



# The League of Women Voters of Washington County

November 2017 Vol. 65. No. 4 [www.lwvarwc.org](http://www.lwvarwc.org) P.O. Box 4, Fayetteville, AR 72702

## Calendar of Events

- Tuesday, November 21, 2017 – Member Activity: Drinks & Dialogue topic – Homelessness in Northwest Arkansas, 5:30 to 6:30 at Fresco Restaurant, 112 West Center Street, #100.
- Wednesday, December 6, 2017 – LWVWC Holiday Celebration with special guests from Citizens First Congress. The Lodge, Butterfield Trail Village, 1923 E. Joyce Blvd., Fayetteville, 6:00 to 8:00 pm. Members are asked to share Holiday food items. Non-members are welcome to attend.
- Saturday, December 9, 2017 – Vigil for Victims of Gun Violence In solidarity with the National Vigil Peace Fountain on Fayetteville Square at 6:30.
- Thursday, December 14, 2017 – Education Discussion Committee; 6:00 to 7:00, Contact Michelle Wolchok at michellewolchok@gmail.com for meeting location.
- Sunday, January 21, 2018 time pending Reading and Q&A at St. Paul’s Episcopal Church BULLETS INTO BELLS Poets & Citizens Respond to Gun Violence Edited by Brian Clements, Alexandra Teague and Dean Radar Sponsored by MOMS DEMAND ACTION & Arkansans Against Guns on Campus. For more information contact Patsy Ferritor at patsy50@cox.net.

## A Comment from the LWVWC President



After a whirlwind of LWVWC activity we find ourselves entering the holiday season and an opportunity to reflect on what we are thankful for. At a time when there is much frustration about our elected officials failing to get much done, we have come a long way in rebuilding our League. Here are things I am thankful for as a LWVWC member:

1. I am thankful for everyone reaching out to build our membership. We have added twenty-four new members since January, 2017!
2. I am thankful that Beth Barham and Sally Kelly understand the technical requirement of developing our new website and have given hundreds of hours to birth this baby! We will soon have a vastly expanded platform to improve communications and increase our overall efficiency and effectiveness.
3. I am grateful our new members are getting younger! For years Leagues across the country have aged and seen a decline in membership. Younger women are learning the impact government has on them personally and how their voices, opinions, labor and grit are needed.
4. I am thankful we live in a diverse region with many talented and generous people who are willing ACT rather than just talk about a problem. Our program chairs can call on knowledgeable communicators to peel back the layers of an issue.
5. I hope that each of you enjoys this Thanksgiving with family and/or friends as a prelude to the giving season. There are many in need and many organizations depending on our generosity. In a world that is overburdened with “stuff”, we should consider make lasting changes with our gifts where need is the greatest.

## Can You Answer This Immigration Test Question?

Most questions are pretty easy for League members, but some take a little thought. **When was the Constitution written?** Look for the answer somewhere in the Voter.

## The LWVWC Invites You to Socialize



New to the League this Fall, ***Drinks and Dialogue***. Join us for a discussion centered on the issues faced by the homeless in Northwest Arkansas. Hear a brief report from Kevin Fitzpatrick, University Professor and Director of the Community and Family Institute, about his work with the homeless and the biannual homeless census. Come learn more about this important issue and

meet some new friends. Take this opportunity to socialize with friends and League members. This event is open to members and non-members.

**Tuesday, November 21, 5:30 to 6:30 at Fresco in the Ball Plaza, 112 West Center Street #100, Fayetteville. RSVP to Sarah Gheen, 479.871.5156.**



The first launch of D&D was very successful with more attending than predicted. As a starting point for future discussions, a booklet of the LWVWC's *Program for Action* was shared. The outline of issues the League has studied locally shows areas for advocacy in questions of public policy. Future gatherings will be more open to small conversations and socialization.

## The Current Hot Topic: Charter Schools

The Education Committee met Thurs. Nov. 2 at the home of Michelle Wolchok to compile some preliminary research and continue a discussion on charter schools. Elizabeth Wood shared copies of bills that failed this last session. One example was the attempt to start a pilot program of Education Savings Accounts. The legislation referred to a Walton trust funding the program which raised a lot of questions about privatizing and state funds going to non-public schools.

Copies of similar legislation were found on ALEC web pages leading the committee to believe this legislation will be introduced again at the next legislative session. The two types of charters that are allowed in Arkansas were discussed along with some of the requirements for each type of chapter. The committee is interested to know about the extent to which charters can receive waivers from some state laws governing all public schools.

The next meeting will be Thurs. Dec. 14<sup>th</sup>. Catherine Dunlap will report on the progress of a similar committee and their work from Pulaski County LWV. A list of experts in the community will be developed to contact for more information. All LWVWC members interested in joining the discussion are welcome. Call Michelle Wolchok, 801-560-6172, for more information.

## Staff from Citizens First Congress to be the LWVWC's Holiday Guests



### Arkansas Citizens First Congress

While the LWVWC has had an ongoing relationship for many years with the Arkansas Public Policy Panel (APPP) and its sister organization, Citizens First Congress (CFC), our new members may not understand that the League is a member of the CFC coalition and together work to promote progressive legislation. Bill Kopsky, executive director of APPP/CFC, will share some of our history and explain the value of bringing groups together to build political power at our Annual Holiday Social on Wednesday, December 6, 6:00 – 8:00 pm. Our guest, Bill Kopsky, will speak at 6:30. The event will take place at The Lodge at Butterfield Trails Village, 1923 East Joyce Boulevard, Fayetteville. Members are asked to bring a food item to share. Donations to further the work of Citizens First Congress will be appreciated.

## Angela Davoni Joins LWVAR Leadership Team

The League of Women Voters of Arkansas is governed by representatives from Washington and Pulaski County Leagues on a Team. A recent vacancy left only one person, Beth Barham, LWVWC. Recognizing the importance of having a voice with state Angela Davoni, LWVWC secretary, has volunteered to join the team.



Leadership representing issues,

brings her THANKS,

Angela is very interested in seeing fair redistricting of the Congressional/Legislative maps after the census in 2020. She also professional water quality knowledge to environmental issues. Angela, for representing us!

## Get Involved with Helping Stop Gun Violence

There are things you can do to help save lives:

Know and practice sensible gun safety

Collaborate with gun-owners to “BeSMART”

Educate yourself and friends about the dangers of gun proliferation

Don't be silent about silencers and assault weapons

Help post HANDGUN IS PROHIBITED signs in the stores you frequent

Contact legislators to express your support for sensible gun laws

Campaign for candidates who support sensible gun laws

Remember the power of your vote. One reason that politicians are resistant to voting for stricter gun laws is because more pro-gun voters contact them than do pro-regulation voters. Huge gun manufacturing donations are a big factor, but elected officials want to keep their constituents' votes even more. An impressive statement by Stephen Cobert regarding guns and your vote is worth watching. <https://www.facebook.com/ OccupyDemocrats/videos/1777569329002780/>



**Our New Website is Near Launching Stay Tuned!**

## LWVWC Gun Safety Panel Speaks Plainly about Taking Action



On Thursday, November, 9, 2017, there was a standing room only crowd at the Fayetteville Public Library for the League of Women Voter's sponsored forum on Gun Violence. The program was a the brainchild of Patsy Ferritor, who assembled a stellar panel of experts to discuss ways that our communities can become better engaged and better educated on the subject of gun violence. One goal was for folks to walk out of the forum with some tangible action plans relating to gun safety. There was significant pre and post forum media coverage that concurred that the forum succeeded on all fronts.

The four person panel was moderated by Ann Rosso and included Arkansas House Representative Greg Leding who is serving his fourth term in the legislature. Greg began by discussing current legislation and more fully explaining the law (Act 562) in regard to public spaces in which guns are now allowed. Steve Gahagans, the ten year Director of the University of Arkansas Police Department, spoke about gun laws and compared the requirements of concealed and enhanced concealed carry to the training required by police personnel. The upcoming book, "Sanctuary" The Case for Gun Safe Colleges" is authored by our panelist, educator Stephen Boss, following three years of exhaustive research of collegiate homicides. Steve Boss was a founding member of Arkansas Against Guns on Campus and reviewed the staggering statistics of gun violence with a power point presentation. The final panelist was Nicole Clowney, an attorney, educator, and member of Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America. She discussed the S.M.A.R.T. program and spoke of actionable ideas.

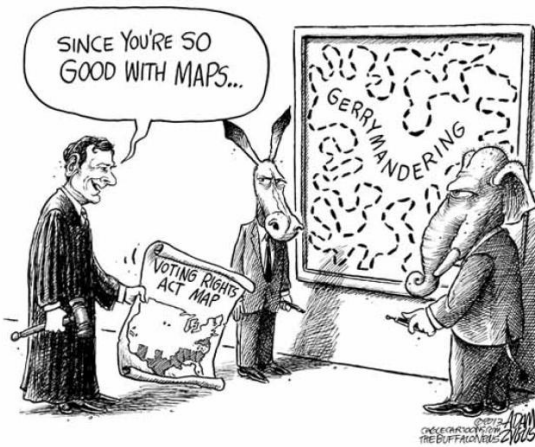
A full hour and a half of questions were fielded by the panelists. The questions spanned the gamut between finding effective lobbying/legislation regarding Act 562 and the NRA to mental health/anger issues as they relate to gun safety to finding solutions to get rid of military grade armaments and turn around the proliferation of guns. A short clip of Steven Colbert's "call to action" to vote concluded the presentation.

Folks lingered afterwards to peruse the vast amount of information and look at the posters of victims from mass shootings assembled by Patsy Ferritor and her team, Mary Alice Serafini, Bettie Lu Lancaster, Chris Harris and Priscilla Kumpe. Great job, Patsy!

**The answer is 1787.**



## LWVWC Voter Issues Committee Struggles to Focus



The Voter Issues Committee (VIC) has met regularly since August looking at the laundry list of voter suppression issues trying to decide where to focus. The major voter concerns in need of change are:

- (1) Voter ID requirements and the legislature's efforts to make them permanent in Arkansas's constitution
- (2) Falsely purged voter registrations from state records targeting minorities
- (3) Refusal to allow-campus polling locations when they might not support the county election commission's political bias.

But the single issue having the greatest long-term effect on candidate selection is redistricting or "gerrymandering." Once district maps are drawn, it is a decade before the next national census is taken to determine what populations are to be remapped. This old tool for drawing political district boundaries has reached its pinnacle of influence. Arkansas's elected officials draw and approve their own maps to concentrate voters in a district and to create as many safe districts for their party as possible. Politically drawn maps protect party interest over people's interests. Extreme partisanship, interconnected computer systems with voter profiles, and special interest financing contribute to incumbent entrenchment. Consider the long list of uncontested positions on each ballot to understand the power of incumbents. We live in a system where politicians are choosing the voters rather than the voters choosing the politicians.

Redistricting is not recognized as a means for voter suppression by the majority of voters. The infrequent decade-long cycle creates an out-of-sight-out-of-mind situation where only those standing to benefit are usually paying attention. However, the current surge of new candidates inspired to curb the erosion of individual rights and environmental protections may find themselves stopped by incumbents. Districts can be drawn to save or eliminate a politician depending on their political influence with voters or special interests. If citizens are to have a voice in choosing their leaders, districts must be drawn independently of partisan influence.

The League of Women Voters in several states has taken on the challenge of changing the partisan advantage in redistricting. In 2008 the LWV of California led the way in establishing a system, which has resulted in the California Citizens Redistricting Commission. Now other Leagues are following their lead. Voters in Wisconsin are battling their state's gerrymandering with signs saying #FAIR MAPS. It is a long and difficult process to establish fair and transparent representation. It is not likely to happen by asking elected representatives to give up their mapping powers. An initiated act by petition for constitutional change that creates an independent redistricting commission must be passed. No one organization will succeed in doing this, but the League, with its well-known non-partisan issue-oriented standing and experience with this subject, has the best chance of being the catalyst.

Taking redistricting out of political hands will be our challenge. To move forward, many other individuals and organizations need to be working together as soon as possible. The state-wide membership of the Citizens First Congress is our best ally to begin educating and activating people. If you want in on the action to bring change, contact Joyce Hale [joycehale43@gmail.com](mailto:joycehale43@gmail.com) to volunteer.

