

From LWVUS Liaison Report April 2016

In Preparation for National Cnvention Washington D.C. June 2016

1. The board adopted a new Money in Politics (MIP) position, which has been rolled out in the League Update. We had many LWV's participate and have reached consensus in a variety of areas.

MIP Position: The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should:

- Enhance political equality for all citizens;
- Ensure maximum participation by citizens in the political process;
- Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns;
- Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices;
- Ensure transparency and the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections;
- Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office;
- Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public; and
- Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

The League believes that political corruption includes the following:

- A candidate or officeholder agrees to vote or work in favor of a donor's interests in exchange for a campaign contribution;
- An officeholder or staff gives greater access to donors;
- An officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them;
- A candidate or office holder seeks political contributions implying that there will be retribution unless a donation is given; and
- The results of the political process consistently favor the interests of significant campaign contributors.

In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, the League supports:

- Public financing of elections, either voluntary or mandatory, in which candidates must abide by reasonable spending limits;
- Enhanced enforcement of campaign finance laws that includes changes to ensure that regulatory agencies are properly funded, staffed, and structured to avoid partisan deadlock in the decision-making process;
- Abolishing Super PACs and spending coordinated or directed by candidates (other than a candidate's own campaign committee); and
- Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists, which may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.

Until full public financing of elections is enacted, limits on election spending are needed in order to meet the League's goals for protecting democratic processes. Among the different entities that spend money to influence elections, the League supports the following comparative limits:

- Higher spending limits for political parties, genuinely non-partisan voter registration and get-out-the-vote organizations and activities, and candidates spending money raised from contributors;
 - Mid-level spending limits for individual citizens (including wealthy individuals), Political Action Committees (with funds contributed by individuals associated with the sponsoring organization, such as employees, stockholders, members and volunteers), and candidates spending their own money;
 - Lower spending limits for trade associations, labor unions and non-profit organizations from their general treasury funds;
 - Severely restricted spending for for-profit organizations spending from their corporate treasury funds; and
 - No limits on spending by bona fide newspapers, television, and other media, including the Internet, except to address partisan abuse or use of the media to evade campaign finance regulations.
2. With our MIP position, as with so much LWV work, we are only effective when local and state LWV's are active –using the MIP and other positions, recruiting and retaining members, raising enough funds, developing new leaders, promoting the vote etc. Keep up that good work. Encourage your LL's to plan and prioritize.
 3. The Key Structures of Democracy will be recommended as program for the next biennium. Those participating in program planning process overwhelmingly suggested Key Structures of Democracy be recommended by the board to convention and no new study be recommended.