



THE WEST VIRGINIA VOTER

Published Quarterly by the League of Women Voters of West Virginia

Vol. 56 No. 1 Summer 2012

LWVUS convention a wonderful experience

By Linda Yoder, LWV of Morgantown/Monongalia County

Never in my dreams, in my forty years of passion for the League of Women Voters, did I imagine myself holding up a huge "West Virginia" sign and speaking for sixty brief seconds about the West Virginia League I am proud of. But it happened in June in Washington, DC at the LWVUS convention, and I will be forever grateful to members for sending me as a delegate.

I still had so much to learn about the way the League works: makes decisions, apportions its money, chooses issues for study, lobbies on the hill. The way it tries to listen to every voice. The way it is trying to grow the League. The trust in the voter. The vision for the future.

I was lucky to be invited by Diana Haskell, our Ruth Shur Fellow who keeps track of activities in West Virginia, to stay in her home in Bethesda, along with a Member at Large from Hampton, Virginia. The three of us talked League morning and evening. Diana's heart for the League, and the way she devoted her energies to mentoring other members, impressed me deeply. As did her husband's willingness to drive us into DC early every morning.

I found out that caucuses are the way to learn a lot

about an issue in a short amount of time, and caucuses sometimes started at 7:30 am or went on to 10:30 pm. I chose caucuses on health care reform, actions in response to the *Citizens United* decision, and a proposed Department of Peace, for example. I got in on workshops for newcomers to convention, on using social media, and on growing the League. As a coach, I was able to attend a lunch in honor of coaches where we learned to know other coaches and gain a wealth of new ideas. As a delegate, I was able to vote, and one of our proposed studies failed by only THREE votes, proving what we all know, that every vote is important.

I got to laugh through the Capitol Steps, listen to Eric Holder let us know how it felt to be under attack, be encouraged by Kathleen Hall Jamieson and her flackcheck.org (go there and learn how you can combat false advertising on behalf of political candidates), be in awe of Eleanor Holmes Norton who has long been a hero for me.

I felt genuinely fortunate to have this responsibility, and I only hope that many of you can go to convention in Texas in 2014. There will be many more battles to be won!

Action taken at convention

The LWVUS held its 50th biennial convention June 9 – 12 in Washington, DC. Linda Yoder, the state League's representative, was one of 650 in attendance.

There were workshops and caucuses where delegates discussed many of the critical issues facing our democracy this election year. The League's *Power the Vote 2012* initiative was highlighted throughout as delegates celebrated recent successes in protecting voting rights and secret money in elections.

Delegates reelected Elisabeth

MacNamara of Georgia as national President and elected a new Board of Directors, passed the League's budget, approved a \$31.00 PMP and voted on national program for the next two years, placing a special emphasis on working to fight the flood of secret money in politics.

Delegates approved the following motions relating to program:

- adopted a concurrence with the Sentencing Policy position of the LWVDC as follows: The LWVUS believes alternatives to imprisonment should be explored

and utilized, taking into consideration the circumstances and nature of the crime. The LWVUS opposes mandatory minimum sentences for drug offenses.

- adopted the LWVUS Board recommended comprehensive program to educate members and communities on the issue of campaign finance in order to inform our education and legislative efforts as needed.

Action, continued on page 2

Action, continued from page 1

- retained all other current LWVUS positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, and Social Policy.
- adopted a review and update of

the LWVUS agriculture position approved in 1988. Such a review would investigate genetic modification, consolidation in the food industry, money in the regulatory process, and the consumer's right to accurate and comprehensive food labeling.

LWVWV joins coalition

The state League has joined a coalition of organizations that focuses on children's and domestic violence issues in West Virginia.

The Legislative Action Team for Children and Families includes American Friends Service Committee, Fair Shake Network, the National Association of Social Workers - WV Chapter, Prevent Child Abuse WV, the WV Alliance for Sustainable Families, WV Center for Budget and Policy, WV Child Advocacy Network, WV Coalition Against Domestic Violence, WV Council of Churches, WV FREE, WV Healthy Kids and Families Coalition, WV Kids Count Fund, WV Tobacco Coalition, WV Women's Commission and West Virginians for Affordable Health Care.

The coalition meets several times a year and on a weekly basis during the legislative session.

LWVUS positions cover many of the issues targeted by the coalition. The following position was adopted by the 1994 national convention:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that early intervention and prevention measures are effective in helping children reach their full potential. The League supports policies and programs at all levels of the community and government that promote the well being, encourage the full development and ensure the safety of all children. These include:

- child abuse/neglect prevention;
- teen pregnancy prevention;
- quality health care, including nutrition and prenatal care;
- early childhood education;
- developmental services, emphasizing children ages 0-3;
- family support services;
- violence prevention.

League Supports Full Implementation of Affordable Care Act

Following the U.S. Supreme Court's decision to uphold the Affordable Care Act (ACA), LWVUS president Elisabeth MacNamara reaffirmed the League's commitment to continue working to fully implement the law.

"Upholding the ACA brings our nation closer to the goal of this law: to provide universal health care for all Americans. There are still threats to these critical reforms and the League will continue its work fighting for progress on many fronts," MacNamara said.

"Now that the law has been upheld, children will no longer be denied coverage due to pre-existing conditions, young adults can stay on their parents' health plans as dependents until age 26, Medicare participants will have annual check-ups and mammograms, and many uninsured Americans will now have health care coverage.

"Leagues throughout the country will continue to educate communities and Americans on the ACA and its pivotal impact on their lives and work to fully implement the law. Health care for all must be the goal as we expand coverage to millions of Americans and preserve the ACA's transformational reforms."

The LWVWV urges Governor Tomblin and the legislature to complete the work necessary to establish insurance exchanges, marketplaces where small businesses and individuals can shop for easy-to-understand insurance options, and to expand Medicaid to provide coverage to an additional 120,000 West Virginians.

LWVWV to participate in Constitution Day Event

The Civics Literacy Council, of which the LWVWV is a member, will sponsor an event on Constitution Day, September 17, to underscore the values of citizenship and civic responsibility. The event will target 7th - 8th graders and will take place at the State Capitol. There will be various activities for the students

throughout the day, including a mock election. The League's activity introduces students to the Bill of Rights using an upbeat rap song. We will then present Supreme Court cases relating to student and/or school issues and discuss what amendment applies to the cases. We will also distribute Bill of Rights bookmarks. If anyone is interested in helping that day, contact Susan Watkins at susanwatkins@suddenlink.net.

THE CLEAN AIR ACT AND EPA'S REGULATIONS

By Helen Gibbins

Hazardous Air Pollutants

The US EPA continues to promulgate rules mandated by the Clean Air Act. In the WV League's Fall 2011 VOTER we discussed the Cross State Air Pollution Rule and the rule to reduce Hazardous Air Pollutants on the oldest and most polluting oil and coal-fired power plants. Power plants are the largest remaining source of manmade mercury in the environment. Mercury is a toxic metal that's known to impair brain development in children, including those exposed in the womb. Since 1990, the EPA has had the power to regulate toxics, but special interests had delayed the rules until last fall. The League supports the rule, known as Utility MACT.

The House of Representatives voted to block the EPA from updating the Clean Air Act's regulations on hazardous air pollutants. In June 2012, efforts in the Senate to block the EPA from setting these standards were not successful (46-53).

Climate Change Rules

In March 2012, the EPA, in an historic effort, issued regulations to limit industrial carbon pollution. The EPA's proposal sets a performance standard that will ensure new power plants limit their pollution that fuels global warming, makes smog worse, and threatens the health of children and the elderly.

On June 26, a federal appeals court in D.C. upheld the authority of the EPA to regulate the reduction of climate change gases from large industrial facilities such as factories and power plants and vehicular tail pipes. This decision follows the US Supreme Court's 2007 decision that said the EPA has an obligation to regulate climate change

gases, if they can be found harmful. In 2009 the EPA concluded that greenhouse gases endanger human health and welfare. Because the Obama administration was unsuccessful in getting a global warming law through Congress, it decided to go the regulatory route.

The industry groups and states that had argued against the regulations declared that the EPA was incorrect in concluding greenhouse gases endanger human health and questioned the science of heat trapping gases. Unfortunately, the antagonists will continue to fight the rules, but the EPA will move on to finalize the regulations.

Air Pollutants From Fracking

In April 2012, the US EPA issued regulations to reduce air pollution from the oil and natural gas industry. These are the first rules to apply to fracking. The rules will reduce Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs) by nearly 95 percent. The reductions on pollutants will amount to 190,000 to 290,000 tons of VOCs; 12,000 to 20,000 tons of air toxics; and 1.0 to 1.7 million short tons of methane. Methane is a greenhouse gas that is over 20 times more effective in trapping heat in the atmosphere than CO₂.

The reduction of the pollutants will decrease asthma attacks, cancer, and other health problems. "The EPA estimates that the net cost of compliance with these new rules will be less than zero. Under current practice, a substantial volume of marketable gas either escapes into the atmosphere or is burned. By using 'green completion' techniques, companies capture and sell this product. The value of the product is expected to offset the costs of compliance with the new rule. EPA's analysis of the rules shows a cost savings of \$11 to \$19 million when the rules are fully implemented in 2015." (Environmental Protection Agency)

Senate Refuses To Debate DISCLOSE Act

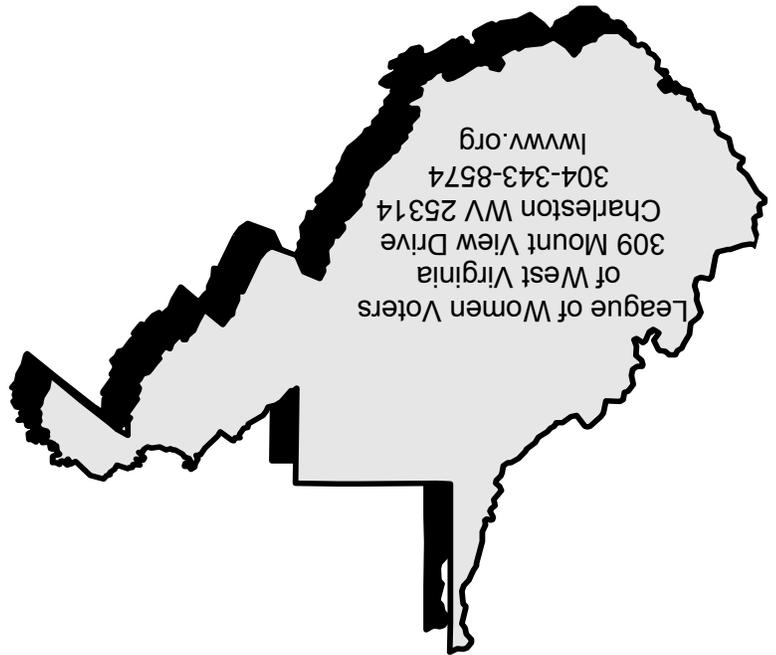
This month, the U.S. Senate refused to allow full debate on the DISCLOSE Act, which would require complete disclosure of spending on big-money advertising in candidate elections. Twice, the Senate failed to invoke cloture, the procedural motion that requires 60 votes before the Senate can even consider legislation.

Fortunately, Senator Rockefeller and Senator Manchin did vote to allow debate on this vital issue. We are proud that they stood up for the voters against the special interests pouring huge sums of secret money into the elections.

The League supports the DISCLOSE Act of 2012 because we believe that Americans deserve all the information they can get before they vote. The DISCLOSE Act builds on disclosure requirements already approved by the U.S. Supreme Court in *Citizens United* when it said that disclosure is important to 'providing the electorate with information.'

The League and its partners in the voting rights community will continue to push for passage of DISCLOSE because secret campaign money undermines the role of the voter and corrupts the election process. Tell us where the money is coming from and let the voters decide. The DISCLOSE Act is an important step towards eliminating secret money.

Susan Watkins
President and Editor



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Calendar

- August 26 Women's Equality Day
- September 8 LWVWV Board Meeting
- September 17 Constitution Day
- October 16 Deadline to register to vote in General Election
- November 6 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: Teresa Koon, Treasurer, LWVWV, 4112 Coopers Creek Road, Charleston WV 25312. 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.

Name(s) _____ Phone _____

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