

President's Note

The past couple of months have been extremely difficult, even though they started out really great. On March 1st, we celebrated the 100th birthday of our local League with a huge party at George's Majestic Lounge. A few days later, we filed our redistricting reform ballot petition with the Secretary of State.



Then, by mid-March, the Governor issued a state of emergency for Arkansas, which effectively halted all of our campaign's efforts to gather signatures.

I want to assure you that despite being physically distanced, your local Washington County and Arkansas State Leagues are still working hard to defend democracy. On April 22nd, Arkansas Voters First, our redistricting reform ballot initiative campaign, filed a lawsuit in federal court seeking legal relief to the signature gathering requirements. Gathering signatures in-person runs counterintuitive to the social distancing guidelines put forth by the CDC, WHO, Governor, and President. We should not have to choose between our health and participating in direct democracy. You can read more about the lawsuit [here](#):

We need to ensure that the constitutional rights of Arkansans are protected. We are doubling down on our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy. Please take the pledge to sign the petition once it's available and encourage others you know to do the same. You can find more information about the amendment and take the pledge to sign at <https://arvotersfirst.org>.

Continuing education and advocacy about gerrymandering and the importance of fair and transparent redistricting is extremely important right now. As you know, the Census is underway this year, and maps will be redrawn in 2021. The time is now. We might not be able to hold town halls, but we can use social media, e-mail, phone calls, text messages, and letters to educate our friends and communities about the destructive effects of partisan gerrymandering.

Our National League is also working hard and ramping up efforts around supporting communities who are hurting from the health and financial impact of this crisis, expanding voter access, and ensuring adequate funding exists to secure our elections and protect the health and safety of voters.

I've written to Senators Cotton and Boozman urging them to include policies in the next COVID-19 stimulus bill that will protect elections, protect all families regardless of immigration status, and to pass additional measures that will fully fund state election efforts and direct states and counties to administer the 2020 elections in a safe, fair, and accessible manner. That includes fighting for all of us to have access to mail-in ballots if we want to vote that way, including expanded absentee voting access in Arkansas.

We are navigating uncharted territory and dealing with some very devastating effects of this global pandemic. I hope you and your loved ones are staying safe and healthy. We are in this together.

In solidarity,
Bonnie Miller
President of LWVWC



Join Arkansas Voters First Online!

We can't go door to door to get your signature in support of ending gerrymandering, but you can make a [pledge to sign it](#) once the quarantine has been lifted, [here](#).

In the meantime, Arkansas Voters First has filed a complaint seeking relief from the state guidelines which make it impossible to collect the requisite signatures for placing a constitutional amendment on the ballot.

"We have a right to petition our government to amend our constitution. We don't have the luxury of waiting until next year," said Bonnie Miller, Director of Arkansas Voters First and President of the League of Women Voters of Washington County. "If we are denied access to the ballot this year, Arkansas could be stuck with unfair and unrepresentative districts for another ten years."

You can read about this complaint in the national news [here](#) and [here](#).



Join Us For Our Annual Meeting

Mark it on your calendar now! On June 5th, we will be gathering online at 5:30 pm for our Annual Meeting. Information on how to attend this meeting will be sent out soon. In the meantime, please check out the slate of officers for 2020-21. [LWVslateofficers.pdf](#)



Washington Co Quorum Court Meetings

You can still participate in Regular Washington County Quorum Court Meetings!

Meetings are live-streamed on the County's YouTube Channel: <https://www.youtube.com/user/washcoar>

For information regarding participating using Zoom and making public comments during the meeting, [Click Here](#).

Washington County Detention Center Update

Due to the spread of COVID-19, there have been a lot of changes at the Detention Center. More people are being released on ankle monitors who would have been detained before their court dates. Sheriff Tim Helder also announced that he has ended participation in the 287(g) immigration program. This voluntary program allowed the Washington County Detention Center to detain people suspected of being undocumented immigrants. Washington County was one of three counties in Arkansas that participated in the program. Although he expressed his support of the program, Helder stated that the suspension was due to "the amount of time and energy we currently have dedicated to the COVID-19 pandemic." Such facilities face a unique problem when it comes to preventing the spread of the virus. This past week over 600 cases of COVID-19 were reported in the Department of Correction's Cummins Unit in Grady Arkansas.

#CountMeIn



Count Me In

Make sure you are counted in the 2020 Census. Being counted will ensure the political power, health, and safety of every community is maintained or enhanced in the upcoming decade.

LWV of Washington County is creating a digital archive of LWVWC materials. If you have any of our old documents in your possession, please send them to [Catherine Dunlap](mailto:Catherine.Dunlap).

Why Redistricting Matters To YOU

Send us a video telling us why redistricting is important to you. We will post it to our social media! Email [Bonnie Miller](mailto:Bonnie.Miller).



Questions for the League? E-mail us at info@lwvawc.org.
Questions for Bonnie? Email her at bonniehmiller@gmail.com

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