

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF
HILTON HEAD ISLAND/BLUFFTON AREA**

**ANNUAL REPORTS
2016-2017**

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF HILTON HEAD ISLAND/BLUFFTON AREA
2016-2017**

Officers and Board

Term Expires

Officers

President	Fran Holt	2017
Vice President/Program Chair	Joan Kinne-Shulman	2018
Treasurer	Mary Jo Happle	2018
Secretary	Ellen Dahl	2017

Elected Directors

Action/Advocacy - State Issues	Patricia Montgomery	2017
Membership	Ellie Dixon and Diane Neal	2017
Voter Service	Oleta Harden* and Ruth Wilwerding	2018

Appointed Directors

Natural Resources	Sally McGarry	2017
Education	Kathy Quirk	2017
Communications	Sandy Stern	2017
Meeting and Event Planning	Jan Billingslea*	2017

Off-Board Positions

Action/Advocacy - Local Issues/ Observer Corps	Sally McGarry
Archivist	Connie Voight
Facebook Manager	Karen Wessel
LWVSC Healthcare	Alison Burke
Liaison to LWVSC Board	Sue Yearwood
Nominating Committee	
Elected Members	Nancy Williams, Chair; Dot Law
Appointed Members	Joan Kinne-Shulman, Ruth Wilwerding
Webmaster	David Rice
Budget Committee	Katie Miller, Chair Karen Wessel, Mary Jo Happle
Bylaws Committee	Sally McGarry, Chair

*Oleta Harden and Jan Billingslea both resigned from the board prior to the end of the term. However, Jan Billingslea continued to serve as Meeting and Events Planner in an off-board capacity.

President's Report

Thanks to a competent and congenial board, support from members and recovery from hurricane Matthew, we've accomplished quite a lot this past year. Commitment to making democracy work during these contentious times has been a strong bond that makes our efforts seem worthwhile. Most of what we've accomplished is covered in the following reports prepared by other officers and board members. My primary role as a team leader has been to support them in what they did. I have also tried to help the Beaufort League, which has come back to life after a long dormant period.

In addition, as spokesperson for our League, I have been quite involved in advocacy by trying to support what both the national and state Leagues do. LWVSC Vice President and lobbyist Lynn Teague has been especially helpful in keeping us informed on legislation through conference calls, Facebook and Legislative Action and Advocacy Day (LEAD). I have written letters to the editor, made quite a few phone calls to elected officials and also written to them. Recently we have voiced our concerns locally in regard to development proposals. We also joined the Charleston League in advocating for gun safety. Nationally, we tried to make our views known on various issues, including the Affordable Care Act and the Election Assistance Commission.

We are trying to keep up with the times and are grateful to some of our more technology savvy members for their help with that. We are now on Facebook and sometimes Tweet. We conducted a survey using an online service, are planning to make it possible for members to make credit card payments for dues and other expenditures and have a very good website. There is a lot more that we should do with technology, but I am confident that will happen soon.

Having just returned from the LWVSC Convention, I know that there is much more work to do. The one message that was made loudly and clearly is that, although the League must change with the times in order to stay relevant, the commitment to **nonpartisanship** is sacred. I leave the presidency of our local League knowing that it will be in very good hands. Nancy Williams and Dot Law will be excellent co-presidents, and they will be working with a very competent board and those holding off-board positions. I know they will also enjoy the support of our membership, including the twenty-five new members who joined this past year.

By the way, I am not retiring from the League! My commitment to this organization won't let me do that. I am pleased to report that I will be serving as treasurer on the LWVSC Board, and you'll still see me at local League events.

Fran Holt

Program

During the 2016-2017 League year, we held a variety of programs for members and the general public. Usually the meetings were held at the Hilton Head PSD community room and the Unitarian Universalist Congregation church in Bluffton. All of the programs were quite well attended.

In September we heard about "Regional Environmental Issues" from representatives of the Coastal Conservation League (Michelle Sinkler) and The Nature Conservancy (David Bishop).

In October the focus was on local candidate forums and ballot issues. Hurricane Matthew swept through in early October, cancelling a forum for candidates for the Beaufort County Board of Education. Later in the month, speakers on behalf of the school district (Phyllis White) and the County Council (Mike Sutton) explained ballot issues concerning the financing of a variety of county and school projects. At the end of the month, we held a forum for candidates for two seats on the Hilton Head Island Town Council.

A committee of three League members (Alison Burke, Cynthia Hudson, and Sue Feutz) plus a recorder (member Nancy Williams) presented the LWVSC Consensus Meeting on Healthcare in South Carolina in early November. It was the second part of a two-year study.

At our December Holiday Luncheon South Carolina Senator Tom Davis gave us a preview of issues likely to be considered by the South Carolina Legislature in its 2017 session.

Perhaps our most successful meeting in recent memory occurred on January 11 at the Campbell Chapel A.M.E. Church in Bluffton. Entitled "Creating a Beloved Community: A Conversation on Race Relations," the program attracted more than 200 people. Moderator Luana Sellars directed the proceedings. Each of the five panel members, Dr. Jon Black, David Ames, Fran Heyward Bollin, Alexander Brown, Jr., and Dot Law spoke about an aspect of race relations in the area. It was the first of what the League hopes will be an ongoing series of conversations.

The February meeting focussed on State and Local League Program Planning.

In March, the Hilton Head PSD General Manager Pete Nardi and Beaufort Jasper Water and Sewer Authority General Manager Ed Saxon reported on "What's Happening With Sewers and Wells" in the region.

The April program continued our "conversation" series on race and ethnic relations. Aimee Deverall, a local immigration lawyer, spoke about "Issues of Concern to the Hispanic Community" in our area.

At our Annual Meeting and Luncheon in May, Jane Perdue, representing the Center for Women in Charleston, reported on "The Status of Women in South Carolina."

Joan Kinne-Shulman

Vice President and Program Chair

Voter Service

In the Fall of 2016 the Presidential Election was held and Legislative seats at both the national and state level were contested. Our local league was very involved in registering first time 18 year old voters and providing information to all eligible voters who had questions about voting absentee or how to update their own registrations. Ads were placed in the local papers by LWVHHI/BA giving a state website that provided information and the address and the phone number of the Beaufort County Board of Elections. Fran Holt, our league president, wrote a letter to the editor of the Packet stressing that you needed to be registered by Oct. 8th and the locations and dates of LWVHHI/BA voter registrations sites.

September 27th was National Registration Day. The Congress of the USA designates that day. On that day, our League registered students at 3 Beaufort County High Schools plus the Technical College of the Low Country. Earlier volunteers had registered students at the University of South Carolina HHI Gateway campus. The Farmers Market in Bluffton and the Burgers and Brews Event on HHI are examples of LWVHHI/BA outreach to the community. In all volunteers registered about 100 voters at 9 different locations.

League sponsored 3 forums for voters. The first one was a candidates meeting for the Town Council of Hilton Head. Ward 1 and Ward 2 had contests with 2 candidates running for each seat. The second Forum was on the local tax initiatives that would appear on the November 8th ballot. The last forum was to be for the school board candidates from Districts 6 and 9 but was cancelled because of Hurricane Matthew.

Many members of our local league volunteered the day of the election as poll workers or poll watchers. My co-chair Oleta Harden resigned her position as co-chair of voter service to serve as a poll watcher.

The election of many new federal, state, county and local officials meant that the LWVHHI/BA Guide to Elected Officials needed to be updated. That was completed in February.

Thank you to Katie Miller, who was last year's Voter Service Chair, and Oleta Harden for their support. Also, a big thank you too to the 18 members of our league who volunteered to make the Voter Service drive a success

**Ruth Wilwerding
Voter Service Chairperson**

Membership

The League of Women Voters Hilton Head/Bluffton area currently has 132 members as of April 30, 2017. Membership Co-Chairs, with significant support from League members who have actively recruited and referred potential members. Membership numbers are reviewed by LWVUS on February 1st of each year. Since our last annual May meeting, we have welcomed 25 new members to our chapter.

About 10 – 14 individuals did not renew their membership for a variety of reasons: relocation, illness, death or other interests. Where appropriate, every effort is made to encourage continued involvement with the League. While most of our members have single membership, we also have at least a half dozen family memberships. Both single and family memberships include individuals who reside in Hilton Head Island, Bluffton and Beaufort as well as in island areas of the Lowcountry.

The League has continued to be visible within the Beaufort County area: hosting candidate forums, participating in the Martin Luther King parade on Hilton Head Island, holding numerous voter registration drives and sponsoring a race relations program in Bluffton that was open to the public and attracted a full house.

Activities are publicized in local newspapers, flyers are placed in public locations, increasing awareness about the League. Membership forms are available at all League events.

Diane Neal and Ellie Dixon

Membership Co-chairs

Communications

During the past year, I fulfilled my responsibilities as Communications Chair by sending out Press Releases to local newspapers, magazines and TV media regarding our meetings, candidate forums, fundraiser, educational programs and voter registration information.

I've invited the public to attend and participate in these meetings.

They include:

Sept. 21, 2016 - General Meeting

Sept. 27, 2016 - National Voter Registration Day

Oct. 6, 2016 - Candidate Forum for the Beaufort County School Board - in Districts 6 and 9

Oct 16, 2016 - Jazz Brunch fundraiser at Ruby Lee's II

Oct. 20, 2016 - Town Council Candidate Forum at HHI Town Hall

Oct. 25, 2016 - Ballot Referenda meeting

Nov. 9, 2016 - Meeting on Status of Healthcare in SC

Jan. 11, 2017 - 'Creating the Beloved Community: A Conversation on Race Relations'

Feb. 10, 2017 - National & Local Program Planning for 2018 Meeting

Mar. 8, 2017 - 'What's Happening with Sewers and Wells?' - guest speakers, Pete Nardi and Ed Saxon

Apr. 12, 2017 - 'Issue of Concerns to Hispanics' guest speaker, immigration attorney, Aimee Deverall

May 10, 2017 - 'The Status of Women in SC' guest speaker, Jane Purdue

I took photos at each of these meetings to include in our monthly *Lighthouse* newsletter, as well as share with local media and our Facebook page.

I sent out hard copies of the *Lighthouse*, to members who do not have email addresses.

I wrote a column for the *Lighthouse* on my personal account of my March on Washington on Jan. 21, 2017.

Comments: During this highly political year, I was pleased to see an increase in interest by the public in what the League does. I was also pleased to note that our local publications printed most of the Press Releases I emailed them.

Sandy Stern
Communications Chair

Education

Throughout the year, Education Committee members have worked to educate themselves about issues at both the local and state levels. At the local level that has included monitoring the meetings of the Beaufort County School District (BCSD) board and the challenges the board has faced in dealing with the ongoing split, both on the board and in the community, on whether to retain Dr. Jeffrey Moss as Superintendent. The committee has written to and met with members of the board about our concern for transparency and a loss of trust due to the board's handling of the controversy. More recently, we met with the editor of the Island Packet to talk about balanced coverage of the district's meetings. Other issues of concern at the local level are the achievement gap between African-American, Latino and white students in our school population and reports of inequities in discipline. The BCSD board recently acted to address inequities in school facilities by voting to fund the building of the performing arts center and gym at their Whale Branch campus, which has a predominantly African-American student body. Our committee is expecting to further study the district's response to the existing achievement gaps. The Education Committee has also been following legislation impacting education at both the national and state levels. Specifically, we are tracking H.R.610 at the national level, which would allow the distribution of federal funds in the form of vouchers to private and religious schools. We have been following similar proposed legislation at the state level which is not expected to come out of committee in this legislative session. The League opposes all use of tax funds to support private and/or religious education. We are monitoring the legislative response to the SC Supreme Court's Abbeville decision, where little has been done to address the problems faced by poor rural districts. Among other things, the LWVSC supports consolidation of smaller less efficient school districts and better compensation for teachers in rural areas with large high-risk student populations. We also continue to support increasing the base student allocation to the level required by the Education Finance Act.

Kathy Quirk
Education Committee Chair

Natural Resources/Land Use

The Committee has not met regularly this year. We did not schedule a meeting in September. Hurricane Mathew in October caused all regular scheduling to go out the window.

In November, Kate Schaefer of the South Carolina Coastal Conservation League spoke to us about trees and tree ordinances. She also touched on development proposed for Bay Point Island, off the coast of Hilton Head Island; a possible plastic bag ban on the Island; and the start of the Environmental Impact Statement process for the Jasper Port.

In January, 2017, we heard from Ginny Kozak, Planning Director of the Lowcountry Council of Governments. (LCOG). This organization receives federal funds for transportation planning involving Hilton Head Island, Bluffton, and Beaufort. Its long- range plan for the area can be viewed on line. LCOG is also involved with planning for both the Port of Savannah and the future Jasper Port. Sea level rise, as it involves Parris Island, is being studied with Dept. of Defense money. It was obvious to the Committee members that this was an organization operating outside of our scope of interest. This lack should be remedied.

The speaker for April, Anthony Criscitiello, Director of Planning for the Beaufort County Council, will address the Community Development Code for the County and its application to proposed development on the Hilton Head National site.

A May meeting is planned, to evaluate what we have learned to date and to identify issues and proposals, affecting our areas of interest, to be followed over the summer.

Sally McGarry
Natural Resources/Land Use Committee Chair

Observer Corps/Local Issues

The mission of the Observer Corps is to monitor meetings of the Town Councils and Planning Commissions of the Towns of Hilton Head Island and Bluffton with a view to identifying issues of concern to our local League and making our views known to our elected officials, if our positions warrant it. Making our views known may take the form of letters, phone calls or emails to the officials themselves from our leadership, encouraging letters, phone calls or emails from our members , or writing letters to the editors of the local newspapers.

The Observer Corps has been very small this year. We are covering the Hilton Head Island meetings of both the Council and the Planning Commission regularly. Attendance at the Bluffton meetings is more spotty, but there are League members who attend both Bluffton and Beaufort County Council meetings and advise us when action should be taken.

The Observer Corps needs to enroll more members, and that will be our goal for the next program year.

Sally McGarry, Chair

State Issues/Advocacy

Lynn Teague Identified Legislative Issues for 2017

The 2016 – 2017 year was a busy one for state and local issues and advocacy, especially in light of the national election and this year’s shortened state legislative session. Lynn Teague, VP for Issues and Action, LWVSC identified legislative issues for 2017 in January for our attention and monitoring. She listed ethics and judicial reform as well as reform of current law regarding possible conflicts of interest by legislators as priorities. LWVSC was also concerned about voting rights, including making voter registration and absentee and early voting easier for state citizens and redistricting since South Carolina has very few districts that are competitive in the general election. Also of concern are the 123,000 South Carolinians who have no health insurance because they fall in the “gap” with income too high for Medicaid and too low for insurance subsidies. LWVSC will consider relevant bills to support better health insurance coverage for SC citizens.

On the education front, LWVSC supported consolidation of smaller less efficient school districts and better compensation for teachers, especially those in rural areas. Women’s Reproductive Health, Violence Prevention by curbing access to military-style weapons, and environmental protection were other priority issues for the new 2017 session of the

General Assembly. Since very little progress was made on these issues during this year's legislative session, these issues will continue to be of concern for the 2017 – 2018 year. Indeed, as can be seen in the review of actions below, our State Senator was in opposition to almost all of the state League's position on these items. See the attachments for more detailed information on the League's positions during the year.

Senator Davis at Odds with Local and State League Positions

Beginning in December 2016, SC Senator Tom Davis outlined his priorities for the 2017 legislative session at our local League's holiday luncheon on December 14. Repair of bridges and roads locally and across the state headed his list of priorities. Senator Davis was not in favor of a gas sales tax as the primary option for providing funds to fix the roads; he looked to have a commission established to explore alternatives. Most recently however, the S.C. Senate passed a 12-cent-a-gallon gas-tax hike April 26th by a vote of 34-10, with a veto-proof majority, after sitting down Senator Davis who had filibustered against the tax for the past two years. Prior to the vote, SC had the second lowest gas tax in the nation.

Senator Davis' other priorities included preparations for the Jasper Port and increasing state funding for USCB. Our county has been picking up a disproportionate share of the cost of this campus. His position on K – 12 education is not in keeping with the state League's position relative to the Abbeville decision. The League supports the state Supreme Court's requirement that the legislature come up with a remedy to our state's failure to provide requisite funding for all students. While the state increased per pupil funding by 2% for the 2017 – 2018 year, this level of funding will not provide students in the Corridor of Shame equitable schooling and also did not result in an increase in funding for our local school district since state-mandates actually reduced the amount of state funding to the Beaufort County School District. His view that market competition and choices deliver the best outcomes in healthcare and education were also at odds with state and local League positions on these issues.

Montgomery Reported Regional Legislators Priorities for the 2017 General Assembly Patricia Felton-Montgomery, our chapter's Board member for State Issues/Advocacy attended a January 4, 2017 Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce's Legislative Luncheon to hear the positions of our regional legislators and advocate for League positions: Senator George E. "Chip" Campsen III of District 43 (Republican serving Beaufort, Charleston and Colleton Counties) and Senator Tom Davis of District 46 (Republican serving Beaufort and Jasper Counties) along with Representative Jeffrey "Jeff" A. Bradley of District 123 (Republican serving Beaufort County), Shannon S. Erikson

of

District 124 (Republican serving Beaufort County) and newly-elected Michael F. Rivers of District 121 (Democrat serving Beaufort County) shared their priorities for this year's General Assembly.

Chip Campsen: Reauthorization of the Conservation Bank; changing laws so that the State Superintendent of Education is appointed by the Governor of the state rather than elected; and changing the Index of Tax Pay Ability because Beaufort County is the most short-changed county in the state in reference to taxes paid and tax revenues sent back to the county.

Tom Davis: Moving forward with building the infrastructure for the Jasper Port and having permits issued by 2020 for RFPs to follow and funding of the Jasper Port Fund; the Bowers Bridge and the other three spans to Hilton Head Island.

"Jeff" Bradley: Education and addressing the Abbeyville ruling for equitable funding of low-economic school district; the SC retirement system; and parity (funding) for USCB.

Shannon Erikson: Quick restoration of Hunting Island because it is one of the few revenue-generating parks in the state, with its revenues being used to fund revenue depletion parks; and domestic violence and support of children and families.

Michael Rivers: The SC retirement system; Hunting Island and Penn Center; the relationship between revenue and services.

Act 388 was another priority area for the legislators. Tom Davis suggested and other legislators agreed that there was no stomach at the state legislator level for going back to funding schools as they were before Act 388. Tom Davis also suggested that providing across the board sales tax relief would not solve the problem with Act 388 nor raise the monies needed for the schools, rather he suggested providing relief to the 6% and 10% properties via elimination of the sales tax exemptions (of which there are many) which will generate \$1 billion unless those benefitting from the exemptions can prove that the exemption(s) are in the public good.

Legislation that aims to stabilize South Carolina's pension system for public employees was passed on April 25, 2017 but is seen as "just the first step of many" needed to fix the problem, Gov. Henry McMaster said as he signed it into law. The law will require higher payments from workers and employers, starting in July and places an undue burden on schools, counties, and cities.

While the Republican governor applauded legislators for addressing a "pension liability

crisis," he said he's disappointed the law doesn't set a date for moving new hires to a defined contribution plan, such as 401K retirement accounts. Funding for Hunting Island was also approved so that the Island will reopen on Memorial Day in May.

HHI/Bluffton Area Members Participate in the Women's March in Washington on January 21, 2017

Janet Law, Sandy Stern and Sue Yearwood were among the more than 2,000 South Carolinians who participated in the historic Women's March. They met League members from Virginia and North Carolina. Janet let us know that March organizers have posted their ideas for action (10 Actions/100 Days) at <https://www.womensmarch.com/>.

Letters to our State and National Officials

In March, members of our chapter joined with LWV members across the state in writing to members of the state House of Representatives to amend the original roads bill, H. 3516 to exempt public education funds from being used to pay for roads. The bill would have eliminated \$37.6 million from the Education Improvement Act (EIA) in FY 17-18 and shift those funds to pay for roads. Our calls and efforts made a difference, with funding being restored to the EIA.

In April, our president Fran Holt wrote a letter to the *Island Packet/Beaufort Gazette* stating our concern about the current movement in the US Congress to terminate the Election Assistance Commission (EAC) Her letter pointed out that, " With continuing controversy about the accuracy, conduct and participation in American elections, this is not the time to abolish the only federal entity devoted exclusively to improving election administration on a bipartisan basis.

The EAC does invaluable work to improve our nation's election systems on a voluntary, non-regulatory basis. It oversees the federal voting system certification program that sets standards for the upgrade of America's voting machines and that 47 states depend on to maintain their voting machines. The EAC also improves accessibility at the polls for more than 37 million voters with disabilities. Finally, local election officials rely on the EAC to provide best practices on voting and election administration."

**Patricia Felton-Montgomery, Ed. D.
State Issues/Advocacy**

Treasury

The fiscal year begins on July 1, and ends on June 30 of the next year. The term of the Treasurer is for two years. Since this past year was my first year, I will continue at the Board's pleasure for the upcoming year.

We bank at Coastal States Bank on Main Street where we have a checking account, a debit card, and a CD in the amount of \$3,000. In September we transferred \$1,620 from our CD to the checking account to meet expenses. On the second day of the month the bank sends me the Monthly Statement via email, from which I prepare my monthly Treasurer's Report.

Our annual Application for Tax Exempt Status was filed by June 30, 2016 to the State of South Carolina, and confirmed. The current form will be filed in June 2017.

Our dues to LWVUS and LWVSC which are paid in quarterly increments, and are due July 15, October 15, January 15, and April 15, have been paid on time. Our annual Post Office Box rental fee, which was due in September 2016, has been paid. This will be renewed in September 2017.

Our 990E Federal Tax Return form was filed on time - before November 15.

Donations were added to the LWV Education Fund account. These donations are tax deductible, and thank you notes were sent to each donor.

At the request of President Holt, I prepared a report of all income and expenditures for a six month period to give us necessary information in the process of preparing the next year's budget.

The use of Paypal was researched this past year, but will be followed up next year with the new Co-Presidents and the Treasurer.

Since the Treasurer has a number of payments due for various obligations at specific times, I created a narrative job description as a guideline for myself, as well as security in the event that I was unable to perform my duties, or as a guide for my eventual replacement.

Mary Jo Happle

Treasurer

FINANCIAL REPORT - July 1, 2016 to March 31, 2017

	<u>BUDGET</u>	<u>ACTUAL</u>	
<u>INCOME</u>			
Membership dues	7,200	3,390	
Donations	1,000	410	
Fundraiser		3,815	Profit 1,272
Events	3,000	1,620	
Software Refund		64	
<u>TOTAL INCOME</u>	11,200	9,299	
<u>FUNDS TRANSFER</u>	1,620		transferred from CD to checking
<u>EXPENSES</u>			
Administration/Supplies	300	374	
Conference & Travel	1,200	652	
Events	3,000	1,656	
Fundraiser		2,543	
Lighthouse	50	35	
Membership	200		
PMPSC	1,561	1,296	
PMPUS	3,568	2,964	
Voter Service	500	976*	
Website	239	200	
Miscellaneous	82	150	
Forums/Programs	500	369	
<u>TOTAL EXPENSES</u>	11,200	11,215	

*Voter Service was paid with Fundraiser profits

Checking Account Balance as of 3/31/2017 was \$4,492.31
CD Balance 3,000
Education Fund 660

Mary Jo Happle - Treasurer

A report showing expenditures for the entire fiscal year will be available after June 30, 2017.

**LWVHHI/BA ANNUAL FINANCIAL REPORT
JULY 1, 2015 TO JUNE 30, 2016**

	BUDGET	ACTUAL
INCOME		
Membership Dues	\$7,050.00	\$5,480.00
Contributions	940.00	695.00
Events	3,500.00	2,460.00
TOTAL INCOME	\$11,690.00	\$8,635.00
EXPENSES		
Administration/Supplies	275.00	1,021.47
Conference/Travel	2,250.00	1,476.68
Education Committee	100.00	0.00
Events	3,000.00	2,226.82
Forums/Programs	125.00	295.26
Lighthouse	0.00	77.90
Membership	185.00	21.74
PMPSC	1,568.00	1,561.00
PMPUS	3,568.00	3,568.00
Voter Service	300.00	127.47
Website	200.00	223.98
Miscellaneous	79.00	102.00
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$11,690.00	\$10,702.32

Checking Account Balance = 4279.32

CD Balance = 4620.26

Education Fund Balance = 475.00

This report does not include many in-kind donations, travel, copying and hospitality.

Jan Billingslea

Treasurer 2014-2016

