



Spring 2014



## Advocacy Update: Successes at the State House

**ELECTION REFORM:** The comprehensive election reform bill that the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts (LWVMA) has been advocating for was passed overwhelmingly by both houses and signed into law by Governor Deval Patrick on May 22--a true victory for the voters of the Commonwealth!

The new law makes major reforms to elections in Massachusetts, including provisions for early voting, online voter registration, pre-registration for 16-year-olds, and post-election audits of voting machines.

The League has worked actively for these reforms for years, and has partnered with other voter advocacy organizations, including Common Cause, MassVote, MassPIRG, and the ACLU of Massachusetts, as part of the Election Modernization Coalition to persuade the legislature to pass them. Some of our coalition partners and [LWVMA's Legislative Action Chair, Nancy Brumback, welcomed the reforms in the \*Bay State Banner\*.](#)

**GUN CONTROL:** On May 27, LWVMA and its partners in the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence welcomed House Speaker Robert DeLeo's announcement of the most comprehensive changes to Massachusetts gun laws in 20 years.

The bill includes four of the Coalition's five legislative priorities, including background checks on secondary gun sales, expanded police chief discretion in issuing gun licenses for rifles and shotguns, reporting of all required information to the national instant background check system, and improved data collection about guns used in crimes and suicides.

We are hopeful that the legislature will act quickly to pass this bill, that the governor will sign it, and that Massachusetts will maintain its position as a leader in gun violence prevention.

**YOU CAN HELP:** Call or email your state representative and senator to urge swift passage of this bill, H.4121. And email Speaker DeLeo to thank him for keeping Massachusetts the leader in strong gun controls. Attend the Joint Committee's hearing on the Speaker's bill at noon Tuesday, June 3, in Gardner Auditorium at the State House.



JONATHAN WIGGS/GLOBE STAFF  
Meryl Kessler, executive director of the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, at DeLeo's press conference.

**UPDATED BOTTLE BILL:** For over 12 years, the League and its coalition partners have been working hard to update the state's nickel deposit on drink containers, known as the Bottle Bill, to include containers for non-carbonated beverages like water and sports drinks. Our efforts may pay off soon!

Last fall, LWVMA gathered over 20,000 signatures to put the Updated Bottle Bill on the November ballot--a significant contribution to the more than 130,000 signatures collected overall. We are now conducting a second round of signature-gathering, which will end in early June.

At the same time, there is still a chance that the legislature could pass an Updated Bottle Bill before the end of the session. On May 22, the State Senate approved a budget amendment that would update the Bottle Bill. And a House subcommittee is working to draft compromise legislation. If the Bottle Bill becomes law, Massachusetts would catch up with Maine, Connecticut, and New York, all of which added more types of containers to their deposit laws over the past several years.

## Education Update: Videos with Viewpoints

On June 17, LWVMA will honor high school students from Burlington, Natick, and Fall River at the State House as [winners of our statewide "Dear Future Governor" Student Video Contest](#).

With a gubernatorial election scheduled for fall 2014, the League invited Massachusetts high school students to create two-minute videos illustrating a problem or issue in their communities that they hope the next Governor will address. The contest aimed to heighten civic awareness among high school students, provide them with an opportunity to speak out about the topics that are important to them, and possibly help shape the next Governor's agenda.



First-Place Winner, "Restore Democracy"

The winning videos were selected from a pool of entries submitted from across the state--from western Massachusetts to Martha's Vineyard--that touched on a wide variety of topics, including the economy, gun control, crime, gangs, the environment, education, campaign finance reform, legalization of marijuana, immigration, minimum wage, bullying, potholes, veteran's benefits, and alternative energy, to name just a few. The Judging

Committee--composed of members of LWVMA, as well as members of the Governor's Statewide Youth Council--selected the winning submissions based on their clear and compelling messages, memorable content and delivery, and creativity.

The winners will receive awards of \$1,000 (first place); \$500 (second place); and \$250 (third place). In addition to the individual prizes, Durfee High School in Fall River will receive a special prize of \$250 for being the first high school to submit five or more videos.

The contest was sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Citizen Education Fund, which supports programs designed to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in democracy and increase understanding of public policy issues.



## What's happening?

Joint Committee on Public Safety hearing on the gun violence prevention bill (LWVMA is a member of the Massachusetts Coalition to Prevent Gun Violence)	June 3, noon, State House, Gardner Auditorium
<a href="#">"Dear Future Governor" Student Video Contest Award Ceremony</a>	June 17, 10 a.m., State House, Nurses' Hall
Join the League at Fenway Park for Women's Equality Day: Red Sox v. LA Angels	August 20, 7:10 p.m., Fenway Park

Please see our [Calendar](#) for additional events sponsored by local Massachusetts Leagues.



## Join us

Since its founding in 1920, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts has been a respected and trusted voice for citizen participation in our democracy. With 47 local Leagues throughout the state, LWVMA has been at the forefront of efforts to empower and educate Massachusetts voters and effect change on a wide range of issues. **Please help advance our important work by [joining the League](#).**