



Empowering Voters.
Defending Democracy.

Women Power the Vote

A Presentation offered by
The League of Women Voters of Greater Hartford
For Ethel Walker School
February 2020

Today's Goal



- Describe the League of Women Voters
- Engage YOU to take action on Feb 14 – the 100th birthday of the League which was founded on February 14, 1920

Our Workshop Agenda



1. LWV Action Framework

Key principles, organization structures, issues & positions; LWV history

2. Available resources – National League; Connecticut League

3. Student-centric February 14 “Day of ACTION” checklist

LWV Today: Big picture



- **Mission**

- Empowering voters. Defending democracy.

- **Vision**

- We envision a democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate.

- **Value**

- We believe in the power of women to create a more perfect democracy.

Structures, Principles, Practices



- Membership organization: open to all regardless of gender
- 3 levels of organization: National, State, Local
 - Councils & Conventions – National/State
- Operating arms: Education (LWVEF)/Advocacy (LWVUS)
- Non-partisan: no endorsement of candidates or political parties
- Political advocacy on issues with LWV consensus positions

Areas of Emphasis Examples



- **Representative Government**
 - Voting Rights
 - Citizen Rights
- **International Relations**
 - United Nations
 - Developing Countries
- **Natural Resources**
 - Air Quality
 - Water Resources
- **Social Policy**
 - Equality of Opportunity
 - Immigration



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Action Examples: Protecting the Environment

- At forefront of efforts to protect air, land and water resources since 1960's
- Pioneering focus on interrelationships between air and water management issues
- 1999-2000 produced Q&A on Global Warming; LWV believes in immediate, international action

Action Examples: Protecting & Expanding the Vote

Legislation

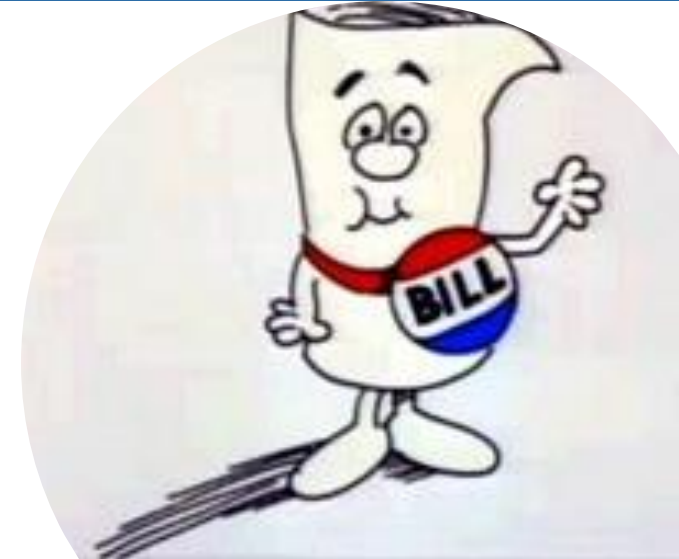
- National: National Voter Registration Act; Voting Rights **Advancement Act**
- Connecticut: Early Voting, Citizen's Election Program

Litigation (court cases)

- Oppose ID laws intended to suppress voting
- Oppose gerrymandering



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Key action principle: “Speak with one Voice”



- Work collaboratively among all levels of the League
- Provide advocacy resources – often includes materials to inform, such as issue brief
- Maintain non-partisanship in Voter Service– no mention of LWV positions

League History



- Founded February 14, 1920 – almost 100 years ago- by Suffrage Leader Carrie Chapman Catt
- LWV direct descendant of suffrage movement
- Catt and others: organization to inform, educate



LWV Then vs Now: What Happened?



Civil Rights Movement

- 1) May 1960: President Dwight D. Eisenhower signed the Civil Rights Act of 1960, which **prohibited intimidation of black voters** and gave **judges power to appoint referees to oversee voter registration**
- 2) 1964: 24th amendment to the Constitution was ratified; it finally abolishes poll taxes in federal elections
- 3) 1965: **Voting Rights Act** which established federal oversight of election rules for states with a history of voter suppression

Where was the League?



“ Even during the Civil Rights movement, the League was not as present as we should have been. **While activists risked life and limb to register black voters in the South, the League’s work and our leaders were late in joining to help protect all voters at the polls....”**

“...Early on, many state Leagues adopted positions on election laws. But at the national level...**the League found itself during the civil rights struggle of the 1960s without authority to take national legislative action on behalf of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 (VRA)”** (p. 13, Impact on Issues – 2018-2020)

Inflection Point: 1970 LWV Convention



“Stung by the League’s powerlessness to act on such a significant issue, the 1970 Convention adopted a bylaws amendment [that enabled action without adopting voting rights in the national program]. This unusual decision reflected member conviction that protecting the right to vote is indivisibly part of the League’s basic purpose.” (p. 13, Impact on Issues-2018-2020)

Representative Government



- After that 1970 Convention, several conventions that followed further embedded voting rights as a set of actionable positions that are firmly integrated within the modern League structure.
- ~30 pages of Impact on Issues out of 94 pages in total are devoted to positions within the category of Representative Government



<https://whowhatwhy.org/2019/01/07/league-of-women-voters-gets-trump-bump/>

Commitment to Diversity, Equity, Inclusion



LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. **Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization's current and future success** in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a **more perfect democracy**.

There shall be no barriers to full participation in this organization on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.

League Online: national & state Find your legislators link



- CT LWV: <https://my.lwv.org/connecticut>
- Find your legislator:
<https://www.cga.ct.gov/asp/menu/cgafindleg.asp>
- National LWV: <http://lwv.org>