



MASS. LEAGUE VOTER



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MASSACHUSETTS

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A Word From Our Co-Presidents

In June, we came back energized after spending four days at the LWVUS Council in Washington, DC. We learned and connected with state League leaders from over 40 states, as well as with LWVUS board members and staff.



With a mix of outside speakers, whole group sessions, and workshops, we discussed and strategized about the many challenges facing member organizations like the League: How do we engage a wider audience? How can we build a more diverse membership? How do we effectively utilize many different modes of communication? How do we develop and support our leaders to increase their effectiveness - and also avoid burn-out?

We heard compelling presentations about many of the issues that we are confronting today: How can Leagues across the country not only fight voter suppression efforts, but actually expand voter access to the ballot? What are some strategies to build different kinds of community engagement? How can Leagues leverage online engagement to enhance our advocacy? We were challenged by a very informative, but sobering presentation about "The New Soft Money," by Ohio State University Professor Daniel Tokaji. You can see his PowerPoint presentation [here](#).

The takeaway? In order to remain a relevant and impactful organization for a second 100 years, the League must embrace change. We should celebrate our past successes and articulate our core values, while also continuing to learn from self-assessments and responding to the changing external environment. The League

needs to remain true to its roots, but become a more nimble, responsive, and streamlined organization.

Stay tuned - we will be sharing what we learned with the state League board and with all of you, and discussing how we can incorporate it into our work.

In League,



Anne and Jean

HAPPENING NOW

Two National Studies Underway this Fall

At the 2014 LWVUS Convention, delegates approved a three-part national League program for 2014-2016, "Key Structures of Democracy." Two parts will involve *member study and agreement using the consensus process*:

- **Constitutional Amendment Process Study:** a study of the process of amending the U.S. Constitution;
- **Money in Politics (MIP) Review and Update:** a review of money in politics issues and update of the LWV's campaign finance position as to whether the League believes that financing a political campaign is protected by the First Amendment. [Read more...](#)

Election Reforms: When They Happen and What They Mean

We passed an election reform law last July!
Now what?

The 2014 Election Modernization Law calls for online voter registration, early voting, pre-registration of teens, post-election audits and a task force to evaluate these reforms and recommend additional changes.

The first three changes, in particular, will impact League voter service efforts, especially in voter registration. Here is the implementation schedule for the changes, and suggestions for ways your League can work with those changes. [Read more...](#)



Amherst Develops Mentoring Program for New Members

By Kathy Vorwerk, past co-president, Amherst LWV

This past fall the Board of the League of Women Voters of Amherst endorsed a new

program designed to increase our core of active, involved members in our League's "family." That program is based on two assumptions:

- **First**, if new members can be easily and quickly involved in League activities, they will be more likely to remain involved and become active members and contributors to the League's mission.
- **Second**, interaction with a League member can have a powerful effect on an individual's perception and attitude toward the League. We believe this because so many of us in the Amherst League were drawn in by a member—our mother perhaps, or a friend or colleague, or someone else whose opinion we valued. [Read more.....](#)

ADVOCACY

Charter Schools Study Approved

At its May Convention, LWVMA approved a two-year study aimed at developing a position on the issue of charter schools.

Currently, a committee is being formed to develop information materials and consensus questions. If you are interested in serving on that committee, please contact [Anne Borg](#).

Since local Leagues will be involved with the two LWVUS studies on the Constitutional amendment process and on money in politics through the first of next year, the charter schools study committee will work to have information on that study available to local Leagues by spring 2016, so that work on the study can begin then and into fall 2016, with consensus reports due in early 2017.

The Legislature Is Busy -- And So Are We

After a slow start to this two-year session of the state legislature and budget negotiations, joint committees are now holding hearings on bills almost every day. And LWVMA is there, testifying on the bills we have chosen to follow this session. You can take a look at those bills and read our written testimony on the website [here](#).



Clare Gordon got things started in April with testimony supporting the Earned Income Tax Credit, waiting in Gardner Auditorium from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. to present the League's position. And it appears some version of that tax credit will be in the final budget, though the financing is still being debated. In May, Carolyn Lee testified in favor of a bill to improve access to public records-- Massachusetts ranks almost last among states in this area. The joint committee recently reported this bill out favorably, but it faces a fight on the floor of the legislature if it makes it out of the House Ways and Means Committee, the reason we issued an [Action Alert](#) July 20. [Read more...](#)

AROUND THE LEAGUE

Report from LWVMA's May Convention



Members of Leagues around the state, gathered in West Springfield for the 2015 LWVMA Convention, elected Anne Borg of the Newton League and Jean Cherdack of the Northampton Area League as co-presidents of the state League for the next two years. Anne has been co-president and Jean has been a director for the past two years.

The Convention also approved a two-year state study of charter schools with the aim of developing a position on this subject to be presented to the 2017 Convention. As action items for the coming two years, the Convention approved a strong voter registration, information and education program centered on the 2016 election; development of an action plan on civic education and engagement; and extension of a committee to review and report on election-related technology. [Read more....](#)



Latest Scharfman Grant Winners

Congratulations to the six Leagues awarded Daniel Scharfman Citizen Education Grants in June. The total amount for the six grants was \$1,447. For information on the grant program, including a full description of the winning projects, [click here](#).

- LWV Melrose: Will host at least two forums to educate voters about the candidates and issues in the November local election.
- LWV Needham: Is creating a timeline in honor of its 75th anniversary to display and to present at a public event.
- LWV Shrewsbury: Will invite an historical re-enactor to perform during the Spirit of Shrewsbury Fall Festival.
- LWV Springfield Unit of Northampton: Plans voter education activities aimed at increasing visibility and establishing the LWV as a premiere source of voter information in Springfield.
- LWV Waltham: Purchased two sandwich boards to publicize LWV Waltham public events.
- LWV Worcester Area: Help to cover materials and postage costs related to its participation in naturalization ceremonies in Central Massachusetts.

LWVMA Celebrates its 95th Birthday!

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts celebrated its 95th anniversary May 27- marking 95 years that the League has been at the forefront of *Making Democracy Work!*

We were honored that Massachusetts Secretary of Transportation Stephanie Pollack joined us for our May 3 birthday celebration to share her vision for the Commonwealth's transportation system.

And thank you to Governor Charlie Baker and Lieutenant Governor Karyn Polito for [recognizing this important occasion](#) as well. [Read more...](#)



Winners Honored in Second Student Video Contest



LWVMA celebrated the winners of its "There Oughta Be a Law" Student Video Contest at a State House award ceremony June 8.

Applauded by friends, family and teachers, the winning students -- from Maynard, Longmeadow, Newton, and Fall River -- received prizes from the League's Citizen Education Fund and official citations from state legislators representing the

students' home districts. Senator Jamie Eldridge, who represents Maynard, addressed the students, encouraging them to remain actively engaged in civic life. View the videos and [Read more...](#)

Happy Women's Equality Day on August 26!

The Mass. League Voter is distributed to all LWVMA members. Anyone can request the Voter by clicking [here](#). Please review this Update for articles of interest to your League and include them in your local Bulletin.

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