



# The Voter

## *The President's Report*

One of the major goals of the League of Women Voters is to educate voters. To help achieve that goal, the Oak Ridge League (LWVOR) offers an opportunity for constituents to meet with our state senators and representatives. Our local elected representatives have chosen to participate in Breakfast with the Legislators for decades and we appreciate the time they spend with us.

On the fourth Monday of each month when the state Legislature is in session, some or all of the legislators from Anderson and Roane Counties arrive at 7:30 a.m. in the Social Room of the Oak Ridge Civic Center to meet for about an hour with area residents.

The League provides the coffee and a light breakfast, and League members Dan Robbins and Charlie Hensley chair the gathering. Legislators who are able to attend share information about issues before the Tennessee Senate and/or House that are of interest to Oak Ridge constituents. Following their short presentations, members of the audience have the opportunity to ask questions of their legislators, and the legislators can respond. Questions and answers are time-limited so that a maximum number of people can participate. The sound system provided by the Civic Center makes it possible for all present to hear the questions and the responses. The Breakfast ends at 8:30 when the legislators head to Nashville.

I encourage League members to attend Breakfast with the Legislators. This is an early start to the day, and it is a valuable opportunity to listen and speak in person to our local legislators. The second Breakfast is at 7:30 a.m. on February 25. Check the calendar on our website, <http://lwvoakridge.org/calendar.html>, for the dates of the Breakfasts and other League activities.

Harriett McCurdy

[mccurdy46@hotmail.com](mailto:mccurdy46@hotmail.com) or 865-332-6440

## *Connect with Us*

Website: [lwvoakridge.org](http://lwvoakridge.org)

Facebook: League of Women Voters of Oak Ridge

## **Inside this Issue**

- The President's Report .....1
- Lunch with the League .....2
- Committee Reports.....2
- Breakfast with the Legislators.....2
- US House Bill HR-1 .....2
- LWVUS Update January 2019 .....3
- Vote411 Gaining Popularity.....4
- Observer Corps .....3-5
- Stewart Clifton Updates.....5
- Snow Policy .....5
- League Resources.....5
- Membership Notes .....5
- Membership Application.....5
- Editor's Comments.....5
- Calendar .....6

**Bill Moore, Voter Editor**

[lwvornews@icloud.com](mailto:lwvornews@icloud.com)

**Marian Varner, Webmaster**

**Precision Printing and Graphics supports the League of Women Voters of Oak Ridge by helping with costs for printing and folding *The Voter*.**



## Lunch with the League



On **February 5** our speaker is **Sarah Graham McGee**, coordinator for the TN Alliance for the Severe Mental Illness Exclusion (TASMIE). Her topic is, "Severe Mental Illness and Capital Punishment."

On **February 19** our speaker is **Robin Smith**, Chief, Oak Ridge Police Department. His topic is, "Police Matters."

On **March 5** our speaker is **Mark Watson**, City Manager, City of Oak Ridge. His topic is, "State of the City of Oak Ridge."

Lunches from the [Soup Kitchen](#) are available for \$8 on a first-come basis beginning at 11:30 a.m. The presentation begins at noon. Lunch with the League is open to the public and reservations are not required. We provide coffee, water and tea. Lunch with the League is at the [Unitarian Universalist Church](#), 809 Oak Ridge Turnpike.

## Committee Reports

### Education Committee

The Education committee will meet on February 26 (4<sup>th</sup> Tuesday) at 2:30 at Methodist Medical Center Cafe. We will discuss critical issues that may or will arise in the state legislature on education, such as the financial impact of vouchers. If you are interested in our schools, please contact me at 483-4871 or carolplasil@comcast.net. We will try to change the date or time if interested members prefer.

~Carol Plasil

## Breakfast with the Legislators

This legislative session the LWV will once again host Breakfast with the Legislators the fourth Monday of each month the Legislature is in session. The second Breakfast will be at 7:30 a.m. on February 25 at the Oak Ridge Civic Center. Senators Randy McNally and Ken Yager and Representatives John Ragan and Kent Calfee are invited to participate.

~Dan Robbins and Charlie Hensley

## US House Bill HR-1

One of the most exciting, and timely, proposed bills to come out of the members of the 116th U.S. House of Representatives is HR-1 (fittingly, the first act introduced) – For the People Act.

Today, our democracy is out of balance. As a response to the impact our broken democracy has had on civil rights, and many other issues facing the country, the Declaration for American Democracy coalition was formed.

This collection of more than 120 organizations, including the League of Women Voters, has come together to press for systemic political reforms to return power in our government to the people.

We understand the importance of seizing the historic opportunity we face to repair our political system by moving immediately on a single package of comprehensive democracy reforms.

Throughout our nearly 100-year history, the League of Women Voters has worked to "level the playing field" of our election system by registering new citizens to vote, fighting unfair district maps in court, and advocating in Congress for fair election processes.

Specifically, the LWVUS advocates the prioritization of the following essential elements of the bill:

- Break down barriers that prevent Americans from registering to vote. The Act requires states to allow same-day registration, establishes an opt-out system of automatic registration, and includes the establishment of an online voter registration system for all eligible voters.
- Restore the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and strengthen our elections by cutting back the obstructive laws that have kept eligible voters from exercising their rights at the ballot box. Since the Supreme Court's Shelby County decision rolled back key provisions of the Voting Rights Act, voters have faced a variety of obstacles from reduced polling places to long lines, to strict voter identification requirements, to the unlawful removal of registered voters from the rolls. In the 2018 midterm elections



we saw voter suppression in Arizona, Florida, Georgia, North Carolina, and Texas, as well as other states across the country.

- Establish independent, citizen-led redistricting commissions at the state level to draw congressional districts that allow voters to pick their politicians not the other way around.

- Empower small donors by creating a public financing system to match small contributions to presidential candidates. It will also close disclosure loopholes that allow outside groups to flood elections with millions of dollars of secret money.

The many elements of this legislation align with the League’s long-held positions and advocacy to ensure that our elections are free, fair, and accessible to all eligible citizens. We call on all legislators, regardless of party, to support legislation that is indisputably by and for the people.

~Mary Ann Reeves

### ***LWVUS Update January 2019***

Mary Ann Reeves has written an excellent synopsis of recent activity by various Leagues around the US. It is available on our website, [lwvoakridge.org](http://lwvoakridge.org).

### ***Vote411 Gaining Popularity***

Nationally, in 2018, [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) had nearly 7 million sessions, with over 5.5 million sessions, including online voters’ guides. That represents a 100% increase in sessions nationwide compared to the 2016 presidential election cycle, and a 490% increase over the 2014 midterm election cycle.

Our Oak Ridge VOTE411 had over 900 sessions, slightly more than in 2016, and nearly 10% more than in 2014. By comparison, Knoxville had double the sessions it had in 2016, (2,198 to 4,455), and Chattanooga more than quadrupled its sessions from 1,033 to 4,397. Way to go Chattanooga!

These are amazing numbers and show just how much voters turn to the League to find the information they need on Election Day. For the 2020 election we hope to grow the number of Oak Ridgers who use Vote411.

~Pat Bryan

### ***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.*

### **EQAB**

*Regular Meeting, January 3, 2019*

Members present: Wendy Doolittle, Darcie Holcomb, Robert Kennedy, Sophia Krusen, Donald Miller, and Kelly Smith. Visitor: Ellen Smith

In Robert Kennedy’s absence, Kaela O’Dell chaired the meeting.

The election of officers was moved to the February meeting because the City Council has not yet selected the new members.

Chair Robert Kennedy will pursue the re-establishment of a board member position that is common to the Planning Commission and EQAB.

As the City Tree Board, EQAB will work with Community Development to preserve some of the mature trees on the former ASME site, especially the Darlington Oaks.

There was again discussion of re-establishing Environmental Quality Awards to community entities and individuals.

The possible closing of TVA’s Bull Run plant and the future of the site was a topic of discussion.

At the February meeting, Council member Jim Dodson will speak about Dogwood Arts walking trails, and EQAB high school representative Sophia Krusen will report on the ORHS recycling program.

Under new business, the EQAB Annual Report and an EQAB Environmental Awards Program were discussed. EQAB will ask the City to include instructions for recycling and other environmental services in utility bills.

~Kathryn Olsen, Observer

### **Senior Advisory Board**

The City’s Senior Advisory Board (SAB) has been busy. One topic of recent meetings has been study of possible replacements for the taxi coupon program that reduces the cost of taxi rides (from Morgan Cab Company) for

residents over age 60 and younger people who cannot drive due to disabilities. About 200 people use this program. The taxi coupon program was formerly supported by a transportation grant administered through the state of Tennessee, but that grant ended on September 30, 2018. It was not renewed due to state officials' concern over lack of financial accountability (the cost of offering service and the value of benefits provided could not be properly documented or audited). The City still receives other transportation grant funding for the "Oak Ridge Transit" buses that the East Tennessee Human Resources Agency (ETHRA) operates for the City.

The taxi coupon program is continuing through the current fiscal year, which ends June 30, 2019, using funding from other city government sources.

Discussions between city staff and Morgan Cab have determined that the cab company will not change its operations to help provide the financial accountability needed to restore grant funding for future years.

After the city learned of the loss of grant money for the taxi coupon program, the SAB made plans to survey users of taxi coupons regarding their transportation needs and their experience with the taxi coupon program. It was expected that survey forms would be distributed in January.

At its December meeting, the board discussed some possible options for replacing the taxi coupon program. Options discussed included subsidies for Uber rides (with an arrangement to request up rides for people who don't have smartphones to access Uber) and volunteer-assisted transportation (VAT) programs similar to those operating in other communities.

At its regular meeting on January 7, the SAB heard presentations about volunteer-assisted senior transportation programs in Blount County (Blount County SMILES) and Knox County (Knox County Community Action Commission VAT program), as well as the state's Senior Volunteer Transportation Network (SVTN) initiative that seeks to develop 30 VAT programs in the state over three years. These programs all depend on volunteers to provide rides to community members who cannot drive themselves.

Clients typically phone a program office to request a ride, then staff use web-based software to make connections between riders and volunteer drivers. Blount County volunteers drive their own vehicles (and most pay for their own gas), but Knox County has a fleet of seven minivans and ten Toyota Prius cars available for use by volunteer drivers. Although drivers donate their service, funding is required to run the program, including paying for software, staffing, and background checks and training for volunteer drivers. The programs carry excess liability insurance for their drivers, but a state law shields drivers in formal VAT programs from lawsuits. Participants in the Blount and Knox County programs pay a membership fee, and then pay \$6 round trip for each ride. These fees cover part of the operating costs, and additional funds typically come from fundraising, grants, and assistance from local healthcare providers. The state SVTN initiative may award grants of \$30,000 per year for three years to get a local program started, with the first year's money available only to programs that are up and running by April 30, 2019. Representatives of Blount County SMILES, Knox County CAC, and ETHRA all spoke highly of the success of the existing VAT programs in this area.

At a work session on January 14 the SAB discussed what members had learned about VAT programs, as well as the steps that would need to be taken to start a VAT program in Oak Ridge. Topics discussed included questions about who would administer the program and whether the program should have its own vehicles or depend on volunteers, uncertainty about the ability to recruit enough volunteer drivers, and concern that the lead times (typically a day in advance) needed to request rides in the programs in other communities would make a VAT program less desirable than the taxi coupon program has been. However, board members were optimistic that a VAT program could be successful. A follow-up work session on senior transportation was tentatively scheduled for Monday, January 28, at 9:30 a.m.

At its January 7 meeting, the SAB also discussed the naming of the new senior center that is being built west



of the Oak Ridge Civic Center. The board had received a suggestion to name it for one of Oak Ridge's most prominent elder citizens, Manhattan Project photographer Ed Westcott. After discussion, the board voted unanimously to recommend that the name be "Oak Ridge Senior Center." Considerations discussed included a desire for a name that clearly identifies the facility's purpose, the possibility of confusion with the shopping center (where Kroger is located) that is already named the Westcott Center, and an observation that most civic buildings in Oak Ridge are named according to function and not named after a person. Board members suggested that Westcott could be honored in the senior center, perhaps by naming a room for him and displaying some of his photos there.

~Ellen Smith

### Recreation and Parks Advisory Board

The League wants to thank Mary Lou Daugherty for being the Observer of the Recreation and Parks Advisory Board. However, she has decided that she should hand the position over to someone else, beginning in March. If anyone is interested in filling the role, please contact Joye Montgomery at [montgomery102@comcast.net](mailto:montgomery102@comcast.net).

### *Stewart Clifton Updates*

To receive email updates from the state League lobbyist Stewart Clifton, send an email with your request to him at [QA@LWVTN.org](mailto:QA@LWVTN.org).

### *League Resources*

Here are additional resources for information about the League of Women Voters:

Local: Oak Ridge – [lwvoakridge.org](http://lwvoakridge.org)

Knoxville: <https://my.lwv.org/tennessee/knoxvilleknox-county>

Chattanooga: <https://lwvchattanooga.wordpress.com/>

State: <https://www.lwv.org/local-leagues/lwv-Tennessee>

National: <https://www.lwv.org>

### *Editor's Comment*

First, I thank the League for entrusting this important role to me, I and know the League thanks Emily Jernigan for her many years of dedicated service as Editor of the Voter. I will do my best to maintain her high quality standards, and I deeply appreciate her willingness to help me learn the drill. This issue is largely the result of her efforts, along with those of Charlie. I hope you all will bear with me as I become familiar with this role. I also want to thank those that read my version and made comments and suggestions. In this regard, I particularly want to mention Mary Uziel, who took on the role of proofreader. Thank all of you again. If you have content that you want to be considered, please send it to: [lwvnews@icloud.com](mailto:lwvnews@icloud.com).

-Bill Moore

### *Membership Notes*

Please contact Janis Williams, 483-1219 or [J.Wymer.Williams@gmail.com](mailto:J.Wymer.Williams@gmail.com), with membership corrections and updates.

#### *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

**Make checks payable to LWV Oak Ridge**

\*Donation to Education Foundation \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\**Make a separate, tax deductible check payable to LWVEF*

Please send this form and your check(s) 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

Return Service Requested

Dated Material - Please Deliver Promptly

Nonprofit Org.  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Oak Ridge, TN  
Permit No. 148

**\*\*\*\*\*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

- 5**     **Lunch with the League\*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: Sarah Graham McGee, coordinator for the TN Alliance for the Severe Mental Illness Exclusion (TASMIE). Topic: “Severe Mental Illness and Capital Punishment.”
- 12**    **Board Meeting\***     10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- 19**    **Lunch with the League\*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: Robin Smith, Chief, Oak Ridge Police Department. Topic: “Police Matters.”
- 25**    **Breakfast with the Legislators** 7:30 to 8:30 a.m., the Oak Ridge Civic Center Social Room. Open to all. Coffee and a light continental breakfast are served at no charge.

### March

- 5**     **Lunch with the League\*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: Mark Watson. Topic: “State of the City of Oak Ridge.”
- 12**    **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.