

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CONCORD-CARLISLE

BULLETIN

January 2010

LWVCC Website: www.lwvcc.com
P.O. Box 34 Concord, Massachusetts 01742-0034

Volume 14 09-10 #3

CALENDAR

JANUARY

- 13 Wed LWVCC Members Breakfast, Colonial Inn, Concord 9:00-11:00 AM
19 Tues Special Election for US Senate Seat Polls open 7 AM – 8 PM
22 Fri LWVCC Program – LIFE IN THE BALANCE: POWERING THE FUTURE 7-9:00 PM
“The Great Squeeze” (film), Alcott Auditorium, 93 Laurel St, Concord
27 Wed LWVCC Book Group, Trustees Room, Concord Library 10:00-11:30 AM
27 Wed LWVCC Environmental Movie Night (Nancy Beeuwkes) 7:30 PM

FEBRUARY

- 3 Wed LWVCC Board Meeting (Becky Shannon) 9 coffee, 9:30 mtg
National Program Planning Meeting brown bag lunch 12 – 1:30 PM
5 Fri LWVCC Program – LIFE IN THE BALANCE: POWERING THE FUTURE 7-9:00 PM
“Our Community and Tomorrow’s Energy”
Harvey Wheeler Community Center, 1276 Main St., West Concord
9 Tues LWVCC Movie Night (Nancy Beeuwkes) 7:30 PM
10 Wed LWVCC Program – OUR TOWN, OUR SCHOOLS, OUR MONEY 7:30 PM
Concord Town House Hearing Room, Monument Square
28 Sun Regional Forum on Housing and Homelessness 3:00 PM – 5:00 PM
1st Parish Church, 20 Lexington Rd, Concord

MARCH

- 3 Wed LWVCC Board Meeting (Erica Morrison) 9 coffee, 9:30 mtg
10 Wed LWVCC Environmental Movie Night (Nancy Beeuwkes) 7:30 PM
23 Ties Concord Town Elections polls open 7 AM-8 PM

APRIL

- 7 Wed LWVCC Board Meeting 9 coffee, 9:30 mtg
14 Wed LWVCC Environmental Movie Night (Nancy Beeuwkes) 7:30 PM
28 Wed LWVM Day On The Hill, State House, Boston

MAY

- 5 Wed LWVCC Board Meeting 9:00 coffee, 9:30 mtg
26 Wed LWVCC Annual Meeting, Place TBA 7:00 PM

Members are invited to attend monthly Board meetings.

Please contact Becky or Paula if you would like to attend any of them.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan grassroots organization of men and women formed in 1920 and dedicated to the principles of self government established by the Constitution of the United States. The League works to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government.

Co-Presidents	Becky Shannon	(978) 371-1806	Co-Presidents@lwvcc.com
	Paula Vandever	(978) 369-9268	Co-Presidents@lwvcc.com
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EXECUTIVE STEERING COMMITTEE

Becky Shannon and Paula Vandever, Co-Presidents

Dear League Friends,

Happy New Year to all! And a special ‘thank you’ to all who have participated in the many League activities this past fall. Our winter is lining up to be just as exciting – so please attend at least one of the many activities and add your voice to our conversation!

On January 13, we will hold our annual Membership Breakfast. Jeff Clements, Concord resident and former MA Assistant Attorney General, will speak on campaign finance reform and the Supreme Court case *Citizens United v. FEC*. We are watching this Court case closely, fearing the ruling will invalidate current regulations and take campaign finance reform backward. In March we will co-sponsor a forum on campaign finance reform. As the legislative process for both health care and banking reform has demonstrated, we need stronger, not weaker, regulations on corporate influence.

The *Let’s Talk Trash* and *Food For Thought* programs in October and November were a huge success. We reached hundreds of people and received broad coverage in the media. Food For Thought Action Groups are meeting now to change the school lunch program, start a farmers market, protect and promote farming in our towns, and learn/teach about food and nutrition. The *Life in the Balance* series continues on January 22 & February 5 with *Powering The Future*.

In anticipation of Town Meeting, the League gave comment to the Natural Resources Commission at the December public hearing on the proposed Wetlands Regulations. We will be reviewing these regulations and other Warrant Articles in upcoming LWVCC meetings.

On February 10, we will present *Our Town, Our Schools, Our Money* with Town Manager Chris Whelan, Town Finance Director Tony Logalbo, School Superintendent Diana Rigby and Deputy Superintendent John Flaherty. Finances are tight due to the recession and we look forward to hearing how the town and schools suggest we manage the budgets for 2011.

The LWVUS National Convention will be held this June in Atlanta, Georgia. We will have a delegation of Board members in attendance, so let us know if you would like to go! Next month following our February 3rd Board meeting, LWVCC members will meet to decide whether to recommend a new study, review, or concurrence to the national League agenda. As part of the process of preparing for convention, the LWVCC recently forwarded our recommendation that campaign finance reform be moved to the highest priority for advocacy at the national level. This letter has been included in the Bulletin.

Finally, remember to vote for your candidate in the special U.S. Senate seat race on January 19. Look for the LWV Vote signs around town urging everyone to vote in this important race.

Sincerely,

Becky Shannon and Paula Vandever, Co-Presidents

LWVCC MEMBER NEWS

The deadline to renew memberships arrives on the last day of January. There are still many members who have not renewed for the 2009 – 2010 membership year, but of course many who have. There will be one more mailing sent out to only those members who have not renewed. They will receive this mailing in time to return the form with their dues, so that their membership does not lapse. If you receive a letter from the local Concord Carlisle League, with a form and a request for you to continue your commitment to the League and the important work that it carries on, I urge you to return the form with dues as soon as you possibly can.

If you do not see this mailing come to you, then you are all set, and do not need to worry. The new 2010 LWVCC Membership Directory will be made up following the January 31 deadline and members will be receiving their copy in February.

If you have any questions regarding membership, please contact me at 978-287-0049 or email at Membership@lwvcc.com.

Barbara Lewis, Membership Chair

LWVCC BOOK GROUP

The next meeting will be on Wednesday, January 27, 2010 in the Trustees Room in the Concord Public Library from 10:00-11:30 AM. We will discuss *Out of Eden: An Odyssey of Ecological Invasion* by Alan Burdick. This book looks at the ecology of worldwide invasions of flora and fauna, particularly important as our habitat becomes global.

The League's book group meets four times a year to discuss current nonfiction books on a variety of pertinent and thought-provoking topics. If you would like more information please call or email Anne Hayden at (978) 369-8526 or Book_Group@lwvcc.com.

Anne Hayden, Book Group Chair

HELP WANTED

ANNIVERSARY CELEBRATIONS!

This is the 90th anniversary year of the founding of the League of Women Voters. Mrs. Carrie Chapman Catt of Iowa was president of the National American Woman Suffrage Association and in 1919 urged the formation of a League of Women Voters. In 1920, the year woman suffrage was written into the Constitution, the League was formed, with Maude Wood Park of Massachusetts its first president. The Massachusetts League was founded the same year, and the Concord League in 1931.

In addition, this year is Concord's 375th anniversary and it will be celebrated on September 11-12. Various celebratory activities are in the planning stages including fireworks and a parade. (In 1935, the Concord League had a float in the Town's Tercentenary Parade.)

We have formed a sub-committee to consider how our League might participate in both of these special anniversaries. We need volunteers for suggestions and planning, the more creative the better. If you would like to take part, please contact Ardis Bordman (Secretary@lwvcc.com) or 369-7914.

Ardis Bordman, LWVCC Secretary

Life in the Balance Forum Series Strikes a Chord

Carrying out the agenda set by League members at the May 2009 Annual Meeting, LWVCC, in collaboration with ConcordCAN (Concord Climate Action Network), Carlisle Climate Action and Concord-Carlisle Adult and Community Education, is sponsoring “**Life in the Balance: A Public Forum Series**” this year, offering programming on several topics related to climate change—trash, food and energy. Information on the series is available at <http://lwvcc.com/lifeinthebalance.html>.

POWERING THE FUTURE

Jan. 22 – *The Great Squeeze*

Feb. 5 – Our Community and Tomorrow’s Energy

The **Life in the Balance** public forum series continues with **Powering the Future**, a two-part program that focuses on climate change, energy issues and community-based solutions. **Powering the Future, Part 1**, is a free community screening of *The Great Squeeze: Surviving the Human Project*, an award-winning documentary. An informal reception will follow the film, giving audience members a chance to share their reactions.

The screening and reception will be on Friday, January 22, 7-9 p.m., at the Alcott School Auditorium, 93 Laurel St., Concord, MA. Seating is first come, first served; or reserve seats in advance by email to ace@colonial.net (subject line: “tickets”). Snow date Sunday, Jan. 24.

The Great Squeeze (2009) looks at the environmental and economic challenges brought on by low-cost, plentiful energy. With the help of experts in anthropology, economics and biology, the film explores our reliance on fossil fuels, concluding that humankind must change course or face unacceptable consequences. The film was the Official Selection at the 2009 Environmental Film Festival, the 2009 European

Independent Film Festival, and the 2009 Durango Independent Film Festival.

Powering the Future, Part 2, is “Our Community and Tomorrow’s Energy,” a speaker forum on Friday, February 5, 7-9 p.m., which will build on themes framed in *The Great Squeeze*. The forum, at the Harvey Wheeler Community Center, 1276 Main Street, West Concord, will feature guest speakers including State Rep. Will Brownsberger (Vice-Chair, House Committee on Global Warming and Climate Change), Dr. Warren Leon (author and former Director, Mass. Renewable Energy Trust), and Gretchen Brewer (Earth Circle Conservation & Recycling). Attendees may also participate in group sessions to discuss the issues and local responses. Snow date Sunday, Feb. 7.

Cindy Nock and Launa Zimmaro represent LWVCC on the planning committee. For more information contact them, visit <http://lwvcc.com/lifeinthebalance.html>, email Green_Initiatives@lwvcc.com or call 978-369-3842.

FOOD FOR THOUGHT

Forum Launches Community Action

Following the successful screening of *Food, Inc.* early in November, LWVCC and co-sponsors ConcordCAN and Carlisle Climate Action hosted a *Food for Thought Action Forum*. With a focus on moving toward a sustainable food system, over 100 people came to hear five expert speakers at the Trinitarian Congregational Church parish hall in Concord on November 20, 2009.

League Board member Lauren Bakewell moderated the program, first welcoming keynote speaker Brian Donahue, Ph.D., Assoc. Professor of American Environmental Studies at Brandeis University. Presentations followed by Willow Blish of Slow Food Boston, Jim Catterton of the Concord Agriculture Committee, Jen Hashley of Tufts University's New Entry Sustainable Farming Project as well as Pete & Jen's Backyard Birds, and Charlotte Vallaeys, Farm & Food Policy Analyst for the Cornucopia Institute. The speakers then answered questions from the audience.

As the Q&A segment ended, Lauren Bakewell invited audience members to move to action tables for discussion and planning next steps in each of four areas: Personal/Household, Schools, State/National and Local/Regional. League members Debbie Barr, Becky Shannon and Paula Vandever, along with Hasso Ewing of co-sponsor ConcordCAN, led the group discussions.

Lively sessions ensued, with each table designating coordinators, identifying priorities for action and gathering contact information to facilitate scheduling future meetings. Other League members involved in planning or

helping with the forum include Anita Barker, Barbara Lewis, Cindy Nock, Erin Pastuszanski and Launa Zimmaro.

Already, the November 20th Schools discussion has spawned an active School Nutrition Coalition working on school lunch issues and school-farm connections (see related article in this Bulletin). In addition, arising from the Local/Regional discussion in November, a Local Food group will meet on January 16 to discuss farmers markets and other topics.

Future action group meetings will be listed in the LWVCC calendar at www.lwvcc.com. Anyone interested in learning more about the ongoing groups formed at the Food for Thought forum may email Green_Initiatives@lwvcc.com or request an invitation to join the Concord/Carlisle Food for Thought Google group at <http://groups.google.com/group/ccfoodforthought>.

For more about the speakers' remarks, visit the Food for Thought section on the Life in the Balance webpage (<http://lwvcc.com/lifeinthebalance.html>) for links to news articles and a Food Actions and Websites guide. You may also watch the forum online at www.concordtv.org (search for "food" on the Video On Demand page).

Though the Food for Thought forum has ended, the action, advocacy and engagement of our community around this subject has only just begun. If you or your friends, neighbors or colleagues want more information, contact Green_Initiatives@lwvcc.com anytime!
Erin Pastuszanski, Communications

**FOOD FOR THOUGHT
School Nutrition Coalition**

The goal of the **Life in the Balance Series** has been to mobilize our community to become more sustainable and resilient to climate change and changing energy resources by supporting action groups established at the forums. After *Food For Thought* in November, parents and others concerned about the quality of food served at the schools and those who envision a partnership with local farms as a way to help struggling farmers in the community, formed the School Nutrition Coalition.

The goal of the Nutrition Coalition is to provide health promoting, nutrient dense, affordable lunches to all children attending Concord's public schools, to educate the school community about healthy and sustainable food options, to foster community-wide awareness and support of our goals, and to promote reform of state and national policy related to nutritional value and sustainability of our food supply.

The initial focus is K-8. There are three integrated components to our effort: (1) removing unhealthy additives from foods (including trans fats, preservatives, high fructose corn syrup, MSG, excessive sodium, dyes, and, eventually, genetically modified foods); (2) establishing a robust farm-to-school program that increases the diversity and amount of food purchased from local farms while preserving Concord's agricultural heritage and open space; and (3) establishing school gardens and food-related curricula that would give our children (and their families) hands-on experience with growing food, with valuable lessons about health, the environment, and sustainability.

To join the School Nutrition Coalition, contact Becky Shannon,
School_Nutrition@lwvcc.com.

Becky Shannon, LWVCC Co-President

**STATUS OF E-WASTE BILL &
UPDATED BOTTLE BILL (UBB)**

The **E-Waste bill** (formerly H. 833: *An Act Relative to Producer Responsibility for Discarded Electronic Products*, now H. 4374) was reported out of committee favorably before the winter recess and sent to the Joint Committee on Rules. This bill needs to move to Ways and Means this legislative session (by July 2010) in order to be voted.

The **Updated Bottle bill** (*H3515/S1480 An Act To Improve Recycling Rates In The Commonwealth*) has not yet been reported out favorably from the Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy. The LWVMA is working closely with MassPIRG and the Sierra Club MA to promote passage of this bill. Local Leagues in committee member districts have been contacted and asked to contact legislators urging support of this bill and submission of a resolution in support of the bill for approval by town administrations in towns and cities that have not yet passed a supportive resolution. This bill needs to move to Ways and Means this legislative session (by July 2010) in order to be voted; sixteen years and counting!

For information about the Bottle Bill, including towns and cities that have signed resolutions in support, go to: <http://www.massrecycle.org/bottlebill/resolution.html>.

Launa Zimmaro, Carlisle Liaison

LWVCC ONLINE HIGHLIGHTS

- LWVCC's website (www.lwvcc.com) features a frequently updated Calendar, along with Bulletins, information and links. Visit often, and send comments to wm@lwvcc.com.
- Soon, you can pay your dues or make donations conveniently and securely with a credit card online at www.lwvcc.com. We'll email you when this feature goes live.
- Interested in Food for Thought and the action groups that have spun off since our November programs? Ask to join the new Concord/Carlisle Food for Thought Google group (or just ask for more info) by emailing Communications@lwvcc.com.
- Please help test our new photo-sharing website. Email Communications@lwvcc.com for site access instructions, or click on the link in the upcoming email to members "Re: LWVCC Shutterfly." You can view, upload or order prints of photos.
Erin Pastuszewski, Communications

LWVCC ENVIRONMENTAL MOVIE NIGHT

LWVCC Environmental Movie nights will continue monthly until June at 7:30 pm at Nancy Beeuwkes' house. The dates (usually 2nd Wed) and movies are: January 27 (4th Wed) – *Running Dry* (Water), February 9 (2nd Tuesday) – *The Power of Community* (Food) & *What's Growing in Concord?* (Food), March 10 – *Flow* (Water), April 14 – *Fresh* (Food) & *The True Cost of Food* (Food, Cartoon, short), May 12 – *The Big Energy Gamble* (Energy), and June 9 – *The Future of Food* (Food). Watch for

an email sign-up "doodle" with the title of the film and sign up; space is limited.

If you missed one of the films we showed this fall you can probably see it on your own. See the list below for the names and sources of the films. If you have any questions call Janet Rothrock, 978-371-0350.

Movies previewed so far:

Inconvenient Truth (general)

The American Southwest: Are We Running Dry? (water)

Fast Food Nation (food)

The Real Dirt on Farmer John (food)

Supersize Me (food)

Energy Crossroads: A Burning Need to Change Course (energy)

Janet Rothrock, Movie Coordinator

OUR TOWN, OUR SCHOOLS, OUR MONEY: Facing Concord's Financial Challenges

This popular LWVCC forum returns to Concord on February 10th at 7:30 pm in the hearing room of the Town House. Proposed budgets for the town and schools will be reviewed and explained by:

- Christopher Whelan, Town Manager
- Tony Logalbo, Town Finance Director
- Diana Rigby, Superintendent of Schools
- John Flaherty, Deputy Superintendent for Administration and Finance

The discussion at this meeting is always lively and interesting and an ideal preparation for Town Meeting. Please bring a friend to this wonderful program. Refreshments will be served. Snow date is February 17th.

Erin Pastuszewski, Communications

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

As this past year has demonstrated, the influence of special interests continues to intrude upon the legislative and elective process, undermining attempts to enact meaningful legislation to address the serious issues we face as a country and society. It is increasingly clear that attempts by citizens and grassroots organizations to impact the legislative process through traditional advocacy channels are no match for the powerful counterforce of special interests. When members of Congress are beholden to special interests, the voice of the citizenry is muted.

While work on single issue efforts must continue, enactment of campaign finance reform is fundamental reform with the potential to transform 'business as usual' and positively affect the full spectrum of legislative efforts.

Campaign finance reform legislation is currently pending in Congress. The Fair Elections Now Act (S.752 and H.R. 1826) would authorize publicly financed campaigns for members of the U.S. House and Senate and is consistent with the principles of campaign reform legislation endorsed by the LWVUS. There is growing momentum across the country for campaign finance reform. Campaign finance reform represents an opportunity and responsibility to reclaim the political process and restore the trust necessary to thrive as a democracy.

For these reasons, the LWVCC has formally requested that the LWVUS assign campaign finance reform to the highest level of advocacy priority during the 2010-2012 program cycle. Plans are also underway to alert local Leagues across the country regarding the urgent

need for campaign finance reform. The letter submitted to the LWVUS is included in the Bulletin for your reference. We'll be sure to keep you posted on the response from LWVUS and ongoing work on this issue.

In a separate but related matter, the US Supreme Court is about to render a decision in *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)*. There is grave concern on the part of many who are following this case that the Supreme Court will lift restrictions on unlimited campaign spending by corporations and unions, further deepening the steady erosion of limits on such spending. In her recent commentary on the League's amicus brief to the Supreme Court, LWVUS President, Mary Wilson, describes the threat such a decision poses to our democracy (<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Template=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&ContentID=14510>).

Attorney Jeffrey Clements will be joining us at our Winter Member Breakfast on January 13th to speak about this case. The LWVCC is also collaborating with Alliance for Democracy to sponsor a public presentation by Attorney Clements tentatively planned for March.

For those interested in learning more about the implications of the *Citizens United v. FEC* ruling, the January 9th New York Times article by David D. Kirkpatrick provides an excellent overview: <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/01/09/us/politics/09donate.html?hp=&pagewanted=print>

Launa Zimmaro, Carlisle Liaison

LWVUS NATIONAL PROGRAM PLANNING

On February 3rd right after our monthly Board meeting, we will take part in LWVUS Program Planning. This three-part process, a core component of the League's mission, is composed of program planning, study and consensus, and advocacy. It is what makes the League a grassroots organization. Local Leagues across the country send their recommendations to the national League for issues that they would like to see promoted to the top tier. We have already sent our recommendation for Advocacy Priority. We recommended that campaign finance reform be moved to the top tier.

In February we will decide whether we need a new national study, a review or a concurrence of any of the national positions. Once we have studied an issue and come to consensus, we can take a stand and lobby for that issue. The top recommendations will be reviewed and voted on at the LWVUS National Convention in June.

Join us next month by attending the meeting, especially if there is an issue that you feel strongly about that the League has not addressed.

Paula Vandever, Co-President

ADVOCACY FORUM ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS

Reverend Liz Walker will be the keynote speaker at the sixth annual forum of the regional *Advocacy Network to End Family Homelessness*, on Sunday, February 28th at First Parish in Concord, 20 Lexington Rd., Concord, from 3:00 to 5:00 P.M.

Speakers for the forum include Elizabeth Curtis, director of the Mass Interagency Council of Housing and Homelessness, who will describe the goals and progress of the new regional programs in ending homelessness, and Mary Doyle of the Metropolitan Boston Housing Partnership who will cover the specific programs for ending homelessness of the MetroBoston (inner western suburbs) Network. Both speakers will focus on ways individuals and organizations can further programs to end homelessness.

Speakers and area state legislators will take questions during a discussion period moderated by Miriam Stein, MSW, advocacy consultant. The forum is free and open to all.

LWVCC is a co-sponsor of this event along with a number of local and regional organizations.

AUDITIONS FOR DVSN BENEFIT

The Domestic Violence Services Network (DVSN) is planning its annual 2010 Benefit on March 26, 27 and 28, 2010 – a production of monologues by world-renowned authors edited by Eve Ensler, author of *The Vagina Monologues* and founder of V-Day, the global movement to end violence against women and girls.

DVSN is looking for female and male volunteers to assist both on and off stage. No prior acting experience required. Auditions are Sat, Jan 21 10 am-1 pm at Harvey Wheeler Community Center, Mon, Jan 18 4-6 pm at Concord Police Dept (219 Walden St.) and Sat Jan 23 10 am-1 pm at Harvey Wheeler Center.

November 2009 Domestic Violence Prevention activities

Introduction: national and state **League of Women Voters** chapters have made a significant commitment to domestic violence prevention with reports in every **Concord-Carlisle League** newsletter. Included:

- **Rachel's' Box Project**
- **Domestic Violence Services Network [DVSNI]** (including **DVVAP**)
- **Network for Women's Lives [NWL]**
- other timely area projects

Rachel's Box Project serves victims of domestic violence, as well as child and elder abuse, in **50 locations around the western suburbs**. Please notify Nancy James 978-369-2771 if you notice boxes in disarray or needing materials. ***The Network for Women's Lives*** Rachel's Box Committee tends the boxes and provides updated materials and ***Network*** newsletters.

Domestic Violence Services Network through ***DVVAP*** trains community volunteers to become advocates who "offer empowering knowledge and gentle compassion." Emergency numbers on the web site are below.

Emergency Numbers

Police	911
Emerson Hospital	978-287-3690
Rape Crisis Center	800-542-5212
Domestic Violence Victim Assistance (DVVAP)	888-399-6111
Network for Women's Lives Referral Service	978-287-4089
Support Group for Women with Controlling Partners	978-369-0259 or -2208
Concord District Court D.A.'s Victim Witness Advocate	978-369-0225
Dept. of Transitional Assistance	617-629-1400
Food Source Hotline	800-645-8333
[Jane Doe] Mass Coalition Against Sexual Assault & Domestic Violence	www.janedoe.org
Domestic Violence Shelter	877-785-2020

By: Nancy P. James
1/12/2010
978-369-2771



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF CONCORD-CARLISLE**

P.O. Box 34, Concord, MA 01742 www.lwvcc.com league@lwvcc.com

Making Democracy Work

January 7, 2010

Judy Duffy, Chair
Advocacy Committee
LWVUS Board

Dear Ms. Duffy:

We are contacting you on behalf of the LWVCC to ask that campaign finance reform be designated as a top tier advocacy priority of the LWVUS during the 2010-2012 program cycle.

While there are many urgent issues that need to be addressed by Congress, a review of critical legislative efforts in the past year alone leads to the unavoidable conclusion that money has become the most influential determinant of legislative outcomes. Special interests are robbing the electorate of its voice and blocking the essential changes needed to deal effectively with the needs of the citizenry and the monumental issues we face as a country.

The current battle to enact meaningful climate change and health care legislation, two LWVUS advocacy priorities for 2009, are prime examples of this disturbing phenomenon. Unless we deal effectively and comprehensively with the underlying reasons for ‘politics as usual’, special interests will continue to stymie the democratic process, with diluted and potentially counterproductive legislation as the result.

Given the League’s comparatively limited resources in relation to special interests, we urge that the LWVUS focus on fundamental reforms that underlie the legislative and election process.

The Fair Elections Now Act (S.752 and H.R. 1826) is an example of such reform. This legislation would authorize publicly financed campaigns for members of the U.S. House and Senate.

The LWVUS is already on record as being in support of an earlier version of the Fair Elections Now Act (S. 936), as documented in LWVUS President, Mary Wilson’s 2007 letter to the Senate (attached). The current House and Senate versions of the bill contain many of the key provisions needed to ensure its effectiveness. Additionally, there is bipartisan support for this much needed reform with 124 members of the House of Representatives listed as co-sponsors.

On November 6, 2008, the LWVUS joined forces with the Brennan Center for Justice, the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Democracy 21, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG to issue a Government Integrity Reform Agenda for 111th Congress

(<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=12350>).

Repairing the public financing system for presidential elections and creating a new public financing system for congressional elections is cited as the “overriding priority for fixing Washington” in this document.

There will surely be an ongoing need for public oversight and monitoring of the legislative process, but establishing true campaign and election reform through public financing will level the playing field so that the merits of legislation and the public good—rather than special interests—will dictate outcomes.

We urge the LWVUS to designate campaign finance reform as its highest advocacy priority for 2010-2012. There can be no greater cause than the restoration of our democratic process and the confidence of the people, and no more fitting role for the LWVUS as a force on behalf of that repair.

Thank you for your consideration of this request.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Shannon, LWVCC Co-Chair
978-371-1806

Paula Vandever, LWVCC Co-Chair
978-369-9268