

**Civic Engagement & The Power of 10**  
**For Phoenix Women's Commission Forum Oct. 26, 2016**  
**Keynote by Care Lengel**

Some election, huh? I don't know about you, but I'm ready for this national election to be over! Some say this election has been historic because of how much it's raised civic engagement; it's just too bad it hasn't also raised civil behavior. Though we have gotten many, many new voters registered!

But this election reminds me of a job offer I got years ago. Someone I knew asked me to quit teaching and organize a campaign to get voters to quit voting; to make folks so tired of the hype, so frustrated with the process that they would quit participating in our democracy! The strategy was to get people to disenfranchise themselves so that those who did vote would have more control.

That's the day I learned not voting was still voting! But every time I see a negative commercial that harangues against a candidate or an issue, I think, "Somebody is doing that job, the one I refused, getting people NOT to vote!" And that makes me mad!

Of course, I didn't take the job. It was against all my family's values! Before the 1960's, many men went to work and many women worked at home raising kids. So the women in my family got involved in politics to improve society. My grandmother worked for women's right to vote in the 1910's. My mother worked on candidates' campaigns in the 50's. At 10, they had me wearing huge buttons during the Nixon/Kennedy election in 1960. I remember we heard a legislator and mother of 10 at the state legislature speak for a woman's right... to birth control.

Later we marched for state laws to make abortion safer and legal. You may agree or disagree; I support your right to do so. But my Republican mother and grandmother taught me that, since women had the vote it was our duty to use it, and it was everyone's Duty to get informed and speak out on the issues of our day. I guess that's why I still do and why I'm here today.

Since the 1970's, women have worked inside and outside the home, but we still see clearly into the future through our children and grandchildren. So I stand here, a third generation political woman, encouraging you to take the long view, ignore this election hype, and get engaged in our community rather than give away your vote!

I'm here to say, "Don't give up on our democracy! Take up civic activism and civil persuasion instead! Because every single woman here thinks about the future for the next generations, and we can contribute to making our society better."

This election will be over...eventually...but our nation, our state, our county, our cities, our school districts will all still be here, working for our citizens. Local, state, and national government will certainly still need improvement. As citizens of this democracy, that's our responsibility. One president of the League of Women Voters first said it in the 1950's and so many others have quoted it since, "Democracy is not a spectator sport!" It's 100% participatory!

So how much good can one woman, one citizen do? Plenty! Consider running for office yourself. Or if that doesn't fit into your life yet, just get involved in a group! There are many examples of nonprofit organizations, whose names you know, some of which are here today, that are working toward a better society.

Arizona's women have been voting since statehood in 1912. But in 1920, just as all women across the rest of the country were granted the right to vote by passage of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment, suffragette Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters to help newly eligible women get registered, get informed, and vote!

If you're old enough, you may know LWV for running unbiased and well-controlled election debates. Today, LWV remains a nonpartisan. We support or oppose no party or candidate ever, even in this election. Local League groups study issues, and when membership agrees, League advocates on those issues.

Originally only for women, in 1974 LWV allowed men to join too but retained the name and history of protecting the rights of women and children.

LWV endorsed the first office of Food and Drug safety and the first Social Security Administration to protect the elderly. We supported women worldwide and the founding of the United Nations. And defended the environment and conservation of our natural resources. Leaguers walked door to door to pass the 1960's Civil Rights and Voting Rights Acts for equal protection and access for all.

Throughout its national history, LWV has worked to improve government. Leaguers helped pass the National Voter Registration Act that let you register to vote when you get your drivers' license and let's you vote by mail.

We have also worked toward campaign finance reform and to end unreported and unlimited campaign contributions by people who want to buy influence in our government. We still are!

Since 1941 in Arizona, LWV has worked for state improvements too. With officials and other organizations, LWV helped to frame and pass Merit Selection of Judges that allows judges in big counties to avoid taking campaign contributions and gives the voting public a report on judges' performance. You got it mailed to your home in your Secretary of State's Voter Guide. I follow in my mother's footsteps and serve on the Judicial Performance Review Commission so I brought the list along.

LWV was one group that worked on the Arizona Clean Elections Act that lets candidates run without taking special interest money and pays attention to those who do.

Many nonprofits, including LWV helped win Arizona's Independent Redistricting Commission to redraw fairer voting boundaries in Arizona districts, based on population changes rather than political parties.

And for each election since 1941, Arizona's LWV members have published balanced Pro and Con Voter Guides and registered 10's of thousands of voters, and provided non partisan, factual information to voters, all voters, to help them find out about voting and make better, informed, voting decisions!

Because it's The Vote, our individual votes however we vote, that make our democracy work, especially in local politics! Right here. Right now.

Frustrated people are asking, how much does one vote and one voter count? Here's how much! Imagine this. Ten voters vote, and each one gets 10 more people to vote, and they each get ten more people to vote, and they each get 10 more, and so on. By the time we hit 10 to the 10th power, we'd have 10 billion votes! (That's more than the number of people on Earth today. [7.5 bill])

The same is true with local issues. Each of us could make one phone call or write one email or letter about an issue that's important to us. Ten people send ten notes about an issue, and they get 10 more people to

Speak up, that's 100, and they each get ten more for 1000, and so on – when we get to the power of 10 there would be 10 billion messages speaking up about one issue! Things would change in a hurry!

That's the power of 10! That's also what makes social media so powerful. But there's a risk. On social media, I can yell at readers in sound bites about how frustrated I am with this election. But I shouldn't limit myself to venting my feelings. That's just like getting people to give up on voting, leaving the power to those who do!

Instead, it's more effective to take action, to learn about the issues, and to state our reasons. Through one act, we can each use our Power of 10 to help improve our government, and make our cities, county, state, and nation better for us all.

That's the nature of democracy! It's all about doing One Thing multiplied to the Power of 10. Each of us can get registered, get informed, and vote, and get 10 more people to vote too. Every one here could write a note or telephone about an issue and get 10 more to do the same. Take 10 minutes to speak to power and tell an official, politely, civilly what you think and your story. Then get 10 more people to speak up. Give \$10 to any nonprofit whose work you agree with, and get 10 more people to contribute. Take 10 minutes to study what would make a better government, a better society, and get 10 more people to invest the same time toward the same goal. From one person doing one small act of civic improvement, anything can still be accomplished in our democracy!

I can prove it! You can help. In a moment, I'll ask you to turn to the person next to you, and share one thing you will do this week to improve our community. Think a moment, I'm hoping you'll share one thing that you will do, that if lots of others did it, could make a difference. (Pause)

Go ahead, turn to the person you know or a stranger sitting next to you. Take a minute and share one thing that would help improve our community with the person next to you, and listen to her idea too. I'll wait a bit. (Count 90 seconds or so)

Wow! Thank you! Good! Great!

Were you inspired by your own one thing? Did you hear an inspiring idea from someone else?

I watched you! I saw your faces! I know some of you heard some great ideas! Are there one or two that stand out? Who will share one idea that inspired you, your own or someone else's? Will a couple of women give us [this much] of an inspiration? (Nice and loud)

(Listen. Nod. Smile. Restate.)

1. Drive people to the polls to vote.
2. Get young people on a cruise to vote the day they return.
3. Attend Maricopa County Community College same night.
- 4.

Wow! That's a Excellent! Wonderful! So let's try the Power of 10 with one, driving people to the polls. Restate)

Let's see if we can increase it by the power of 10. If you are willing to consider doing just this one thing also. If you will drive people to the polls to vote, raise your hand! (And keep it up)

(Hands all around) Look around! That's more than 10! If each of you get 10 more, and they get 10, soon we'll have 10 billion people all (Restate.)

So that's what I hope will be your Take Away for today, the lesson from the women of my family, from the grassroots advocacy of LWV.

It's up to you, to us. So do your One Thing this week! In spite of this election, don't give up, give in, or give away your vote. Improving our democracy won't begin or end with this election. It's up to us, to each

of us, to act and do one thing, and to then invest in the power of 10 for the next generations.

Even a working mother can:

Take 10 minutes to learn about an issue or candidate

Encourage 10 voters to vote

Send 10 polite messages to officials

Make 10 thoughtful posts on social media

Give \$10 to an organization you admire

And get 10 colleagues or others to join in!

Give 10 to improve our community, our state, our nation, and our world! And then get 10 more to do the same.

To Make Our Democracy work, Women and Men Just Need to Take Action, to the Power of 10!

Thank you.