



July 2016

# League of Women Voters Benicia

## VOTER



<http://www.lwvbenicia.org>

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and action.

LWVB will again be marching in the **Benicia Torchlight Parade**  
**July 3.**



If you would like to join us in marching, please contact  
Pat Pepin at [claireandpat@earthlink.net](mailto:claireandpat@earthlink.net) .

Up-coming date:

July 30: Board Retreat, 10am- 2 p.m.



### President's Message

I am honored and proud to have been elected the President of the League of Women Voters Benicia. Thank you. I greatly admire and respect the men and women who have made our group so dynamic. Nationally, statewide, and locally the LWV is well regarded for its practical, non-partisan stances on measures, propositions, and issues. Our statements to the public carry weight and gravitas. Voters look to us for impartial guidance on voting. Personally, it gives me great pleasure to call an official or busy important person and have them give me deference because I'm calling on behalf of the LWV.

It is especially exciting to be President this year because of the approaching General Election. Since its inception, the LWV has been at the forefront of the fight for voter's rights. Our primary mission is to help create a strong, well-informed electorate. This year will be no different. In fact, registering people to vote, getting them to the polls, and keeping them informed about issues will be our only focus for the rest of 2016. We will clearly be "on a mission!"

This past year members have worked hard to create partnerships with other groups to help spread our message further. Those partnerships are starting to pay off. At the recent Vallejo Juneteenth celebration members of various civic organizations recognized our work and expressed a desire to continue working with us, inviting us to collaborate even further. This is what the League is about....community in action.

I look forward to working with the Board, Committees, and volunteers of our League to grow our active membership so we can continue to expand our positive effect on the public. Many of you have lots of good ideas about promoting the League and improving voter participation. Please feel free to share them with me at [vonwindgayle@gmail.org](mailto:vonwindgayle@gmail.org). I can't wait to hear from you!

Sincerely,

Gayle Vaughan

## ***Voter Services Committee***

Whew, the primary is past and the Voter Services committee is shouting high fives. The voter turnout in Solano county for the 2016 primary was 44.92% compared with the 2012 primary turnout of only 34.85%. Statewide the 2016 voter turnout was 38.1%. These are the reported numbers from the Secretary of State. We feel our time registering over 600 people at schools, farmers markets, the new citizenship ceremony and National Voter Registration Day were not wasted. Nor was our fledging embarkation in learning the ins and outs of VOTERSEDGE.COM. We will be interested in seeing the age distribution of the voter turnout as that data is verified. The Voter Services committee even followed up with our students who had submitted Voter Pledges the week before the election urging them to get out and **VOTE**.

### **VOTE ! Signs**

Peggy Lipper distributed VOTE signs before the Primary and 21 were placed in yards and windows in Fairfield, Vallejo and Benicia. If you still have yours, hold on to it. If you missed the chance to get one we will be distributing them again in the fall. They may be displayed only 60 days before the election, so September 5<sup>th</sup> (Labor Day) is the date for the November election.



### **Juneteenth**

On Saturday June 18<sup>th</sup> the League of Women Voters was well represented at Vallejo's Juneteenth event at City Park. It was a lovely summer day to be out in the sun, with great food and jazz music. Our talented Susan Street decorated our booth and our always enthusiastic league members Pat Pepin, Niles Medders, Peggy Lipper, Harvey Rifkin, and our new league president Gayle Vaughan joined me in talking to community members about league activities. More than 30 people signed up to receive our newsletter and we even registered a few new voters. It was a well-attended event and many people stopped by to learn about the league while their children played the bean bag toss.

### **Upcoming Voter Services Events**

Stay tuned for news about National Voter Registration Day 9/27, Citizenship Ceremony 10/19 at the Fairfield Library and, of course, forums for the fall elections.

The committee is discussing fall events in the schools and what kind of election related programs we want to do for the community at large. If you are interested in getting involved with the committee or just a specific event contact Susan Neuhaus at [lwnneuhaus@gmail.com](mailto:lwnneuhaus@gmail.com).

# Hundreds of League of Women Voters Activists Storm Capitol Hill for Voting Rights

06/15/2016 | by Kelly Ceballos |

**Washington, DC** – Hundreds of League members from around the country will be on Capitol Hill today and bringing with them a tough message on voting rights for their U.S. Senators and Representatives.

“2016 will mark the first presidential election in 50 years without the vital protections for voters found in the Voting Rights Act (VRA),” said Elisabeth MacNamara, president of the League of Women Voters of the U.S. “It has been three years since the disastrous U.S. Supreme Court decision in *Shelby County v. Holder* gutted key provisions of the VRA and left voters and their rights at risk of discrimination.”

“Our members are fanning out across the Capitol today to tell their elected representatives that it is well past time to right this wrong. We need them to pass the Voting Rights Advancement Act (VRAA), legislation that will put protections back into place to ensure that Americans have equal opportunity to access the polls,” MacNamara said.

The day of advocacy kicks off the League’s 52<sup>nd</sup> National Convention this weekend in Washington, D.C. Taking place at the Marriott Wardman Park hotel, the gathering brings close to a thousand members from around the country to plan the organization’s work in 2016 and beyond as well as elect national leadership.

“In 2013, *Shelby* opened the floodgates to the expansion of discriminatory voting laws across the country and now we are seeing their impact on voters,” said MacNamara. “Throughout the primaries, voters from Texas to Wisconsin, California to North Carolina, faced hurdles getting to the polls because of laws that make it harder for voters, particularly voters of color, to participate in our democracy.”

“Today our members will be delivering a personal, direct message to their Senators and Representatives, one they have been urging for years from their home states,” concluded MacNamara. “Step up to the plate and take action that will protect and benefit all voters. Pass the VRAA.”

Contact: Kelly Ceballos, 202-263-1331 or [kceballos@lww.org](mailto:kceballos@lww.org).



# What's Happening in the States?

## A Voters' Rights Legislative Round-up

By: Cynthia Sebian-Lander 05/12/2016



With most state legislative sessions coming to a close at the end of April, the action on voting rights in 2016 is shaping up to be [very similar to last year](#). Following nearly a decade of consistent and growing attacks on voting rights, we're continuing to see some bright spots. On the whole, states are passing less restrictive election laws, and even better, more and more states are reforming their election process in order to help voters. Leagues across the country continue to be a driving force in advocating for stronger voter reforms as well as fighting back against the remaining attacks.

### Online Voter Registration Momentum Continues

Online voter registration continues to have the strongest support. Rhode Island, Tennessee and Wisconsin have joined the list of [31 states](#) that have, or will soon have, online systems. Similar to most online registration bills, [all of the new bills introduced in 2016 require voters to already have state IDs or a driver's license to register online - leaving out many citizens who do not have a license or the ability to obtain one](#). While there is not currently online registration in Ohio, [the League of Women Voters in Ohio has worked with coalition members](#), including Secretary of State Jon Husted, to garner broad support of a bill to create an online system and are hopeful it will pass soon. Automatic voter registration was another popular reform introduced in legislatures across the country. Despite a strong movement out of the 28 states that introduced legislation in 2016, only a handful passed the reform. [West Virginia became the third state in the country to pass automatic voter registration](#) and [Vermont legislators passed a bill in late April](#) to become the fourth state. Alaskans will have the opportunity to [vote on a ballot measure](#) in November to create an automatic voter registration system. While West Virginia and Vermont's new laws tie automatic registration to the Department of Motor Vehicles (similar to Oregon and California), Alaska's proposal would create a system based on the state's Permanent Dividend Fund. Nearly every Alaskan resident is enrolled in the Permanent Dividend Fund, a state resource from oil profits that provides annual checks to every resident, and therefore is a more complete database than the Department of Motor Vehicles or other government programs.

### The Fight Against Anti-Voter Laws Continues

Since 2015, the number of restrictive voting laws passing state legislatures has been on the decline. But that doesn't mean we've stopped seeing attack on voters' rights. In March, [West Virginia became the first state in over a year to pass a new voter ID law](#) as a part of their acceptance of automatic voter registration. While this law is more flexible than other states' laws, the League is opposed to any restrictions on voters' rights. Missouri has also once again introduced legislation that would create [a strict voter photo ID law](#), and the [League of Women Voter of Missouri](#) is actively working with coalition partners to oppose the bill.

*(continued on next page)*

At the beginning of 2016, the [League of Women Voters of Wisconsin](#) vigorously opposed the online voter registration legislation that was introduced because the bill will also [eliminate the state's Special Registration Deputies](#) (SRD) starting in 2017. The deputies, who are often League members, [register thousands of people across the state each year](#), and without the SRD program it is much harder for citizens from the most marginalized communities to join the political process. The legislation also made the documentary proof of residence requirement, where citizens must provide specific documentation that proves they live at their current address in order to register, more difficult to meet. Despite widespread criticism of the bill, the governor signed it into law, and the League will have until the end of the year to continue registration campaigns under the SRD program.

### Seeing the Impact of New Restrictions in Place for 2016 Elections

In many states, [new restrictive laws are in place for the 2016 primaries, and we have already seen the negative impacts at the polls](#): from [long lines in New Hampshire](#) and Arizona to issues with student voting in Wisconsin to a voter purge in Brooklyn. Without any action to reverse harmful laws by elected officials or the courts, we anticipate that these issues will continue during the general election where these issues will disenfranchise many more voters. In November, [voters in Ohio will no longer have the "golden week" available](#) – a week where voter registration and early voting overlapped allowing new voters to register when they turned up to vote. Leagues in each of these states have been working hard to educate voters on the new restrictions, while [pushing their states to do more education and outreach](#).

Do you think these attacks on voting rights are unacceptable? [Tell Congress to Restore the Voting Rights Act!](#)

## Bring the Affordable Care Act into Compliance with the National Voter Registration Act

By: Jeanette Senecal

May 20<sup>th</sup> was the 23rd anniversary of one of the League's greatest victories ever—the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA), or the so-called "Motor Voter" law.

Here's the quick back story: the NVRA requires that voter registration be made available whenever citizens interact with a wide variety of government programs—including federal-run health insurance exchanges set up under the Affordable Care Act. Most state-run health care exchanges are complying with the law, but, inexplicably, Americans applying for health insurance in the more than 30 states that use *federal*-run exchanges are NOT given an opportunity to register. **By some estimates, this failure has already cost 1.7 million lost voter registrations.**

And that's something our democracy cannot afford, especially when voters' rights are already under pressure from onerous new laws making it tougher to register and vote in some states.

**Tell President Obama it's time to act.**

It's the perfect way to celebrate one of the League's great victories.





## Rolling on through Summer!

Even though many of us are traveling or busy with family this summer, the LWV Benicia will be working to improve the voting process. We will be marching in the Benicia Torchlight Parade on July 3 to increase awareness of the LWV. The Board is meeting July 30 to line out our goals and commitments. In August we will be working with Club Stride, a teen club in Vallejo, to help them put on a forum for the Valley City Council candidates.

In the fall things will really heat up, and we will need your help! We will be out in force on National Register to Vote Day (Sept. 27) to sign people up. We will be back in high school classrooms conducting civics instructions about the voting process. We plan to continue our tradition of hosting a candidates' forum for city, county, and regional offices. Once again we will be putting out VOTE! signs.



### BLOGS FROM LWVUS

Several blogs from LWVUS are here in this newsletter for you. If you would like to read ALL the LWVUS blogs, you can copy the following link into your browser:

<http://lww.org/blog/what%E2%80%99s-happening-states-voters%E2%80%99-rights-legislative-round>

<https://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-Benicia>



“Like” the League on [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-Benicia). Follow us on Twitter: [@LWV](https://twitter.com/LWV)

Newsletter submissions:  
due by 20th of the month  
Susan Street, [sustreet@pacbell.net](mailto:sustreet@pacbell.net)

League business only  
What where, when why in first paragraph  
200 words or less  
Please use WORD; Calibri 12 pt is preferred.  
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