



Green Mountain CITIZEN

Winter 2015

Whose Democracy is it?: Money in Politics

As adopted by delegates to the 2014 LWVUS Convention, Leagues from across the nation are engaging in a review and update of the national LWV position on campaign finance to consider First Amendment-political speech issues. The LWVEF Board tasked the Money In Politics Review and Update Committee to:

- Conduct an update of the League’s position on campaign finance.
- Evaluate the extent to which political campaigns are protected speech under the First Amendment.

So, why is the League updating the position on campaign finance? Our current position dates back to the 1970s and predates Supreme Court decisions that changed campaign finance law significantly. The MIP Review and Update will address a gap in our current position. It aims to get League member understanding and agreement as to the extent to which our organization believes that financing a political campaign is speech protected by the First Amendment. Leagues are being asked to consider through the consensus process: the rights of individuals and organizations to express their political views through the financing of political campaign activities; and how those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current LWV position.

The current League position takes a collective approach to financing political campaigns. It focuses on achieving political equality in areas of combating corruption and undue influence, ensuring equitable competition, and protecting the rights of citizens to know and to fully participate. This position has enabled the League to advocate strongly for transparency in campaign finance and against big money and its influence on elections and government.

But there are still questions to consider and this is why we are studying the issue: What about the First Amendment interests of candidates and donors particularly as compared with equitable competition; preventing corruption and undue influence; enhancing voter participation? These are questions that the position update is considering.

The First Amendment has been at the center of the campaign finance debate since the 1970s. A key provision says, “Congress shall make no law...abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press...”

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Vermont/193029977406840>

Message from the Board Winter 2015

We're here again in the middle of the busiest time of the year. I hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

Of course, the League is busy too. We have just completed the LWVUS study of amending the Constitution through the Article V process. If you missed the local Leagues' discussions or the readings posted on the website, you can still watch Claudette Sortino's interview with national study committee member Ann Luther at <http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01221&video=254601>.

The next installment of the studies adopted by the League in 2014 is the **Money in Politics** study, our cover story. You can see Ann Luther again, giving a talk at the Montpelier City Hall, at <http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01221&video=255051>

The LWVCEN is hosting a **"Happy Hour"** at 5:30-7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 2, at NECI on Main in Montpelier. This is a membership tool used successfully in Florida and North Carolina, and we hope to attract some fresh new talent through this means.. We'll let you know more about it, but with the Legislature in session, we are sure that attendees will not be limited to the Montpelier area, and that Champlain Valley may benefit from this event.

Next comes **Legislative Day** at the State House on March 9. Once again we will be taking advantage of hosting coffee in the cafeteria, to talk one-on-one with our Legislators.

Spring brings the 10th annual **Quad States Conference**, to be held in Wells, ME on April 8-10. Save the date.

In the meantime, we're working with former state Representative Suzi Wizowaty on registering Vermont prisoners to vote, including those incarcerated in Michigan. More about that, and how you can help, on p. 3.

One last note: when I listed voter registration activities in the September GMC, I failed to include

Irene Wrenner's registering eight new voters at the Five Corners Farmers Market in Essex.

We hope you will join us in fulfilling this busy agenda!

Kate Rader

Democracy is not a Spectator Sport!



Show your pride in the League. Buy one of our great T-shirts! \$15 plus \$3 S&H. E-mail your order to hertzrader@myfairpoint.net.

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Membership in the League includes a subscription.
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Registering Prisoners in VT and MI

Jean Hopkins

According to an article by Wilson Ring, election fraud is the only crime that disenfranchises prisoners in Vermont. “No one in Vermont can remember the last time anyone was convicted of election fraud, making it and Maine the only two states that allow all inmates to vote. Officials in both states say interest in voting in the presidential election is up among prisoners as Democrat Barack Obama and Republican John McCain campaign for the White House.”

Prisoners have the right to vote in Vermont, but how many of them are registered to vote and actually vote? This is something the League of Women Voters would like to look into.

We would also like to go to the prisons and help with voter registration there.

A prisoner in Vermont has the right to register to vote using the address of residence prior to being incarcerated. Therefore, absentee ballots would need to be obtained from that town or city once registration is confirmed there.

Literature on this topic indicates that being able to vote helps prisoners feel connected to society and therefore they have an easier time becoming a contributing member upon being released from prison.

If Vermont League members are interested, it is recommended that members work in pairs to go to the prisons.

To help facilitate this, Jean Hopkins is willing to be contacted via phone at 802-863-5359 or via email at seaheidi@earthlink.net

Another issue, which former state Representative Suzi Wizowaty has brought to the attention of, the Champlain Valley League is that many Vermont prisoners are incarcerated in private for-profit prisons in other states. Many were recently transferred from a Kentucky prison to Michigan. One prisoner there has brought to our attention the difficulty of obtaining his right to vote as a

Vermont. Victor Hall is trying to help Vermont prisoners at the Michigan prison register to vote.

The Vermont Secretary of State’s office is helping in this effort. Will Senning, Director of Elections and Campaign Finance might be willing to speak with us about the right of Vermont prisoners to vote.

Here are some links for further reading:

Website: www.VermontersforCriminalJusticeReform.org

Twitter: @V4CJR

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/VermontersforCriminalJusticeReform>

Locked Up &

#ShippedAway campaign: <http://nationinside.org/campaign/shipped-away/>

Quad States Conference Is Coming Up

The 10th Annual Quad States Conference has been scheduled for April 8-10 at the Hampton Inn in Wells, Maine.

Keeping in mind the mission of these conferences to enhance League skills, and the timeliness of the League’s work on money in politics, we chose a general theme of communications, with the questions, “Is their money diluting your voice?”

All three proposed workshops deal with aspects of communication:

Social media, with an emphasis on Facebook and Twitter

Working with the press to get the word out in print, radio and TV

Effective advocacy, particularly with Congressional delegations.

We hope our keynote speaker will provide insight into how campaign spending works behind the scene – how decisions are made where and to spend money, what goes into political ads, and the general nitty-gritty of campaign finance.

Contact Kate Rader at catherine.rader@myfairpoint.net with comments and/or suggestions for workshop leaders.

Cont'd from p. 1

Before the 1970s, the Supreme Court rarely heard cases on campaign finance regulation. But the issue of money in politics has a long history in the U.S. The 1907 Tillman Act banned contributions from national banks and corporations, in response to corruption in the Gilded Age. The 1947 Taft Hartley Act extended the ban to labor unions. The 1971 Federal Election Campaign Act and its 1974 amendments put further restrictions on campaign contributions and spending, expanded disclosure, and created the Federal Election Commission to oversee compliance. The 2002 Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (McCain-Feingold) tried to remedy the explosion of soft money we saw in the 1980s and 1990s.

The activities that the Court focused on largely involve free speech. Election campaigns develop messages for publication, from speeches and debates to paid advertising in various media. Money is required to coordinate the messaging and pay for the advertising. Under the Court's approach, a system of campaign finance protects the rights of a candidate to disseminate her message as well as the rights of her donors to express their own views through her message -- It also protects the rights of other political actors who may wish to make election expenditures independent of the candidates or to advocate in support or opposition to particular public policy issues. To the Court, this campaign speech (as opposed to campaign finance) is central to American democracy and is what the First Amendment was designed to protect.

Whatever else it may or may not have done, the Supreme Court's decisions in the 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and 2014 *McCutcheon, et al. v. FEC* cases galvanized the campaign finance reform movement.

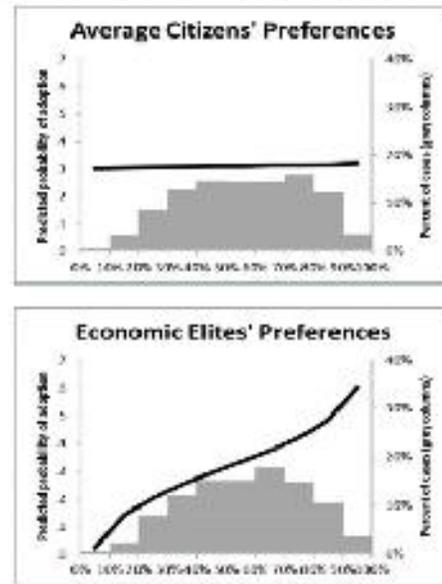
On November 8, Ann Luther gave a talk which vividly illustrated the effect on our political system of those recent Supreme Court decisions.

You can see her talk at

<http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01221&video=255051>

The most telling illustration of Luther's talk is the table below, demonstrating the effect of big money in our political system.

Figure 1. Predicted probability of policy adoption (dark lines, left axes) by policy disposition; the distribution of preferences (gray columns, right axes)



Another League-sponsored talk (along with the Cleveland-Marshall College of Law) addressed the issue of money in politics. The LWV of Greater Cleveland presented Fordham Professor Zephyr Teachout speaking on corruption in politics. That talk be be seen at <http://mediasite.ulib.csuohio.edu/Mediasite/Play/44c4835f115d43b1b6afb0fb9ab8b5611d>.

Resources gathered by the study committee can be found on the Money in Politics page of the LWVUS website, www.lwv.org, or e-mail Kate Rader at catherine.rader@myfairpoint.net, and she will e-mail you downloaded copies of the papers.

The LWVCEN consensus meeting has been scheduled for 7:00 p.m. on Tuesday, January 26 at 1186 Towne Hill Rd., East Montpelier. All members are encouraged to attend. The Champlain Valley League will meet on Or, you can respond by mail or e-mail. Rader will send out the study guide and consensus questions.

Spring Meeting Will Look at Human Trafficking

After last year's successful "Spring Fling" featuring civic engagement guru Peter Levine, the board of the LWVVT voted to make this event a yearly one.

Our second annual meeting will be held on March 19. Save the date, and watch for details about venue.

This year's topic will be human trafficking, a problem that was brought home in this article in the Barre Montpelier Times Argus:

<http://www.timesargus.com/article/20151103/NEWS03/151109868/1001/NEWS>.

We have been made aware of Vermont's problems with opiate addiction and drug trafficking, but as the article points out, that has brought with it sex trafficking through coercion or sex for drugs.



Rosalee Keech, the LWVUS board liaison to LWVUS will address the gathering. Ms. Keech represents the LWVUS as Observer to the United Nations (UN) since 2011. She works with UN Agencies, member States and other non-governmental organizations (NGOs) to further LWVUS policies. Specifically, she has developed multiple programs at the UN on increasing women's leadership and participation in democratic political processes, promoting democracy around the world, and preventing violence against all women and girls.

Ms. Keech is a retired Information Officer with more than 30 years of experience in developing and executing system strategies for the private

sector. She has leveraged her private sector experience in developing strategies for use at the UN and by governmental agencies.

Specifically, she has developed a comprehensive strategy for preventing exploitation of women and children at major events. By working in conjunction with the UN, the strategy has been adopted and implemented by governments, both foreign and domestic.

It was as a result of this that Ms. Keech currently serves as a member of the New Jersey Attorney General's Human Trafficking Task Force and chair of its Outreach and Awareness Committee. Additionally she is a governor appointee to the NJ Board of Professional Planners and member of the Boards of Directors at the Jewish Home at Home and Home at Rockleigh.

Keech reinforces what the Times Argus says, "Our efforts in raising awareness, educating tourism industry, judiciary and others certainly in the area of sex trafficking is making a difference. And the efforts of government--at local, state and national to coordinate efforts is a key part of this.

But even if every victim were to be rescued today, it is still too lucrative a business and the only thing that will stop it is, limiting demand.

Strongly urge all of us in the civil society sector, to help raise awareness on how businesses and the public can fight the demand side by being aware and putting into place those processes to ensure that coercion isn't part of the equation."

We will be working with other organizations to raise awareness about this issue. Watch for more details about this important event as our plans are finalized.

Like us on Facebook and follow us on Twitter!



You can now pay your dues electronically from our website (www.lwvofvt.net).

For now, that's all you can do, but soon we'll be adding "Donate" buttons for both LWVVT (not tax deductible) and the LWVVT Education Fund (deductible).

The LWVVT board is excited about this new capability. Check it out, and watch for features to come.

Join Us at the State House on March 9

The LWVVT will once again be providing coffee and bagels in the State House cafeteria, and meeting one-on-one with our Legislators.

This yearly event provides the opportunity to explain our advocacy positions and get an update from our lawmakers about legislation of interest.

And we get to touch base and network with Leaguers from around the state.

Do plan to be with us. Check the Calendar of Events at www.lwvofvt.org or details.



November – Amending the Constitution by Convention (Claudette Sortino/Ann Luther, LWVME). See it at <http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01221&video=254601>

December – Money in Politics: Public presentation by Ann Luther, LWVME, <http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01221&video=255051>

January –Legalized Marijuana, pro and con (CCTV)

February – Sex Trafficking (tentative)



In Memoriam

We mark with sadness the passing of long time Champlain Valley member Louise Ransom.

Louise became the face of women -- or of everyone -- in leading the opposition to the Vietnam War after her oldest of six sons died there. Never having done anything like it before, she became outspoken, chained herself to others in front of a recruiting office, addressed the Democratic national convention. Later, in Vermont, she edited the Williston Whistle newspaper, with, of course, editorials. She had started to pull together a book, but her effort for "getting out the vote" two or three years ago interrupted the book work; it was one of the projects that distracted her, so she didn't finish the book before her stroke last month. She was someone LWV should be proud of -- stepping forward nationally to espouse what she believed in.

Ginny Walters

The League Takes Action on the Environment

Ed. Note: With world leaders and environmental activists meeting in Paris to try to work together to address climate change, it seems like a good time to review the LWVUS positions on the environment.

The League of Women Voters has been at the [forefront of the environmental protection movement for decades](#), consistently supporting legislation to preserve our nation's natural resources and protect our public health. We support legislation that seeks to protect our country from the physical, economic and public health effects of climate change while also providing pathways to economic prosperity.

The League believes that averting the damaging effects of climate change requires action from both individuals and governments at the local, state, national and international levels. By raising public awareness of the causes and likely impacts of climate change, helping citizens learn what they can do to protect the environment and building broad support for effective climate solutions, we can help put our country -- and our planet -- on the path to a sustainable future.

We believe that a path toward a clean energy future will strengthen our economy by opening up millions of jobs to Americans while also rescuing America from its dependence on fossil fuels, reducing threats to our health, protecting the natural resources that we depend upon for survival and creating millions of domestic jobs. The League's environmental work falls into the three categories below:

[Global Climate Change](#) – Climate change is the greatest environmental challenge of our generation. The League supports legislative solutions, including setting caps on greenhouse gas and carbon pollution, encouraging conservation and renewable energy and investing in a new clean energy economy. We also support strong executive branch action under the Clean Air Act to cut industrial carbon pollution from new and existing power plants, which are the largest source of industrial carbon pollution in the US. The League works to [build grassroots support for action on climate change nationally](#) and at the state and local

levels in order to avoid irrevocable damage to our planet.

[Clean Air Defense](#) – We work to protect our air quality by advocating for [federal air pollution controls](#) on industrial processes, government installations, fuels and motor vehicles. League members across the country actively campaign to urge the President and Congress to lead the world in the fight against climate change by controlling carbon pollution from new and existing power plants. The League presses for full implementation of the Clean Air Act of 1970 and for strengthening amendments, while fighting against attempts to weaken it.

[Clean Energy](#) – The League advocates for legislation to [improve energy efficiency](#) throughout the economy and improve pollution control, including shifting to renewable energy, establishing federal fuel-efficiency standards and opposing oil drilling in environmentally sensitive areas. The League opposes the construction of the [Keystone XL Pipeline](#), which threatens to pollute huge drinking water reserves, increase the world's dependence on dirty oil and increase the greenhouse gases that contribute to climate change. Preservation of a healthy environment is a top priority, and state Leagues have taken the lead in working to block fracking and dangerous mining processes that threaten to pollute natural resources in their communities.

You can take action right now by clicking on http://participate.lwv.org/c/10065/p/salsa/web/tellafriend/public/?tell_a_friend_KEY=10255 to thank EPA Administrator Gina McCarthy for protecting public health and our environment, by establishing a strong methane pollution standard.

and/or go to

http://participate.lwv.org/c/10065/p/dia/action3/common/public/?action_KEY=11777 to urge your members of Congress to oppose resolutions that puts the health of our children and families at risk, threatens the quality of our air, and strips the EPA of the tools to address dangerous carbon pollution.

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