

The Voter

The President's Report

How does the Electoral College work for voters – or does it?

Discussion about whether the Electoral College should be abolished and replaced with a more direct voting system periodically becomes heated. This is usually after a candidate wins the popular vote but not the Electoral College vote. The 2016 election is no exception, given that the popular vote for a candidate who lost in the Electoral College was almost three million voters higher than the other candidate. This has occurred in other elections (1876, 1888, 2000) but not by as wide a margin.

What is the constitutional authority?

The current procedure for electing the President and Vice President of the United States was ratified under the Twelfth Amendment on June 15, 1804. This was done after much discussion, primarily around the slave population. It echoed earlier discussions about the apportionment of the House of Representatives. The southern states wanted the slave population to be counted to raise their representation in the House of Representatives, but they did not want to give that population the right to vote. This issue arose again when all states wanted women to count towards representation but did not want them to vote, either.

How does it work?

The Electoral College process is an indirect election of both the President and Vice President of the United States. Voters cast votes for electors and not for the candidates themselves.

Each political party in a state nominates electors to represent their respective candidates. The mechanism for doing this varies by state. Examples include party conventions, primaries, campaign committees, state legislatures, and appointments. For all states, the election of the electors is by popular vote in the general election. The number of electors allowed in each state is the sum of their representatives and their senators. Three electors are also chosen for the District of Columbia. The Electoral College currently has 538 electors. All states are guaranteed at least 3 electors, regardless of their smaller populations.

Continued on page 2

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Mary Ann Reeves

President's Report continued

After the election, electors meet in their home states and cast ballots. The candidate(s) with the majority of Electoral College votes is elected. Although the electors pledge to vote for their party's candidate, there is no federal law binding these electors to their pledge. Fortunately, rogue electors have been few in our country's history. Finally, the election is then certified by Congress, meeting in joint session in January.

What are current methods of Electoral College voting?

Winner take all method: The winner of the popular vote in a state will take all electoral votes for that state. Forty-eight states use this method.

Congressional district method: The winning candidate in each congressional district of a state will get one electoral vote. The majority winner, statewide, will get two votes. Maine and Nebraska are the only states that use the congressional district method.

Some studies have the following pros and cons for the Electoral College.

Pros:

- May increase rural influence by forcing candidates to appeal to voters in wider geographic areas.
- May encourage candidates to seriously consider minority voters or special advocacy groups to give the candidate the final push in the Electoral College.
- Small states, regardless of size, are part of the national, federal system and should have a consequential voice in the election.
- Benefits the stability of the two-party system by not allowing minor, third parties that are momentarily popular to have significant influence in the overall election.

Cons:

- Does not reflect one-man one-vote principle nor the follow the concepts of how a democratic system should function.

- Smaller states have a disproportionate influence since they are guaranteed three electoral votes regardless of size. See "pro" above.
- Increasingly, campaign money and attention focuses on a few key swing states where the vote is undecided.
- "Safe" states (states that are solidly red or blue) are ignored.
- Voter turnout is usually low except in swing states due to entrenched political parties and known outcome.
- Number of electors (and representatives) for each state is determined by census data each ten years based on population. However, states do not lose electors when they deliberately suppress or disenfranchise portions of their electorate.
- Current constitutional clauses governing the Electoral College exclude Americans in U.S. territories; approximately 4 million citizens are thus disenfranchised.

What is the League position on the Electoral College?

See separate article in this issue of the *Voter*.

League Committees

Education Committee



The education committee met on January 24 to discuss the upcoming Tennessee General Assembly, the anticipated effects of the new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) on education policy, and the likely influence of the new Secretary of Education and the Trump administration. To date, not many education bills have been introduced into the General Assembly.

Bills of greatest interest to the League are:

- SB 115 modifies the eligibility of students who may qualify for an Individual Education Account in Tennessee.
- HB 45 deletes the requirement for LEAs (Local Education Agencies) for set-aside periods for physical activity.

- HB 76 requires home school students to meet the same 11th grade assessment requirements as public school students.

The League anticipates that a variety of school voucher bills will be introduced and may result in some kind of voucher program in the future. The new ESSA federal law may influence Tennessee to offer more English as a Second Language classes and force school districts to account for students' progress.

The controversial appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education has prompted many objections from teachers, administrators, and parents across Tennessee.

For more information about the education committee please contact **Brenda Parker** at 670-1339, or brendaparker@wildblue.net.



Lunch with the League

On **February 7 Diane Ward**, Vice President for Student Learning, Roane State Community College, will discuss, "Success of Middle College at RSCC and Area High Schools."

On **February 21 Ron Woody**, Roane County Executive, will tell us about the "State of Roane County."

On **March 7 Mary Ann Young**, Deputy Sheriff and Director of Alternatives to Incarceration, will tell us about, "Alternatives to Incarceration Programs in Anderson County."

Sandwich lunches from the [Sweet Café](#) in Norris are available for \$8. Lunch with the League is open to the public. Reservations are not required, and we provide coffee, water, and tea.

Breakfast with the Legislators

The next session for Breakfast with the Legislators will be **Monday, February 27, 7:30 to 8:30 a.m.** at the Oak Ridge Civic Center Social Room. The League hosts the discussions with our area Tennessee legislators.

During these events local legislators have an opportunity to discuss upcoming legislation and issues. Attendees will be able to express their opinions and ask questions directly to those who represent our districts in the Legislature. There is no charge for these events, and they are open to all.

Subsequent breakfasts will be held on the fourth Monday of every month the legislature is in session. If the Oak Ridge schools are closed for snow or inclement weather, the breakfast will be cancelled.

~Betsy Smith

League Position on the Electoral College

The League firmly believes in the one (wo)man/one vote concept for a democratic government.

The League's position on the Presidential electoral process came when the nation was not in the throes of discussion of popular votes winning over electoral votes. Instead, it came in 1970 after a careful, nationwide League study. The position was based on the concept that the direct election of the President by popular vote was essential to representative government.

In 1968, Richard Nixon defeated Hubert Humphrey by approximately 500,000 votes which was less than 1% of the national total. However, Nixon garnered 56% (301) of the electors as opposed to Humphrey's 35%. (191). The rest went to Governor Wallace. This lopsidedness caused national concern.

The League testified for and lobbied for legislation to amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with the direct election of the President, including provision for a national runoff election in the event no candidate (President or Vice President) received 40 percent of the vote. The measure passed the House and nearly passed the Senate in 1971 and has been revived in each Congress without success.



The League believes the Electoral College should be abolished and not merely reformed. The League does not support reform of the Electoral College on a state-by-state basis because there should be uniformity across the nation when electing the President. The League rejects any system that increases the likelihood of pushing the Presidential election into the House of Representatives where each state, regardless of population, receives only one vote.

The League’s position was revised in 1982, updated in 2004, and revised in 2010. It states the following:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

Note: The National Vote Interstate Compact is one of a number of solutions to allow the President and Vice President to be elected by the winner of the national popular vote. States who join the compact agree to pledge their electors to the winner of the popular vote. The League supports this system only until the Electoral College is abolished.

~Mary Ann Reeves

Observer Corps

LWVOR members attend meetings and report their observations of the meeting they attend. These notes are not official minutes. Contact the specific committee for official information. Longer versions of some of these reports may be posted on our website.

Anderson County Commission

Regular meeting, December 19, 2016

All Commissioners were present except Chuck Fritts. Commission voted to accept the settlement reached by the Law Director in the Crumpley lawsuit. This is the wrongful-firing suit brought by an employee in the Public Works Department. The law director reminded commissioners that the amount of the settlement is confidential and urged them not to reveal it. Commissioners McKamey, Vowell, and Isbel voted against accepting the settlement. Mayor Frank was also opposed. She stated that the County would win the case if it went to court and that asking her not to reveal the amount of the settlement was a violation of her first amendment right to free speech.

ADA Committee Chair Louise McKown explained that new TDOT and Federal guidelines require that the County amend the ADA grievance procedure and advertise how citizens can file grievances.

Commissioner Creasy moved that Commission accept the new grievance procedure. Ms. McKown described the new public right of way accessibility guidelines. Mr. Creasy moved that the guidelines be approved. Both motions passed with a voice vote.

Finance Director Natalie Erb reported that the fund balance is \$1.5 million less than it was at this time last year. This brings the fund balance to below \$4 million and so Commission needs 11 votes to pass any spending measure from the fund. Commissioner Iwanski noted that three items caused \$1.3 million of the drop; the \$926,000 Ambulance Service debt, the \$300,000 spent on the computer breach, and the rest is legal fees.

Mayor Frank announced that the Finance Committee had voted unanimously to ask Ms. Erb to consult with the Law Director in drafting a letter to the Sheriff and

District Attorney, asking that they seek help from the FBI in investigating the computer breach.

Commission voted to rescind the motion making all County employees nonexempt that passed at the last meeting. The Fair Labor Standards Board ruling that prompted the change in status has been challenged in court and will not go into effect for some time, if ever.

Veterans Services Director Leon Jaquet asked that the control and coordination of the Veteran's Day Parade be transferred from his office to the Clinton American Legion. For the last four years the Sons of Confederate Veterans have participated in the parade. Some veterans groups have objected. The law director and county mayor recommended transferring responsibility for the parade "due to a liability issue." Commission voted unanimously to approve the change if the Veterans Advisory Committee and the American Legion Post agreed.

Commissioner Creasy asked if the County has a fire plan. Commission decided to meet with a representative of the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and County EMS to discuss steps County should take to control wildfire damage. Commissioner Iwanski suggested that the County advertise Code Red and get as many citizens as possible register.

~Willa Reister, Observer

Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

December 8, 2016, and January 12, 2017, meetings

The International Friendship Bell Pavilion (Alan Tatum): At the November 17 kickoff for the Bell Pavilion's fundraising project, the Bell Committee unveiled the new plan for the cantilevered structure that will house the bell. As of January 12, over \$600,000 of the \$750,000 goal has been collected. Requests for bids on construction may go out in late spring. A video of the pavilion concept can be found on the City of Oak Ridge Facebook site.

Community and Corporate Donations Guide

(Naomi Asher): The brochures have been printed and strategies for distribution are still under discussion.

Trail Development (Ray Garrett, Ken Rueter, Steve Dittner): (1) Ray and Carol Evans of Legacy Parks are scheduled to sign an easement with Wayne Clark for the East Fork Poplar Creek Trail within a week of the current Parks Board meeting. Still needed for construction of the trail is a response from the City Manager for permission to allow the trail to cross city property and an easement from Mel Sturm. (2) DOE is working with TDEC (Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation) and TWRA (Tennessee Wildlife Resources Agency) on the BORCE (West Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement) development. (3) Steve discussed a possible relationship between the Appalachian Bike Club and Friends of Haw Ridge for maintenance of the Haw Ridge Trail. Problems with the Haw Ridge trail include poor maps, no trail markers, and vandalism.

Rails to Trails (Jon Hetrick): A grant of \$100,000 has been awarded to Oak Ridge for design and engineering of the 4.7-mile bicycling and hiking trail. This grant, acquired with the help of Legacy Parks, will provide funding for the trail that ends at the entrance to the Y-12 area. About \$1.23 million of the \$1.6 million CSX appraisal has been secured. This trail will be a significant asset to the city.

Oak Ridge Blueprint (Jon Hetrick): The City of Oak Ridge has asked the Planning Commission to develop a master plan to "make Oak Ridge better." The kickoff meeting for the "Oak Ridge Blueprint" project is scheduled for January 26, 2017, at High Places Church. Members of other boards and commissions are encouraged to participate; the project will focus mainly on housing and recreational parks.

Director's Report (Jon Hetrick): Jon and his staff have been occupied with a variety of activities. (1) The Parks and Recreation administrative staff moved from the Civic Center to the Central Services Complex. This will free up space to accommodate the Senior Center

that will be moving from current quarters to the Civic Center. The space vacated by the staff will be combined and rearranged. There is still the possibility of further remodeling existing space or building a new Senior Center in the future. Jon emphasized the importance of establishing an interface among the Senior Center, the Civic Center, and the community. (2) The eighth rowing lane has been excavated and the retaining wall has been completed. The viewing area should be completed by the end of February. The portion of the Greenways trail that was disrupted by the lane construction will be replaced with concrete. (3) The organizers of the Secret City Festival requested, and have been granted, \$50,000 from the city. (4) City Council awarded \$400,000 for the renovation of Blankenship Field. (5) The tennis courts west of Oak Ridge High School have been resurfaced. (5) Valves and filters will be replaced at the outdoor pool.

~Mary Lou Daugherty, Observer

Senior Advisory Board

The Senior Center Moves

The Senior Center is now open in the Civic Center on the Turnpike. Although smaller than the previous location, it will accommodate all current programs until additional space is available. A decision on the final configuration of the Center will be made soon. Possibilities include an addition to the current space or a new building close to the Civic Center.

An automatic door and a golf cart have been ordered to ease access to the new space. Additional handicap parking spaces are being added to the Library parking lot. Easy access to the pool, walking trail, and library are pluses in the new location.

~Marty Adler-Jasny

Roane State Community College

Roane State has initiated a new program call Success Coaches. This program will help all first-time freshmen through the transition to college. These coaches are trained in every aspect of college admissions including financial aid and giving

students one point of contact during their first year. Currently there are 13 Success Coaches and each undergoes 12 weeks of training.

The RSCC campus in Fentress County has completed its relocation to the York Institute campus. The Campbell County campus will receive additional space for much needed laboratories and classrooms, allowing students to complete required science courses in Campbell County.

The Roane State Middle College is continuing to grow with students in Roane County, Anderson County, and now Campbell County. Oak Ridge High School is not a participant. The Middle College accepts exceptional students in their Junior year of high school from these counties. They attend a Roane State campus in the morning and return to their respective high schools in the afternoon to complete their remaining high school graduation requirements and participate in sports, band, or clubs.

The goal for the students is 15 hours per semester and an Associates Degree and high school diploma after two years. These students have won significant college awards.

League Statement on Claims of Voter Fraud

Washington, DC – The League of Women Voters president, Chris Carson, issued the following statement in response to the unsubstantiated claim from the White House that millions of illegal votes were cast in the past election:

“President Trump is calling for a major investigation into voter fraud – in an election that he won! We know that widespread voter fraud is a myth perpetuated to push election laws that restrict voting. We cannot allow false claims to drive policies that will limit participation in our election process. There is no need for an investigation into a nonexistent problem. The issue has been studied and put to rest.”

Membership Notes

Welcome, New Members!

Nancy Hardin
104 Meadow Road
Oak Ridge, TN 37830
865-680-6035

Edith Jones
149 Blue Heron Way
Ten Mile, TN 37880
865-376-6537

Please contact **Janis Williams**, 483-1219 or janisor@bellsouth.net, with membership corrections and updates.



Dr. Jon Shefner, Professor and Head of the Sociology Department, UTK, speaks at Lunch with the League on January 3, 2017. ~Pat Bryan

In Memoriam
We remember with fondness and extend our sympathies to the family of
Nancy Feldman



City Manager Mark Watson spoke at Lunch with the League about the "State of the City" on January 17, 2017. ~Peter Scheffler

I want to join the League of Women Voters

Name _____
Address _____
City _____
State and Zip _____
Phone (Day / Work) _____
Phone(Evening) _____
Email _____

Individual annual dues _____ \$60
Household annual dues _____ \$90
*Donation to Education Foundation \$ _____
*Make a separate, tax deductible check payable to LWVEF
Please send this form and your dues, payable to:
LWV of Oak Ridge
P.O. Box 4073
Oak Ridge, TN 37831



PO Box 4073
Oak Ridge, TN 37831-4073

lwvoakridge.org

lwvor@comcast.net

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*******OUR SNOW POLICY*******

If Oak Ridge Schools are closed due to weather, League meetings that day are cancelled. If they are simply delayed, we will hold meetings as scheduled. However, please be safe and use your best judgment.

Calendar

February

- 7 Lunch with the League*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: Diane Ward, Vice President for Student Learning, RSCC. Topic: “The Success of Middle College at RSCC and Area High Schools.”
- 14 Board Meeting*** 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- 21 Lunch with the League*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: 21 Ron Woody, Roane County Executive. Topic: “State of Roane County.”
- 27 Breakfast with the Legislators** 7:30–8:30 a.m. Oak Ridge Civic Center Social Room
- 28 Education Committee** 2:30, Methodist Medical Center Secret City Café

March

- 7 Lunch with the League*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: Mary Ann Young, Deputy Sheriff and Director of Alternatives to Incarceration. Topic: “Alternatives to Incarceration Programs in Anderson County.”
- 14 Board Meeting*** 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.

* Unless otherwise specified, Lunch with the League is at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 809 Oak Ridge Turnpike at Laboratory Road. Board Meetings are in the Main Conference Room, UT Resource Center, Rutgers Ave. at the Turnpike.