By CINDY HEINE

The Kentucky League has been in the news this winter with stories relating to work on felony disenfranchisement.

Releasing our study *Felony Disenfranchisement in the Commonwealth: A Report of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky* in January generated lots of media interest. Between Dec. 6 and Feb. 3, the League was mentioned in numerous media stories including THE APPEAL Political Report, the Lexington Herald-Leader, Insider Louisville, the Glasgow Daily Times, The Daily Independent (Ashland), WKYT-TV Lexington, WHAS Louisville, WPSD Local 6 TV Paducah, and Kentucky Forward.

In November, Florida voters amended their constitution to restore voting rights to persons convicted of certain felonies, leaving Kentucky one of only three states that permanently disenfranchise these citizens. That has brought national attention to the Commonwealth. Judy Johnson, a Lexington League member who has taken the lead on this issue for the state, has been interviewed by reporters from Reuters, The Courier-Journal, ThinkProgress, The Appeal, The New York Times, (Cont’d on p. 3)

By BONNIE LYNCH

You won’t want to miss this year’s State Convention of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky! It will be in Hopkinsville from Friday, April 12, to Saturday, April 13.

In addition to a welcome by the mayor of Hopkinsville, League members will hear from law professor Joshua Douglas, author of *Vote for US: How to Take Back Our Elections and Change the Future of Voting*. But, best of all, it’s a chance for League members from across our state to meet in person and share memories and ideas!

We’ve made it easy for you to register with a form on p. 6 of this newsletter.
President’s Message

By BONNIE LYNCH

We, the members of the Hopkinsville/Christian County League of Women Voters are planning an informative and fun weekend for all who attend the State Convention in April. (See p. 6.)

This is a chance to see what makes Hopkinsville so special. But it is also a chance to meet fellow League members from across the state, women and men who are devoted — as you are — to making democracy work for all of us.

I am asking League members from across the state to make a special effort to attend. We promise that you will not be disappointed!

We are hoping to see everyone in “Hoptown” in April!

HR1 Supports Election Reform

By GEORGE SCHUHMANN

On Feb. 5, the League of Women Voters of the United States held a webinar for members to call in to find out about HR 1, the “For the People Act” introduced in the U.S. House of Representatives as a reform to clean up problems in our electoral system.

HR 1 has many provisions which the League supports, but there are some which, because the League has no existing position on the particular issue, we cannot support (although we are free as individuals to let our thoughts be known to our elected officials).

Below is a link to a recording of the webinar so that we can all be informed on the particulars that the League supports in HR 1. Find it here.

(Note: the first 14:40 is dead air time when the recording was on but no one was speaking. Please use your mouse or pointer on the strip at the bottom of the picture to skip that. The spoken part of the webinar lasts 47 minutes and can be paused at one's convenience.)

LWVUS maintains talking points for all Leagues to speak with one voice about HR 1. The national League has also provided us with some excellent talking points that we can use on social media and when conversing with friends and family. Find those here.
LWV Makes News

(Cont'd from p. 1)


“Talking with journalists, two things stand out—their dedication to getting the story of disenfranchisement out and keeping it alive until change is brought about and their confidence that information provided by the League is substantiated and nonpartisan,” said Johnson. “My contacts have reinforced my respect for writers who use their skills to focus public attention on an issue that demands remedy.”

LWV Has League Day at the Capitol

By MARY JO RODGERS

Kudos to the 25 members of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky who braved the rain and fog to meet in Frankfort for our Annual League Day at the Legislature on Feb. 7.

LWV members from Louisville, Lexington and at-large members from Kenton and Bell counties gathered to review the day’s agenda and listen to briefings on felon voting rights and Legislative Reapportionment by Cindy Heine, LWVKY Legislative Liaison, and Ed Monahan, a Lexington League member and executive director of the NAPD Fund for Justice.

Attendees adjourned to their legislative appointments and committee meetings. Home base was moved to the Dining Cafeteria, where the group randomly assembled, shared information, and got to know each other.

Seven senators and representatives were visited: Representatives Dean Schamore, Reginald Meeks, Charles “Buddy” Wheatley, Tina Bojanawski and Wilson Stone, and Senators Alice Forgy Kerr and Denise Harper-Angel. Just as importantly, the League’s presence was recognized by fellow legislative visitors, members of the press, and other state personnel. Thank you to the Secretary of State’s office staff for their hospitality and the use of their conference room.

See felony disenfranchisement report, p. 4.

The Suffragist Choir took part in the festivities in Frankfort for League Day at the Capitol on Feb. 7. Photo by Cindy Heine
LWVKY Works for Voter Re-enfranchisement

By JUDY JOHNSON

The Voter Disenfranchisement Committee has been in close communication with League of Women Voters of the United States. We updated staff, and they provided guidance preparing testimony for the hearing on HB91 (disenfranchisement of voters) in the House Committee on Elections, Constitutional Amendments, and Intergovernmental Affairs on Feb. 25. (See photo on page 5.)

President Bonnie Lynch, representing the state League, presented data from our January 2019 report on felony disenfranchisement. Kentucky has the highest rate of African-American disenfranchisement in the nation: 26.2 percent — more than one in four — cannot vote! Lynch clearly stated the League’s support for HB 91 and the position that, once felons have completed the sentence mandated for the crime committed, their voting rights should be automatically restored. Others who testified were Amanda Hall of ACLU’s Smart Justice, Tayna Fogle of Kentuckians For The Commonwealth (KFTC) and Shelton McElroy of the Bail Project.

Bill sponsors Representatives George Brown, Jr. (D) of Lexington, Charles Booker (D) of Louisville and Jason Nemes (R) of Louisville, explained why they sponsored this bill. The committee was very receptive to testimony and supportive of the bill. On Feb. 24, Cindy Heine and Judy Johnson represented the League at an initial meeting of a large and diverse voting rights coalition. Although several potential participants were absent due to poor weather, the group that gathered represented at least 20 organizations willing to make felony disenfranchisement a top priority. Among those present at the table were: the ACLU, Frankfort Anti-Racism, the Jewish Federation, the Kentucky Civil Engagement Table, the Bluegrass Activist Alliance, the NAACP, Together Frankfort, the Kentucky Equal Justice Center, KFTC, PAR (People Advocating Recovery) and the Black Caucus of Local Elected Officials. It was a productive introductory meeting and the group plans to continue on a monthly basis, working toward a long term solution to disenfranchisement in Kentucky.

The committee now has an up-to-date tabulation of applications for restoration of voting rights from the beginning of Governor Matt Bevin’s administration to Jan. 1, 2019. Applications sent to the governor by the Department of Corrections number 2,104; approvals sent from the governor to the Secretary of State number 1,230. That gives Bevin a rate of approval of 58 percent. And there is no way to know where the remaining 874 applications are or what will happen to them as more applications continue to be sent to the governor’s office.

The League recommends that the governor provide a statement for why he approves — or denies — applications for the restoration of voting rights. Section 77 of the Kentucky Constitution calls for this explanation.
Redistricting

By SUSAN WESTON

Redistricting state, congressional and judicial districts is just a few years away, with 2020 census data expected to be released in 2021 and redistricting likely to happen in 2022. Seeking a more transparent process and fairer district lines, League members have met with a number of legislators in recent weeks. Representative Joni Jenkins filed HB 482 to create a “Legislative Advisory Reapportionment and Redistricting Commission” on February 21, opening an important window for change this session, and we hope to be able to collaborate with her and others on the issue.

We also want to build statewide discussion on these issues: members of the Redistricting Subcommittee want to speak to your League, as well as civic, church and community groups. We’re finalizing slides, handouts, and talking points now, so we’ll be ready when you are. If you know a potential venue for these conversations, please do let us know. Letters to the editor and op-eds can also be a big help. For speakers or sample op-eds and letters, contact us at KentuckyLWV@gmail.com.

KY LWV President Bonnie Lynch (second from right) testified before the House Elections, Constitutional Amendments and Intergovernmental Affairs Committee in Frankfort. She spoke about HB 91, a bill that would place an amendment on the ballot to automatically restore voting rights to persons convicted of a felony on completion of full sentencing. Also testifying were (left to right) Shelton McElroy of the Bail Project, Amanda Hall of ACLU’s Smart Justice and Tayna Fogle of KFTC. LWV member Cindy Heine was available to provide background if needed. Photo by Judy Johnson

LWV of Kentucky Education Committee Report

By Terry Naydan and Nita Smith

We met with Pat Murrell and Leslie Marcellino of the Louisville Education Committee last week to discuss education bills that will be voted upon in this short legislative session (30 days) as well as other concerns about public school education today.

SB1 - School Safety Bill-calls for more safety resource officers (SROs) and mental health professionals in the schools where needed and when funds are available. One concern of ours is that sending security officers in first in a nonviolent confrontation could escalate the chance for violence in some urban schools. This bill has passed both chambers.

SB3 - this bill changes the status of school based decision making councils (SBDM). More power is given to administrators. For example, principals would be hired by superintendents. This bill has passed the Senate and been sent to the House. A companion bill that has already passed the Senate and been sent to the House is SB8 which revisits procedures for terminating teacher contracts.

HB14 & HB17 - these bills would repeal charter schools. Both bills have been assigned to the House Education Committee.

HB11 & SB 27 - these bills would not allow smoking or tobacco products to be used by anyone in any public school in Kentucky. Sent to Health and Family Services Committee in the House and sent to Education Committee in the Senate.

Several League members also replied to Education Commissioner Lewis’s call for public comments on new graduation requirements. We all wanted to know if final decisions were research based and the source of the research.

We plan to visit with Commissioner Lewis whenever he can see us to discuss education concerns.
Call to 2019 League of Women Voters of Kentucky Convention in Hopkinsville
Register Today!

Friday, April 12 The Hopkinsonville-Christian County Public Library – 1101 Bethel St., Hopkinsville
5:30 to 6:30  Welcome by Mayor – Program by UK Law Professor, Joshua Douglas, author of *Vote for US: How to Take Back Our Elections and Change the Future of Voting*
6:30 to 6:45  Book signing
6:45 to 7:00  Social/informal gathering of League members
7:00  Catered dinner for LWV members – Spotlight on the Museum w/Alissa Keller, Ex. Director

**Own transportation to hotel – Comfort Suites of Hopkinsville, 210 Harvey Way, Hopkinsville**

Sat., April 13 Comfort Suites Meeting Room
7:30 to 8:30  Breakfast/Registration
9:00 to 10:45  Convention called to order - Business meeting – Session 1
10:45 to 10:55  Spotlight on local elected officials
10:55 to 11:10  Fast break
11:10 to 11:20  Spotlight on local elected officials
11:05 to 12:05  Workshop 1 – Melissa Currence
12:05 to 12:50  Boxed lunches provided by Southern Belle Catering
2:45 to 1:00  Spotlight on local elected officials
1:00 to 1:15  Fast break
1:15 to 1:25  Spotlight on local elected officials
1:25 to 3:00  Business meeting – Session 2
3:00  Convention adjourned
3:00 to 3:45  New board meets to schedule next board meeting

**Thanks for coming to Hopkinsville!**
Convention Registration Fee :  $50.00 includes Friday evening program and dinner, Saturday breakfast, lunch, snacks and meeting materials.  For more information, contact Bonnie at (270) 881-2574 or wandabonnie@bellsouth.net

For overnight accommodations, contact Comfort Suites, Hopkinsville at (270) 226-4267.  Be sure to mention you are with the LWV.  Rooms are $99 per night plus taxes.

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2019 League of Women Voters Convention Registration DEADLINE - April 5th

Name _____________________________________________________________
E-Mail ______________________ Phone_________________________
Local League________________________________________________________
Regular meals______________________ or Vegetarian meals______________

$__________ Additional Gift to the League

________$50 Convention Registration Fee (includes all meals) ________$35.00 for Saturday attendance only

$_________Total enclosed
Make checks payable to the League of Women Voters of Kentucky. Complete form and mail with payment to:
Martha White, 503 East Lake Road, Gracey, KY 42232
Nominating Committee Report for 2019 Convention

The Nominating Committee of the League of Women Voters of Kentucky submits the following slate of officers serve as State Board Directors for fiscal year 2019–2020:

President: Fran Wagner, Louisville
First Vice President: Dee Pregliasco, Louisville
Second Vice President: Bonnie Lynch, Hopkinsville
Treasurer: Richard Heine, Lexington

In addition, we propose that the following three members be elected as non-board members to serve on the 2019–2020 Nominating Committee:

Terry Naydan, chair, Lexington
Anita Simmons, Hopkinsville
Barbara Kelty, Louisville

Submitted by:
Richard Heine, chair, Lexington
Barbara Kelty, Louisville
Terry Naydan, Lexington
Anita Simmons, Hopkinsville
Fran Wagner, Louisville

State Council Delegates

While we encourage everyone to come to the State Convention, each local league (including state administered) is allocated a certain number of voting delegates who are to be chosen by their local league. According to our by-laws, voting members at Convention shall be:

- Officers and directors of the LWVKY
- Local league presidents (or their designated alternate)

In addition to the above, each local and state administered league is entitled to one delegate for the first 10 members, one delegate for every 10 additional members up to 50, and one delegate thereafter for every 20 additional members.
League of Women Voters of Kentucky

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2018–19 LWV KYOFFICERS
President: Bonnie Lynch, Hopkinsville
First Vice-President: Fran Wagner, Louisville
Second Vice-President: Donna Blue, Lexington
Secretary: Harriette Seiler, Louisville
Treasurer: Donna McIntyre, Hopkinsville

DIRECTORS
Soraya Assar, Greenville
Cindy Heine, Lexington
Joan Lindop, Louisville
Terry Naydan, Lexington
Mary Jo Rodgers, Louisville
Steve Senft, Lexington
Nita Smith, Lexington

NOMINATING COMMITTEE:
Richard Heine, Lexington, chair
Barb Kelty, Louisville
Mary Jo Rogers, Louisville
Anita Simmons, Hopkinsville
Fran Wagner, Louisville

KY VOTER EDITORS
Soraya Assar, Greenville
Ivonne Rovira, Louisville

Return Service Requested

Check us out!
http://lwvky.org/
Twitter: @lwvky

Calendar

Monday, April 22: Last day to register to vote in the primary

Tuesday, May 21: Primary Election Day

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