



LWV US Recommended Program: The Campaign for Making Democracy Work®

The LWVUS Board recommends that Program 2018-2020 continue *The Campaign for Making Democracy Work®* with Leagues throughout the country working on:

- **Voting Rights**
- **Improving Elections**
- **Campaign Finance/Money in Politics**
- **Redistricting**

The Campaign for Making Democracy Work® – includes ensuring a free, fair and accessible electoral system for all eligible voters. The first year of the biennium has been an active one in ways that we never could have anticipated. There have been challenges to the right to vote and to fair and open elections at every level and in every branch of government.

At Convention 2016, delegates voted to support a program that would fully utilize core League positions in the area of Voting Rights and Election Reform. This decision was preceded by a biennium where state and local Leagues studied and agreed on three Government positions: Campaign Finance, Constitutional Amendment Process and Redistricting.

Armed with these new and existing positions, Leagues at every level have worked to protect and advance voting rights and election reform as well as fight efforts in Washington, D.C. and state legislatures to suppress voters.

At the same time, the League of Women Voters is undertaking a transformational journey to strengthen the organization while also engaging new and future activists around the League's core issues. As we look to achieve our transformational goals around relevance, impact, focus and culture, we also look to the priority issues that are at the heart of the League's mission.

Accomplishments of the 2016-2018 Campaign for Making Democracy Work®

Since Convention 2016, LWVUS sent 21 action emails to our network of grassroots activists on voter suppression tactics, including the creation of the "Election Integrity Commission" as well as fighting budget cuts to key federal election-related programs. These also include action alerts on environmental issues and attacks on the Affordable Care Act.

These efforts resulted in 75,300 letters to Congress, more than 25,340 petition signatures and

close to 10,000 contacts with the Executive Branch. Through our outreach we were able to engage 6,320 new activists.

Voting Rights – LWVUS continues its core work to expand voting rights by advocating for proactive reforms such as expanded early voting and online voter registration, ensuring existing pro-voter laws are being followed and challenging all efforts that limit the ability of voters to exercise this basic right. LWVUS and state Leagues are actively opposing voter photo ID laws, advocating against barriers to the voter registration process, working to prevent last-minute Election Day obstacles and helping millions of voters get the information and any required documentation they need to vote.

As in previous Congresses, the League of Women Voters is lobbying both the House and Senate for restoration of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) by supporting passage of the Voting Rights Advancement Act, which would strengthen the VRA following the 2013 decision in *Shelby v. Alabama*.

The League has spoken out actively against the new ‘Election Integrity Commission’ which the current administration established to justify false claims of widespread voter fraud in the 2016 election. The commission, which is populated by political ideologues with dangerous agendas, is itself a vehicle for attempts to suppress the vote.

State Leagues and LWVUS continue to mount legislative judicial challenges to state laws designed to make it harder for people to vote in states like North Carolina, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Improving Elections – At all levels, the League of Women Voters is working to modernize our voting systems and make it easier for all eligible voters to become active participants in our electoral process. In our efforts to improve the voting experience, the League works to establish permanent and portable statewide voter registration, expand early voting, improve polling place management, expand online voter registration and implement electronic streamlining. We also work to ensure compliance with laws like the Voting Rights Act (VRA) and the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). In the states, the LWV Missouri and LWV Indiana are among those going to court to get their states to comply with the NVRA.

We continue to lobby against Congressional attempts to terminate the Election Assistance Commission (EAC). The EAC does invaluable work to improve our nation’s election systems. The Commission works to ensure the efficacy, reliability, and trustworthiness of our nation’s election systems by conducting research, collecting data, and sharing information among elected officials, the public, and interested organizations. The EAC is also responsible for improving the election experience for disabled voters.

In the 117th Congress, the League is supporting the Automatic Voter Registration Act of 2017. Under this legislation, when eligible voters interact with a government agency, they will automatically be signed up to vote unless they decline. This bill also provides online voter

registration for all eligible voters. State Leagues are also working on automatic voter registration laws and are celebrating victories in Illinois and Oregon.

Campaign Finance/ Money in Politics— In addition to supporting positive campaign finance reform proposals, Leagues are fighting attempts to cut back on existing campaign finance laws. In 2017, the LWVUS lobbied against Congressional attempts to eliminate public financing for presidential campaigns and supported the Honest Ads Act.

LWVUS also supports the We the People Democracy Reform Act of 2017 which includes legislative solutions to many of the money in politics issues the U.S. faces. Provisions include small dollar fundraising, disclosure, defining coordination and overhauling the Federal Election Commission (FEC). State Leagues continue to push for campaign finance reform in many states including Arizona, Maine and California. And the St. Petersburg, FL League successfully lobbied their city council to abolish Super PACs and limit foreign corporate spending in local elections.

Redistricting – In 2016, convention delegates adopted a new position on redistricting which enables state Leagues and the LWVUS to call for fair representation in the redistricting process. LWVUS and state Leagues are working in the courts to challenge state laws that enable partisan gerrymandering. The LWVUS has filed an amicus brief in the case of Gill v. Whitford which was heard by the Supreme Court in early October. The League brief argues that partisan gerrymandering violates the First Amendment and the Equal Protection Clause of the U.S. Constitution and points out that traditional redistricting principles – such as compactness, contiguity, and respect for political subdivisions – have no constitutional foundation. State Leagues including those in Ohio, Florida, Maryland and Pennsylvania continue to challenge state redistricting aimed at letting politicians choose their voters rather than the other way round.

2018 and Beyond

Despite all this action, there is still more work to do. For almost 100 years, the League of Women Voters has championed voting rights and this programmatic work is more important now than ever. Local and state Leagues and the LWVUS have made progress in The Campaign for Making Democracy Work® but our work is not finished. The League continues to be up to the challenge to advance these priorities. At the local, state and federal level, our work on voter protection and mobilization, election reform, money in politics and redistricting is at the heart of the League's mission and its future.