

# The Voter

## *The President's Report*

"Voter suppression is back. And it is as outrageous it is indefensible." These words came from the League of Women Voters of the U.S. they announced the U.S. League's top priority in 2017. Suppression of voters has become far easier after the U.S. Supreme Court stripped key provisions of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) in 2014. The VRA had been considered hallmark election legislation in our country; it opened the door for all eligible voters to exercise their right to vote.

Since the SCOTUS decision, many states have used this opportunity to implement both illegal and discriminatory laws regarding voter registration, voter ID, and voter purging. Most of this has been under the guise of protecting the election. In fact, it has been shown repeatedly that there has been virtually no in-person voter fraud. In reality, the motive is the same as gerrymandering: to affect the outcome of the election. These motives are not the hallmark of any one political party; all have been guilty of similar practices throughout our history. Much of our work, and that of others, is to ensure the right to vote for all citizens. This includes diligently maintaining voting rights, eliminating restrictive Voter ID laws, and making voter registration as easy as possible. Unfortunately, much of this work needs to be done in our state of Tennessee.

Before the election, the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Sixth Circuit ruled that Ohio's practice of purging voters for failure to vote is illegal and is in violation of Section 8 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. The court ruled that Ohio voters who have been purged for not voting previously were to be given provisional ballots and be allowed to vote in the November election.

Since Tennessee has the same purging practice and since Tennessee is also in the jurisdiction of the Sixth Circuit, the LWVTN requested that the Tennessee Secretary of State, Mr. Tre Hargett, allow Tennesseans to follow the same practice of provisional voting (some of the voters who were purged were military serving overseas).

Mr. Hargett's reply was disappointing given that a federal court ruled this practice illegal. His brief response to League President Marian Ott stated "My office has reviewed your letter alleging that Tennessee is in violation of Section 8 of the National Voter Registration Act of 1993. We believe that Tennessee's laws for removing voters are substantially different from the laws and directives at issue in Ohio. Additionally,

Mary Ann Reeves (865-693-6286)

[maryannreeves1@att.net](mailto:maryannreeves1@att.net)

## *Connect with Us*

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

Facebook: [League of Women Voters of Oak Ridge](https://www.facebook.com/LeagueofWomenVotersofOakRidge)

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**Emily Jernigan, Voter Editor**

**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*.**



Mary Ann Reeves

## *President's Report continued*

your letter was not received until after early voting had begun across the state, and changing the rules at this stage of the process would present a major disruption to elections in Tennessee."

This is inaccurate. Purging for failure to vote in two sequential Presidential elections is illegal purging no matter how it is done. It does not matter if the wording of Tennessee law and directives are different. Early voting in Tennessee had definitely begun. This should not have been a reason for not complying with the intent, if not the letter, of the ruling. Early voting is certainly not disruptive for people who could not vote anyway because they have been purged.

Unlike driving or practicing a profession, the right to vote is NOT a privilege covered by a license. It is a constitutional right and personal responsibility.

Our state officials, both elected and appointed, must be diligent in not only avoiding bias but also the appearance of bias. This applies in all areas of the government but most importantly in our elections.

## *League Committees*



### **Education Committee**

When the education committee reconvenes on January 24 we will be closely watching efforts to transfer money from the public schools to the private sector as school vouchers for students to attend private, usually religious, schools or charter schools run by private interests.

Although the Tennessee General Assembly has rejected efforts to establish a voucher program for the past three years, the national climate with Donald Trump's appointment of Betsy DeVos as Secretary of Education will inevitably reinvigorate the effort. The League will support our local school board and Tennessee public schools and teachers in their efforts to maintain adequate funding for our public schools.

For more information about the education committee please contact **Brenda Parker** at 670-1339, or [brendaparker@wildblue.net](mailto:brendaparker@wildblue.net).

## *Lunch with the League*



The speaker on **January 3** will be **Dr. Jon Shefner**, Professor and Head of the Sociology Department, UTK. He will discuss, "Explaining the Results of the Presidential Election."

On **January 17** **Mark Watson**, City Manager, Oak Ridge, will speak on, "The State of the City."

On **February 7** **Diane Ward**, Vice President, Student Learning at RSCC will tell us about, "The Success of Middle College at RSCC and Area High Schools."

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 first session for Breakfast with the Legislators will be **Monday, January 23**, 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. The General Assembly is holding a brief organizational session, beginning January 10. The regular legislative session will begin at the end of January. Our January meeting is an opportunity to learn about their committee assignments, legislation they are sponsoring, and the general outlook for the session.

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.

~Claudia Lever

## VOTE411.org Results

The data compiled after the election show that Oak Ridge did not expand its usage much from the 2014 midterm elections, although it would be expected to increase in a presidential election. However, we did have 100% participation from our local candidates. Publicity was comparable to 2014, except we added a digital billboard on the main route to Knoxville.

Knoxville and Knox County more than doubled their new users and total sessions over the 2014 midterm elections. It appears that they benefited far more from the billboard than Oak Ridge.

*Editor's note: VOTE411.org is an online voter information guide set up by the national League. Pat Bryan headed this project, working to get local, area, and state candidates to fill out our questionnaire about their positions on issues we deemed important.*

~Pat Bryan

## Febb and Harry Burn Memorial

The LWVOR, along with other organizations, was asked to join the local Suffrage Coalition of East Tennessee to help erect the Febb and Harry Burn memorial. Our board voted unanimously to take advantage of this project that is very exciting for our citizens, especially women.

Harry Burn was a very young legislator from East Tennessee. He was in office when the 19<sup>th</sup> constitutional amendment came to a vote. Tennessee was in the national limelight as this would be the crucial 36<sup>th</sup> state which would decide whether the amendment would be passed. Legislators strolled into the assembly chambers wearing either a red rose (against) or a yellow rose (for) in their lapels. Harry wore a red. Then, Harry received a telegram from his mother, Febb Burn, that stated very strongly that she wanted the right to vote. Harry then switched to a yellow rose, voted yes, and the amendment passed.

Harry caused quite a furor in the general assembly with this vote. He was routed out of the chambers, escaped through a window, and hid in a broom closet until the uproar died down.

Though the efforts of Wanda Sobieski, the statues are chosen, the site is approved, the legal technicalities completed, and county funding budgeted.

Next is the completion of the statues with donations. Mail a check for the "Suffrage Coalition" to the East Tennessee Foundation, PO Box 2310, Knoxville, TN 37901, or give online at <https://etf.givingfuel.com/easttennesseefoundation>.

~Mary Ann Reeves

## LWVTN State Action Committee

The State Action Committee met on November 14.

The 2017 LWVTN priorities were discussed and they include Elections, Open Government, Government Finance, Education, Health Care Reform, Environment, and Immigration.

The makeup of both the House and Senate are essentially the same. There have been nine changes in the House due to some defeats and some retirements. There is one Senator not returning due to retirement. It is assumed that Senator Randy McNally will replace Ron Ramsey as Lt. Governor and Speaker of the Senate. Rep. Beth Harwell is still current Speaker of the House and would like to keep that position; however, she is apparently being opposed by Sen. McNally who seems to prefer someone more conservative. Apparently it is highly unusual for a member of one chamber to get involved in the selections of the other chamber.

Politically, the landscape of the legislature is the same.

Discussion topics:

**Education:** We will probably see another surge for the voucher system. The League has a position opposing the use of vouchers.

**Elections:** The League is opposed to the purging of voters who have not voted in the last two consecutive presidential elections." The LWVTN will pursue the federal court ruling (which has jurisdiction over both Ohio and Tennessee) that the state of Ohio's purging system is illegal. There will be a meeting in Nashville between DEMOS, the ACLU, and State Election Commissioner to discuss this issue. There is concern about the motor voter law not being applied in some counties in Tennessee.

**Environment:** There is concern over strip mining and mountain top removal laws (important to Tennesseans) being caught up in the overall environmental initiatives that will likely be opposed by the new U.S. President. Locally, our climate

change action group will continue to inform and educate the public about one of the most important threats to our civilization.

**Health Care:** Tennessee has continued to oppose expanding health care insurance to the underinsured. The 3 Star committee, appointed by the legislature to study expanding health care to military and mental illness patients, is almost complete. The current administration may not approve this plan since it only applies to these two groups and ignores large numbers of the population that are not military or who have mental illness. It is uncertain how a new national administration will view this plan.

**Immigration:** It is not known how the new federal administration will affect immigration and immigration reform. The President-elect has announced that he will deport 2 to 3 million immigrants as soon as he gets into office. Since the U.S. already deports immigrants guilty of committing felonies, it is uncertain to which 2 to 3 million people he is referring. This announcement has caused much anxiety and fear in the immigrant and refugee community.

~Mary Ann Reeves

### **Remote Area Medical (RAM)**

Anabel Evora, Senior Strategist for RAM, was our guest speaker at the Holiday Luncheon. I have been asked by members attending the lunch to reach out with a report to Leaguers who were not there.

The League has very strong stands on equitable and affordable health care for all. We are still working towards that goal, particularly in Tennessee where denial of the expansion of Medicaid has caused untold suffering.

RAM, located in Rockford, Tennessee, right outside Knoxville, has several missions. The most famous is RAM Mobile Medical Clinics. Begun in 1985 by Stan Brock, of Wild Kingdom TV fame, these mobile clinics delivered almost \$10M in free health care to 30,000 people in 2015 alone. RAM continues to expand its operations.

These free services are the lifeline of thousands of people who line up outside the designated clinic for as long as 48 hours to receive their number and get relief from suffering and psychological pain. To accommodate the schedules of medical and general

volunteers these clinics operate primarily on weekends. The mobile trucks travel to remote communities transforming large venues, such as school gyms, into turnkey medical centers, giving needed health care to those who are underinsured or cannot afford health insurance.

Other missions include disaster relief. Due to planes dedicated to this purpose and pilots that volunteer to be on call, RAM gets to disaster centers faster than other relief operations. RAM is also incorporating mental health problems into its lineup.

RAM uses and needs thousands of volunteers, many of them health professionals. There is also a great need for general volunteers to set up the medical infrastructure, sort and handout medical equipment, process patients, refer very ill patients to other health providers, and more.

RAM will have its next mobile clinic for Knoxville on February 4 at the Jacob Building. If you want to volunteer go to [www.ramusa.org](http://www.ramusa.org) to register. If you need to cancel later, there is an option for doing so. If you would like to make a donation please go to [www.ramusa.org](http://www.ramusa.org) and use the Donate button.

~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, November 21*

All sixteen members of the Commission were present.

Before the meeting, TDOT presented solutions to the problems on Clinton Highway. Commission voted to have the Transportation Committee review the options and bring a recommendation to the Commission.

During the Appearance of Citizens, Larry Rosenbaum asked that commission committee meetings be televised. Commissioner Fritts moved that Operations Committee pursue this. Motion passed.

The Mayor announced that the County has received a \$5.7M State grant to build a Tennessee College of Applied Technology in the I-75 Industrial Park. The new College will open early in 2019.

Commission voted to donate \$10,918 a year to the 911 Code Red program. The donation will come from the unassigned fund balance.

Plans for remodeling Glen Alpine Convenience Center were presented by Chuck Grant from the MBI Architectural and Engineering firm. Commissioner Meredith objected that the present site is wasting prime retail property. Commission Iwanski moved that the decision be postponed for 60 days while Commission Meredith searches for a better site.

The federal Fair Labor Standards Board has ruled that effective December 1, 2016, all exempt employees must make \$47,476 a year. Seven current exempt employees would need hefty raises, as much as 30%, to meet the standard. HR director Russell Bearden explained that all exempt county employees must be treated equally. These seven meet the standard for exempt status and if they are declared nonexempt then all county employees must be nonexempt. Commission voted to remove exempt status from all County employees, making all county employees eligible for overtime. It was pointed out that this could result in huge overtime bills. Commissioner Iwanski moved and commission approved a motion that departments not exceed their overtime budgets without Commission approval.

Cumberland Securities, the municipal advisory firm that handles the County's bonds, advised that the County refinance \$8.3M of the debt incurred in 2011 when the County issued bonds for the new jail and some school building upgrades. Commission voted to refinance if savings over the life of the bond were \$500,000 or more.

The Mayor vetoed the \$800,000 TIF granted to Hollingsworth Investments VIII at the October commission meeting. She pointed out that the TIF was \$200,000 more than usual and that the County had already given the project a generous land swap and \$4,000 in infrastructure upgrades. Commissioner Meredith moved to override the Mayor's veto. The motion passed with only commissioners Fritts and Hitchcock voting against it.

The first meeting of the Charter Commission will be held on December 5. The Commission will be sworn in, elect officers, and hold its first business meeting.

*~Willa Reister, Observer*

## Oak Ridge Board of Education

*Regular meeting, November 28*

**Good News:** The U.S. Department of Education has given Oak Ridge Schools an A+ ranking among public school systems in the nation. ORHS was number 3 in the state, behind two magnet schools. The Cross Country girls team earned the award as 4<sup>th</sup> in the state, and the boys finished as Region Champions.

**Action Items:** Board Policy regarding Fundraising: Teachers may choose the vendor they work with. An online component to pay offers the best results for fund raising. All teachers need to be aware of the board's fundraising procedures.

Board Policy regarding Food Services Management: More information is needed about food allergies or intolerances under the category of modified meals. The collection of unpaid meal charges may be paid through the General Fund.

Board Policy regarding English Learners: There are 150 new English language learners who are receiving direct and transition services from 5 ESL teachers. Projections for students literate in their native language to learn English literacy takes two to four years; for students not literate in their own language, the process is protracted.

Board Policy regarding the Testing Program: Testing is reviewed each November. Our End Of Course results from the last school year are different from previous results due to a different kind of assessment.

For this school year there will be a smaller percentage of students requiring remediation than in the past to accommodate changes in the testing. A motion to remove bullet C, stating that as much as 25% of a student's second semester average of a year long course could be included in high school students' final grade, was approved by the Board because they were uncomfortable with that percentage being so high.

Board Policy regarding Students in Foster Care: There is a new state transportation policy. Since every child has an educational passport, when a foster child comes into or leaves our school system the superintendent and board should decide who bears the cost of transportation.

**Resolution to Support Public Schools:** Drafted by Angi Agle, it concluded, "...the Board strongly opposes

taking funds from public education in any Tennessee community without the concurrence of the local Board of Education, without statutory assurance that schools receiving the funds will comply with the same curriculum and testing standards required of public schools, and until the Basic Education Program is adequately funded by the Tennessee General Assembly.”

The resolution drew spontaneous applause, and it will be sent to area legislators, Roane and Anderson County’s Boards of Education and Commissions as well as to the city councils of Clinton and Oak Ridge urging them to pass a similar resolution.

~Kay Moss, *Observer*

## **Recreation and Parks Advisory Board**

*Regular Meeting, November 10*

### **North Boundary Trail Powerline (Doug Colclasure):**

In 2013, the Industrial Development Board (IDB) voted to build a 69 kV power line along the North Boundary Greenway to supply extra power to the Horizon Center. The decision was made without considering the concerns raised by Oak Ridge citizens. The IDB proposal was submitted to City Council and, recently, the City Manager informed Doug that the power line would not be built and that other options for supplying the extra power were under consideration. Doug also reported that he and a friend repaired erosion damage on the Haw Ridge Trail and that the recent 18-hour mountain bike race at Haw Ridge was very successful.

**The International Friendship Bell Pavilion (Alan Tatum):** The kickoff for the Bell Pavilion’s fundraising project is set for November 17, 5:30-7:30, at Pollard Auditorium. The Bell Committee will unveil the new concept for the pavilion, designed by Washington, DC, architect Ziad Demian.

### **Community and Corporate Donations Guide**

**(Naomi Asher):** The brochures will be printed and ready for distribution soon. Strategies for distribution are under discussion.

**Trail Development (Ray Garrett, Ken Rueter):** (1) Ray reported that Gary Long, of the Anderson County Road Department, had constructed a small parking lot at the start of the North Ridge Trail. (2) Development of the East Fork Poplar Creek Trail is awaiting the negotiation of the easement with Wayne Clark

and permission for the trail to cross City property. The City would eventually take liability responsibility for the trail. Ray met with Carol Evans of the Legacy Parks Foundation to create a plan for the trail. (3) Ken recently talked with Oak Ridge’s Mayor Gooch regarding the Legacy Parks’ possible involvement in other Oak Ridge and Anderson County trails projects. These may include the Sinkhole Trail, multi-use trails on the ED-6 parcel, Gallaher Bend and the West Black Oak Ridge Conservation Easement (BORCE) development. The Mayor was supportive of these efforts. (4) Ken met with DOE regarding development of the Gallaher Bend trail. (5) He expects to start scouting a partnership between Legacy Parks and TWRA.

### **Convention and Visitors Bureau (CVB) Report**

**(Steve Dittner):** The CVB reported at a recent meeting that the rowing program is going well. Thirty-plus teams have signed up for spring training. Construction on the eighth lane is progressing well and may be finished by the end of February. The Secret City Marathon is scheduled for November 19. One thousand participants have registered for the event that also features a half marathon and a 5K fun run. Jon Hetrick added that the eighth lane contractor may be able to open the greenway for the race.

**Director’s Report (Jon Hetrick):** (1) At the recent meeting of the Great Smoky Mountains Regional Greenway Council, hosted by Oak Ridge Recreation and Parks Department, Jon made a presentation on the 911 location markers that were installed along the Melton Lake Greenway. (2) The Planning Commission met to discuss the FY2018–2023 Capital Improvement Program. Included in the plan are the Peace Bell Pavilion and the Rails to Trails project. (3) The Senior Center will be temporarily housed in the Oak Ridge Civic Center.

**Other Announcements:** Dan Robbins noted that the National Park Service has a newsletter for the new National Park. Ken Reuter announced that the final design of the East Tennessee Technology Park History Center is almost finished and construction should begin before summer.

## Senior Advisory Board

Following much study, a vote by the Senior Advisory Board, and consultation with City Manager Mark Watson and City Council, the Senior Center will begin its transition to the Civic Center in mid-January. Although a building addition or whole new building in the Civic Center area is ultimately planned, January will see the old Daniel Arthur Building vacated and all the programs relocated to the areas around Rooms A and B of the Civic Center.

Accommodations will be made for easier access and parking, there will be some shared spaces (e.g., the gym, pool, etc.), Meals on Wheels and Congregate Feeding will be accommodated, and the Seniors' dedicated pool tables and bingo will still be available. The move may be uncomfortable for some of the Center users, and every effort is being made to make it easy with the better access to the gym, pool, library, and walking track offsetting factors.

To kick off the move, the annual Senior Center Holiday Party on December 9 was held at the Civic Center, with tours offered.

The plan is to refurbish the Center's current space at DARC for the Anderson County Sessions Court.

If you have questions, call SAB member Marty Adler-Jasny 483-9455. Right now, with the staffs of the Library, Civic Center, Senior Center, and their patrons, all making adjustments, patience and playing well together are the goals.

~Marty Adler-Jasny

## *Membership Notes*

### *Welcome, New Members!*

Debora Leahy  
101 Poplar Rd.  
Oak Ridge, TN 37830  
865-272-3058

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



*Anabel Evora, Senior Strategist for RAM, speaks at our Holiday Luncheon. ~Pat Bryan*



*Dr. Bruce Borchers, Superintendent, Oak Ridge Schools, at Lunch with the League. ~Pat Bryan*

### *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

lwwor@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

### January

- 3 Lunch with the League\*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: Dr. Jon Shefner, Professor and Head of the Sociology Department, UTK. Topic: “Explaining the Results of the Presidential Election.”
- 10 Board Meeting\*** 10 a.m. – 12 p.m.
- 17 Lunch with the League\*** 11:45, lunch; 12–1. Speaker: Mark Watson, City Manager, Oak Ridge. Topic: “State of the City.”
- 23 Breakfast with the Legislators** 7:30–8:30 a.m. Oak Ridge Civic Center Social Room
- 24 Education Committee** 2:30, Methodist Medical Center Secret City Café

### 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.

\* 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.