



**THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS®**

League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area
P.O. Box 802
Clemson, SC 29633

**Statement to the Oconee County Legislative Delegation
League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area
January 31, 2008**

The League of Women Voters of the Clemson Area serves Oconee, Pickens, and Anderson Counties. The League is a nonpartisan organization encouraging active and informed citizen participation in government at all levels. Our League, which currently has 68 members, has been actively engaged in voter education and registration and study and action on public issues in this area for forty years. As part of the League of Women Voters of South Carolina, we study and advocate on statewide issues. Among our priorities this year are education funding, safeguarding the voting process, and safeguarding air quality.

We know that you are facing a difficult budget year with likely budget cuts unless economic conditions improve rapidly. However, we do urge you to proceed with expanding 4K funding for our young at-risk children to give them a fair start on their journey to becoming productive and responsible adult citizens. It's an investment with a very big payoff down the road. We also urge you to look at some of the unintended effects of Act 388 in terms of redistribution of state aid to school districts and make some adjustments. The Index of Taxpaying Ability for EFA no longer measures ability to raise revenue. The State Department of Education and the Department of Revenue have some good ideas about how it may be adjusted to ensure fair distribution of EFA funds. We also urge you to give attention to streamlining and simplifying our complex patchwork of education funding sources so that local districts have more resources and more flexibility in using them to meet diverse local needs.

We oppose the use of State funds for private school tuition. Our position is linked to our support for equal access to education and support for desegregation as a means of promoting equal access. We are uneasy about the negative impact that school vouchers/tuition tax credits would have on the public schools by encouraging flight, particularly from desegregated schools. We therefore urge you to consider our position when voting on this legislation.

The South Carolina League and the Clemson League in particular, remain concerned about the safety and accuracy of the voting count that we get from our current iVotronic voting machines. Other states have abandoned their use in favor of something that provides a voter-verified paper trail. Voting is an important act of civic participation.

We want our citizens to feel confident that their votes are being recorded and counted accurately.

The South Carolina League has always paid close attention to issues of environmental protection. As our population grows, we are increasingly challenged to protect air and water quality. One of the biggest issues on the agenda this year is the proposed coal power plant in Florence County to be built by our state-owned Santee-Cooper electric utility. This plant will have a significant negative effect on air quality, particularly in mercury emissions. We urge you to investigate this project and join in the opposition to this plant. We encourage you to consider the adoption of renewable energy sources such as wind and solar power to decrease South Carolina's dependence on fossil fuel and thus reduce a major source of carbon dioxide.

We have long supported less restrictive annexation laws. Would you consider making South Carolina's Municipal Annexation Laws less restrictive so that cities can play a larger role in controlling growth and providing services to growing residential communities?

The League of Women Voters of SC applauds Attorney General Henry McMaster's desire to participate in the ongoing Legislative study to update and revise the SC criminal justice system. We are encouraged by his support of middle courts and other community-based responses to nonviolent offenders. The LWV-SC believes that before making drastic changes in the criminal justice system, the legislature should complete a thorough study of the laws governing sentencing and parole, including examination of the impact of abolishing parole in Virginia and the experiences of the federal prison system. The League appeals to you members of the Legislature to proceed very cautiously as you consider this serious proposal.

The League appreciates your interest in hearing from citizens and your willingness to respond to our concerns. Thank you for the good work you do on behalf of the citizens of Oconee County and South Carolina.