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LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WISCONSIN RELEASES ELECTION OBSERVATION REPORT – FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

MADISON, January 3, 2017 – The Election Observation report from League of Women Voters of Wisconsin goes public today with key findings and recommendations compiled from the November 2016 Election regarding election administration, voter education and the impact of new voting laws.

The League placed 249 volunteer election observers in 511 polling sites across Wisconsin in an effort to understand how the changing election laws affect voters and Election Day processes. Almost 200 of the sites were in Milwaukee County or Dane County, with the others in urban, rural, and suburban settings around the state. More than 20 polling sites were in locations with heavy student voter populations.

Observers were trained to witness the application of new laws and procedures including the photo ID requirement for voting, polling site organization and mechanics, the ease of registration, as well as the knowledge of election officials and polling site management.

The report emphasizes the professionalism and dedication of local election officials, the vast majority of whom worked diligently to help voters exercise their right to vote. However, the report also shows that many voters had difficulty providing acceptable documentation for voter registration and photo ID for voting. The new laws caused confusion for voters and election officials alike in some polling sites, and in the worst cases were misapplied by election officials and prevented eligible citizens from voting.

“While many voters have reported that they had no problems on Election Day, others found it difficult to comply with increasingly restrictive voting laws. The League has offered a few recommendations to improve election law and procedures to ensure a positive voting experience for all eligible citizens,” said Andrea Kaminski, executive director of the League of Women Voters of Wisconsin.

The report contains specific examples of problems voters experienced and concludes with recommendations for improvement. Unfortunately what this report cannot quantify is the number of eligible citizens who did not attempt to vote due to the new documentation requirements.

Recommendations for improvement of elections are:

1. Improve training of local election officials, especially about what constitutes acceptable documentation for registration and photo ID
2. Develop better statewide standards for smooth polling site management
3. Increase and target voter education so voters come to the polls prepared and ready to vote
4. Increase options for complying with the Proof-of-Residence and Voter Photo ID laws

The full report can be found here:

http://www.lwvwi.org/Portals/0/VotingElections/PDFS/Nov2016_ElectionObservation_FINAL.pdf

The League of Women Voters of Wisconsin is a nonpartisan organization that advocates for informed and active participation in government. There are 18 local Leagues in Wisconsin. Follow on Twitter @LWV_WI