Supreme Court Considers Voting Rights Act

The U.S. Supreme Court has heard oral arguments on the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, a case which will ultimately decide whether millions of voters could face new barriers when trying to exercise their right to vote. The Voting Rights Act is an essential part of American democracy. It ensures that every American citizen, regardless of race, has an equal right to vote.

If the Justices overturn the Voting Rights Act, it would be the single biggest setback for voting rights in history. The VRA is indispensable to the League’s work. The League protects and defends voting rights across the country in order to ensure that our elections are fair, free and accessible to all eligible citizens. The VRA has helped the League work to defeat restrictive state voter photo identification laws, block such laws where they have already been passed, and fight laws designed to curb organizations like ours from registering voters.

The thought that the Supreme Court might take away voting rights should send a chill down the spine of every American. We’re working with our partners to ensure that the justices of the Supreme Court understand what is truly at risk if the VRA is overturned. You can support the League’s work by making a pledge to support the VRA here: http://participate.lwv.org/c/10065/p/dia/action/public/?action_KEY=7412.
New PowerPoint Presentation Available Online

“The Role of the League of Women Voters of Oregon: More Power than We Knew 1920-2010,” a new PowerPoint presentation by Marge Easley, is now available online at the LWVOR website in the members’ section. It is based on the newly updated League history, More Power than We Knew, compiled by Marge Easley, Jane Gigler, Libby Medley, and Kris Hudson to commemorate the 100th anniversary of woman suffrage.

The presentation covers the Oregon League’s road to suffrage, the depression and war years, action taken, voter service landmarks, all statewide studies done since 1995, and interesting little-known facts. It is available for download at http://www.lwvor.org/members/outreach-and-pr-resources/. (You’ll need to login first. Contact the office if you need a login.)

The book More Power than We Knew is available from the League office for $12 each. If mailed, the book costs $16. The PowerPoint presentation is free.

Convention Planning

The LWVOR Convention 2013 Committee has been meeting regularly and is making some innovative changes that are in accordance with our bylaws and LWVOR Policies and Procedure Guidelines. The committee has searched for ways to logically shorten the business portions of convention while not leaving out important time for review and discussion by members.

By having only two sections for discussion instead of four before voting on bylaws, program and budget, we will shorten the Convention agenda and leave time for more creative activities. On Friday May 17th the items mentioned will be introduced, and there will be time then for discussion also. The next day, on Saturday, May 18th in the first morning session, we will vote after more time for discussion.

ATTENTION: VOTING AT CONVENTION on bylaws, program and the budget will take place on SATURDAY, May 18th, 2013. Otherwise, the schedule will stay the same. All other business will be voted on Sunday, May 19th.
**President’s Column / Robin Wisdom**

Hello League Leaders and Activists,

The legislative session is going full speed ahead. Our Advocacy Team is following it from a number of vantage points. If team members are not at the Capitol during weekdays, they are viewing hearings from home and reporting back to the group. No doubt you’ve been reading the weekly Legislative Reports (LR). They are eye-openers. Specifically, the League has just signed on with Ceasefire Oregon to support responsible gun safety measures. The Action Team has already testified on suction dredging, funding for the Oregon Youth Authority, the Land Use Board of Appeals, the Dept. of Geology and Mineral Industries and much more. The National Popular Vote bills are SB 624 and HB 3077. You can easily follow those from here.

We are fortunate to have such a lively and giving group of activists who represent us at the legislature and are willing to keep us informed. Reading the LR is a succinct way to find out what’s going on without having to read volumes of legalese which our Action Team does for us. And conversely, the Action Team wants you to know they value your input and your assistance especially now when so much is happening so quickly.

The Day at the Legislature has been scheduled for April 10th at the Montag Den at the Willamette University. Save the date, register early, and bring a friend.

What we’ve learned in the Membership & Leadership Development program (MLD) is evident in our membership stats. Membership numbers for 2013-14 are up compared to the past few years. For 2013-14 we have 1033; last year state total was 1026. That’s not a large increase, but the downward trend is now reversed. This is largely thanks to our national League and all Oregon MLD state and local League coaches and local League members who do their part for membership recruitment. Your work is already starting to pay off. The ultimate goal is to incorporate MLD best practices into what we do already and craft new projects with those practices built in. If we do this sincerely and not set MLD aside, we will be successful in the long run as well as in the short. Let’s maintain the momentum!

There are discussions regarding MLD and the relationship between coaches and state board liaisons. Each position has similar, if not overlapping, purposes. The state board is considering re-defining its liaison program for the future. To add to this discussion, contact State Coach Coordinator, Pamela Ashland at misschattr@aol.com.

“The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new lands but seeing with new eyes.” — Marcel Proust

Thank you sincerely for your wise leadership,
**Climate Change Matters**

On February 28, 2013 LWVOR sent the following letter to President Obama.

Mr. President,

The League of Women Voters of Oregon calls on you to lead the U.S. and the world through the greatest environmental challenge of our generation: climate change. Please raise your voice to draw special attention to this issue. Use your authority as President to save our youth and seniors from the formation of smog which can induce lung damage and asthma attacks. Use your influence to protect us from deadly heat waves, droughts, and severe storms.

Mr. President, you can establish the U.S. as a world leader in fighting climate change. You have the power to put controls on new and existing power plants and make the world a safer place for our children to live and breathe. The Supreme Court has said that the Administration can move forward under the Clean Air Act to cut this life-threatening pollution.

President Obama, if the United States doesn’t lead, the rest of the world cannot follow. Saving the world is a legacy worth fighting for.

Sincerely,
Robin Wisdom
President

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**Leave a League Legacy**

It’s not complicated to leave funds or property for your most important organization for future unfinished business. You can arrange now to leave a legacy gift to the League’s 501(c)(3) tax-exempt charitable organization or you can give at any time. The language is quite simple and can be written up with your attorney/financial planner. Simply say,

“I bequeath to the League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund, a charitable nonprofit tax-exempt organization formed in Oregon, with an office at 1330 12th Street SE, Suite 200, Salem, OR 97302, (specify gift amount, percentage of estate, residual amount or property).”

You can leave a flat amount, a percentage of the estate or a piece of property. The amount can be dedicated to a local League and kept by the state League’s Education Fund for that local League to use on Education Fund projects.

Thank you for your generosity to the League. It’s because of you, the League and our democracy will continue on into the future.
Rebecca Smith, Coordinator
After successful mock election year, we are pleased to announce that we have won another national award for the Oregon Student Mock Election. Leading educational organizations, in conjunction with the My Voice National Student Mock Election, sponsored awards for outstanding student voter educational projects. The Oregon Student Mock Election is the winner of the Statewide Category for an exceptional state level voting project.

The 2012 Oregon Student Mock Election involved 217 schools and more than 49,000 students from all parts of Oregon. The League organized volunteers to publicize the project and revise and create new materials to encourage students to vote. The project culminated in a mock vote resulting in extensive media coverage. Through an authentic learning experience, students realized that their votes matter.

The program was coordinated by the League of Women Voters of Oregon Education Fund and cosponsored and supported by the Governor’s office, the Secretary of State, the Department of Education, the Oregon Newspaper Publishers Association, the Oregon PTA, the Oregon School Boards Association, the Oregon Council for the Social Studies, and Oregon Association of Student Councils. We worked in coordination with the My Voice National Student Mock Election.

I would especially like to acknowledge dedicated League volunteers Deanie Anderson, Anne Bell, Marge Easley, Marianne Germond, Sally Hollemon, Marnie Lonsdale, and Kathy Pugh. Temporary employees Rachel Buckley and Hayden Clapper, as well as intern Hannah Miller were a tremendous help. All the organizations, volunteers, and employees deserve credit for the award. Thank you!
LWVOR Raffle: You Could Be a Winner!

Betsy Pratt
For the past few years, the League of Women Voters of Oregon has conducted a raffle to raise funds in support of its programs. And like a good League member I have diligently sold tickets to my friends and relations. To my great amazement, one of those tickets was a winner! I was totally surprised when my sister Catherine’s name was drawn from the bucket at the May 2011 state convention. And she was even more astonished – and delighted - when I told her the news.

The winning ticket formed the basis of a Pratt family reunion on the Big Island of Hawaii in March 2012, a dream-come-true for Catherine. Five of us, including my mother, Clackamas League member Nancy Pratt, had a glorious week enjoying the view and the infinity pool at our rental house, exploring the island, lounging on soft sandy beaches, eating fine seafood, and swimming with sea turtles. We rented kayaks one day and visited the Volcanoes National Park on another.

This year we shifted our raffle prizes from travel to technology – and we are picking 3 winning tickets, instead of just one.

- First prize: iPad3 with Retina Display
- Second prize: iPad Mini
- Third prize: Nook HD+

Each of these models is the best of its type. The iPads both come with WiFi and cellular capacity, and the Nook was rated highest for e-readers by Consumer Reports.

Only 2,000 tickets will be sold in the entire state and cost $10 each. The raffle drawing will take place at the State Convention in May. So when the opportunity comes around again to buy (or sell) League raffle tickets, give it a shot. Someone you know might win!

Tax Laws and Organizational Options

Betsy Pratt
On January 23rd, I attended an afternoon seminar sponsored by the Nonprofit Association of Oregon. The title of the workshop was “Nonprofits and Advocacy: Mission Advancement and Civic Engagement,” which sounded like an ‘organizational development’ exercise. It turned out there were 2 main topics presented, with the first being very interesting and relevant to the League.

The main speaker, Daren Garshelis, from a national group called Alliance for Justice, provided very useful guidance about the tax status for nonprofits as tied to advocacy efforts. The League of Oregon has two separate legal entities to protect the tax-exempt status of our 501(c)(3) program (the Education Fund). It was our understanding that tax-exempt donations to the 501(c)(3) entity could not be used for Action and lobbying activities, so those activities occur as part of the regular organization (which is a 501(c)(4) entity). However, according to the Alliance for Justice material, 501(c)(3) public organizations “can lobby within the general limits allowed by federal law. How much lobbying the organization can do depends upon which of the two tests the organization uses to measure its lobbying -- the “501(h) expenditure” test or the “insubstantial part” test.”

Mr. Garshelis explained that the “insubstantial part” test is not well-defined by the IRS and “lobbying” is defined broadly as any effort to influence legislation. He said that case laws suggests that if a 501(c)(3) organization spends more than 16% of its budget on lobbying, that’s too much; less than 5% does not seem to be challenged.

The “501(h)” test, on the other hand, has much clearer boundaries and requirements. (Continued on page 7.)
Tax Laws (Continued)

First, an organization must affirmatively file a specific IRS form (IRS 5768) one time. Second, there are clear expenditure limits (on actual expenditures only, not volunteer time or in-kind contributions). Up to 20% of the organization’s budget may be used for direct lobbying, and there are no limits on other “education or non-lobbying advocacy” efforts. And an organization may use up to 25% of that 20% ceiling for “Grassroots lobbying.” Finally, there is a much narrower and specific definition of “lobbying” as direct communication to a legislator (or rule-maker) to express a view about specific legislation. Although the 501(h) concept is new to us, the underlying law dates back to the 1970s.

The Wisconsin state League has already shifted to the 501(h) mechanism and is working on a transition for local Leagues. LWVUS has recommended that other Leagues wait and see whether this mechanism is working, but based on Mr. Garshelis’ presentation, it may be appropriate to investigate this option ourselves.

The second workshop topic concerned advocacy roles. Most of the attendees were from social service organizations that focus on service delivery. Unlike the LWV, they don’t see influencing public policy as part of their mission. The workshop presenters argued that these organizations have perspectives and facts that should be shared with policy makers, either to speak for their communities’ interests or to gain (or preserve) resources needed to support their programs.

Norman Turrill and Marge Easley, LWVOR Action Team members, demonstrating a legislative hearing in the National Popular Vote skit at the Legislative Process Day, 1/17/13.
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Buy your $10 raffle tickets today for a chance to win and to support the League of Women Voters

*Prizes will be awarded in the form of gift cards. Drawing will be held May 18, 2013, 8 pm at The Mill Casino, North Bend, OR. Ticket holders need not be present to win. **Maximum number of tickets to be sold: 2000**
Wednesday, April 10, 2013
Oregon State Capitol and Montag Den, Willamette University
Sponsored by League of Women Voters of Oregon,
Oregon NOW, and AAUW of Oregon

Highlights
Legislative hearings hosted by LWV and AAUW volunteer lobbyists at 8 AM, 1 PM and/or 3 PM
10 AM – 1 PM workshop & lunch with
Expert speakers on Election Reforms, Public Safety, Scenic Rivers, and more

Day at the Legislature Registration Form

Name: _________________________________________________________________________________________________
Organization affiliation (if member of sponsoring org):_____________________________________________________
Address: _______________________________________________________________________________________________
_________________________________________________________________________________________________________
Phone:___________________________Email:____________________________________________________________________

Workshop with lunch:
☒ $21.00 member of sponsoring organization
☒ $26.00 guest

Workshop only:
☒ $12.00 member
☒ $17.00 guest

Lunch Choice:
Box lunch features sandwich, fruit, chips, water, and cookie. Choose: ☐ Turkey   ☐ Beef   ☐ Vegetarian

Parking Pass:
☒ Send me a Capitol parking pass in advance for $15.50 ($15.00 pass plus .50 postage). My check includes this fee
and I have included my mailing address. (Note: parking fees have doubled in cost as of February. Meters are
$1.50/hr.)

Hearings:
We will give you the opportunity to sign up in advance with a host for 8 AM, 1 PM, and/or 3 PM hearings. Please make
sure we have a legible email address so we can send you the sign-up form and instructions on Monday, April 8.

Make checks payable to LWVOR and return with this form to LWVOR, 1330 12th St. SE, Suite 200, Salem, OR 97302 by
April 3, 2013. Questions? Call 503-581-5722 or email lwvor@lwvor.org. Register online and get map, parking info,
and agenda at www.lwvor.org.
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