



FORWARD

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WISCONSIN

Legal Battles Against Voter ID Continue

The case against Wisconsin’s voter ID law is far from over. While the cases filed by the League and NAACP in state court have been closed, the federal case continues. In January, the ACLU-Wisconsin, The Advancement Project and others appealed the federal case to the U.S. Supreme Court for consideration. Their actions resulted in the reinstatement of the federal injunction, protecting voters in the spring elections and, we hope, on into the future. On February 9, the Wisconsin League joined LWV-US and the Texas League in submitting an *amicus* brief urging the U.S. Supreme Court to take up the case and to combine it with a similar case challenging the Texas ID law.

This is just the latest step in the long, bumpy battle to keep a strict voter ID law out of Wisconsin. The law has been blocked since March 2012, when the League won an injunction in state court based on the state constitution. In April 2014 Judge Lynn Adelman added another injunction in the federal lawsuit. In July the Wisconsin Supreme Court ruled in the state case that the law would be constitutional as long as citizens are not required to pay money for the ID or any underlying document needed to obtain an ID, such as a birth certificate.

To meet that requirement the state unveiled a no-cost process in September, just days before oral arguments in the federal case before a Seventh District Appeals Court panel. That panel reversed Judge Adelman’s ruling and allowed the law to go into effect less than two months before the November election. Plaintiffs appealed the stay on the injunction to the U.S. Supreme Court, which in October issued an emergency ruling blocking the law through the election. The court



extended the injunction when plaintiffs appealed the case on its merits in January.

Indeed, Wisconsin was not ready to implement the law a mere seven weeks before the election. Almost 2,000 local election officials had to scramble to update their materials, procedures and poll worker training at a significant cost to local governments. Nearly 12,000 absentee ballots had already been mailed to voters

without instructions for enclosing a picture of a photo ID, and some had already been returned to the clerks. There was a serious risk that many of those ballots would not have been counted without the injunction.

Which brings us to the *amicus* brief submitted on February 9. Commonly used in cases under appeal, an *amicus* or “friend of the court” brief is submitted by a party that has a strong interest or views on a case but is not a party to the action. We asked the nation’s highest court to accept the federal case against the Wisconsin ID law on its merits and to combine it with a similar case from Texas. The League’s brief can be found on the News & Events page of the LWVWI website at lwvwi.org.

Through all the legal ups and downs, our tenacious League members have worked with their local election officials and media to educate citizens of the requirements so they would be prepared to vote. Leagues have also continued to register voters, interview candidates, hold candidate forums and post our statewide, online “candidates’ answers” voter guides on our websites.

Join the effort! To stay informed of developments in the voter ID case and new legislation, go to lwvwi.org and sign up to receive E-news and Alerts. ❖

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News from National

Four Solutions to Fight the Corruptive Power of Money in Politics



*Elisabeth MacNamara,
LWVUS President*

Every January, the LWVUS marks the anniversary of the U.S. Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*. It has become an occasion when we acknowledge the damaging effects of the decision while strengthening our resolve to address the problem of money in politics.

Spending levels for the 2014 election are the newest evidence of the lasting impact of the *Citizens United* decision.

An estimated \$4 billion was spent on the 2014 election, making it the most expensive midterm election in U.S. history. Super PACs raised and spent more than \$600 million and money poured into other outside groups and secret dark-money organizations. These supposedly "independent" groups could raise and spend unlimited amounts because of weak regulations by the Federal Election Commission (FEC). What's more, this type of system is also impacting state and local elections, including the election of judges across the country.

While the outlook may seem bleak, there is actually much that can be done to stop the influence of money in politics. Here are four things the League is working on:

1. Improve Disclosure: Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy said: "Disclosure permits citizens and shareholders to react to the speech of corporate entities in a proper way."

Citizens have a right to know who is trying to influence their vote, and disclosure of donations and spending is necessary to shine a light on secret money. The League is a longtime supporter of the DISCLOSE Act and we will continue to push for passage of this important piece of legislation. In Wisconsin, LWVWI is supporting legislation introduced by Sen. Erpenbach to require disclosure.

2. Establish a Public Financing System: The League believes that public financing is the best long-term solution to getting big money out of politics. States like Arizona, Connecticut and Maine have had success in public financing with state legislative and statewide elections. The League continues to look for ways to limit the size and type of contributions from all sources as a means of combating undue influence in elections.

3. Strengthen Regulation on Coordination: While the Federal Election Commission (FEC) is in charge of our nation's campaign finance laws, so far they have done practically nothing to address the disappointing *Citizens United* decision. Under existing law, the FEC can work to define "coordination" as a way to cut back the "independent" expenditures that really are coordinated with candidate campaigns, but thus far they have refused to do so.

4. Vote: If the American public wants to get money out of politics, it's time to take our elections back. Voting is the most powerful form of expression that a single citizen has. When citizens vote, politicians have to listen. We must improve voter turnout and engage within our communities to combat the undue influence of money in our political system.

Adapted from an article by Jessica Jones posted on the League's website, lwvus.org. ❖

2015 CALENDAR

LWVWI Board Meeting
December 13, Madison

The Big Share
Support LWVWI on this Online
Giving Day!
March 3

Spring Elections
April 7

LWVWI Board Meeting
Ashland
June 5-6

Annual Meeting Ashland
June 5-7

LWVUS Council
Leesburg, VA
June 18-21

President's Message



Melanie G. Ramey

At the League of Women Voters, principles, people and power are at the foundation of our work. Because these key elements strike a fragile balance, it is imperative that we do a status assessment from time to time to ensure that we continue to operate in the efficient and effective manner that has become our standard.

First, do we have a clear mission and solid positions that guide us in accomplishing that mission? Check!

Our mission is well-defined: the League advocates for informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences policy through education and advocacy. We support democratic solutions in all

areas of government policy, including elections, fair and impartial courts, natural resources and social policy. Our objectives are clearly spelled out in policy positions that our members agree upon after thorough study and debate. The principles on which we stand are well reasoned and nonpartisan.

Second, do we have capable leadership and willing volunteers to put our ideals into play? Check and check!

This is an area in which we clearly do not falter. One needs only to look back at the recent midterm election to see that our League leadership and League members have never been more passionate about democracy and willing to put in the time and effort to ensure it prevails. From serving as election observers to leading voter registration drives to interviewing candidates and hosting candidate forums, our Leagues did everything in their power to inform citizens and ensure fair elections. Meanwhile, our executive director went to the media with our concerns about voter ID legislation, participating in interviews and writing to editorial boards across Wisconsin to state our case. The people behind the League are unflappable, unwavering and true professionals.

Finally, do we have the funding to power the important work that remains? Check, in part.

Thanks to our members and supporters, we raised \$200,000 for the voter ID lawsuit, which held off voter ID through five elections in two years. That fight continues with the filing of our *amicus* brief to the U.S. Supreme Court. (See cover story.) But we need to up our game to fight the growing assault on voting rights and democracy. Unfortunately, we now face a delay in the consideration of a sizable grant request that has been funded in the past. With the lack of balance in today's government and dark money dominating elections, the timing could not be worse.

Funding powers our work and so the League is once again looking to our members for help. We need to return elections to the voters, and we need your financial support to make it happen.

The League offers many options for giving, including a planned gift or a monthly contribution. On March 3 you can support the League through The Big Share, a one-day, online giving event. (See related story on page 7). However you give, please do so generously and help us strike the balance we need to Make Democracy Work® in Wisconsin. ❖

(Re)Like the League on Facebook!

Facebook has made changes that may prevent you from seeing LWVWI posts — even if you have “liked” our page in the past. Please take a moment to go to

facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Wisconsin/166060673456299

and click the “Like” button. If you hover over the “Like” button, a dropdown menu will appear where you can click “get notifications” so you don’t miss our posts about the latest League activities. ❖

SAVE THE DATE: 2015 ANNUAL MEETING

Friday, June 5 - Sunday, June 7, 2015

Best Western Hotel Chequamegon, Ashland

Ensuring a Healthy Environment and a Strong Economy for All

Three Days of Learning, Levity and League Business

At the LWWI's 2015 Annual Meeting, League members from around the state will explore what we can do to build a healthy environment and a strong economy for the benefit of all. The meeting will take place in Ashland at the Best Western Hotel Chequamegon on June 5-7.

The program will open Friday evening with our second Zabelle Malkasian Lecture, made possible through a generous gift from Bill Malkasian in memory of his mother, who was an active member of LWV Milwaukee County. Presenter Jody Knauss serves as a policy analyst with the Center for Media and Democracy, a national investigative research and reporting group based in Madison, and will address the timely and important topic of economic inequality.

Saturday morning will feature a presentation titled "The Distribution and Environmental Effects of Mining Activity in Wisconsin" by Dawn White and Esteban Chiriboga, who are with the Great Lakes Indian Fish and Wildlife Commission. Immediately after their program, experts with meeting host LWV-Ashland-Bayfield Counties will treat us to a fund-raising workshop for local Leagues.

Also on Saturday, our annual awards luncheon will celebrate winners of the 2015 Meg McLane Award for Advocacy and our new Membership & Leadership Development Award. Delegates will attend breakout sessions on issues and organizational matters after lunch, and our business meeting will update positions, elect leaders, adopt a budget and select our program focus for the coming League year.

Last but not least, we have arranged for Tom Fitz, Professor of Geoscience at Northland College, to lead a tour of the proposed mining site in the Penokee Hills for anyone who stays on Sunday and wishes to participate.

Watch for registration information in the state League's weekly e-news or from your local League. If you are not receiving the e-news and would like to do so, send an email to lwwisconsin@lwwi.org and let us know. ❖



Jody Knauss, Senior Analyst and Writer at the Center for Media and Democracy



Tom Fitz, Associate Professor of Geoscience at Northland College

Proposed Revisions to LWVWI Social Policy Positions, Sub-sections on Equal Rights, Sex Equity, Divorce Reform and Marital Property Reform

Proposed by Legislative Committee; recommended by State Board (10/03/14) to be forwarded to local Leagues for discussion and feedback. The State Board will consider feedback and propose a final draft to be voted on by delegates at the Annual Meeting. Proposed deletions are shown as ~~strike-outs~~ and proposed insertions are underscored.

EQUAL RIGHTS

Support for equal rights for all regardless of race, ~~or sex~~, color, creed, ancestry, national origin, religion, disability, age, gender, gender identity and expression, sexual orientation, or any other class protected by applicable state or federal laws, with recognition of the special needs of Native Americans; action to combat poverty and discrimination and to provide equal opportunity for employment, housing, quality education, and access to public accommodations.

Paragraph to be added to the history for the Equal Rights position:

The Wisconsin League opposed the Wisconsin Marriage Amendment, adopted by statewide referendum in 2006. The amendment stated that only a marriage between one man and one woman shall be valid or recognized as a marriage in this state. In 2014 the fate of the amendment is on its way to the Supreme Court of the United States. ACLU-Wisconsin challenged it on behalf of a number of citizens. The amendment was struck down as unconstitutional by Federal Judge Barbara Crabb in July 2014. The state appealed to the 7th Circuit, which in September 2014 affirmed the ruling of the lower court. It is expected that the Supreme Court will take up same-sex marriage cases from a number of states, including possibly Wisconsin, in its next session.

SEX EQUITY

Adequate state funds should be provided to eliminate sex bias and stereotyping, with recognition of bias against Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Trans-sexual individuals, and to provide sufficient nontraditional educational, career and other options for women and men.

DIVORCE REFORM

Support of divorce laws which:

- 1) Prohibit discrimination based on sex in any consideration or decision related to divorce.
- 2) Provide financial settlement (maintenance payments and/or property division) with just consideration given to:
 - a. Length of marriage;
 - b. Contribution of each party to the marriage, including appropriate economic value to each party's contribution in homemaking and child care;
 - c. The earning capacity of each party;

- d. The contribution of one party to the other's increased earning power;
- e. The terms agreed to regarding child support.
- 3) Award child custody on the basis of the best welfare of the child(ren), without bias based on gender, gender identity or expression, sexual orientation, race or disability.
- 4) Determine child support on the basis of:
 - a. The financial resources of the child;
 - b. The financial resources and potential earning capacity of each parent;
 - c. The physical, emotional and educational needs of the child;
 - d. The value of custodial services;
 - e. The preference of the custodial parent to remain in the home.
- 5) Remove the necessity of placing "fault" with one of the parties.
- 6) Recognized "irretrievable breakdown" as grounds for divorce.

Support for legal and economic protection for men and women in divorce cases is included in this position.

MARITAL PROPERTY REFORM

Support of legislation to insure that:

- Economic value is placed on the work of the homemaker both partners regardless of earned income.
- The tax structure is equitable to both spouses partners.
- Legally, marriage is considered an economic partnership that establishes rights and obligations.
- Marriage is an option for both heterosexual and same-sex couples

Specifically:

All property and assets brought to the marriage and property or assets acquired through gift or inheritance during the marriage remains the separate property of the spouses who received them.

All profits (fruits) from property or assets brought to the marriage or from property or assets acquired by gift or inheritance during the marriage shall be shared property.

All earned income received by either spouse during the marriage shall be shared property. During the marriage all earned income of either spouse shall belong equally to both and both spouses shall have equal rights to manage and control earnings.

Spouses shall be entitled to one-half of all property acquired during the marriage other than gifts and inheritances. Written agreements entered into by both partners regarding property ownership shall be recognized by the state. ❖

Executive Director's Message



Andrea Kaminski

I feel like I have grown up with the Government Accountability Board (GAB), at least as far as my career with the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is concerned.

I started at the League shortly after the caucus scandal that sent legislative leaders from both

political parties to jail for campaigning on the taxpayers' dime. Launched in 2008 by a virtually unanimous, bipartisan vote in the legislature, the GAB was established to hold public officials accountable to the citizens they were elected or appointed to serve. I join many in the belief that it's one of the best innovations in Wisconsin government.

The GAB replaced separate boards populated with political appointees, which oversaw government ethics and election administration. The new Board was given the ability and the "sum-sufficient" funding to enforce ethics laws, and it is still the only nonpartisan board nationally to oversee elections. The League has worked with GAB staff and testified before the Board many times.

The GAB is a big improvement over the old Elections Board, which was often deadlocked as members sought to represent the partisan interests that appointed them. If you like the way Congress has operated in recent years, you would have liked the old Elections Board.

In contrast, the GAB was hailed nationally in 2013 as "America's Top Model."ⁱ A 2011 book about elections systems in five Midwestern states noted that the Wisconsin GAB "achieves something that up until now has been a rarity in the United States: election administration that is independent of partisan politics."ⁱⁱ

The GAB's six members are former judges—nonpartisan elected officials who are experienced in making difficult decisions in a fair and thoughtful manner. The judges are

nominated and confirmed through a process designed to minimize partisan influence.

A recent audit of the GAB by the Legislative Audit Bureau identified some areas where the agency needs to do a better job. The audit did not identify any misdeeds or lapses that could justify the hyperbolic rhetoric we have heard from a handful of politicians who already wished to do away with the Board. Instead, the audit revealed the GAB to be an effective agency limited by an oversized workload and a barely sufficient level of staffing.

The League has found GAB board members and staff very willing to listen to our concerns, and their response is always timely and clear. They do not agree with us on everything, but that is to be expected from an independent agency.

I suspect the current calls for reform of the GAB are simply a power grab at a time when one party has the majority needed to muzzle the agency's watchdog function and craft an elections agency that can be easily manipulated. In times of one-party rule, regardless of which party is in the majority, we need the GAB more than ever.

ⁱ*America's Top Model: The Wisconsin Government Accountability Board (2013)*, Daniel P. Tokaji, Professor of Constitutional Law, The Ohio State University, Moritz College of Law, <http://www.law.uci.edu/lawreview/vol3/no3/tokaji.pdf>

ⁱⁱ*From Registration to Recounts Revisited: Developments in the Election Ecosystems of Five Midwestern States (2011)*, Steven F. Huefner et al. <http://moritzlaw.osu.edu/electionlaw/projects/registration-to-recounts/2011edition.pdf> ❖

Save Trees and the League Money!

Money doesn't grow on trees, but we can save both by using email for League communications! Send an email to lwwisconsin@lwwi.org to sign up for any of the following (be sure to tell us which items you wish to receive by email):

- Forward Newsletter
- League Updates and Action Alerts

Here's Your Chance to Give Big to LWVWI

The Big Share on Tuesday, March 3 is an exciting online giving day to support organizations like the League that make Wisconsin a great place to live.

The campaign will be hosted by Community Shares of Wisconsin (CSW), the nation's first social action fund, of which the League is a proud member. Modeled on successful giving-day events in other parts of the country, The Big Share provides an easy, flexible way to support the League.

"The Big Share allows us to reach out to new supporters, including young donors who may prefer to connect with causes online, people working from home and retirees who no longer have the chance to give through the workplace," noted Crystal Anders, CSW Executive Director.

On March 3, simply log on to the bigshare.org, click on "donate" and find the LWVWI sub-page to make your contribution.

When you make your gift to the League be sure to look for ways to expand your contribution or even win a prize yourself! Many local businesses and individuals are offering matching gifts and cash prizes to randomly selected donors. To learn more, visit thebigshare.org. And mark your calendar now for the Big Share on March 3! ❖

Around the State • Around the State Around the State • Around the State Around the State • Around the State

Appleton: hosted an educational forum about sex trafficking in the Fox Valley and efforts underway in Outagamie County to tackle this problem.

Dane County: unveiled a beautiful new website at lwdanecounty.org; held a forum examining the impact of four-year-old kindergarten in the Madison Metropolitan School District.

Janesville/Beloit: cosponsored the annual Susan B. Anthony Celebration, which featured "Susan B. Takes on the World," a historical drama that focused on the contributions of Wisconsin and Rock County suffragists.

Milwaukee County: presented a forum called "People Are Not For Sale: Human Trafficking in Milwaukee" about the UnluckyThirteen campaign, which includes bus shelter public service announcements, digital billboards, and online and social media efforts to spread awareness.

Northwoods: hosted a holiday luncheon where Rhinelander School District administrators gave presentations and answered questions on a variety of public education topics; offered listening sessions

with Senator Tom Tiffany (R-Hazelhurst) and area Assembly Representatives.

Ozaukee County: presented the Art Palleon Advocacy Award to Krista Grimm for her education project about the environmental impacts of storm water runoff on Lake Michigan; will celebrate Women's History Month in March with a forum featuring Dorothy Q. Thomas, a leader in antiapartheid, women's rights and U.S. human rights movements.

Ripon: cosponsored with LWV-Lake Michigan Region a presentation by the Indiana League's Natural Resources Chair Jeanette Neagu about the lack of mandatory inspection programs for above-ground chemical storage tanks in many states, including Wisconsin, a discovery made as she examined this topic following last year's disastrous chemical spill into West Virginia's Elk River.

Winnebago County: hosted a Food for Thought lunch featuring keynote speaker Dr. Joanne Klussendorf, founding director of the Weis Earth Science Museum in Menasha, who discussed sand mining in Western Wisconsin; hosted a Oshkosh Mayoral Candidates forum. ❖

Plans Move Ahead on LWV-Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization

League members in Iowa, Illinois and Wisconsin have been meeting to develop the Upper Mississippi River Region Inter-League Organization (LWV-UMRR ILO) to coordinate and strengthen the League's work on natural resource issues within the five states of the Upper Mississippi River Basin. The state League boards in these states have approved development of this ILO, and the decision is pending before the board of the LWV-Missouri. The LWV-US recommends an ILO's membership include two-thirds of the local Leagues representing at least two-thirds of the total membership within the ILO's region. Local Leagues are being asked to join the ILO. If in the next three months a sufficient number of local Leagues commit to join, planning will commence for the first annual meeting for the LWV-UMRR ILO next summer in Dubuque, Iowa. ❖

Legislative Committee Update

Knowing there will be many challenges to the League's positions coming out of the state legislature this session, our Legislative Committee has set the following priorities to focus its work:

- Support public education in Wisconsin
- Defend the Government Accountability Board (GAB)
- Advocate for redistricting reform
- Protect our groundwater

The committee will also continue to follow and respond to legislation in other areas where the League has positions, but members felt the League could have the greatest impact with the resources available by focusing on these issues.

Public Education

The first bills to be introduced in the State Assembly and Senate were the so-called "school accountability" bills. The League weighed in on both bills, noting that we support policies that provide an equitable, quality public education for all children. Indeed, the League recognizes that "quality" and "equality" are inseparable principles in public education.

While the Senate bill was a major improvement over the legislation being considered by the Assembly, the League nonetheless opposes both bills because:

- We believe there should be substantial control of school programs and personnel by local school districts. The proposed legislation would weaken control by locally elected school board officials, and thereby weakens accountability.
- Any proposal that withholds funding for underachieving schools or districts is antithetical to the principle of improvement. Research has shown that it is not schools that are failing, but rather students from poor socioeconomic circumstances. We certainly cannot meet their needs by cutting funds.
- The League opposes any efforts to divert tax dollars from our public schools to private schools. Further, we believe any institution or organization that receives public funds for K-12 education should be required to meet the same requirements as public schools.

Government Accountability Board (GAB)

The League communicated with members of the Joint Legislative Audit Committee on the findings of a recent audit of the GAB, which identified some areas where the agency needs to

do a better job, as any audit should do. The audit also revealed the GAB to be an effective agency that has been limited by an oversized workload and a barely sufficient level of staffing.

The League told legislators that we need a strong state agency to ensure that every citizen has the same opportunity to vote. The GAB has lived up to that charge through tumultuous political times and many changes in election law and polling place procedures.

Redistricting Reform

A new redistricting bill has been introduced in the legislature, which the League will support. In the meantime, Legislative Committee member Carolyn Castore convened a conference call for local League representatives in which she announced new plans to:

- Educate voters about how the current system of partisan redistricting impacts their lives
- Encourage contacts with legislators to support reform
- Continue efforts to highlight the issue in various media.

Protect Water Quality

The League and several environmental and industry groups are supporting AB 15 and SB 15, bipartisan bills that would ban the sale and manufacture of personal products containing small nonbiodegradable plastic particles called microbeads. It is estimated that these particles make up 20 percent of all pollution from plastics in the Great Lakes.

The State Budget

The Legislative Committee is analyzing the Governor's biennial budget proposal for the state, which includes deep cuts in funding to such important programs and institutions as the University of Wisconsin System, K-12 education, the Stewardship Fund and other natural resources protections, and public broadcasting. Equally alarming are the proposals in the budget that would weaken the watchdog agencies and citizen boards that protect us from government gone awry. The League signed onto a collaborative letter objecting to the Governor's proposal to require drug testing for all applicants and recipients of public assistance or unemployment insurance. The Legislative Committee will be sending talking points and other information to local Leagues so we can have a voice at every public hearing on the state budget. ❖



LEAGUE OF
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