



The VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters, San Bernardino Area

Co-Presidents: Gloria Anderson and Jill Vassilakos-Long

August, 2015 VOTER Editor: Dotti Garcia

President's Message

Gloria Anderson

Since Jill and I are dividing responsibilities as co-presidents, this month it's my turn to write the President's Message.

At the end of this month, your board will be meeting to consider how best to achieve the goals we are establishing as a new board. Caroline de Llamas, our Management Training Advisor, will assist us with this process. Dotti Garcia has graciously volunteered her home for the meeting that will be held on the afternoon of August 30th. A report will follow in the next issue of the VOTER.

My plea this month is for members to get involved in several activities for which your help is needed.

Rachel Clark has been busy the past month making plans for National Voter Registration Day in September, and a candidates forum that will be held on October 15th in the San Bernardino City Council Chambers. Several council seats and the city treasurer's position will be on the ballot in November. There is also a San Bernardino City Unified School District election on this ballot. We will need members to help register voters at various locations and to assist at the candidates meetings as greeters, question sorters, etc.; therefore, we will be contacting you to see if you can help---but you can contact Rachel rachelgmclark@gmail.com, Jill jvlong@csusb.edu, or me gloand@juno.com now if you want to help. The sooner the better! Thank you!

Last month I mentioned that we are considering whether to participate in the LWV state and LWV national studies that are being done this year and into 2016. Leagues in California are studying our higher education system. *We have studied the community college system, but we have not studied the University of California and the California State University systems.* On the national level, Amending the Constitution and Money in Politics are the focus, *which will revisit our Campaign Finance position adopted a number of years ago before Citizens United undid much of what was accomplished over decades of efforts to curb the influence of money.* The results of member consensus on these studies should position us for more effective action on these issues, but we can't give our opinions on them if we don't participate, so please let us know ASAP if you will be on a study committee. Time is of the essence. Both committees should begin work right now! Please let Susan Longville know if you will be on a committee. slongvil@gmail.com or 909-772-0843.

And finally, a reminder that your dues were due July 1, and the grace period ends September 1st, so if you haven't renewed yet, all you have to do is write a check – no strings attached.

In League,
Gloria Anderson, Co-President

USING CURRENT TOOLS TO STAY INFORMED

Jill Vassilakos-Long

With the advent of the world wide web, information has become so widely and readily available that there are times when even information “junkies,” such as librarians, feel overwhelmed.

Others have certainly been overwhelmed by the volume of information, and some programmer who is interested in useful political information must have devised a solution that would help tune out some of the noise.

There are actually many applications available. This is a review of one---more reviews will follow.

Oklahoma Senator Andrew Rice (D) helped develop iCitizen in 2012. Subsequently, he served on the advisory board, which also included U.S. Senator Bill Frist (R) from Tennessee.

A newspaper article (Daily Oklahoman: December 3, 2013) by Paul Monies quotes Rice:

“There’s a lot of people who aren’t necessarily engaged between the election cycles but still care about the issues and are looking for ways to become engaged. Most people are tired of the knee-jerk, simplistic attacks and want a more nuanced discussion.”

The free app let users rate their elected officials and view a list of major campaign donors. It includes information on their voting record and on bills they sponsored. It facilitates users communicating with their representatives via phone, email or social media. It could be improved with more bill information, for instance a link to the full text of the bill and of key interest-group recommendations.

One section of the application is devoted to polling users on political issues. Polls and surveys are complex. Question wording can not only affect responses, but can actually “push” biased information to respondents. ...It is difficult to write questions that are unbiased on some topics. iCitizen puts some questionable phrases in quotes without giving sufficient information on the issue to elicit an informed response, for instance, in the area of women’s rights.

In all, I can only be for the stated goals of the application, such as “to promote civic dialogue” and to “reconnect citizens and representatives.” I felt that it was biased, but still interesting and useful. The application is free. To find the version that matches the operating system on your device, go to www.icitizen.com



TAKE ACTION

A letter from your LWVUS President, dated August 6, 2015

Fifty years ago today, President Lyndon B. Johnson signed the Voting Rights Act (VRA) into law, calling the day “a triumph for freedom.” The VRA was an historic achievement that changed America. But two years ago, the U.S. Supreme Court overturned a key part of the law, leading to a full frontal attack on the voting rights of American citizens.

For 95 years, the League of Women Voters has been fighting to keep the power of our democracy in the hands of the people, and we will not remain silent as the voting rights of Americans remain at risk. Join us as we tell Congress to restore the Voting Rights Act.

Congress currently has before it various proposals to restore the Voting Rights Act, but has taken no action in spite of mounting evidence of voter discrimination. Every day that Congress fails to act Americans are at risk of finding new

barriers at the polls. In fact, we are dangerously close to holding our first presidential election in 50 years without the critical protections once embodied in the VRA.

Voter discrimination cannot be tolerated. Tell your members of Congress to mark the 50th anniversary of this influential law by restoring its key protections!

Our nation has taken great strides in advancing equality since 1965, but voter discrimination still exists today, and minority voices are still being silenced. The civil rights activists who helped pass the VRA 50 years ago left our country a legacy of strength and bravery in the fight for civil rights for all. Now is the time to build on that legacy.

The League of Women Voters has been fighting to protect the right to vote since 1920, and restoring the VRA is an important step to keep our elections fair, free and accessible. Join us and tell your members of Congress that the right to vote is one of the most basic rights in our country and it must be protected.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth McNamara, President, League of Women Voters

Happy 95th Birthday to the 19th Amendment!



On August 18th, 1920, the 19th Amendment which guaranteed women the right to vote, was ratified. The following week it was certified by Secretary of State Bainbridge Colby, officially enshrining the new law into the U.S. Constitution.

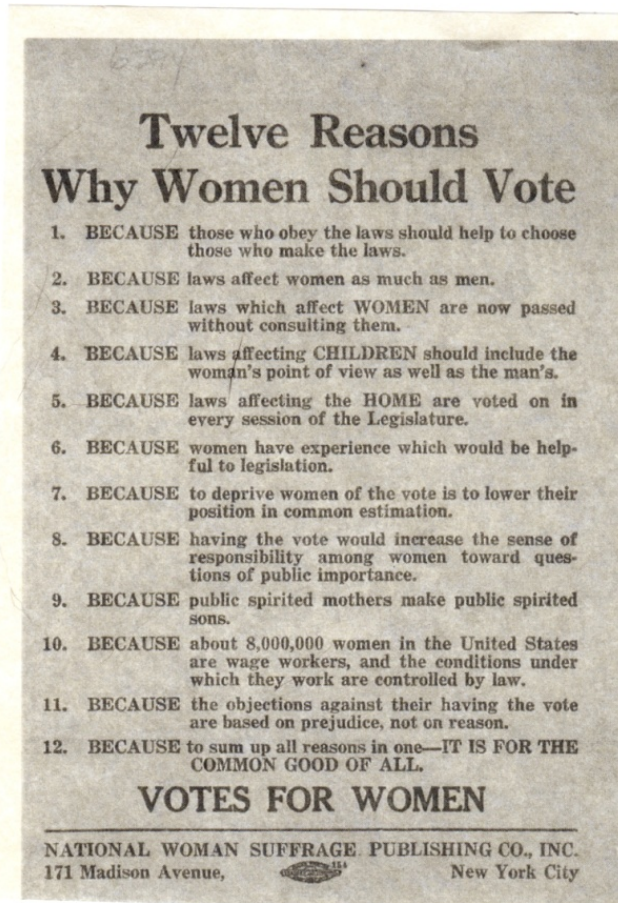
Although it was made law in 1920 with ratification by two-thirds of the states, it wasn't until 1984 that the final state, Mississippi, passed the ratification.

The League of Women Voters was there from the beginning! A short history:

- On June 4th, 1919 Congress proposed the 19th Amendment. Although the amendment sailed through ratification votes in a few states, it took energetic advocating by a dynamic new organization called the League of Women Voters before Tennessee, on August 18, 1920, became the 36th state to ratify the Amendment and enshrine it in the Constitution.
- But the drive for ratification continued---by 1923, Connecticut, Vermont, and Delaware ratified the 19th Amendment.
- Alabama, Maryland and Virginia decided to "Give 'em Hell" by officially endorsing women's rights in the 1950's.
- More than a decade later, Florida got on the bus and ratified the 19th Amendment in 1969.
- As the movement for women's equality was finding its groove in the early 1970's, Georgia, Louisiana and North Carolina added their votes in favor of the 19th Amendment.
- In 1984, 64 years after the 19th Amendment was enshrined in the U.S. Constitution, Mississippi joined the party by becoming the last state to vote for ratification.

And we work to defend the voting rights of all Americans today! See next page for vintage posters about the Suffrage Movement.

VINTAGE POSTERS FROM THE MOVEMENT TO GIVE WOMEN THE RIGHT TO VOTE



Note: substitute the word "women" with "all American citizens"

Other National News

On August 3rd, the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) released its Clean Power Plan---the first ever limits on carbon pollution from power plants. This life-saving regulation has been a long time coming. ...League supporters have been encouraging the administration to move forward with this rule for years. Together, we've generated over 90,000 letters to the Obama Administration in support of a strong rule...this long awaited regulation will save lives, improve health, spur economic growth and protect our environment.

Another Anniversary

August 14, 1935----On that momentous day, President Roosevelt signed into law one of America's more successful and far-reaching programs. For 80 years, Social Security has provided economic security for millions and millions of seniors, disabled Americans and their families.

Report from the League of Women Voters of California

Higher Ed Study

At its August meeting the LWVC Board unanimously adopted the consensus questions for the Public Higher Education study (*Ed. Note: mentioned in President Gloria's column in this issue*) and previewed the draft study guide for this important study. We were excited with what was presented and are looking forward to having the complete materials available for local Leagues next month. Interesting background reading is currently available at:

<http://lwvc.org/study/education-0> for those Leagues that are currently planning informational meetings or have active study committees meeting. This is a great time to get your study committee up and running, if you haven't already done so.

Be Sure to Participate in LWVUS Studies

A reminder, we also have two national studies, Money in Politics Update and Constitutional Amendment, with consensus reports for the Constitutional Amendment study due December 1 and Money in Politics due February 1. The Constitutional Amendment consensus questions are now available. We hope you have included these popular topics as you set your calendar for the coming year!

Voting Rights Action

Earlier this month we celebrated a historic legal victory that restored voting rights to nearly 60,000 people in CA who have been disenfranchised since 2011. As a result of our action, formerly incarcerated people who are on post-release community supervision or mandatory supervision, two new and innovative local supervision programs, can register and vote. The outcome of the Scott v. Bowen case is a major step in our struggle to achieve suffrage for ALL Californians!

Get Involved in Legislative Activity

Did you know that the California League supports bills to improve the vote-by-mail process, require further reduction of greenhouse gas emissions, increase funding for affordable housing, remove the cap on school district reserves that was imposed last year, and more? Check out the [LWVC Bill Status Report](#) that lists all the bills on which the League has taken a position and links to more information about each bill.

Action will be fast and furious from now until September 11 when the Legislature adjourns for the year. Be alert for possible calls for action as we move into these critical days.

Would you like to write an article about some aspect of government in this space?

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN---OR, THINK BEFORE YOU INK

The League of Women Voters of California encourages its members and the public to be cautious during this period of circulation of initiative and referendum petitions.

Voter are often asked to sign a petition “just to get it on the ballot so people can vote on it.” The League says to voters, “Your signature is valuable, perhaps even more valuable than your vote. Why? Because far fewer signatures are required to qualify a measure for the ballot than votes needed to pass it once it’s on the ballot. Only sign a petition for an initiative or referendum that you believe belongs on the ballot.”

The LWVC suggests six questions voters should ask themselves to help determine whether or not to sign an initiative petition:

1. **Is it complex?** Some issues can be decided by a simple yes or no. More complex issues may be better handled by thorough examination and debate in a legislative arena.
2. **Is it confusing?** Some initiatives are not well written or contain conflicts that may require court resolution or interpretation.
3. **Does it belong in the Constitution?** If an initiative amends the Constitution, consider whether it really belongs there. Is it a a fundamental law that should be protected from change? Correcting a constitutional amendment later would also require amending the Constitution, is cumbersome and costly, and requires another vote of the people.
4. **How will it be funded?** Is it an “unfunded mandate” that would require the legislature to take funds from other essential programs? Consider the effect on the overall flexibility of a government budget with already limited revenue. An initiative should generally define its own revenue source or specify what would have to be cut to fund it.
5. **Before you sign, ask about who is circulating the petition.** Many initiative campaigns use paid signature gatherers. The only requirement in California is that the petition itself must have a disclaimer that it may be circulated by a paid signature gatherer. You can ask whether the person requesting your signature is paid, and if so, how much.
6. **Who is behind it?** It can be difficult to find out who the real sponsors and opponents of a petition are. Sometimes there are news reports, or a Web site that can help you. Contribution and expenditure reports of committees organized for action on ballot measures are available through Cal Access, the lobbying and campaign disclosure system sponsored by the California Secretary of State’s office. Go to this site: www.cal-access.ss.ca.gov to read the financial reports of campaign committees.

The League of Women Voters is a trusted, nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government. Our members do the hands-on work that safeguards democracy and leads to civic improvement. More information about the League, including membership information, can be found on the League’s Web site, www.lwvc.org

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