

LWV OF KENTUCKY

SPECIAL POINTS OF INTEREST:

- Check out **Redistricting Update**, p. 5

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The Kentucky Voter



VOLUME 6, ISSUE 2

DECEMBER 2018

Thank a Suffragist on Election Day!

By MARSHA WEINSTEIN

In an effort to increase voter turnout on Election Day, the League of Women Voters of Louisville partnered with the Frazier Museum and the Louisville Office for Women to commemorate Louisville's own suffragists — the folks whose struggles helped secure voting rights for women and expand access for all.

The organizing partners held a press conference on Nov. 5 at Eastern Cemetery in Louisville, at the graves of local suffragists Alice Nugent, Georgia A. Nugent and Mamie E. Steward to lay flowers in their memory and position markers for voters to visit. Afterwards the group proceeded to Cave Hill Cemetery to the grave of Susan Look Avery.

On Election Day volunteers were stationed at three cemeteries distributing maps that pinpoint the gravesites of more than 20 local suffragists. (List available on our website.)

On the way to or from the polling place, voters were invited to stop by one of these cemeteries to pay their respects at the gravesite of a suffragist.

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Susan Look Avery, suffragist and founder of the Women's Club of Louisville, hosted the first suffrage meeting in the South in 1881. Her gravesite was one of the stops on an Election Day tour of gravesites of Louisville-area suffragists.

LWV Hosts Forums Across Kentucky

By CINDY HEINE

Leagues across the state hosted dozens of forums for candidates ranging from Congress on down.

The Louisville League hosted 15 candidate forums covering a total of 34 races including Metro Council, the state legislature, mayor, Jefferson County School Board, Third Congressional District and seven judicial districts. Television station WAVE 3 and public radio affiliate WFPL made the mayoral and Congressional forums available on their websites. WFPL also had school board and judicial race forums available. WLKY covered other

forums for legislative and Metro Council races.

In Hopkinsville, the League hosted 18 candidate forums this fall. They also planned a large public forum on education with a focus on their deteriorating high schools and undertook a study on local health issues including one on clean, healthy water.

In Bell County, the League held forums for state representative and mayoral candidates and hosted a "meet and greet" for 17 candidates running for City Council. They published a booklet with information gathered from all candidates that was shared at their

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President's Message

By **BONNIE LYNCH**

September, October and November were busy months for all League of Women Voters members. I would especially like to thank everyone for getting out the vote in your communities. The cornerstone of Making Democracy Work — the League's motto — is an informed **and active** electorate,



President Wanda "Bonnie" Lynch

and that means voting.

Making Democracy Work also means ensuring that all votes matter equally. That's where redistricting comes in. When districts are gerrymandered to create 'safe' districts for political parties, polarization becomes the norm and democracy suffers. So please be sure to talk with your state representative and state sena-

tor about redistricting. We want a fair and transparent process. (See below and story pg. 5.)

Take time to enjoy the holidays with family and friends, for when the clock strikes midnight on Jan. 1, 2019, our work begins again. There are so many issues to monitor and address.

Thanks for your dedication to democracy!

Talk with Your Legislators about Redistricting

By **CINDY HEINE** and **MARY JO RODGERS**

As we approach the 2019 Legislative Session, the League will be working to improve Kentucky's redistricting process. We need your help getting a sense of the lay of the land on this issue.

We have spoken to a number of legislators and they all seem to have a story about redistricting. We'd like to get more of those stories.

If you or a group from your League, have a chance to speak to your state representative or senator, please tell them that the League is interested in addressing the redistricting process, making it fair and transparent.

Then ask:

What is your experience with redistricting?

What priorities would you propose for improving the process?

Second, help us get a sense of public knowledge/interest/passions:

As you talk with friends and neighbors, ask what

they know and/or think about redistricting?

Let us know what you learn. You can also request a speaker. On redistricting. Email us: kentuckylwv@gmail.com.

For more information, check our report at <https://lwvky.org/>



Fig. 6-4. Elkanah Tisdale's original Gerrymander, as it appeared in the *Boston Gazette*, March 26, 1812. (From James Parton, *Gerrymander and Other Civic Art* [New York: Harper and Brothers, 1877], p. 316.)

Interim Joint Committee on State and Local Government:

Read notes on the October meeting for information on potential election-related legislation. www.lwvky.org

We don't want KY districts to look like this.

Leagues Host Forums at National, State, Local Levels

(Cont'd from p. 1)

event. All events were streamed live and archived so citizens could watch at their leisure.

In the spring, Bell County's league hosted forums for primary candidates for mayor and jailer.

Members in Murray/Callaway County, our newest local League, held three voter registration drives, hosted a "Meet The Primary Candidates" forum in May and a "Meet the Nov. 6 Candidates" Forum in October.

Lexington League members hosted 19 candidate forums this fall, 17 in conjunction with the Lexington Public Library (videotaped and available on YouTube), a mayoral



forum with a neighborhood association and another with television station WKYT, the *Lexington Herald-Leader*, radio station WLAP and Transylvania University. That forum was aired live on WKYT's *The CW Lexington* and was streamed live by WKYT and the *Herald-Leader* and availa-

ble on YouTube.

Of the 60 invited candidates, 45 participated, including those running for mayor, Urban/Council, the Kentucky House and Senate, the Fayette County Board of Education, County Judge Executive, coroner, the Fifth Appellate Court, Family Judge and District Judges.

Study: Lobbyists' Influence Greater on State, National Levels

By **GEORGE SCHUMANN**

We all recognize that money in politics (MIP) involves money spent to influence elections. But did you know that, at the federal level, almost as much money is spent on lobbying as is spent on elections?

In 2017, the annual meetings of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky and of the Louisville League both approved studies on lobbying. One study, involving Metro Louisville, has been completed and its report was approved in September. We are thankful especially for the work of the Louisville League's Money in Politics Committee, which deserves credit for that report. An electronic copy of the report can be obtained by emailing lwvlouisville@gmail.com.

Information for the Local Lobby-

ing study was gathered by interviewing eight local elected officials and two key staff personnel. The general impression conveyed by the local study is that local officials are so close and available to their constituents that the public's interest in local issues drives results more than lobbyists.

Although that is reassuring, the issue differs at the state and national levels. When the elected officials leave their hometown for a somewhat remote state or very remote national capitol, the situation can involve a different balancing of interests. Much has been written about concern regarding an overly large influence of lobbying at the national level. And, to some extent, the situa-

tion at our state level presents a similar picture on a smaller scale.

Given the history of lobbying on the national level, the greater likelihood of undue influence involves professional lobbyists acting on behalf of large commercial interests. The danger noted by many analysts is the disproportionate impact that large business entities can wield when their interests are opposed to an interest of the general public.

It is anticipated that the methodological experience obtained with the Local Lobbying study will be improved and applied to examine the issue at the state level. Planning for undertaking that effort is ongoing.

Expungement, Voting Restoration Explained

By **JUDY JOHNSON**

The state League identified restoration of voting rights for ex-felons as an issue to work with this year. The first step was putting together a clear picture of how these rights can be restored in Kentucky and the processes that must be followed in each case.

The three paths to restoration of rights:

1. State law gives the governor the arbitrary right to grant a pardon, which restores civil and voting rights. This does not require an application nor any other requirements.

2. Persons convicted of felonies may apply to have their record expunged. However, the process, which is completed through the court



system, can be complicated, lengthy and costly. Felony expungement applies only to certain Class D felonies. Applicants must meet the requirements for five-year waiting period, no current criminal charges after completion of the person's sentence, no current criminal charges and no convictions for five years prior to applying. The fee is \$500 plus \$40 for the expungement certification. As

expungement is discretionary, a judge may deny the application even if all statutory requirements have been met.

3. Ex-felons may apply to have their voting rights restored. Applicants must not be under felony indictment, must not have pending charges or owe any outstanding fines or restitution. The application goes to the governor's office. This process is arbitrary and often takes months, if not years, to complete.

We next collected data on the restoration application process. We found that between Dec. 15, 2015, and Sept. 1, 2018, 1,765 applications had been sent to the governor, with 981 approved. We could not verify the status of the remaining 784. The state League will continue to collect data and work toward a constitutional amendment restoring voting rights automatically for ex-felons upon completion of sentence and parole requirements. The recent successful ballot measure in Florida leaves Kentucky and Iowa as the remaining two states with the most arbitrary, difficult paths to restoring voting rights.

LWV Hosts Suffragist Grave Tours



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Each of the gravesites was designated by a sign (see on left) and a floral arrangement. Visitors could add their names to the Signs of Thanks. Coverage by three local TV stations and social media

resulted in an impressive number of voters visiting the gravesites.

To increase public awareness of the little-known history of the women's fight to win the right to vote and to encourage citizens to vote plans are underway to expand this event for next year's election.

Redistricting Cannot Be Done in Secret

By **CINDY HEINE** and **MARY JO RODGERS**

Kentucky's process for re-drawing legislative and Congressional District lines every ten years has historically been done behind closed doors and with little or no public input.

According to our report, [Redistricting Kentucky: A Guidebook for Citizens](#), "Over recent decades, the United States has experienced increasing political polarization. In Congress and state legislatures, it has become less common for legislators to work across party lines. In elections for those bodies; it has become more common for seats to be seen as 'safe' for a single party, which means there is little chance of a competitive race in the general election.

"Today, there is widespread belief that redistricting allows

legislators to choose their voters and maintain that polarization. A better redistricting process can help rebuild confidence in voters' ability to make the central decisions on who will govern them."

Ex-California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger (R) has said, "Gerrymandering is not a Republican or Democrat issue — it is a voter's issue. Politicians of both parties draw maps to benefit their own interests — but never the voters."

The League seeks to improve the process which will occur after the 2020 census data has been released, probably in 2021 or 2022. We are seeking a process that makes it easier for citizens to learn about candidates, engage in robust discussions about who can best serve their communities, and communicate with elected officials. We want members of one party to compete against members of another for election and for people of different



racial and language backgrounds to elect candidates they prefer. We want citizens in various regions of the state (rural or urban, agricultural or industrial, areas experiencing economic growth and those seeing economic decline) to ensure their needs are considered.

During the 2018 legislative session, after releasing our report on redistricting, we worked with state Representative James Kay, who filed House Bill 548 that would have created a redistricting commission. That bill did not get a hearing. Representative Kay did not seek re-election this year, so we have been talking with other legislators from both parties in an effort to find bipartisan bill sponsors in 2019. We have also made several presentations to help citizens understand the importance of this issue and are exploring creation of a Kentucky Citizens' Redistricting Committee, an effort to expand our communication efforts and generate support for improving the redistricting process. You can help (See pg .2).

LWV Sends Letter on Grad Requirements

By **TERRY NAYDAN** and **NITA SMITH**

We, co-chairs of the Education Committee of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky, along with LWV state President Bonnie Lynch provided written comments to Education Commissioner Wayne Lewis on proposed graduation requirements.

Our letter stressed that not all Kentucky high schools have equal academic facilities, and the League's position is that this inequity should be addressed as quickly as possible. Additionally, no curricular and instructional changes should be made before they thoroughly researched.

Based on prior experiences, changing graduation requirements, would be quite a challenge for the

Kentucky Board of Education. The state League looks forward to the Commission's progress in this important endeavor and expects transparency in all reporting from the Commissioner and the state Board of Education.

The Education Committee is also monitoring the proposals on charter schools. Although the national LWV does not have a position on charter schools, the state LWV is concerned about charter funding at a time when Kentucky public schools lack funding.

NOTE: On Dec. 5 the Kentucky Board of Education made changes to their proposal on high schools, adopting requirements taking into account the funding disparities mentioned in the League letter.



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Calendar

Saturday, Jan. 12, 10 a.m.: League of Women Voters of Kentucky Board meeting.

February, Date TBA: League Day at the Capitol

Friday, April 12, to Saturday, April 13: League of Women Voters of Kentucky State Convention