



THE WEST VIRGINIA VOTER

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LWV Celebrates Women's Equality Day and the 90th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment

On February 14, 1920, with passage of the 19th amendment imminent, suffragists met to transform the movement into the League of Women Voters to help educate women to be responsible voters. On August 26, 1920, just days after Tennessee became the thirty-sixth (and last - needed) state to ratify the amendment, the Secretary of State signed the proclamation enacting the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote. In 1971, Congress passed legislation designating August 26 as Women's Equality Day.

Elizabeth Cady Stanton and others first seriously proposed women's right to vote at Seneca Falls, NY, on July 19, 1848. Prior to this time, Susan B. Anthony was active in the women's temperance movement, but when she met Stanton in 1851, they joined forces and worked together over the next half of the century – and what a force they were. Although they both died before the goal was reached, they lived long enough to see significant progress and were primarily responsible for the ultimate success. Carrie Chapman Catt, founder and early leader of the League of Women Voters, younger than Anthony and Stanton, entered the struggle later and became a leader in the suffragist movement that

helped lead it to victory with passage of the 19th amendment in 1920.

The sacrifices these three made to win the right to vote for women is amazing and one that few people recognize today. In most cases, they gave their lives to the movement. Becoming public advocates at the time for this or any movement, meant that they were living lives and playing roles in a totally unconventional, unacceptable, inappropriate manner. To many they were pariahs. It is impossible to even conceive of how difficult their lives were, what hardships they endured – public humiliation, terms in jail, ridicule – and they did it so that the women of yesterday, today and tomorrow can exercise their right to vote.



Credit: cartoon showing President Grover Cleveland with book, "What I know about women's clubs," being chased by Susan B. Anthony as Uncle Sam laughs in the background, 1892-1896. Prints and Photographs Division, Library of Congress. Reproduction no. LC-USZ62-96565.

Recently, a group of college women – graduate and undergraduate students, as well as faculty - attended a showing of *Iron Jawed Angels*, a movie about the fight for women's suffrage. At the end of the film the auditorium sat in stunned silence. When the moderator opened discussion, one after

another of the women said in voices filled with emotion and in a variety of ways, "I had no idea what they went through." And they were not alone. Without reminders, few of us can really know what they endured throughout their lives.

On August 26, take a moment to thank all those brave women who came before us and committed their lives to making the lives of future generations better.

LWVUS Convention Action

The national League met in Atlanta from June 11 to June 15 for its biennial convention. Over 700 delegates adopted two new studies, approved a budget, made bylaws changes and elected new officers. Below is a brief summary of the actions.

Program

Convention adopted:

- A study of the federal role in public education. The study will focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The scope will be dependent on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time.
- A study on privatization: the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector.

Convention also adopted the following positions by concurrence on the convention floor:

- An updated Arms Control Position. (Go to lww.org; click on For Members; Council & Convention; Convention Action)
- An addition to the LWVUS position on selection of the president: “We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished.
- An addition to the LWVUS Equality of Opportunity position: “The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. The LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.

Convention also supported the following resolutions:

- To support lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba.
- To call upon the Board to use the resources of the League to support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources. This strengthening should include elimination from national legislation of the exemptions for drilling and mining, as well as additional legislation requiring the federal agencies to regulate drilling and mining in a manner consistent with the preservation of a healthy environment. We also call on the Board to communicate with the President and the Congress putting them on notice that Leagues across the country are deeply concerned about this issue.
- To call upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster.
- To call upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all.
- To call upon the LWVUS to highlight the need for those responsible for the oil spill to be held accountable. Further, the LWVUS demands that our government hold those responsible for the environmental disaster accountable for the clean-up. The LWVUS further urges the legislative and executive branches of the federal government to immediately take all necessary steps to maximize to the extent practicable the ability and efforts of all relevant federal agencies and departments to take action, and to work with the U.S. coastal states and communities most directly and immediately affected, to respond creatively, efficiently and effectively to the environmental, health and economic crisis created by the oil flowing from the out of control BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico and by the efforts to contain and disperse it.

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Convention, continued from page 2

Bylaws

Article III, Sec. 2 A (3), Membership, was amended by striking out the word HONORARY before the words life members. The bylaw will then read "those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more shall be life members excused from the payment of dues. **(Note: All Leagues must conform their bylaws to this change.)**

Article IX, Sec. 4, Convention Powers, Article X, Sec. 4, Council, Powers, Article XIII, Sec. 3 and 4, Financial Administration were amended to provide that a biennial budget would be adopted at Convention, starting in 2012.

Article X, Sec. 1. Place, Date and Call of Council was amended to provide that council shall be held at a time and place or in a manner determined by the national board.

Budget

The proposed PMP rate of \$29.60 was increased to \$29.70 for 2010-2011 by a motion on the convention floor. The PMP rate of \$30.00 for 2011-2012 was adopted as proposed.

Natural Resources

By Helen Gibbins

Every three years (triennial review) the Department of Environmental Protection may propose changes to West Virginia's water quality standards. This year one of the proposals is to establish a drinking water standard for Total Dissolved Solids (TDS) of 500 mg/liter. The US EPA is also recommending this standard. (A definition of TDS from Wilkes University Center for Environmental Quality, Environmental Engineering, and Earth Sciences: TDS comprise inorganic salts, principally calcium, magnesium, potassium, sodium, bicarbonates, chlorides and sulfates, and some small amounts of organic matter that are dissolved in water.)

The League of Women Voters of West Virginia supports this addition to the state's water quality standards. We believe the standard should be measured at the point of discharge, whereas many industrial groups favor the measurement at public water intakes thus allowing treatment of pollution by dilution.

Last fall we were distressed by the news of the Dunkard Creek fish kill near Morgantown. The aquatic life kill was in a stretch 30 miles long. The cause of the kill was a bloom from alien golden algae. Seasonal low levels of water and high levels of chlorides and dissolved solids provided the habitat for the golden algae bloom. Both coal mining and natural gas industries dispose of TDS effluents in nearby waters.

Establishing stronger rules for Marcellus Shale drilling would also be more protective of our waters. Marcellus Shale drilling uses a tremendous amount of water to fracture the rock that contains the gas. Part of the water plus chemicals and other contaminants come back to the surface and must be treated and disposed of. The public needs to know how well the wastewater has been treated, what chemicals are in the water, and where drillers are disposing of their wastewater.

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LWVUS supports comprehensive energy legislation

On June 8, 2010, the League and other environmental organizations sent a letter to Chairs of the relevant Senate Committees, urging them to support comprehensive energy legislation that moves the United States away from our dependence on oil and toward a clean energy economy. Excerpts from the letter:

Dear Chairmen Baucus, Bingaman, Boxer, Dodd, Leahy, Lieberman, Lincoln, and Rockefeller:

As you prepare to respond to Majority Leader Reid's letter of June 3rd asking for your recommendations on provisions that should be included in comprehensive energy legislation to be considered by the Senate this summer, we write to reiterate our firm belief that to be an effective response to the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico such legislation must hold energy companies responsible for cleaning up the pollution they emit into our air and water. We start with the same premise the President clearly articulated on June 2nd – that the disaster in the Gulf of Mexico underscores the need for legislation that will move us away from our dependence on oil and toward a clean energy economy:

We consume more than 20% of the world's oil, but have less than 2% of the world's oil reserves. So without a major change in our energy policy, our dependence on oil means that we will continue to send billions of dollars of our hard-earned wealth to other countries every month – including countries in dangerous and unstable regions. In other words, our continued dependence on fossil fuels will jeopardize our national security. It will smother our planet. And it will continue to put our economy and our environment at risk.

The President went on to say that the time has come to aggressively accelerate the transition to clean energy, and that:

... [t]he only way the transition to clean energy will succeed is if the private sector is fully invested in this future – if capital comes off the sidelines and the ingenuity of our entrepreneurs is unleashed. And the only way to do that is by finally putting a price on carbon pollution.

The President is right. Only a comprehensive bill that includes limits on carbon pollution can put in place the incentives needed to create the jobs and security that are essential to our future prosperity. This legislation should be written in a way that makes clear to the American people how it is responsive to the Gulf disaster. And it needs to take aggressive steps to deal with the immediate issues raised by the BP spill, as well as the underlying problem of oil dependence. This effort can succeed by articulating clearly the security, economic, and environmental benefits of these measures so that the defenders of big oil and dirty coal – as well as ideological opponents of reform–can't hide behind empty rhetoric and delaying tactics.

With that in mind, we urge you to draw on existing bills, many of which were developed in a bipartisan manner, to assemble comprehensive clean energy and climate legislation that includes titles that deal with the following matters:

- Direct response to the tragedy in the Gulf and its causes. This should include ensuring that BP pays for all remediation and assistance for affected Gulf states and key reforms of drilling regulation to ensure that environmentally sensitive resources are protected.
- Reduce U.S. dependence on oil. This should set ambitious national targets for reducing America's dangerous dependence on oil and direct the President to meet these goals using both existing and new authority to increase vehicle efficiency, improve the efficiency of our transportation infrastructure, increase production of sustainable biofuels, and electrify our transportation system.
- Limit carbon pollution. This should build on the core elements of the Kerry-Lieberman bill and foster a dynamic partnership with state and local governments. These limits are essential to mobilize the level of investment required to build the clean energy economy Americans want. They should be designed to protect consumers, and provide incentives for investment in clean energy manufacturing to smooth the transition to a clean energy future, and help rebuild our manufacturing companies to compete in the 21st century.
- Improve energy efficiency and expand renewable energy production. Efficiency provisions should include either an ambitious electricity efficiency resource standard or a requirement that one-third of the allowances allocated to electric and gas local distribution companies be used for efficiency improvements. Provisions on renewables could build on existing proposals, but need to be strong enough to significantly enhance what existing state standards are already achieving.

These issues are all related and should be put forward as a package. For example, efforts to expand transmission capacity and electrify our transportations system could inadvertently increase carbon emissions unless they are part of a comprehensive policy that requires pollution cuts.

The failings of the status quo are literally right before our eyes as the Gulf tragedy continues to play out. The American people will support a package that clearly responds to the immediate tragedy, moves us away from oil dependence, and puts in place critical incentives that will send a clear economic signal to move the U.S. to a clean energy economy. This will create jobs, make the U.S. more secure, and protect the environment.

Signatories to the letter were:

American Rivers Center for American Progress Action Fund * Climate Protection Action Fund Earthjustice * Environment America * Environmental Defense Fund Environmental Law and Policy Center * Green For All * League of Conservation Voters League of Women Voters * National Audubon Society * National Wildlife Federation Natural Resources Defense Council * Ocean Conservancy * Sierra Club * The Wilderness Society World Wildlife Fund * Union of Concerned Scientists

Et Cetera

➤ Upcoming dates:

August 5	Voters Service meeting at home of Susan Watkins, Charleston
August 26	Women's Equality Day
Sept. 11	LWVWV Board meeting Charleston
Nov. 2	General Election
Nov. 13	LWVWV Board meeting Bridgeport

➤ On August 24, the Huntington Area League will celebrate the 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment to the Constitution by sponsoring a parade in downtown Huntington. The League is working with the Marshall University Women's Center and faculty members to plan the celebration and to remind our communities about the sacrifices made by suffragists and the progress of women's rights throughout our history. The celebration will be held at Pullman Plaza and include speakers, music and re-enactors. Groups and individuals are invited to join the parade from the plaza to the Courthouse.

➤ The federal government has a new website, healthcare.gov, designed to provide individuals with information on the new healthcare legislation and how it will impact consumers.

➤ LWVUS has put together a global Climate Change Toolkit that provides action plans and resources for local and state Leagues. Log onto lwv.org; click on Take Action; select Global Climate Change; select Toolkit for Climate Action.

➤ Interim meetings of the WV Legislature are scheduled for the following dates:

July 19-21
August 9-11
September 13-15
October 11-13
November 15-17
December 13-15

CAMPAIGN FINANCE BILL PASSES HOUSE League of Women Voters Applauds DISCLOSE Act, Restored Transparency in Elections

Responding to the Citizens United case, the House of Representatives passed the DISCLOSE Act. While it is not perfect, the Act goes a long way towards preventing the use of secret money to influence elections in this country. With the fall elections coming up, the LWVUS has made the DISCLOSE Act its number one priority in the hope that the Senate will pass this vital legislation before those elections. All other election reforms, including the Fair Elections Now Act, must take a backseat seat to this push in order to ensure that the 2010 elections will not be awash in money from foreign corporations, corporations with large government contracts or those which benefitted from bailout money, as well as any corporate money veiled in secrecy.

The LWVUS issued this press release on June 24, 2010 hailing the passage of the legislation:

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The League of Women Voters today hailed the passage of campaign finance legislation by the U.S. House of Representatives as the first step in achieving greater transparency in U.S. elections.

“Secret spending in elections undermines our democracy - - that’s why this bill is so important,” said Elisabeth MacNamara, national president of the League of Women Voters.

The League of Women Voters commends the House for taking strong action, especially Representatives Van Hollen and Castle for their leadership. We now call on the Senate to pass a similar bill, ideally a version free of amendments that dilute transparency or corrupt the spirit of the legislation,” she stated. “It is essential for Congress to enact this legislation now, so we can protect the 2010 elections,” MacNamara said.

The DISCLOSE Act received support from a host of reform groups including the League, and today, Speaker Nancy Pelosi acknowledged the League and coalition groups for their efforts in helping to pass this legislation.

“This bill is a step in the right direction and achieves its fundamental purpose,” MacNamara said. “The League will continue to fight for enhanced disclosure, and this bill is an important part of that fight. It’s the best campaign finance reform since McCain-Feingold,” she concluded.

The Supreme Court in Citizens United v. FEC recently gave the green light to corporations to spend without limit to elect or oppose candidates for office. However, the Court’s decision made clear that disclosure of this spending could be required by Congress.

Susan Watkins
President and Editor



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In Memoriam

The League of Women Voters of West Virginia joins with many others in expressing its sorrow for the passing of Senator Robert C. Byrd. We appreciated his vast knowledge of history and the legislative process and his understanding that government is a force for good in our society. We will miss his timely responses to our concerns and his unrivaled efforts to improve the lives of the people of West Virginia.

JOIN THE LEAGUE! The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. **If you live in Cabell, Jefferson, Monongalia, or Wood County, please contact the local League in those counties.** To join at the state level, send a check or money order payable to LWVWV to: Margie Renaud, Treasurer, LWVWV, HC 60, Box 148, New Martinsville, WV 26155. Dues are \$40 for individuals, \$60 for a household, and \$20 for students. Because we are a lobbying organization, membership dues are not tax-deductible.

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