S. Let’s wish everyone involved lots of insight and luck.

<p style="text-align: center;">ELECTION INTEGRITY Duncan Buell and Eleanor Hare</p>

We continue to work on problems with the Election Systems & Software (ES&S) voting system, including the iVotronic voting terminal. We have been joined by Mr. Frank Heindel (Charleston, SC) and Mr. Chip Moore (research programmer in Boston, MA).

Frank and Duncan have requested electronic voting records from 13 counties (Anderson, Berkeley, Charleston, Colleton, Florence, Georgetown, Greenville, Horry, Lexington, Pickens, Richland, Spartanburg, Sumter). Duncan and Chip have written computer software that will determine if the electronic data records are complete and if the votes recorded on the iVotronic terminals have been correctly reported in the total vote. Audits of these counties are not complete, but 114 uncounted votes were found in Horry County and 1127 in Richland County. Almost 1400 more votes than ballots were found in Colleton County. Most counties have not collected all the flash card data from the iVotronic terminals after each election. This data is required in order to determine that the vote from the terminals has been correctly recorded.

Together with Barbara Zia, representing the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, a paper, “Auditing a DRE-Based Election in South Carolina,” written primarily by Duncan, is being sent to the primary research conference on election technology. This paper is available on the LWV-SC web site at <http://lwvsc.org/files/fiveauthor.pdf>

Duncan and Frank were invited to meet with a subcommittee chaired by Senator Campsen on April 14 to discuss S. 464, a bill co-sponsored by Senators Alexander, Leventis, and Rose, which would require that voting machines “print out a receipt showing how the voter cast his vote that must be deposited in a receptacle by the voter, which only must be used to verify the vote at the polling place if there is a recount.” – that is, a paper ballot.

Unfortunately, South Carolina is unlikely to obtain an elections system with a paper trail in the near future because the State has no money and standards for machines are in the process of being revised nationally.

The good news is that Duncan and Frank were asked to provide input for an amendment to the bill that would require the kind of audits we have been doing.

The Senate Subcommittee requested that Duncan work with Marci Andino, Executive Director of the State Elections Commission, (and Ms. Andino with him) to audit the election results from all 46 counties. She admitted that she didn't begin auditing election results until we showed them that things are not as they should be. Duncan is scheduled to meet with the SCSEC staff in May.

We are also collecting information from the counties about the continuing costs of using the ES&S voting system. Counties pay an annual fee in order to use the voting machines that they own. In 2011, as the result of a 7% increase in these fees, the annual charge to the counties increased to \$1,060,128 plus SC sales tax (usually 7 or 8 percent). Only ES&S and its authorized representatives may provide paper ballots or audio files for ADA-compliant terminals. Some fees for the 2010 General Election audio files (pre tax) were \$2042.90 for Charleston, \$1887.90 for Greenville and \$1275.30 for Edgefield. Additional audio files were purchased for primary elections and other elections. Other expenses included repairs, shipping charges, replacement batteries (as much as \$95 each) required for each terminal, replacement batteries (\$10 each) for personal electronic ballots and miscellaneous other equipment purchases.

The terminals used in South Carolina are no longer being manufactured; but used, refurbished terminals are being purchased by some counties (including Aiken, Greenville, Sumter and York), because the population is increasing. The State Elections Commission does not keep records of purchases of additional terminals, so this information must be collected individually from each of the 46 counties. Counties do not always reply to Freedom of Information Act requests and we are (as of May 1) still attempting to obtain information for 2010 from seven counties.

Problems with recounting and certifying the vote using the current voting system are expected to accelerate replacement of the current voting technology. In order to be able to participate in the selection of the next voting system, the State Board created an Alternative Voting Technology Task Force at its March 12, 2011, meeting. This task force is co-chaired by Duncan and Eleanor.

This task force will examine the existing literature and periodically share collected information with the membership, utilizing the SC Voter and statewide meetings such as League Leaders' Day and State Council. Members wishing to participate should contact Duncan (buell@computer.org) and Eleanor (eleanorhare@gmail.com). A web page for the task force has been set up at http://clemsonarea.sc.lwvnet.org/Voting_Systems.html.

<p style="text-align: center;">JUDICIAL INITIATIVE – Constance Anastopoulos, Sarah Leverette, Peggy Appler</p>
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The League of Women Voters of South Carolina has been involved with the issue of judicial selection in South Carolina for some time. On September 17, 2008, the LWVSC, with the S.C. Bar Association and the S.C. Women Lawyers Association, hosted a forum at the Palmetto Club in Columbia to address "Judicial Selection in South Carolina; Ensuring Quality, Independence and Diversity on the Bench." The panel consisted of the Chief Justice of the S.C. Supreme Court, members of the legislature, and attorneys and scholars. Several

issues were debated and more questions were raised that focused on problems with South Carolina's process of judicial selection.

Additionally, the LWVSC filed an Amicus Brief in Segars-Andrews v. Judicial Merit Selection Commission, et al., S.C. Op. No. 26791 (Mar. 2010). LWVSC, with the assistance of the national League, Justice at Stake, and other national advocates, filed the Amicus Brief in support of the argument AGAINST legislative domination of the process which LWVSC suggested threatens judicial independence. The Brief was filed by Prof. Constance Anastopoulo of the Charleston School of Law on behalf of LWVSC.

Based on our prior involvement on this important issue, LWVSC worked with the LWVUS to be chosen as a participant state in a national grant program to educate citizens about the importance of an independent and diverse judiciary and to determine the changes that are needed in the judicial selection process in South Carolina in order to ensure independence and increase diversity on the state's courts. LWVSC members met with League members from Kansas at the LWVUS Convention in Atlanta to discuss what strategies worked well for the Kansas League and what changes they would make to improve their effectiveness.

The Initiative has received valuable input from the staff of the LWVUS and the national organization, Justice at Stake. Numerous conference calls and face-to-face meetings with these staff resulted in the development of specific strategies and goals as the project moves into the second year.

LWVSC kicked off the campaign with a half-day forum in Charleston, SC, on October 8, 2010. The event included national, state and local speakers on the issue of ensuring independence, diversity and quality on the bench. The topics included: *The Impact of The Judicial Process On Citizens; Why Does Judicial Diversity and Independence Matter?; What Does A Fair and Balanced Judiciary Look Like?; How Does the Current South Carolina System Compare with This Model?; and How Can We Achieve This Vision Of A Fair And Balanced Judiciary?*

The Charleston forum was incredibly well-attended and kicked the campaign off with tremendous enthusiasm and momentum. Local Leagues have followed with their own projects including a forum by the League of Florence Area held at the Francis Marion University campus. LWV of Darlington County held a meeting in which they showed the League's Power Point on the judicial selection process in South Carolina.

The October 2010 Charleston conference served as a "launch point" for the two-pronged action program:

1. To identify changes in the current judicial selection process that would increase the levels of independence and diversity in the state judicial system.

Actions Taken:

- To address the involvement of the established official entities of the state judicial system members of the coordinating committee met with Chief justice Jean H. Toal in the fall of 2010 for the purpose of discussing the Initiative and to seek her advice as to the strategies and goals of the project.
- In February 2011, some 20 members of the LWVSC and partner representatives met with members of the Judicial Merit Select Commission for the purpose of obtaining "at hand" information on the operation of the judicial selection process, including the roles of the JMSC, the citizens committees and legislative participation in the final phase of selection.

2. To establish a statewide program of citizen education focusing on the state judicial system, the role the courts play in the life of the citizen, the importance of

judicial independence and diversity in ensuring a fair and impartial judiciary and how the current judicial selection system impacts the independence and diversity of the state courts.

Actions Taken:

- Excellent statewide media coverage has been attained throughout the year.
- Through a speaker project established in cooperation with the South Carolina Women Lawyers Association, volunteer members of SCWLA provide speakers for local Leagues and community organizations. The SCWLA speaker project is continuing through the year.
- The May 2011 LWVSC convention in Sumter will focus on the Initiative through the keynote speaker C.J. Ruth McGregor, former Chief Justice of Arizona Supreme Court, a panel discussion of Transparency in the Judicial Selection process, and a presentation on iCivics, a program to educate middle school students about the three branches of government.
- Local LWVs over the state are conducting special events to lend statewide emphasis to the Initiative.

To help coordinate local Leagues' special events, Peggy Appler, LWVSC VP, and Karen Utter, LWV Columbia Area, volunteered to be the Local League Project Coordinators. Their first task was to request that each local League identify a contact person to liaise with LWVSC and LWVUS. Each local League leader was provided a resource manual, containing sample events and proposals from the Kansas projects, diversity statistics, and other resource material. Zaida Arguedas and Cynthia Padera met with the League leaders prior to the October conference in Charleston to provide one-to-one assistance.

Many leagues have completed events, others are still planning for future dates. Below are reports from Judicial Independence and Diversity Local League Leaders:

- ❖ *LWV/Charleston Area, Shirene Hansotia* - provided a great deal of assistance to the State Kickoff in October 2010 and is planning to have former Family Court Judge F.P. "Charlie" Segars-Andrews address members and guests at their Annual Meeting.
- ❖ *LWV/Clemson Area, Linda Gahan* - Held a meeting on "A Quest for a More Diverse and Independent Judiciary" on April 12, 2011. Jennifer Howe, a Greenville, SC, attorney and a representative of the South Carolina Women Lawyers Association was the speaker. She was very articulate and made the topic interesting and interactive. The purpose of the meeting was to educate our members with the consensus of the 40 attendees that the current Merit Selection Process is not the worst in the nation, but the Merit Selection Judiciary Committee needs a more diverse composition. Mary Ann McKenzie was in charge of the meeting and Eleanor Hare took pictures.
- ❖ *LWV/Columbia Area, Karen Utter and Carole Cato* - Held a public policy luncheon on the history of the League's involvement with issues involving the independence of the courts in South Carolina and outlined the LWVSC Initiative on Judicial Diversity and Independence. The LWV/Columbia then conducted an essay contest for high school seniors in Richland and Lexington Counties. The theme of the essay was "Comparing the Strengths and Weaknesses of the S.C. Judicial Selection System with Those in Other States." An awards luncheon will be held May 17, with \$2,000.00 in scholarships to be awarded.
- ❖ *LWV/Darlington County Joyce Franklin* - Held a "Discussion of the Judicial System and Diversity" with state Senator Gerald Malloy of Hartsville.

- ❖ *LWV/Florence Area , Sara B. Stewart and Frances Elmore* – Hosted a panel discussion on November 29, 2010, on the campus of Francis Marion University, Florence. The topic was the history of issues regarding the selection process of judges in the State of South Carolina with the perspective of gaining more independence and diversity. A reception for all participants and audience followed. The target audience was primarily students, especially Political Science classes at FMU and those majoring in related programs at Florence-Darlington Technical College. Also invited were members of the LWV/Darlington County, AARP members, the various educational sororities in the area, local members of the Silver Haired Legislature, and the Bar Associations of Florence, Darlington and Marion Counties. Francis Marion University handled the print media publicity. Local papers, both weekly and daily, are being sent press releases, and all radio and TV stations in the area were notified. In addition, the LWV/Florence Area president appeared on several local TV and radio programs to promote the meeting. The newly appointed editor of the Florence daily paper was briefed concerning the event and agreed to promote it. Since Francis Marion University operated a campus TV station, the program was taped and made available to public viewing several times during the ensuing weeks. Audience participants were asked to complete an evaluation form. The forms were reviewed by the Board of the LWV Florence Area and the results shared with the FMU Political Science Department.
- ❖ *LWV/Georgetown County, Zane Wilson* – This project is in the planning stage.
- ❖ *LWV/Greenville County, Rebecca Lambert – Jan Welch, Val Vandersloot* – Are creating a website with information about the members of the Judicial Merit Selection Commission, the five Regional Citizen Committees On Judicial Qualifications, and the South Carolina Supreme Court.
- ❖ *LWV/Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Area, Caroline McVitty* – Plans are for an October 12, 2011, Forum on "Ensuring a Diverse and Impartial Judiciary." Speakers, to be announced, will be comprised of persons in the field of judiciary selection, existing and/or retired state judges, representative(s) currently serving on the Judicial Merit Selection Committee (a body appointed by the General Assembly with the sole authority of nominating candidates for the judiciary to be approved by the General Assembly) local representative(s) from the SC Bar Association and/or Beaufort County Bar Association.
- ❖ *Horry County MAL Unit, Elizabeth Weems* – Has planned a free conference addressing the importance of an independent and diverse judiciary in South Carolina and examining the impact that the judicial selection process has on reaching that goal. They have applied for Continuing Legal Education credits. The conference is scheduled for May 16, 2011. The speakers are Justice Kaye Hearn, South Carolina Supreme Court, and Lee Coggiola, Chief Disciplinary Counsel, South Carolina Supreme Court. Other invited panelists are state Rep. George Hearn, Ernest Finney, Solicitor for the South Carolina Third District Circuit, Judge Jennifer Wilson, Myrtle Beach Municipal Court, former state Rep. Vida Miller, and Natasha Hanna, member of Pee Dee Citizens Committee on Judicial Qualifications.
- ❖ *LWV/Spartanburg County, Linda Bilanchone* –Project began in February 2011 and concluded in April with a mock court event. The project was a civics and judicial selection education program designed for Boys and Girls Club.
- ❖ *LWV/Sumter County, Barbara Wiley and Chuck Gibbs* – Held four monthly meetings, open to League members and the general public. Each meeting a

different level of the court system, educating audiences about the roles, responsibilities and election process of each level of the judicial system. Speakers were: Master in Equity Richard Booth; Chief Magistrate Kathy Ward; Judge Jeffrey Young, 3rd. Judicial Circuit; Judge Dale Atkinson, Judge of Probate, Sumter County; and Judge George McFaddin, Family Court.