



2016 ELECTION TOOLKIT

www.LWVNC.org



#VOTE411

#LWVNC

#MattersInNC

This resource was made possible in part by the League of Women Voters Education Fund.

CONTENTS

LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENTS	1
ABOUT THE ISSUES	
BUDGET & TAXES	2
EDUCATION	3
ENVIRONMENT	4
EQUAL RIGHTS	5
FAIR ELECTIONS	6
GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION	7
HEALTH CARE	8
TALKING ABOUT THE ISSUES	9
HOW TO RESEARCH CANDIDATES	10
CANDIDATE REPORT CARD	11
VOTE 411 ELECTION INFORMATION	12

A LETTER FROM THE LWVNC PRESIDENTS

GET INFORMED and VOTE in 2016!

It's an important election year in North Carolina. With so many issues at stake in our state, the League of Women Voters is working hard to educate voters and connect them with non-partisan, election-related resources, to help them cast informed votes on Election Day.

Included in this 2016 Election Toolkit is information about issues the LWVNC is focused on related to our education and advocacy work. Each issue has an associated **League Action Team**, comprised of members from local Leagues across the state, working together to seek progress. Many of these teams are working in conjunction with partner organizations comprising statewide coalitions, multiplying the impact of our individual efforts. We welcome you to join us and spread the word about these League Action Teams. There is power in our numbers. It's how we make democracy work!

Understanding the issues is the first step. Casting informed votes is the end goal. This toolkit offers tools and resources to bring voters what they need.

- **Talking About the Issues:** How to reach voters by personalizing your viewpoint.
- **Researching the Candidates:** How to find where candidates stand on the issues.
- **Connecting with VOTE411 Election Info:** How to navigate the election process.

This toolkit is designed to help League members educate each other and our communities as we gear up for Election Day. Please discuss it at your meetings and share it widely. Watch our LWVNC social media for easy-to-share updates related to this toolkit using the hashtags #VOTE411 and #LWVNC. Let's start conversations across North Carolina about these important issues and the importance of casting informed votes in 2016!

Thank you,

Mary Klenz and Willie Taylor



BUDGET & TAXES

ABOUT THE ISSUES

Especially worrisome proposals known as TABOR, the so-called Taxpayer Bill of Rights, which many analysts call a formula for decline in state investments, come up regularly in the NC Legislature. A constitutional amendment with the taxing limitation portion passed the Senate last session but thankfully got left in a House committee at the end without action. Earlier provisions of such constitutional amendment proposals included spending limitations.

“Dangerous piece of legislation,” “flawed formula,” “bad for education,” “bad for the economy” are just a few of the criticisms of the proposed constitutional amendments to cap the state income tax rate and impose a rigid formula for state spending.

For years, the League of Women Voters has been monitoring and opposing legislative attempts to put such provisions in place. The Taxpayer Bill of Rights has been recommended by the conservative organization ALEC in most states and famously adopted in Colorado with what has been described as disastrous results. Voters there suspended the constitutional provisions for five years.

WHAT TABOR PROPOSALS ARE DESIGNED TO DO

- TIE SPENDING INCREASES TO POPULATION GROWTH PLUS INFLATION AVERAGE FOR THREE PREVIOUS YEARS
- CAP THE STATE INCOME TAX RATE (AT 5.5 % IN THE LAST PROPOSAL - PREVIOUS VERSIONS SAID 5 %)
- ESTABLISH EMERGENCY SAVINGS RESERVE FUND REQUIRING ANNUAL DEPOSITS EQUAL TO 2% OF APPROPRIATIONS REGARDLESS OF OTHER STATE NEEDS AND REQUIRE A 2/3 VOTE OF ALL LEGISLATORS TO SPEND THE MONEY

Help the League take action by staying informed and joining our Budget & Tax League Action Team.

BUDGET & TAX LEAGUE ACTION TEAM

E-mail us to join this statewide action team

Follow LWVNC and your local League on social media

ACTION TEAM LEADER

Mary Klenz: lwvklenzm@gmail.com

EDUCATION

ABOUT THE ISSUES

The League of Women Voters (LWV) believes strongly that high quality public education for all children is necessary to sustain our democratic way of life and the economic health of our state and the people. Furthermore, having studied education issues at the national, state and local levels for many decades, the LWV concludes that adequate funding is essential to the ability of the state to provide and sustain such an education.

OUR STANCE ON PUBLIC EDUCATION

- WE OPPOSE SHIFTING PUBLIC TAX DOLLARS TO PRIVATE ENTITIES.
- WE SUPPORT FULLY FUNDED PUBLIC, PRE-K EDUCATION PROGRAMS.
- WE BELIEVE HIGHLY QUALIFIED TEACHERS ARE NECESSARY.
- WE SUPPORT TRAINING, SUPPORT, AND PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT.
- WE BELIEVE IN SALARIES COMPETITIVE WITH THE NATIONAL AVG.
- WE BELIEVE CHARTER SCHOOLS RECEIVING PUBLIC DOLLARS MUST BE HELD TO THE SAME EDUCATIONAL, ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY STANDARDS AS TRADITIONAL PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

The League of Voters of North Carolina is taking action to advocate for quality public education in our state. In accordance with these priorities, the LWFVNC advocacy plan includes:

- Formation of an observer corps to attend related NCGA committee meetings & hearings
- Appointment of a designated representative of LWFVNC to be available to speak to these issues
- Monitoring of state funding and budget issues
- Collaboration with other organizations to advance the LWFVNC's priorities
- Outreach of local Leagues to their local school officials to obtain information on the local impact of school funding in their local school system

EDUCATION LEAGUE ACTION TEAM

Read more at <http://www.lwvnc.org/education.html>

E-mail us to join this statewide action team

Follow LWFVNC and your local League on social media

ACTION TEAM LEADER

Jo Nicholas: myrlejo@gmail.com

ENVIRONMENT

ABOUT THE ISSUES

The League of Women Voters has been at the forefront of the environmental protection movement for decades, consistently supporting legislation to preserve our nation's natural resources and protect our public health. We support legislation that seeks to protect our country from the physical, economic and public health effects of climate change while also providing pathways to economic prosperity.

The League believes that averting the damaging effects of climate change requires action from both individuals and governments at the local, state, national and international levels. By raising public awareness of the causes and likely impacts of climate change, helping citizens learn what they can do to protect the environment and building broad support for effective climate solutions, we can help put our country -- and our planet -- on the path to a sustainable future.

We believe that a path toward a clean energy future will strengthen our economy by opening up millions of jobs to Americans while also rescuing America from its dependence on fossil fuels, reducing threats to our health, protecting the natural resources that we depend upon for survival and creating millions of domestic jobs.

WHY WE NEED ENVIRONMENTAL ADVOCACY

- TO PROTECT OUR AIR QUALITY
- TO IMPROVE ENERGY EFFICIENCY THROUGHOUT THE ECONOMY
- TO BUILD GRASSROOTS SUPPORT FOR ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The League of Voters of North Carolina is taking action on environmental advocacy. You can help by staying informed and joining our Environment League Action Team.

ENVIRONMENT LEAGUE ACTION TEAM

E-mail us to join this statewide action team
Follow LWNVC and your local League on social media

ACTION TEAM LEADER

Lori Williams: lwms@embarqmail.com

EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

ABOUT THE ISSUES

At the 2015 state convention of the LWV NC, members voted to make the Equal Rights Amendment an action item. For the first time since 1982, the ERA was introduced in both houses of the NC General Assembly in 2015. Primary sponsor of the Senate legislation (S.184) was Senator Floyd McKissick. In the House, Rep. Carla Cunningham was primary sponsor of H.166; a third of House members signed on as cosponsors. Neither bill received a hearing in the respective committees. This spring, the state League signed on as a lead organization in the new ERA-NC Alliance, a coalition of numerous state and local organizations dedicated to making the ERA part of the U.S. Constitution. Formation of the Alliance was announced on April 12, Equal Pay Day. For information about the Alliance, visit www.era-nc.org.

WHY WE NEED THE EQUAL RIGHTS AMENDMENT

- TO GUARANTEE CONSTITUTIONAL EQUALITY FOR WOMEN AND MEN
- TO SET AN ENFORCEABLE NORM FOR EQUAL PAY
- TO PROTECT WOMEN WORKERS FROM PREGNANCY DISCRIMINATION
- TO STRENGTHEN AND ENFORCE LAWS AGAINST GENDER VIOLENCE
- TO INFLUENCE EFFORTS TOWARD SOCIAL EQUALITY AT ALL LEVELS
- TO SHOW THE WORLD THAT WE ARE SERIOUS ABOUT EQUAL RIGHTS

The League of Voters of North Carolina is taking action to advocate for ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment. You can help by staying informed and joining our ERA Action Team. Our team engages in occasional conference calls, Lobby Days at the NCGA, Op Ed submissions, and person-to-person education.

ERA LEAGUE ACTION TEAM

E-mail us to join this statewide action team
Follow LWVNC and your local League on social media

ACTION TEAM LEADER

Roberta Madden: robertamadden@yahoo.com

FAIR ELECTIONS

ABOUT THE ISSUES

We believe the survival of our democracy requires two reforms that are fundamental to all others: (1) Ending gerrymandering through nonpartisan redistricting reform, and (2) improving methods of financing political campaigns.

With little prospect of legislative action, the Fair Elections League Action Team and its coalition partners have decided to undertake two projects:

1. To negotiate with candidates in the 2016 elections, asking them to file their campaign finance reports electronically (this will increase campaign finance transparency by making it easier for watchdogs to study and analyze their reports).
2. To work through the Board of Elections to provide training in the use of the free, state-supplied campaign finance reporting software to the election campaigns of candidates for elective offices.

BENEFITS OF FAIR ELECTIONS

- REMOVING SPECIAL INTEREST INFLUENCE IN POLITICS
- LOWERING THE COST OF RUNNING FOR OFFICE
- OPENING UP THE FIELD OF CANDIDATES IN ELECTIONS
- ENDING GERRYMANDERED REDISTRICTING
- RESTORING THE POWER OF THE VOTE

The League of Voters of North Carolina is taking action to advocate for campaign finance reform and redistricting reform in our state. You can help by staying informed and joining our Fair Elections League Action Team. This team is part of a coalition working at the state and local level to educate and advocate for change.

FAIR ELECTIONS LEAGUE ACTION TEAM

Read more at http://lwwpt.org/Fair_Elections.html

E-mail us to join this statewide action team

Follow LWWNC and your local League on social media

ACTION TEAM LEADER

Walter Salinger: fer@lwwpt.org

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION

ABOUT THE ISSUES

The LWVNC is working in partnership with two statewide groups, North Carolinians Against Gun Violence and Moms Demand Action for Gun Sense in America, to reduce gun violence and build safer communities. Gun violence has far-reaching effects in North Carolina, impacting all residents—young and old; rural and urban; black, white, and brown; rich, poor, and in between.

Despite growing popular support, legislative change has been thwarted by the gun lobby and by elected leaders who refuse to prioritize sensible legislation that will save lives.

We support the Second Amendment and work to keep guns away from criminals and those who are a danger to themselves and others. Unfortunately, it's all too easy for these dangerous people to get guns, complicating the work of law enforcement and leading to violence of all types, from homicides to suicides and mass shootings in schools, movie theaters, even churches.

BENEFITS OF COMMON-SENSE GUN LEGISLATION

- **REDUCE GUN VIOLENCE IN NORTH CAROLINA**
- **REDUCE THE MORE THAN 31,000 ANNUAL GUN DEATHS IN THE U.S.**
- **IMPROVE SAFETY IN HOMES, SCHOOLS, PARKS, AND ALL PUBLIC PLACES**

The League of Voters of North Carolina is taking action to advocate for common-sense gun legislation in our state. You can help by staying informed and by joining our League Action Team. Our team engages in LWVUS monthly conference calls, Lobby Days, Op Ed submissions, Letters to the Editor, and person-to-person education.

GUN VIOLENCE PREVENTION LEAGUE ACTION TEAM

E-mail us to join this statewide action team

Follow LWVNC and your local League on social media

ACTION TEAM LEADERS

Kate Torrey: kate.d.torrey@gmail.com | Marsha Harris: marsh625@gmail.com

HEALTH CARE

ABOUT THE ISSUES

The purpose of the Affordable Care Act (ACA) was to provide all Americans with affordable health insurance. Two key pieces of the law are the availability of subsidies to assist individuals with paying premiums and the expansion of Medicaid coverage to people earning less than 138% of the federal poverty level (FPL). Together, these requirements ensure access to health care for people who can't otherwise afford insurance.

However, in 2012 the Supreme Court ruled that each state could decide whether or not to expand Medicaid. This ruling created a health care coverage gap in states like NC that chose not to expand Medicaid. The coverage gap includes people who aren't eligible for Medicaid yet their incomes are too low to qualify for ACA subsidies.

Most people who fall within the gap are working—more than 60% of them. But they don't get health care benefits from their employers or cannot afford to purchase insurance on their own. These hardworking North Carolinians are self-employed or work in industries such as retail, construction, food service and child care. For example, adults who earn between \$737 a month and \$1,674 a month for a family of three are in the gap and are currently left out of both Medicaid and ACA subsidies.

BENEFITS OF CLOSING THE GAP IN NC

- 43,000 NEW JOBS FOR OUR STATE
- \$21 BILLION IN NEW BUSINESS ACTIVITY
- AN INCREASE OF \$1.7 BILLION IN NEW STATE REVENUE
- HEALTH COVERAGE FOR 500,000 PEOPLE NOW IN THE GAP
- ALLEVIATING HOSPITAL COSTS FROM UNCOMPENSATED CARE

The League of Voters of North Carolina is taking action to advocate for Medicaid Expansion in our state. You can help by staying informed and joining our Close the Gap NC League Action Team. Our team engages in bi-monthly conference calls, Lobby Days at the NCGA, Op Ed submissions, and person-to-person education.

CLOSE THE GAP NC LEAGUE ACTION TEAM

Read more at www.CloseTheGapNC.org

E-mail us to join this statewide action team

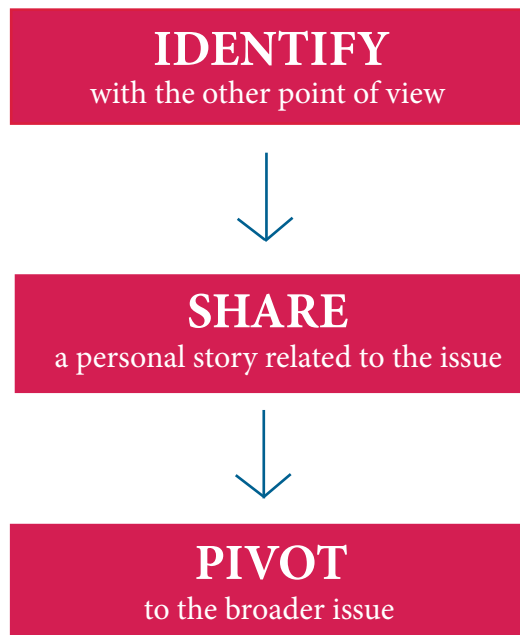
Follow LWVNC and your local League on social media

ACTION TEAM LEADER

Karen Bean: beank@bellsouth.net

TALKING ABOUT THE ISSUES

It's important to talk about the political issues facing our state this election season, like those outlined in this toolkit. You don't have to be trained in political persuasion to have effective conversations with voters in your community. Begin by asking someone how they feel about an issue, like funding for public education or closing the health care gap. Listen to their point of view, then follow these three steps in response:



EXAMPLE CONVERSATION:

YOU: Do you think our state should close the coverage gap to help everyone have access to health care?

VOTER: I don't really want my tax dollars spent on other people's health care. It's too expensive.

YOU: **[Identify]** I understand where you're coming from. Health care costs add up so quickly. Just covering my own deductible and prescription costs can be difficult to manage.

YOU: **[Share]** I feel lucky that I have coverage. I have a friend who is a physician. She tells me that she regularly treats patients like waitresses or child care workers who fall in the coverage gap because they don't qualify for Medicaid, but they don't make enough to qualify for ACA subsidies. They wait too long to go to the doctor because they don't have insurance, then their costs are higher and their outcomes are worse.

YOU: **[Pivot]** For everyone with insurance, premiums go up to cover these patients—we end up picking up the tab either way. If we close the gap, those costs will go down. I also learned that closing the gap will bring new health care jobs to our state. It sounds like an all-around positive move for North Carolina to me.

YOU: The LWVNC has a website full of information about this at www.CloseTheGapNC.org.

HOW TO RESEARCH CANDIDATES

Elections present voters with important choices. Whether it is a local race that will affect your community or a national race that could change the direction of the country, it is a time to consider the issues which you care about and decide which candidate you support. Even if you are under 18 and not yet eligible to vote, election campaigns offer an excellent way to learn about the people and issues that affect your future.

But how do voters go about comparing and then judging the candidates? All too often, slogans, name recognition and personality are all that come through in campaign materials. Because television continues to dominate political campaigns, with the Internet as an every growing presence, it is difficult to move beyond a candidate's image to the substance of a campaign.

However, it is possible to move beyond style to substance. Find a complete guide related to these seven steps outlined below at <http://lww.org/files/HowtoJudgeCandidate-08.pdf>

STEP 1: DECIDE WHAT YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN A CANDIDATE

Candidates can be judged in two ways: the positions they take on issues and the leadership qualities and experience they would bring to the office. Your first step in picking a candidate is to decide the issues you care about and the qualities you want in a leader.

STEP 2: FIND OUT ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Find out which candidates are running in the race you are following by using the League's online election resource VOTE411.org. You can find the number for your local elections office and data on the candidates. Find out all the eligible candidates that will appear on the ballot. Be sure to include minor party and/or independent candidates.

STEP 3: GATHER MATERIALS ABOUT THE CANDIDATES

Put together information about the candidates. Collect any records you can find on the candidates. Call campaign headquarters and watch the press.

STEP 5: LEARN ABOUT THE CANDIDATES' LEADERSHIP ABILITIES

Look at the candidates' background and their experience. Observe the candidates' campaigns - do they accept invitations to debate? Review campaign materials - does the candidate emphasize issues or image?

STEP 6: LEARN HOW OTHER PEOPLE VIEW THE CANDIDATE

Seek the opinions of others in your community who keep track of political campaigns. Learn about endorsements. Look into campaign contributions. When you read opinion polls, find out if it was sponsored by a trusted source, if all data from the poll was released, and if it was a random poll.

STEP 7: SORTING IT ALL OUT

Collect your information on the Candidate Report Card in this toolkit. Ask yourself these final questions: Which candidate's views on the issues do I agree with the most? Who ran the fairest campaign? Which candidate demonstrated the most knowledge on the issues? Which candidate has the leadership qualities I am looking for?

CANDIDATE REPORT CARD

ISSUES	My position	Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
My priority issues				
Example: health care	I support Medicaid Expansion in NC.			
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

LEADERSHIP QUALITIES	I want...	Candidate A	Candidate B	Candidate C
Example: honesty, flexibility				
1.				
2.				
3.				
4.				
5.				

My Choice _____

NOW THAT YOU HAVE THOUGHT THROUGH YOUR CHOICES, DO SOMETHING!

1. Back the candidates you believe in.
2. Talk to your friends and family about “your” candidate.
3. Don’t be afraid to ask questions at candidate debates or when a campaign worker rings your doorbell.
4. Call television and radio stations to praise or criticize campaign spots.
5. Be a letter writer. Tell candidates, newspapers and party leaders how you feel about the issues.
6. Volunteer to work on a campaign or make a donation.
7. If you’re 18, register to vote. Then, on Election Day, go to the polls and vote!

VOTE 411

ELECTION INFORMATION

Launched by the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF), VOTE411.org is a “one-stop-shop” for election related information. It provides nonpartisan information to the public with both general and state-specific information on the following aspects of the election process:

- **Absentee ballot information**
- **Ballot measure information (where applicable)**
- **Early voting options (where applicable)**
- **Election dates**
- **Factual data on candidates in various federal, state & local races**
- **General information on such topics as how to watch debates with a critical eye**
- **ID requirements**
- **Polling place locations**
- **Registration deadlines**
- **Voter qualifications**
- **Voter registration forms**
- **Voting machines**

An important component of VOTE411.org is the polling place locator, which enables users to type in their address and retrieve the poll location for the voting precinct in which that address is located. The League has found that this is among the most sought after information in the immediate days leading up to, and on, Election Day.

SPREAD THE WORD

Help connect voters with VOTE411.org this election year:

- **SHARE THIS TOOLKIT** as a conversation starter about LWVNC and our work.
- **E-MAIL** your contacts to tell them about VOTE411 as a one-stop-shop election resource.
- **USE FACEBOOK** to tell friends about all of the helpful information on this website.
- **FOLLOW** [@LWVNC](https://twitter.com/LWVNC) and [@VOTE411](https://twitter.com/VOTE411) on Twitter and use the hashtag [#VOTE411](https://twitter.com/VOTE411).
- **GET INVOLVED** with your local League of Women Voters.