



The Voter

The League of Women Voters of Western Nevada County

March 2012

PACs—SuperPACs—Citizens United



OUR GUEST SPEAKERS

John Connelly - Chief Administrative Officer, California Assembly, Retired

Tina Vernon - Nevada County Treasurer - Tax Collector

David Walrath - Legislative Advocate

Saturday, March 10, 2012

Refreshments at 9:30 a.m. - Program at 10:00 a.m.

**Peace Lutheran Church
828 West Main
Grass Valley.**



The Prez Sez



Words to remember: Accuracy, Verifiability, Accountability. These words should be the motto for any media organization presenting “facts.” If the “facts” aren’t accurate, or aren’t verifiable, then whoever reports the “facts” should be held accountable.

In the year preceding a national election, we voters will be bombarded from all sides with “facts.” We need to remember to ask for the media sources for those facts.

Case in point: If you weren’t at our February meeting, you missed a stimulating discussion on the topic of “Voter Suppression.” The validity of “voter suppression” v. “voter fraud” was hotly debated as Lola Acosta, Sacramento League President, and Greg Diaz, Nevada County Registrar of Voters, presented information regarding the history of voter suppression in the U.S. as well as current efforts to disenfranchise some voters across the U.S. Some members of the audience insisted that voter suppression isn’t an issue and asserted that voter fraud is widespread. They suspected the League’s sources are biased and distorted. Our speakers presented reports from the Brennan Center for Justice at the NYU School of Law concluding that reports of nationwide voter fraud are greatly inflated.

Since then, we’ve learned that a Pew Center study found that voter registration rolls across the country are riddled with errors, e.g., names of voters who’ve moved or are deceased are still on the rolls. As is often the case, human error or incompetence seems the most likely explanation.

At our meeting, one attendee said that he would provide us with irrefutable proof of widespread voter fraud. Meanwhile, I’ve conducted an on-line search for examples of voter fraud, but couldn’t find much. Apparently, despite conservative charges of widespread voter fraud, there have been very few cases prosecuted.

I also searched for information on “voter intimidation,” especially a 2008 incident at a Philadelphia polling site where several members of the New Black Panther Party apparently tried to intimidate voters by shouting invectives at them while one brandished a night stick. Reportedly, most of those registered to vote at this polling place were African-Americans. So, what was really going on? The more I read about this incident (see July 15, 2010 *Washington Post* article and the Wikipedia summary), the more confused I felt about what really happened and why it wasn’t prosecuted. I concluded that I may never know what actually happened (“accuracy” and “verifiability”) or what the context for this incident was. The only thing I feel sure of is that no one is being held accountable.

One other thing I am sure of is that our 2012 meetings have been outstanding so far. Come and join us for another interesting meeting on March 10 and find out what all the excitement is about.

Karen Schwartz, President



January 12, 2012

The U.S. Supreme Court issues many opinions each year and it is safe to say they all greatly impact the lives of Americans in some way. The Supreme Court's opinion two years ago in *Citizens United v. FEC* is by all accounts one that has dramatically changed the landscape of modern political campaigns in America.

Looking back, the League's commentary on the decision accurately predicted the impact we are now seeing in the 2012 election—the birth of SuperPACs:

“The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake. Their decision announced today in *Citizens United v. FEC* is constitutionally irresponsible and will surely bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. Today, basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined—that elections should not be corrupted by vast corporate wealth and that the voters should be at the center of our democratic system.” (LWVUS 1/21/10)

SuperPACs are popping up everywhere. In 2010, we caught a glimpse of what was to come in American politics under *Citizens United*. Now as we sit back and watch the 2012 campaign season begin to unfold, we see that the very integrity of our elections is at stake. And the federal agency that is responsible for regulating money in American politics—the Federal Election Commission (FEC)- is totally dysfunctional. Of the six commissioners at the agency, three of them simply refuse to enforce the law, and five of the six are serving despite the fact that their terms expired some time ago.

Business as usual is not working. It is time to clean house and President Obama is the one that needs to do something about it.

Elisabeth MacNamara, President
The League of Women Voters of the United States



Our March Meeting



PACs - SuperPACs Citizens United

Pick up a copy of the U.S. Constitution. Can you find the word corporation in it? You cannot.

The U.S. Constitution guarantees you and me— living, breathing human beings, citizens of the United States—the right to free speech.

But in their wisdom, five justices of the U.S. Supreme Court have decided that corporations have the same free speech rights as you and I. And, says the Court in a case called *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission (FEC)*, that includes the right to spend whatever corporations like to support or oppose candidates for elected office.*

Come to the League's monthly meeting on March 10, 2012, and take part in one of the most important discussions most of us will ever have regarding free speech and money in politics and, of course, in elections.

We will, as usual, have guest panelists who will speak on this subject. Election 2012 is almost here! Remember, League meetings are always open to the community, so bring your questions and concerns on March 10 and let's hear from you!

*(Reprinted in part courtesy of Public Citizen)

The California DISCLOSE Act (AB 1148)

Provisions:

- **Requires the three largest funders of political ads to be clearly identified with their names and logos** on the ads themselves, so voters know who is actually paying for them.
- **Applies to all television ads, radio ads, print ads, mass mailers, and websites** for or against state and local ballot measures, and to independent expenditures for and against candidates. It applies whether ads are paid for by corporations, unions, or millionaires.
- **Tells voters where to find the details** and requires ads to list a website with greater disclosure and a link to the Secretary of State's website.
- **Will "pierce through" hidden funders** by requiring political ads to report their three largest actual contributors, no matter how many committees or groups their contributions pass through.
- **Applies to state mailers** by requiring state mailers to show when ads are paid for by independent expenditures.
- **Requires candidates to appear** and say they "approve this message," just like federal candidates.

The "Life and Death of a Bill"

AB 1148 - Authored by Assemblymember Julia Brownley, Chair of Assembly Elections Committee.

AB 1148 - Passed the Elections Committee on January 9 and Appropriations on January 19. It was slated to be voted on by the full State Assembly on Tuesday, January 31, and then by the State Senate.

AB 1148 - Endorsed by the League of Women Voter of California and several local Leagues.

AB 1148 - The California DISCLOSE Act fell two votes short of a two-thirds supermajority that it required for passage on January 31, 2012. The final tally was 52 to 26. One Democrat and one Republican voted "no."



League of Women Voters of California®

Legislative Priorities

Adopted by the LWVC Board of Directors on January 30, 2012

Priority Issues for Action in the Legislature

- **State and Local Finances/State Budget**
- Support reform of the state budgeting process
- Support equitable and adequate generation and distribution of tax revenues
-
- **Other Legislative Issues, As Time and Resources Permit**
- Support requests from local Leagues and inter-League organizations (ILOs) for advocacy on bills of specific interest to their jurisdictions
- Take action as appropriate on core issues: Redistricting, Elections, Initiative and Referendum Process, Voting Rights, Campaign Finance Reform, and Reproductive Choices
- Consider Program Director recommendations for action on the highest priority bills in their program areas. We anticipate action in the areas of Health Care, and Campaign Finance Reform.

Statewide Ballot Measures

Review all statewide ballot measures and recommend a position or neutrality on each one to the LWVC Board of Directors

LWVUS Legislative Priorities

The Board adopted the following LWVUS Legislative Priorities for 2011:

- Clean Air Defense
- Health Care Defense
- Money in Elections (campaign finance reform)
- Voter Registration and Election Administration

The **Legislative Watch List*** is as follows:

- CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women)
- Climate Change
- Ethics
- Immigration
- Safe Drilling and Mining (“Fracking”)

*The Watch List means that if an opportunity arises on these issues and does not interfere with action on an advocacy priority, the LWVUS may take action if it appears we can make an impact.

The Board discussed many issues and the responses from members suggesting Legislative Priorities. The decisions were made based on what issues are likely to come before the 112th Congress, the opportunities to make an impact, program decisions made at the 2010 Convention, member interest and resources available to manage these priorities effectively. The Board reviews these priorities throughout the year, making changes if warranted.

Four Influential Women You've (Probably) Never Heard About!



Esther Peterson (1906-1997)

Esther Peterson worked throughout her life for consumer protection, labor conditions for American workers, and equal opportunity for American women. Because of her work, working women have a legal right to equal pay, and food labels by law must now list exact amounts of ingredients and the nutritional content. She served four U.S. Presidents in various capacities, including Assistant Secretary of Labor and Vice-Chair of the first Presidential Commission on the Status of Women.



Lillian Smith (1897-1966)

Honored in 1956 by the women who organized the Montgomery Bus Boycott, Lillian Smith was one of the nation's strongest European-American voices to expose the vicious ways that racism destroys the human spirit. She used her stellar writing talent and class privilege to expose and challenge racism. Smith co-published the literary magazine *South Today* to help give voice to progressive black and white southern writers.



Harriet Tubman (1820-1913)

This abolitionist was born a slave. She eventually became a "conductor" on the Underground Railroad - a system developed by a secret group of free blacks and sympathetic whites to help runaway slaves get to free northern states. Harriet Tubman led more than 300 slaves to freedom!



Victoria Woodhull (1838-1927)

Victoria Woodhull was the first woman to be nominated and campaign for the U.S. Presidency. She was nominated by the Women's National Equal Rights Party. Woodhull and her sister were also the first two female stockbrokers on Wall Street.

VOTER SERVICE: PRIMARY ELECTION 2012

The Voter Service Committee is off and running with the upcoming special election and the June 5 Open Primary Election.

- On March 8 the League has been asked to count ballots for the Nevada County Consolidated Fire District special tax increase. The Fire District has sent out 20,000 vote-by-mail ballots to registered voters in most of the unincorporated county. This is a monumental endeavor, and several League members have volunteered to help with the count. If any League member would like to participate, please call or e-mail me, and I will gladly put you on the schedule. We will be counting beginning at 8:30 a.m. until we finish (we hope) by late afternoon. The ballot count will take place at: Fire Station 84, located at: 10135 Coyote Street, Nevada City.
- Possible candidate forums for the Open Primary Election are:
 - House of Representatives, District One
 - State Assembly, District One
 - Board of Supervisors
 - Nevada City City Council
 - Judges

We will offer a forum for all elected offices that have at least two candidates running.

The last day for filing declaration of candidates, nominations, and supplemental signatures-in-lieu is March 9. Once we have the candidate information from the Registrar and/or the Secretary of State, we will finalize the forums. At this time, the Board of Supervisors' Meeting Room has been reserved for:

Thursday, April 19	6:00 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.
Wednesday, April 25	6:00 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.
Monday, April 30	6:00 p.m. - 9:15 p.m.

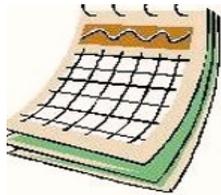
This is a wonderful venue with comfortable seating, appropriate seating for the candidates and media, and access to a sound system.

- Interesting Information: U.S. House of Representatives' qualifications:
 - Individual must be at least 25 years of age.
 - Individual must have been a U.S. citizen for seven years.
 - Individual must be a resident of California on January 3, 2013, the date he/she would be sworn in if elected.
 - (There are no district residency requirements for members of Congress.)

Stay tuned: Next month we will cover the details of the Open Election, where we stand on initiative signatures, and other interesting tidbits regarding qualifications for elected office.

Ruth Schwartz
Voter Service Chair

Mark Your Calendars!



May 12, 2012

LWVNC ANNUAL MEETING And Luncheon

**More information in the April issue of
*The Voter***

NEW MEMBER

Our warmest welcome to our new member!

JOEY JORDAN

Addresses, phone numbers and e-mails of members can be obtained by contacting the Membership Committee.

NEW MEMBER

Our warmest welcome to our new member!

ANNAMARIA S. SAUER

Addresses, phone numbers and e-mails of members can be obtained by contacting the Membership Committee.

WELCOME BACK!

STEPHEN MUNKELT

Addresses, phone numbers and e-mails of members can be obtained by contacting the Membership Committee.

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