



## The Mass. League Voter

*A newsletter for members of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts*

July 2012

### The Scharfman Fund Turns 40

The Lotte E. Scharfman Memorial Fund, LWVMA's Citizen Education Fund, celebrates its 40th anniversary this year. Mrs. Scharfman was president of LWVMA from 1969-1970, and led the League in its successful campaign to reduce the size of the Massachusetts House to 160 members. She died in office in the evening following a debate with David Bartley, then Speaker of the House. Her son, Daniel Scharfman, is a trustee of the Fund.

Lotte Scharfman came to the United States from Austria during World War II to escape persecution of Jews. She had an enduring appreciation of the democratic process and worked to be sure that every citizen had access to government at all levels. Mrs. Scharfman is also widely credited with the phrase: "Democracy is not a spectator sport." For forty years, the Scharfman Fund has sponsored programs to engage citizens of all ages in our democracy. With your help, we can continue this legacy for another forty years and more!

### A Thank-You Note

The state League appreciates the financial support we have received from all of our members and donors. We want to take this opportunity to thank the local Leagues who have made a contribution this year. Our thanks to the Leagues of Acton Area, Cape Cod Area, Concord-Carlisle, Falmouth, Hamilton-Wenham, Lexington, Needham, Newton, Northampton Area, Topsfield-Boxford-Middleton and Wellesley.

### League Registers over 1,000 High School Students



LWV of Marblehead High School Registration

At least 16 Leagues across the state, from Martha's Vineyard and the Plymouth area to Northampton and Needham, partnered with high schools to register over 1,168 first-time voters during lunch periods, extended homeroom periods and as caps and gowns were picked up for graduation.

Local Leagues worked with high schools in their own towns and, in some cases, in surrounding towns, on this project. The Plymouth Area League signed up 145 kids in five high schools. Northampton worked with three schools and ended up with an

invitation to help write the curriculum for an elections course to be offered every other year. Needham registered 207 students in registration drives in January and June, tempting the kids with bagels and gaining some new League members from parent volunteers helping with registration. Greater Haverhill signed up 127 kids in different schools. Check out our Facebook page to see photos from local Leagues' registration days.

Thanks to all the local Leagues who participated this year. Going into the high schools in your area is fun and takes just a little planning. It's a great way for League members who can only do short projects to participate, and it boosts the League's visibility in the community. Let's do it again next spring!

### Candidates' Forums Shaping Up

As we move into a very busy election season this fall and as huge campaign expenditures threaten to block citizens' voices, the League's important role in hosting forums where voters can hear and question candidates has never been needed more.

Local Leagues are working together to host forums for Congressional races in several of the newly-redrawn Congressional Districts.

And if the local Leagues did not sponsor candidate forums for state Senators and Representatives, it's likely voters in many towns would not have a chance to hear the people running for those offices.

### Weymouth Celebrates 50 Years



The League of Women Voters of Weymouth has celebrated its 50th anniversary. To mark this milestone, the Weymouth LWV has donated an anniversary bench, placed near the amphitheater across from the Weymouth Town Hall.

### Help Fight Unfair Campaign Ads

You as an individual can actually do something to combat inaccurate third-party campaign ads!

At the LWVUS convention in June, Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center at the University of Pennsylvania, talked about a new website, [www.flackcheck.org](http://www.flackcheck.org), a companion site to Annenberg's well-known [www.factcheck.org](http://www.factcheck.org).

[Flackcheck.org](http://Flackcheck.org) describes the deceptive tactics used in TV ads and includes a list of ads from supporters of all candidates that [Factcheck.org](http://Factcheck.org) has flagged as inaccurate. The group is calling for television station managers to "stand by your ad" and to refuse to air inaccurate third-party ads. As the website notes, "While TV and radio stations are required to air (and are barred from censoring) federal candidates' ads, no such requirements govern the messages of third-party groups, or product ads. And, significantly, stations have the right to insist on the accuracy of the independent expenditure ads they accept, much as they do with product ads."

Here's where you come in. The website has a section that enables individuals to easily email their local television stations and to ask the stations to refuse to air inaccurate advertising. Take a look. The website is amusing and public pressure on television stations can't hurt.

### Block Efforts to Require Photo ID to Vote

How do you respond to friends and neighbors who ask what's wrong with asking voters to show a photo ID? How do you reply to the argument that people have to show ID to get on a plane or buy beer?

Here's some information to help you convince people that voter ID laws are both unnecessary and will disenfranchise many voters.

In *The Right to Vote: The Contested History of Democracy in the United States*, Alexander Keyssar chronicles restrictions on voting in the U.S. by class, ethnicity, race, gender, religion and age and presents convincing evidence that the history of the right to vote has not been one of expansion and inclusion.

In a recent article in Harvard Magazine (<http://harvardmagazine.com/2012/07/voter-suppression-returns>), Mr. Keyssar takes on the recent wave of voter ID laws, purportedly designed to prevent voter impersonation fraud, which he reports is "exceedingly rare." In testimony before the U.S. House of Representatives on April 18, 2012, the Brennan Center for Justice reported its studies have found "virtually no fraud of the type that a photo ID requirement could fix." However, the potential for a 5-year prison sentence and/or a \$10,000 fine per vote is felt to be a significant deterrent to massive voter impersonation fraud.

In an April 2007 article, the New York Times stated: "Five years after the Bush administration began a crackdown on voter fraud, the Justice Department has turned up virtually no evidence of any organized effort to skew federal elections, according to court records and interviews." (<http://www.nytimes.com/2007/04/12/washington/12fraud.html>). From 2000 - 2007 nine possible occurrences of voter impersonation were found vs. 352 deaths by lightning strike and 32,299 UFO sightings.

In contrast, these and other studies have demonstrated photo ID laws establish an undue burden on minorities, students, seniors and the poor. Using recent census data and Brennan Center calculations, requiring Massachusetts voters to present a government-sponsored photo ID at the polls would disenfranchise as many as 507,380 eligible voters, affecting 25% of black voters, 20% of Asian voters, 19% of Latino voters, 18% of 18- to 24-year-old voters, 18% of seniors, 15% of voters earning less than \$35,000 annually and 8% of white voters.

Unless a law ensures that a photo ID will be provided at no cost by the Commonwealth to everyone who does not have a "valid ID," including at the polls on Election Day, and does not prevent anyone from voting at the time of the election, it only serves to suppress voting. This will obviously be an expensive and time-consuming proposition, all to prevent a voter impersonation problem that does not exist. Massachusetts is not immune to nationwide efforts to require photo ID. Misinformation on the extent of the problem has many voters in support and efforts continue even now in our legislature to pass voter ID legislation. Please keep a close watch on bills still being debated in the legislature and let your legislators know that any voter identification requirement is a fix looking for a problem.

## Welcome to Our New Board Members

Two new directors have joined the LWVMA board, and three new outside trustees have joined the board of the Lotte E. Scharfman citizen education fund.

Andrea Kozinetz, LWV Newton, and Marilyn Peterson, LWV Acton Area, bring the total number of LWVMA directors to nine. Andrea chairs the Human Resource Committee and is a

member of the Nominating Committee. She has also been elected as a Lotte E. Scharfman Fund Trustee from the state board. Marilyn is Co-Chair, with with Karen Price, of the Membership and Local League Services Committee.

Three League members have joined the Scharfman board as trustees from outside the state League board. Welcome and thanks to Susan Abrams, LWV Sudbury, Kathy Leonardson, LWV Marblehead, and Claire Russell, LWV Marion Mattapoisett Rochester.

## Report from LWVUS National Convention

Massachusetts had one of the largest delegations to the LWVUS Convention in Washington in June, with about 35 League members from the state. Four packed days of workshops, plenary sessions, speakers and the chance to meet League members from around the country left us impressed and charged up. You can get a taste of the speakers, including U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder, and the daily activities if you check the on the [LWVUS website](#).

The Convention approved a motion to **review and update our agriculture position:** Motion to move consideration of review and update of the LWVUS agriculture position, approved in 1988. Such a review would investigate genetic modification, consolidation in the food industry, money in the regulatory process, and the consumer's right to accurate and comprehensive food labeling.

It also adopted a **concurrence on sentencing policy** with the LWV of Washington, D.C., position: The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

The Convention approved by a wide margin a slightly-revised version of a **resolution on campaign finance reform** submitted by three Massachusetts Leagues, Concord-Carlisle, Amherst and Sudbury: We, the representatives of local and state Leagues assembled at the 2012 LWVUS Convention, call upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for all appropriate, duly-considered measures which may include, but are not limited to, a constitutional amendment and which: are consistent with our current positions on campaign finance reform and individual liberties; allow Congress and the States to set reasonable regulations on campaign contributions and expenditures; and ensure that elections are determined by the voters.

In light of the adoption of this resolution, the Massachusetts League has resumed its support for SB 772, a resolution asking the Massachusetts legislature to direct Congress to develop a Constitutional amendment to restore the First Amendment and fair elections to the people. The LWV Massachusetts board voted to resume working with other organizations on this and other campaign finance issues, and encourages local Leagues to work on campaign finance reform, including local efforts calling for an amendment to overturn the Citizens United decision.

The US Convention also approved a LWVUS per-member-payment of \$31 each year for the next two years.