



The

VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters, San Bernardino

Area

Co-Presidents: Gloria Anderson and Jill Vassilakos-Long

VOTER Editor: Dotti Garcia

December, 2015

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Jill Vassilakos-Long, Co-President

It's been a busy month, and we have people to thank! First off, I want to thank **John and Susan Longville** for hosting our debate watching parties. The food was good, the conversation was great, and the "venue" was amazing—their projection television is set up so that it is like being in a movie theater! Thank you, **Susan and John**, for opening your home for the debates.

Thank you to the **League members and guests** who came to our Money in Politics Consensus Meeting. The national League of Women Voters is updating the position on money in politics. The league has been working to support transparency in funding and to fight

the pernicious effect of big money's influence in government. Our basic goals have not changed, but the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision changed the landscape, essentially overturning rules that had been put in place through decades of campaign finance reform. The national League created the materials for local Leagues to review the situation and provide input so that the national policy can be revised.

Our meeting was amazing, seeing the passion and intelligence of our members is inspiring. The discussion was lively, and people really listened to each other, looking at issues with new eyes, and in some instances, changing their minds.

In general, the questions we were asked were about how to maintain First Amendment protections while avoiding

the disproportionate influence money can have on elections and on government officials. Through the discussions (there were over 30 consensus questions, hence lots of discussion) we developed a more nuanced view of the issues.

For instance, it was generally agreed that there is nothing wrong with donors supporting candidates

who they believe will carry forward policies that would benefit those donors. But, the principle (positions of the candidate) should come before the donation, if they are changed in response to the donation or in the hope of a donation, then there is a problem.

The majority supported public financing of elections, but agreed that there had to be limits; that having thousands of candidates run for an office would be problematic (and expensive).

In general, we were in favor of spending limits, believed that news coverage should follow the news (although many of us had issues with candidates who seem to say outrageous things just to generate headlines), and that transparency regarding funding is vital.

We will submit our League's responses to national League and, with the input of all the local leagues which did the study, they will revise the national policy in the coming year. Thank you, everyone, for your work on this.

With all the activity on politics and positions that took place in November, we decided that we should hold the League's holiday party in January. Dotti Garcia has booked us into the new San Bernardino Garcia Center for the Arts on January 23rd from 3-5 P.M (See Save the Date on page 2.)

Wishing you and yours a happy holiday!

Jill

SAVE THE DATE

By Gloria Anderson

Happy Holidays to you and your families. Because December is such a busy time, we have decided to have a party in January to get together with League members and to celebrate a new year. We will have some tasty morsels and beverages to tempt your tastebuds and, of course, there will be ample opportunities to engage in lively conversation. We may have some surprises for you too! So mark your calendars and plan to join the party.

Saturday, January 23, 2016

3-5 P.M.

San Bernardino Garcia Center for the Arts

536 West 11th Street, San Bernardino

(South of Baseline, at the corner of E and 11th Streets, turn West on 11th Street off E Street.)

CITIZENS UNITING—AGAINST MONEY IN POLITICS

By Jill Vassilakos-Long

At the League of Women Voters of San Bernardino's recent Community Consensus meeting on Money in Politics, WolfPAC, a political action committee that is working to mobilize volunteers in every state in the union to push for a constitutional amendment to get big money out of politics, was mentioned.

Amending the Constitution is an arduous process. Amendments must be passed by two-thirds of the House and Senate and must be ratified by three-quarters of the States. Cenk Uygur, founder of WolfPAC, developed an interesting strategy. He looked at the fact that the United States Congress has not moved forward to pass legislation to curb the effects of the Supreme Court's Citizens United decision, and the fact that over 90% of the people of the United States have serious concerns about the effect of money in politics. He concluded that any effort to get money out of politics had to start at the grass-roots level, with the people; that Congress could not be trusted to resolve the issues on their own. So WolfPAC focuses on beginning with the state legislatures. The belief is that one of two things will happen:

- 1) Three quarters of the states will pass similar bills that take money out of politics. Congress will then take up the amendment. Their constituents, who became backers of the issue when it was being passed on the state level, will lobby for passage. Congress will pass the amendment,

OR

- 2) Congress, seeing state legislatures rushing to pass the bill, will move forward before three-quarters of the state legislatures complete passage.

Either way, the goal of changing the law to end corporate personhood, support public financing of all elections, and place restrictions on large monetary donations to political candidates, parties, and groups would be achieved.

At this point, resolutions calling for the amendment have passed in California, Illinois, New Jersey and Vermont, and are underway in Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland and New Hampshire. The process is messy, some of the resolutions have language that is different enough from others that they may have to be reworded and passed again. The amendment language proposed by WolfPAC is:

“Corporations are not people. They have none of the Constitutional rights of human beings. Corporations are not allowed to give money to any politician, directly or indirectly. No politician can raise over \$100 from any person or entity. All elections must be publicly financed.”

Many other organizations have mobilized in response to the Citizens United decision. WolfPAC is the one that was mentioned at the meeting, and the League members present expressed interest in learning more about it. To find more information on WolfPAC, go to <http://www.wolf-pac.com>.

(Editor’s Note: The organization [Public Citizen](http://www.citizen.org) also has information on curbing Unwieldy Campaign Spending. www.citizen.org)

From League of Women Voters in the United States:

...League’s supporters have made this an amazing year for the LWV and for our democracy.

Here are just a few of the things we were able to accomplish this year:

- Provided more than 250,000 people with the information they needed to vote in this year’s elections through VOTE411.org;
- Held the line on voting rights with none of the 2,000 new anti-voter laws introduced in state legislatures passing;
- Registered tens of thousands of new voters.

- Sent over 50,000 letters to Congress demanding lawmakers restore the Voting Rights act;
- Won a landmark U. S. Supreme Court decision that is the critical step forward in our work to end partisan gerrymandering, which is a key step towards preventing lawmakers from selecting their voters.

None of this would have been possible without you. Thank you for helping the League. Together we are Making Democracy Work.

Wylecia Wiggs Harris, Executive Director,
lww.org

The Suffragette

Condensed from a review by Rob Lowman

A movie that many of us may want to see (if it ever comes to the Inland Empire) is “The Suffragette”, starring Carey Mulligan. This film tells the story of the sometimes violent struggle of women trying to win the vote in England at the beginning of the 20th century. While most women in England and America take voting for granted, historically speaking, it wasn’t that long ago that they earned the right to cast a ballot---1920 in the U.S., and 1918 for some women in the United Kingdom, and 1928 for all U.K. women 21 and older. Also in the film are Meryl Streep and Helena Bonham Carter.



LWV LEAGUE OF
WOMEN VOTERS®
MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK

**From the President of the
League of Women Voters of the United States,
Elizabeth MacNamara**

Earlier this year, the Obama Administration finalized the Clean Power Plan, which protects public health, creates thousands of efficiency-related jobs, reduces electricity bills for Americans and delivers power reliably. Unfortunately, members of the House and Senate are attempting to permanently block this important regulation.

Join me and urge Congress to oppose all attempts to overturn, limit or undermine the Clean Power Plan.

The Clean Power Plan developed, with the input of thousands of stakeholders, is the single biggest step we have ever taken to tackle climate change. It puts in place commonsense limits on carbon pollution from power plants and provides the flexibility states need to develop their own plans to meet pollution reduction targets. Congress seeks to undo all of the health and economic benefits of the Clean Power Plan and bar the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) from issuing similar standards in the future. Blocking these commonsense safeguards puts polluter profits before the health of our children. This means that Americans would continue to be exposed indefinitely to carbon pollution and the impacts of climate change.

Climate change is a global catastrophe on a historic scale that will change the course of human life. Tell Congress it's time to support people, not polluters

The League has been at the forefront of the movement urging the Obama Administration to move forward with this life-saving regulation. League members have already submitted tens of thousands of comments to the EPA to ensure a strong final regulation, and we need you to raise your voices on this important issue yet again. Please join the League in urging your members of Congress to oppose these resolutions that put the health of our children and families at risk, threaten the quality of our air and strip the EPA of the tools to address dangerous carbon pollution.

Sincerely,
Elizabeth MacNamara, President,
League of Women Voters.