



2017-2018 Leadership

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Heather Bragg, Asst. Communications, Facebook Chair

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Jan Billingslea, Meeting, Events Planner

Mary Agnes Garman, Lighthouse Editor

Sally McGarry, Natural Resources, Land Use Chair

Dave Rice, Webmaster

John Riolo, Vote411 Specialist

Flo Rosse, Co-Membership Chair

Connie Voight, Archivist

League of Women Voters of Hilton Head Island/ Bluffton Area

2017-2018

ANNUAL REPORT

May 2, 2018

**MAKING
DEMOCRACY WORK®**

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2017-2018 the League of Women Voters of Hilton Head Island/Bluffton Area achieved significant results in advancing our mission of “Making Democracy Work,” while enhancing our League’s visibility and authority and growing our membership.

Under the leadership of our Board of Directors we have

- Achieved a net gain in our membership of 8 percent from January 31, 2017 to 2018
- Educated our membership and the general public on issues of concern at seven public meetings, which continued to attract a steady flow of new members as well as members and guests
- Launched a redistricting campaign in support of post-2020 fair and equitable districting in South Carolina that has raised awareness of the issue, educated over 650 voters at numerous public speaking events, and mobilized like-minded individuals and organizations
- Lobbied our state and national legislators on our priority issues
- Registered over 310 new voters, an increase of 210 percent over the previous year
- Sponsored and conducted a Town of Bluffton candidates’ forum
- Invested in LWV’s Vote411 and dedicated resources to gathering and publishing on-line information about local candidates for office and their responses to our questions
- Continued to study local environmental and education issues, including school funding at the county and state levels
- Collaborated with the Coastal Conservation League in resisting proposed federal plans to conduct seismic testing and drill for oil off our coastal waters
- Participated in the Town of Hilton Head Island’s Visioning Project and monitored municipal and Beaufort County Board of Education meetings
- Provided representation to a regional League of Women Voters gun safety group
- Increased our League’s visibility through an enhanced newsletter, Facebook page, regular news releases, letters to the editor, participation in community events, and a soon-to-be launched upgraded website.

We have also increased engagement of our members through committee assignments and have provided leadership development opportunities for newer members. In addition, we found time for socialization at our holiday and annual meeting luncheons and our March celebration of Women’s History Month at the home of Fran and Bill Bollin on Mackay’s Creek.

More details about what we’ve accomplished this year, while responsibly using member dues and donations, appears in the following reports from our officers and committee chairs.

~Dot Law and Nancy Williams, Co-Presidents

PROGRAMS

Our League planned and held seven meetings on topics of interest to the public in addition to our annual program planning meeting in February. A planned ninth meeting for September was canceled because of mandatory evacuation from coastal areas due to the threat posed by Hurricane Irma. All of our meetings were well attended—attracting 40 to 70 Leaguers and members of the general public.

The following are the titles of our programs and the speakers, from October 2017 through May 2018

- October:** Democracy and Voting Rights: Continuing the Conversation on Race
Speakers: Dot Law, moderator; Ron Clifford, Chair of the Beaufort County Board of Elections/Registration; David White, Native Islander and former educator; Enid Carranza, Content and Development Officer of *La Isla Magazine*
- November:** Legislative Redistricting and Gerrymandering
Speaker: Mary Ann Bromley, LWVHHI/BA State Issues and Advocacy Chair
- December:** Evaluate the Media: Fake or Factual News
Speaker: James Mallory, writer and retired editor of *The Atlanta Journal-Constitution*
- January:** Where Is the League Today? Where Is It Going in 2018?
Speaker: Julie Hussey, Co-President LWVSC
- February:** National and Local Program Planning
Discussion Leader: Joan Kinne-Shulman, LWVHHI/BA Vice President and Program Chair
- March:** School Funding Is Everyone's Business
Speakers: Dr. Barbara Nielsen, S.C. Superintendent of Education 1990-1998; Dr. Holley Ulbrich, Distinguished Professor Emerita of Economics at Clemson University and Co-President LWVSC; Tonya Crosby, Chief Financial Officer of Beaufort County School District; Josh Gruber, Interim Executive Director of Beaufort County Government
- April:** Civic Engagement & Advocacy: What Strategies Can We Use to Create Equitable and Fair Voting Districts?
Speaker: Mary Ann Bromley, LWVHHI/BA State Issues and Advocacy Chair; subgroup presenters: MaryAnn Bromley, Fran Gelman, John Riolo, Kay Roshnow, Sandy Stern
- May:** You, Too, Can Run and Win Elected Office: Just Do It!
Speakers: Flo Rosse, moderator; Lisa Sulka, Mayor of Bluffton; Laura Bush, past member of the Beaufort County Board of Education; Barbara Catenaci, Treasurer LWVHHI/BA

Contributing to the success of our programs was Jan Billingslea, our able Meeting and Events Planner, who selected venues and made luncheon arrangements for our holiday and annual meetings.

-~Joan Kinne-Shulman, Vice President and Program Chair

STATE ISSUES AND ADVOCACY

Focus area:

The major focus this program year has been on education and advocacy around redistricting and gerrymandering. Thanks to the efforts of other LWVHHI/BA members who gave of their time and expertise on other important advocacy efforts, we were able to focus almost exclusively on organizing and carrying out our redistricting campaign.

Our kick-off event was an LWVHHI/BA-sponsored general meeting in November 8, 2017. An eye-catching video on gerrymandering from *The Washington Post* and a PowerPoint slide program on redistricting and gerrymandering was used to focus the presentation and discussion. The program was well attended by both League and non-League members, and was favorably received by approximately 60 persons. As a result of this program, invitations from a number of community groups were received to do other programs on this same topic. Another outcome of this program is that 17 program attendees signed up to join our newly formed redistricting action sub-committee. The program, with modifications, was also repeated the following evening for approximately 25 members of the League of Women Voters of the Beaufort Area.

On April 11, 2018, we held a second LWVHHI/BA-sponsored general meeting focusing on legislative redistricting and gerrymandering with the title, "Civic Engagement & Advocacy: What Strategies Can We Use to Create Equitable and Fair Voting Districts?" A new PowerPoint slide presentation was developed to hone in on the importance of an independent redistricting commission as an alternative to gerrymandering. Members from our redistricting action sub-committee then led breakout sessions to discuss and apply strategies we can use to educate and engage both the public and the legislators in the importance of changing the current S.C. redistricting process that allows legislators to pick their voters into one in which we strive for competitive voting districts. We had approximately 35 people at this program.

LWVHHI/BA community outreach programs on redistricting and gerrymandering:

- Lowcountry Indivisible (1/13/18). Estimated attendees: 140
- Hilton Head Island Ethics Society (3/7/18). Estimated attendees: 60
- Sun City Democratic Club (3/20/18). Estimated attendees: 65
- Liberal Ladies of the Lowcountry (4/13/18). Estimated attendees: 160
- Campbell Chapel AME Church, Christian Social Action Commission (5/2/18). Expected: 150-175 attendees
- Rotary Club of Okatie (5/15/18)

Efforts to obtain a hearing on the S.C. House Bill (H4456) to establish an independent redistricting commission:

Once the bill was introduced in the House and assigned to committee, we were in constant communication with our League members and community supporters about what was (and was not) happening with the bill and urging everyone to contact their representatives via their website, email, phone, letter, text, etc. Our LWVHHI/BA newsletter *Lighthouse* carried regular updates about redistricting and the bill, urging members to act. We were also in regular contact with other community contacts, urging them to contact their members as well. Informal feedback suggests that the three S.C. House Representatives covering our area were indeed being contacted by their constituents on this issue and about the specific need for a hearing.

As soon as we learned that the bill would not be heard this session, we refocused our efforts, updated our materials and began recruiting volunteers to attend campaign events to talk about and raise awareness of the need for change in our redistricting process and the need for an independent redistricting commission. In addition to using our League newsletter, Facebook page, and website to recruit volunteers, both Lowcountry Indivisible and Liberal Ladies of the Lowcountry publicized our request for volunteers to help with our nonpartisan efforts as well.

Other accomplishments:

We have sold 71 “Stop the Gerrymander” bumper stickers and created an informational factsheet on the need for an independent redistricting commission. Also, we developed a guide to developing effective communication strategies with legislators and candidates. Lastly, a member of the redistricting sub-committee developed a fact sheet on the S.C. legislative process.

Our redistricting action sub-committee currently has 61 members of which approximately 20 or more are quite active at any given time.

~MaryAnn Bromley, State Issues and Advocacy Chair

COMMUNICATIONS

The goals of the Communication Committee this year were to: increase our presence on Facebook with news updates and blog reports; inform the public through our monthly educational meetings, public forums, and candidate debates; notify the public about sources of voting information via TV, radio and newspaper public service announcements; and set up the VOTE411.org and revise and update our LWVHHI/BA website in time for the primaries in June and our mid-term elections in November, 2018.

Regular press releases were sent to local newspapers and magazines regarding our meetings, public forums, educational programs, and voter registration information. In addition, photographs of our monthly meetings and activities that the League participated in during the year (i.e. Martin Luther King Parade, and March for Our Lives rally) were included in our *Lighthouse* as well as shared with local media and posted on our League’s Facebook page.

The League transitioned its newsletter to an e-newsletter format in March. This enabled readers to more easily view the newsletter directly on their phones, tablets, and laptops without the need to download and open a document. The e-format also made it possible to track readership views and generate other reports to guide future communication efforts.

The committee consists of Heather Bragg, Assistant Communications and Facebook Chair; Mary Agnes Garman, publisher of our monthly newsletter, *Lighthouse*; John Riolo, Vote411.org specialist; Mary Ann Bromley, Facebook administrator; and David Rice, www.lwvghi.org webmaster. The committee met three times in 2018 and each member has contributed a wealth of knowledge and expertise. Their efforts and commitment are appreciated.

~Sandy Stern, Communications Committee Chair

MEMBERSHIP

The League of Women Voters Hilton Head/Bluffton Area increased its membership by 8.4 percent from January of 2017 to January of 2018. As of April 20, 2018, our League has 133 members. Since our last annual May meeting, we have welcomed 25 new members to our League. We have lost 24 members due to a variety of reasons: relocation, illness, death or other interests. Where appropriate, every effort has been made to encourage continued involvement with the League. While most of our members have single membership, we also have 14 family memberships. About one-third of our members live in Bluffton; almost two-thirds live on Hilton Head Island. A few others live in Hardeeville and the Beaufort area. Approximately, 14 percent of our members are African-American; 16 percent are male.

~ Ellen Dahl and Flo Rosse, Membership Co-chairs

VOTER SERVICE

In the fall of 2017, each committee chair on the League Board of Directors was asked to develop goals for the year. The first part of this report evaluates the progress made on the Voter Service goals.

- **Expand the voter registration team.**
The list of members of League who indicated they had an interest in voter registration generated 20 names. Active members who worked with the committee were about 10 people. They were a very dedicated group.
- **Increase the number of events/locations where LWVHHI//BA can support registration.**
The number events in 2017-2018 increased to 11 from 8 in 2016-2017.
- **Increase the number of LWVHHI/BA members who are trained to do voter registration.**
With Marie Smalls, we trained five League members but trained other volunteers as needed.
- **Increase the number of voter registrations submitted in 2017/2018 vs.2016/2017.**
Registrations in 2016-2017 totaled 100 while 2017-2018 registrations totaled 310, an increase of 210 percent.

The committee met five times this year with the focus of our meetings on registering students attending the three Beaufort County high schools south of the Broad River. The total number of students registered at HHIHS was 52; May River, 48; and Bluffton, 75. Our numbers may be higher because some students took the forms home. In addition, two of our committee members registered 80 voters in Jasper County. Thank you to the 35 plus volunteers.

National Voter Registration Day was on September 26, 2017. Volunteers registered 44 people that day. Locations were the Bluffton and Hilton Head Libraries, Technical College of the Lowcountry, and University of South Carolina/Beaufort.

Voter Service worked with other board members to write questions for Vote411.org and is working on the scheduling of candidate forums to be held this fall.

~Ruth Wilwerding, Voter Service Chair

EDUCATION

Throughout the year, members of the Education Committee have worked to educate themselves about relevant issues at both the local and state levels. At the local level that has including monitoring the meetings of the Beaufort County School District(BCSD) board and the challenges the board has faced in managing the ongoing split on whether to retain Dr. Jeffrey Moss as Superintendent and that conflict's impact on many other decisions facing the board. Our committee began the year by preparing a LWVHHI/BA Candidate Questionnaire for the District 6 special election for an open board seat on Oct. 17. The questionnaire was posted on our website and distributed in the community. We will be preparing questions for the upcoming school board elections in fall 2018. There will be seven open board positions in that election. Given the current level of dysfunction on the board, it will be important to encourage good candidates to run.

The committee chose to focus on public school funding for a public information session on March 14. The panel included Josh Gruber, Interim Executive Director of Beaufort County Government, who shared data and projections about the county's growth which will impact the need for school expansion; Tonya Crosby, Chief Financial Officer of BCSD, who discussed local funding issues; and Dr. Holley Ulbrich, Professor Emerita at Clemson University and Consultant on Public Finance, who reviewed how the state funds education and the need for redesign of the state funding process. Dr. Barbara Nielsen, former S.C. Superintendent of Education, was moderator for this panel. Information on the upcoming April 21 bond referendum was also distributed at this meeting.

At the state level, there has not been a lot of legislative action on education this year. The S.C. Supreme Court's ruling on the Abbeville case led to a minimal effort to address the problems faced by poor rural districts. LWVHHI/BA President Nancy Williams wrote a letter-to-the-editor, published in local papers, addressing this poor legislative response and asking for more substantive solutions. Among other things, the LWVSC supports consolidation, better compensation for teachers in rural areas with large high-risk student populations, and increasing the base student allocation to the level required by the Education Finance Act.

Our committee has also been tracking legislation at both the state and national levels which would allow the distribution of public funds, in the form of scholarships/vouchers, to support private and/or religious education. Both the S.C. bill H.4308 and the federal bill H.R.610 have not come out of committee. The League opposes the use of public funds for private/religious education.

The Education Committee will continue to use the Collaborative Agenda for PreK-12 Public Education and the broad range of League education positions to advocate for equitable funding and quality education in the state of South Carolina.

~Kathy Quirk, Education Committee Chair

NATURAL RESOURCES/LAND USE

The committee met in September and discussed what issues we would like to pursue in this new program year. In May, before the summer hiatus, members were urged to follow the visioning project -- Hilton Head Island - *Our Future*, as well as the meetings of the Town Council's Venue Committee. Of interest in September was a proposed single-use plastic bag ban, which was to be voted on by the municipalities and by the Beaufort County Council.

At our October meeting, our speaker was Caroline McVitty, a member of the Hilton Head Island government's Planning Commission. Of particular interest to her was her work on the nine-member Gullah-Geechie Land and Cultural Preservation Task Force which is digging deeply into heirs property issues and hopes to benefit from the experience of other areas. She recommended that questions for candidates for office in 2018 should include these land ownership issues.

The Committee did not meet in November and December due to the holidays.

Our January speaker was County Councilman Stu Rodman who reported that the council had voted in support of the plastic bag ban. To consider the issue of litter more broadly, he reported that a "Keep Beaufort County Beautiful" organization will be formed and staffed by the county. A \$120 million bond referendum to fund transportation needs will be on the 2018 ballot, including \$80 million for the bridges to Hilton Head Island. Councilman Rodman also discussed the dramatic increase in population and traffic which will result from development of the Jasper Port, the need to manage growth in Bluffton, and recycling as a council priority.

Sally Krebs, Sustainability staff person for the Town of Hilton Head Island, was to speak to the Committee in February, but she was unable to do so because of illness. It was fortunate she could not attend, because only I and one other committee member were in attendance. This brought me to realize that attendance had been getting smaller and smaller. Many things are occupying League members this year, including developments with the schools and the Board of Education, and the important issue of the redistricting of our voting precincts following the 2020 Census. Therefore, the committee has been disbanded for the foreseeable future, but could be reinstated if there is sufficient interest and leadership.

~Sally McGarry, Natural Resources/Land Use Committee Chair

LOCAL ISSUES AND OBSERVER CORPS

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 only the Council regularly. Attendance at the Bluffton meetings is spottier, 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.

A local issue of great importance to all coastal county Leagues this year has been the Trump administration's proposal for seismic testing and drilling for oil off our shores. The Obama administration had pledged that there would be no testing and drilling, but that action was overruled by the new administration. Again, our League cooperated with the Leagues of other counties in our protests. Also, we joined with the Coastal Conservation League, at the urging of Mayor David Bennett, to hold a meeting at the Hilton Head Island Library on Feb. 1, 2018 to inform citizens about the offshore drilling issues, write letters to the responsible federal agency protesting the new proposals for seismic testing and offshore drilling, and send letters to Governor McMaster thanking him for his opposition on behalf of the state government. This issue continues to warrant our attention.

~Sally McGarry, Observer Corps/Local Issues Chair

2017-18 FISCAL YEAR REPORT

The League continues to operate in a sound financial manner. Last fiscal year, we dipped into our reserve but expect to finish stronger this year. We have made two changes to our operating processes to continue to strengthen our financial standing.

- We now require that any check written on the League account that is \$1,000 or more requires two signatures.
- We also voted to have our finances reviewed by an outside source not less than every two years.

The first review was done this year and we have worked to follow up on the minimal recommendations made. The next outside review will be done in the 2019-20 fiscal year. The League has in reserve more than \$3,000 in a CD providing a minimum of one-fourth of operating expenses in the event of an emergency.

Please see the next page for:

- Table 1: a snapshot of where our finances stand as of April 30, 2018
- Table 2: a comparison of the previous and current fiscal years
- Table 3: bank balances as of April 30, 2018

Table 1 provides a snapshot of where our finances stand as of April 30, 2018

Income		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Year to Date</i>	<i>% of Budget</i>
Contributions	\$977.00	30%
Events	\$1890.00	58%
Membership Dues	\$5900.00	82%
Interest	\$2.53	Not Applicable
Reimbursements	\$150.00	Not Applicable
Total Income	\$8919.50	71%

Expenses		
<i>Category</i>	<i>Year to Date</i>	<i>% of Budget</i>
Advertising	\$0.00	0%
Admin/Supplies	\$571.75	115%*
Conferences/Travel	\$1025.00	57%
Events	\$1655.00	55%
Forums/Programs	\$341.00	76%
Newsletter - Lighthouse	\$9.33	10%
PMP	\$4922.00	100%
Voter Service & Redistricting	\$284.46	55%
Website	\$435.90	145%*
Miscellaneous	\$40.00	40%
Total Expense	\$9284.40	74%

Please note that the League is currently over budget in two categories. This year the League invested in two unexpected areas. We purchased a projector for use in presentations, forums and meetings and invested in VOTE411. We will also send two representatives to this year's national convention in Chicago.

Table 2 compares last fiscal year to this fiscal year (to date)

Fiscal Year	Income	Expenses	Gain/Loss
FY2016-17	\$10,143.00	\$12,974.00	(-\$2,831.00)
FY2017-18 (to date)	\$8,919.50	\$9,284.40	(-\$364.90)

Table 3 provides bank balances as of April 30, 2018

Account	Amount
Coastal States Bank Checking	\$3,845.04
Coastal States Bank CD	\$3,004.50
Ed Fund	\$820.00

We are on track for a strong fiscal year and expect the same next year.

~Barbara Catenaci, Treasurer