



# THE WEST VIRGINIA VOTER

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## What's the fuss about voter ID laws?

By Kathy Stoltz

Shouldn't voters be willing to show identification in order to assure that they are entitled to register and vote? Why does the LWV oppose voter ID laws? Because these laws are unnecessary, burdensome, discriminatory, costly to administer and enforce, and are thinly veiled attempts at voter suppression.

Laws that require would-be voters to produce specific documents to prove their citizenship and identity in order to register and vote purport to be solutions to a problem that does not exist. There is no evidence of widespread voter fraud by people who are not eligible to vote, and prosecutions for voting fraud are very rare. Election Day turnout of eligible voters is already at dismally low levels. Legislatures should not be enacting laws to further discourage eligible citizens from voting.

Proposed state laws and those already passed vary in their requirements, but commonly include a photo ID, birth certificate, or some other government-issued verification of citizenship and/or identity. Millions of eligible voters do not possess documents that would meet the requirements. People who lack a government-issued ID are more likely to be poor, minority, or elderly than those who would readily be able to produce one. Requiring one is discriminatory.

Consider these points:

- ⇒ Millions of eligible voters do not have a driver's license, including senior citizens who no longer drive, urban dwellers who rely on public transportation, and people too poor to own a car.
- ⇒ Obtaining a state-issued photo-ID may require taking time off work, transportation difficulties for non-drivers, and/or require documents the would-be voter does not possess. There may be fees for the card and for renewing it periodically.
- ⇒ The majority of Americans do not have a passport. To obtain one costs well over \$100.
- ⇒ Students whose driver's licenses show their home ad-

dress, but who want to vote where they attend college, may not be allowed to. College-issued ID cards may not satisfy the law's requirements.

- ⇒ Many people do not have a copy of their birth certificate. The process to obtain one may be burdensome and/or costly for them.
- ⇒ A woman's birth certificate shows her name at birth, not her married name, which may not satisfy the state's requirements for voter registration.
- ⇒ People who want to register to vote at registration drives, at their high school or college, or shortly before an election may not have the necessary documents with them or they may not be readily available.
- ⇒ People who move or marry shortly before an election may not have had time to update their documents.
- ⇒ At a time when state budgets are stretched beyond their limits, it is a waste of resources to enforce laws that aren't needed.

It is unfortunate that legislatures across the country are using their powers to discourage people from participating in democracy rather than on reforms that would enable more people to be active participants in government. We all like the slogan "Democracy is not a spectator sport." We do not want or need laws that make it harder for eligible voters to enter the arena.

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A bill requiring presentation of a photo ID in order to vote in WV was introduced during the 2011 legislative session. It allowed persons lacking photo ID to vote a provisional ballot. It was referred to the Judiciary Committee and died there.

In addition to [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org), copious information about voting rights is online at the website of the Brennan Center for Justice, [www.brennancenter.org](http://www.brennancenter.org).

# Natural Resources

By Helen Gibbins

## Horizontal Drilling/Fracking Select Committee

Leaders in the WV House and Senate have named a special, 10-member select committee to prepare Marcellus shale legislation in time for a special session this summer. If consensus is achieved, Acting Governor Tomblin has agreed to put the subject on the agenda.

Along with other organizations the League contacted Acting Senate President Jeffrey Kessler and Speaker Rick Thompson asking them to add someone with medical knowledge to the task force.

Members of the select committee are: Co-chairmen, Sen. Doug Facemire (D-Braxton) and Del. Tim Manchin (D-Marion); Sen. Corey Palumbo (D-Kan); Sen. Herb Snyder (D-Jeff); Sen. Orphy Klempa (D-Ohio); Sen. Karen Facemyer (R-Jackson); Del. Barbara Fleischauer (D-Mon); Del. Tom Campbell (D-Greenbrier); Del. Woody Ireland (R-Ritchie); and Del. Bill Anderson (R-Wood).

Contact your legislators asking them to work for strong regulations.

In recent months, the Huntington, Morgantown-Monongalia Co. and Wood County Leagues showed the movie *Gasland* and received good turnout and discussion. Morgantown-Monongalia Co. was very active in the successful effort to ban horizontal drilling in Morgantown.

## Air Pollution Control

The USEPA is issuing several new air pollution control standards. Under the Clean Air Act, the EPA must set air quality standards to protect public health. Lobbyists are working to prevent these standards from going into effect. The LWVUS supports these standards.

**Mercury and Air Toxics Emissions Standard** (“National Emission Standards for Hazardous Air Pollutants for Major Sources: Electric Generating Units”)

In March the EPA announced its proposed Mercury and Air Toxics Emissions Standard. The League, along with other public health and environmental advocacy groups, applaud the EPA and oppose efforts to weaken the standards by some members of Congress and lobbyists for mining, the power industry, and industrial interests.

The new standards will save 17,000 American lives and prevent 120,000 asthma attacks. The standards would also avoid more than 12,000 emergency room and hospital visits and prevent 850,000 lost work days each year.

The rule will limit for the first time emissions of life-threatening toxic pollutants like mercury, arsenic and acid gases, dioxin and lead from power plants. Mercury, a potent neurotoxin that can harm developing fetuses and young children, causes cognitive difficulties later in life. According to the EPA's own data, over 300,000 babies are born each year at risk of mercury poisoning and at least 1 in 12, and as many as 1 in 6, American women have enough mercury in their bodies to put a baby at risk.

Many power plants are already reducing harmful emissions so the new standard will make them more competitive with the older, polluting power plants.

Let our members of Congress know that you support the new rule.

**Smog Control: Tell the President You Don't Want to Breathe Smog** (“Reconsideration of the 2008 Ozone National Ambient Air Quality Standards”)

Based on the science, the EPA is expected to set a new smog standard this July. The oil, coal, and other polluting industries are pressuring the Obama administration to delay the standard or to issue a weak standard so that they can continue to pollute our air in order to meet their bottom line. According to the EPA, tightening the standard will prevent or avoid the following health impacts each year: as many as 12,000 premature deaths; 58,000 asthma attacks; 21,000 hospital and emergency room visits; 5,300 heart attacks; over 2.1 million missed school days; and 420,000 lost work days.

Please send this message to President Obama (Phone: 202-456-1111; Fax: 202-456-2461):

“I urge you to set a strong new standard for smog pollution in order to protect the health of all Americans, including those who are most vulnerable to air pollution – our children and seniors.

“Smog pollution threatens the health of too many Americans by triggering asthma attacks, reducing lung function and even causing premature deaths. Do not allow polluting industries to pressure the EPA to delay or weaken standards needed to protect people's health from dirty air. Our lives and health depend on your decision.”

(Information provided by the LWVUS and Natural Resources Defense Council)

## LWVUS president challenges us to keep up the good fight!

Susan Watkins and Teresa Koon attended the LWVUS Council meeting in Leesburg, VA in June. Council is held in the year between conventions and is attended by state presidents plus one other delegate from each state, and representatives of big city Leagues. There were 108 delegates representing forty-two states and Washington, DC. The meeting focused primarily on training Leagues in areas of leadership, new media, fundraising, and planning for the 2012 elections. Below are portions of LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara's opening remarks:

... In so many ways, it is fitting that we are here in 2011, looking back at the 2010 election and looking forward to the 2012 election, having just engaged in an anniversary celebration. We might think of ourselves in the eye of the storm right now, a brief period of calm before the winds begin to blow again. Not only are we in the eye of the storm in the immediate sense, we are also, quite possibly, living through historic times.

In 2008, we did something that most of us never thought we would live to see – we elected a man of color to the highest office in the land. I don't know about you, but I was proud to be an American in November of 2008.

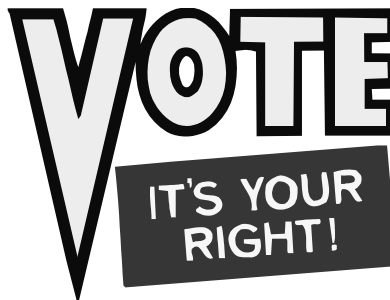
But since that moment, the American people have also reaped the whirlwind sowed over thirty years of "shrinking government." Add in the disaster that is *Citizens United* and we are no longer in the eye just of the storm, but we are in the eye of the perfect storm – a combination of unprecedented economic woes, cutting edge communication technology and unlimited ability of some to spend money to influence elections.

The media is focused almost entirely on the economy, but we in the League see a much broader assault on our democracy. Immigration legislation in the states, voter photo ID, ultra partisan redistricting, cut-backs in early voting, and assaults on environmental protections, women's health and the list goes on.

So having just looked back to where we came from, there could be no better time for us to remind ourselves of who we are

and what we are made of! Our founders were the last of generations of women who had fought for the right to vote, using any means that was effective in drawing attention to the wisdom and justice of giving women a voice in our democracy. Our founders were also the first of generations of Leaguers who fought, using any means that was effective, to achieve great things – wage and hour laws, child labor laws, rural electrification, the United Nations, arms control, and yes, the Clean Air Act. More recently, we can add to the list: the NVRA, or Motor Voter, HAVA, and the Affordable Care Act.

Throughout our history, before and after suffrage was achieved, we have been nonpartisan but political. That balance has always been uneasy ... but it has also been necessary.



Women wanted the vote because of the power the vote gave to influence public policy. The League wasn't founded just to educate new women voters. The League was also founded to concentrate the power of the woman vote to achieve public policies beneficial to women and, therefore, beneficial to our society. The power of the vote is the only reliable answer to the moneyed interests seizing control of our government. That was true in 1920, and it is true today.

What are we made of? What are we willing to do to be effective in this environment? ...

... What we hope to discuss over the next few days, is ways in which we can be effective in our own communities, local, state, and national in communicating what we believe to be true – that government has a positive role to play in our society; that without sound government policies with respect to the health of our people, our environment and our economy, we will lose opportunity, we will lose lives.

The first step, as always, is to help America realize the power of the individual vote. To do that, we must make sure:

- that every eligible citizen can and is registered,
- that every eligible voter understands the electoral process and is armed with the information she or he needs to cast an informed vote, and
- that every voter turns out to vote in 2012.

We must model good citizenship by never letting our elected officials forget that all the money in the world is no substitute for an informed electorate.

Let me close by quoting Carrie Chapman Catt addressing the Jubilee convention of the National American Women's Suffrage Association in St. Louis in 1919:

*Every suffragist will hope for a fitting commemoration of this 50th Anniversary of our organization and the Golden Jubilee of the first grant of full suffrage to women. She will hope for a memorial dedicated to the memory of our brave departed leaders, to the sacrifices they made for our cause, to the scores of victories won.*

*She will not be content with resolutions of self congratulation; with speeches of tribute; nor will any suffragist propose a monument built of marble which only a few would see and fewer comprehend. What then shall it be? I venture to propose a memorial whose benefits will bless our entire nation and bring happiness to the humblest of our citizens.*

*What vainglorious proposal is this do you ask? I propose no marvel; merely the most natural, the most appropriate and the most patriotic memorial that could be suggested – a League of Women Voters to "Finish the Fight;" and to aid in the reconstruction of the Nation.*

We must never forget that we are that League, we are those patriots! To finish the fight and to truly reconstruct our nation, we must work together and support each other, always bearing in mind that it is we who have the power of the vote and the right and the ability to use it!

## Women in the Americas: Cuba 2011

By Sharon Rowe

The League's Global Democracy Program has embarked on a new project in Cuba. The goal of this project is to carry out research on the current political and civic role of women at the grassroots level in Cuba. The League strongly believes that learning first-hand about Cuban women's political and civic participation is extremely valuable for both women in the United States and throughout Latin America. The League will conduct research on leadership styles, grassroots initiatives and various indices of women's political involvement and advancement. The project will have two components: the first is the collection of relevant data in Cuba over a period of twelve months. Data collection methods will include, but are not limited to, personal interviews and surveys conducted during two or three site visits. The second component will be a monograph on the findings which will be distributed to the League's 150,000 domestic members and supporters as well as international partners.

The League's research in Cuba is part of a series of research activities planned in Latin America to discuss the next steps for women in the Americas to achieve equality in the civic and political arenas.

Although women in Latin America have made large strides in the political arena, many barriers continue to hamper a more full participation. Taking into consideration the League's successful track record in building bridges with women from across the world, the League is confident that the results of the research will serve to broaden perspectives on women's political participation in Cuba and Latin America as a whole. The League has a strong historical role in encouraging women around the world to be actively involved in political processes and has implemented multiple programs designed to encourage women's leadership. The League's international outreach began in 1922 when it invited women from all Latin American countries to attend the League's third Convention and the first Pan American Conference in Baltimore, MD. Over 2,500 women from 23 countries, including a representative from Cuba, attended the four day conference. Nearly 90 years later, the League is delighted to continue working in Latin America with this latest project in Cuba.

*Information taken from LWVUS website, lwv.org*

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### Constitution Day

The Civics Literacy Council, of which the LWVWV is a member, was created in 2007 by the Legislature to foster civic education among West Virginia's youth. One of the primary activities of the organization is to sponsor Constitution Day programs.

Constitution Day recognizes the adoption of the U.S. Constitution and those who have become U.S. citizens. It is observed on September 17, the day the U.S. Constitutional Convention signed the Constitution in 1787. The late Sen. Robert C. Byrd was instrumental in the establishment of the day.

The Huntington Area League is planning a program at Huntington High School and has prepared an agenda for the event. If you are interested in conducting a program in your community, you may contact Helen Gibbins for information about the Huntington League's presentation (gibbins@frontier.com).

### Special Election for Governor

The League will publish a *Voters' Guide* for the October 4 special election for governor. It will be posted on the League's website, lwvww.org, in late August. There are five candidates in the race: Democrat, Republican, Mountain, Independent, and American Third Position.

#### Dates to Remember

September 13	Registration deadline
Sept. 21 - Oct. 1	Early voting
September 28	Last day to request an absentee ballot
October 4	General Election Day

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## Single-member districts a hot topic

By Susan Watkins

Following the census every ten years, our state and federal constitutions require the Legislature to redraw voting districts to provide for equal representation based on population changes.

The Senate's Select Committee on Redistricting has held a series of meetings around the state inviting constituents to present their opinions on redistricting options. These meetings have drawn considerable support for single-member districts in the House of Delegates. West Virginia is one of only ten states with multi-member districts - 22 of our 58 House districts are multi-member. A special session to redraw House, Senate and congressional districts will possibly convene in August.

At the state League convention on April 30, our guest speaker was Professor Atiba Ellis, WVU College of Law. He presented his research on the negative impact to women candidates when a state shifts from multi-member to single-member districts. He found it is easier for women to be elected in a multi-member district because voters can choose from a range of candidates and may be more willing to give a woman the benefit of the doubt. Research has shown that fewer women are elected when changing districts from multi-member to single-member districts. Another negative impact of single-member districts is the ability to target a candidate, especially given the changes in campaign finance rules. In a multi-member district, the risk is spread out.

The state League does not have a position on single-member districts. Our position on apportionment, dated January 23, 1973, states:

The LWVWV supports apportionment of the West Virginia Legislature every ten years, based upon the United States census figures in accordance with the following principles: one person one vote representation; preservation of the integrity of county lines insofar as possible; compactness and contiguousness of districts; and prohibition against the use of overlaid districts. The League believes that these principles should be insured by the West Virginia Constitution and that remedial provisions should be established in the event that the Legislature fails to reapportion.

You can find census data and maps at the legislature's website, [www.legis.state.wv.us/redistricting.cfm](http://www.legis.state.wv.us/redistricting.cfm).

## Hydraulic Fracturing and Your Health

Hydraulic fracturing (fracking) creates greater access to natural gas supplies, but the process requires the use of large quantities of water and fracturing fluids, which are injected underground at high volumes and pressure. The average amount of water used is about 5 million gallons per fracture. Gas companies design fracturing fluids to create "fractures" or breaks that release the gas held in shale formations and to transport granular substances to prop open the fractures. The composition of these fluids varies, ranging from a simple mixture of water and sand to more complex mixtures with a multitude of chemical additives. Some of these chemicals can have serious health effects if released into water or air. However, the 2005 Energy Policy Act exempted hydraulic fracturing from regulation under the Clean Air Act, the Clean Water Act, and the Safe Drinking Water Act.

An April 2011 report "Chemicals Used in Hydraulic Fracturing," commissioned by the United States House of Representatives Committee on Energy and Commerce, revealed the following information about chemicals used by fourteen oil and gas companies from 2005-2009.

- Companies used 780 million gallons of fracturing products, **NOT including the water they were mixed with.**
- 29 of these chemicals are 1) known or possible carcinogens, 2) regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act for risks to human health, 3) listed as hazardous air pollutants under the Clean Air Act.
- These 29 chemicals were used in more than 650 fracking products.
- BTEX (benzene, toluene, xylene, ethylbenzene) appeared in 60 products. Companies injected 11.4 million gallons of these chemicals over the five-year period. **Exposure to these chemicals can cause central nervous system, liver, and kidney damage.**
- Companies injected 11.7 million gallons of product containing at least one chemical regulated under the Safe Drinking Water Act (mostly BTEX).
- 2-BE (2 butoxy ethanol) was used in 126 fracking products. According to the EPA, 2-BE is easily absorbed, and rapidly distributed in humans following inhalation, ingestion, or skin exposure. **It can cause destruction of red blood cells (hemolysis), and damage to the liver, spleen, and bone marrow.**
- Companies injected 21.9 million gallons of 2-BE from 2005-2009. **A total of 464,231 gallons were injected in West Virginia.**
- Companies used 95 products containing 13 different carcinogens, and injected 10.2 million gallons containing at least one carcinogen.
- The Clean Air Act requires EPA to control emissions of 187 hazardous air pollutants. **Gas companies used 595 products containing 24 known hazardous air pollutants.**
- Hydrogen fluoride is a highly corrosive and systemic poison that can cause severe health problems and death. Companies used 67,222 gallons of this product in 2008-2009.
- Companies used 93.6 million gallons of fracking products that contained at least one "proprietary component." This means they were bought "off the shelf" and **the companies themselves could not identify all the chemicals in the product.**

For more information on gas drilling, see the Ohio Valley Environmental Coalition website, [www.ohvec.org](http://www.ohvec.org)

Susan Watkins  
President and Editor



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### Calendar

- August 26            Women’s Equality Day
- September 10       LWVWV Board Meeting, Charleston
- September 13       Last day to register to vote in Special General Election
- September 17       Constitution Day
- Sept. 21 - Oct. 1    Early voting for Special General Election
- September 28       Last day to request absentee ballot
- October 4            Special General Election

**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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