

THE VOTER

Join the Movement Unite & Rise 8.5 Day of Action

**LWVEA and Community Partners Invite You to a
Regional Get Out the Vote Training on July 25**

Democracy works best when everyone participates. Join the League of Women Voters of East Alabama (LWVEA) and our community partners on **Saturday, July 25**, for a regional Get Out the Vote (GOTV) training designed to equip and inspire volunteers with practical tools to help increase voter participation across East Alabama. The training is part of the League of Women Voters' national [Unite & Rise 8.5](#) campaign, a nationwide effort to engage millions of voters ahead of the 2026 elections.

(Learn more about Unite & Rise on page 2.)

[Sign up Today!](#)

East Alabama Voter Action Training

Saturday, July 26, 2026

9 am - 12 pm

Nonprofit Center of East Alabama

1944 Opelika Road, Ste 101

Auburn, Alabama

Tentative Program:

- ›Voter Registration Do's & Don'ts (LWVEA)
- ›Election Data to Drive Decision Making (NAACP)
- ›Advocacy & Collective Action (Alabama Arise)

Participating Partners



Are You Ready for the Next Election?

The **Auburn Municipal Election** is on
August 25!

The **registration deadline** for the
municipal election is **August 10.**

Act Now:

- **Check** your voter registration status.
- **Register** to vote!
- **View** the full list of Auburn election deadlines.

Uniting to Rise: East Alabama Joins National Movement

LWVEA and Community Partners Join Forces to GOTV

What is Unite & Rise 8.5?

In May 2025, the League of Women Voters launched the **Unite & Rise 8.5** campaign in response to the current administration's disregard for governmental checks and balances. The initiative, which runs until the **2026 midterm elections**, aims to mobilize **8.5 million voters** to rise up against the anti-democratic actions of the administration.

"From the flagrant disregard for congressional authority and governmental checks and balances to defying Supreme Court orders...one thing is abundantly clear: our country is in a constitutional crisis." — National LWV CEO Celina Stewart and President Dianna Wynn

Why 8.5?

Research from the Carr-Ryan Center for Human Rights [found](#) that nonviolent movements engaging at least 3.5% of a population have historically succeeded in bringing about change. With approximately [245 million](#) Americans eligible to vote in the 2024 election, this means that an estimated 8.5 million people participating in nonviolent protest could create meaningful change.

What is the Unite & Rise Day of Action for Voting Rights?

On **August 8, 2026**, as part of the Unite & Rise 8.5 campaign, Leagues across the county will execute a local Day of Action in honor of the anniversary of the Voting Rights Act of 1965. This is not a symbolic event. Every activation aims to reach real people in the community and generate trackable engagement data that contributes to the Unite & Rise 8.5 campaign goal of engaging 8.5 million people before November.

"This initiative particularly hits home for us Alabama leagues," says **LWVEA President Vanessa Benitez**. "Following the Supreme Court decision that allowed the state legislature to redraw congressional districts



1, 2, 6, and 7, it is more important than ever that Alabamians make themselves heard on Election Day. That's why we are teaming up with our local partners — **NAACP of Lee County, Alabama Arise**, and others — to mobilize voters."

What are East Alabamians doing on August 8?

LWVEA and partner organizations will be hosting a range of events that you can join. Attend the coalition's Voter Action Training session on **Saturday, July 25** to learn how you can participate in the Day of Action. [Sign up today!](#)

Is this Day of Action nonpartisan?

Yes. LWV is a nonpartisan organization that protects democracy and empowers voters. We don't care who you vote for — we care that you can vote. We have members across the political spectrum, and we do not endorse or oppose any candidate or political party. LWV holds elected and public officials accountable, regardless of party.



LWVEA 2026 Annual Meeting Recap

On **April 13, 2026**, LWVEA members and friends gathered for the **LWVA 2026 Annual Meeting**, which included fellowship, organizational updates, consideration of agenda items, approval of the proposed 2026–2027 budget, and the election of new board members. The business portion of the meeting concluded with recognition of several community members through the presentation of awards. After adjournment, the meeting featured a keynote address from **Samuel Duff, Voting Rights Strategist with ACLU Alabama**, who shared strategies for mobilizing disengaged voters ahead of the 2026 elections.

2026–2027 Budget

The proposed 2026–2027 budget was unanimously approved and adopted.

2026–2027 Board of Directors and Committees

The following members were elected:

President — Vanessa Benitez
 Vice President — Sarah Kapp
 Treasurer — Kristen De La Fuente
 Secretary (until 2027) — Rebekah Crawford
 Student Liaison — Serena Orantes* (Auburn University)
 Director — Gretta Sancho (until 2028)
 Director — Vanessa Echols (until 2028)
 Director — Liz Kane Noel (until 2028)
 Director — Cory Unruh (until 2028)
 Director — Kim White (until 2027)

Nominating Committee — Kim White

Nominating Committee — **Vacant**

Awards Committee — Theresa Heckman

Awards Committee — **Vacant**

**Appointed following the meeting*



Thank you to the 2025–2026 Board of Directors!

Harnessing Our Collective Voice: ACLU Alabama Voting Strategist Delivers Keynote

Following adjournment of the business portion of the Annual Meeting, keynote speaker **Samuel Duff** of the [ACLU of Alabama](#) shared a message focused on the power of collective action and the importance of increasing voter participation ahead of the 2026 elections. Duff emphasized that while Alabama has a very high voter registration rate, the challenge remains ensuring that registered voters turn out at the polls. Drawing from his own experiences growing up in rural Alabama, he highlighted the importance of bridging divides between communities and addressing the apathy that can develop when people feel disconnected from the political process. Duff discussed the ACLU of Alabama's [Project MOVE](#) (Making Our Voices Echo), an initiative focused on increasing voter turnout by 5% through community engagement, outreach to young voters, and a focus on quality-of-life issues affecting Alabamians. He encouraged organizations like the League of Women Voters to continue building partnerships, developing long-term strategies, and working together to ensure that every voice is heard.



LWVEA 2026 Annual Meeting Recap

Awards and Recognition



The **Phylis Rhea Award**, which recognizes contributions to the local community, was presented to **Angel Orantes** for her work at Auburn City Schools as Spanish-language liaison and the role she serves as a vital bridge between cultures. Board Member **Cory Unruh** presented the award.



The **Sue Flood Award**, which recognizes service to the Auburn/Opelika area and the LWVEA, was presented to 2025-2026 Programs Director **Ann Moss** and President **Kim White** for their decade of service to the League. Board Member **Liz Noel** presented the award.



Amaya Wayvin, junior of Tuskegee University, thanked League members and friends for LWVEA's contributions to **Tiger's Comfort Corner's** menstrual product drive.



2026 LWVEA Scholarship

The inaugural LWVEA Scholarship was awarded to **Sydney Janson** of **Beulah High School** who plans to attend Auburn University. Sydney Janson thanked League members for the support to further her education. Incoming President **Vanessa Benitez** presented the award.

Why Do You Vote?

LWVEA Members & Friends Share Why They Vote



"I vote because people died for me to have this precious right. My voting proves their sacrifice wasn't in vain." — **Vanessa Echols**

"As a child, my parents would take me to the polls when they voted. I loved going behind the curtains and watching them pull the levers. I was impressed that my parents did not always agree or vote the same way. Participating in democracy was a priority, and I took that value forward into adulthood. I vote to elect politicians who create, grow and support government systems that work for the people and enhance their collective lives." — **Rebekah Crawford**



"I vote because our votes can count more than we might think, especially at the local level. In 2022, State Senator Jay Hovey won the District 27 Republican nomination by ONE VOTE!" — **Sarah Kapp**

Call for Volunteers



Open Positions – Volunteer Today!

Additional volunteers are still needed for the Nominating and Awards committees. These positions are a great opportunity to get more involved in LWVEA with minimal time commitment. The **Nominating Committee** presents a slate of nominees at the Annual Meeting. The **Awards Committee** coordinates the Phylis Rhea Award, Sue Flood Award, and the Transparency Award. If you are interested in volunteering for one of these positions, please email lwveastal@gmail.com.