

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Apportionment, as Announced by National Board, January 1966 and Revised March 1982:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that congressional districts and government legislative bodies should be apportioned substantially on population. The League is convinced that this standard, established by the Supreme Court, should be maintained and that the U.S. Constitution should not be amended to allow for consideration of factors other than population in apportionment.

See also the position on Voting Rights, which applies to apportionment issues. Leagues applying the Apportionment position should be aware that the Voting Rights position (and League action supporting the Voting Rights Act) recognizes that both the Constitution and the Voting Rights Act require that reapportionment not dilute the effective representation of minority citizens.

In 2005, the national Board affirmed that Leagues at all levels may take action under LWVUS positions relating to redistricting. Using the positions on "Apportionment," "Citizen's Right to Vote," and "Congress," Leagues should work to achieve three goals consistent with those positions:

1) Congressional districts and government legislative bodies should be apportioned substantially on population ("one person, one vote"); 2) Redistricting should not dilute the effective representation of minority citizens; and 3) Efforts that attempt or result in partisan gerrymandering should be opposed.

In supporting Leagues, the LWVUS will provide active assistance, including the sharing of information, developing League expertise, and consulting with Leagues on advocacy, public education, and media outreach.

Campaign Finance

The League's History

After the 1972 Convention approved "further study of Congress," the 1973 Council—spurred by spending abuses in congressional and presidential campaigns—focused on campaign finance. Accelerated study and agreement in 1973 led to the Campaign Finance position, which applied League Principles supporting an open and representative government to political campaigns.

The League initiated a petition drive and lobbied intensively for the campaign reforms embodied in the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1974 (FECA). When the law was challenged in court, the League, together with other organizations, intervened as defendants. In 1976, the Supreme Court upheld portions of the law providing for disclosure, public financing and contribution limits, but it overturned limits on candidates' spending, if they used private financing, and limits on independent expenditures. The Court also ruled that the method of selection of the Federal Election Commission (FEC) was unconstitutional, because it allowed Congress to encroach on the President's appointment power. After the Court's decision, the League successfully lobbied for a new law creating an independent and constitutionally acceptable FEC.

In response to budget attacks on the FEC in the 104th Congress, the League testified and lobbied in support of the FEC's Fiscal Year 1997 budget request and against efforts to undermine the agency's core enforcement and disclosure programs through funding cuts.

The League's position on Campaign Finance reflects continuing concern for open and honest elections and for maximum citizen participation in the political process. The League's campaign finance reform strategy has two tracks: 1) achieve incremental reforms where possible in the short term, and 2) build support for public financing as the best long-term solution.

Although provided under current law for presidential elections, public funding of congressional elections, which the League supports, has been an elusive goal. Current law does embody other League goals: full and timely disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures; one central committee to coordinate, control and report financial transactions for each candidate, party or other committee; an independent body to monitor and enforce the law; and the encouragement of broad-based contributions from citizens.

The League continues to look for ways to limit the size and type of contributions from all sources as a means of combating undue influence in the election process. League action on this issue is built on a careful assessment of all proposed changes in campaign financing law. The League continues to assess proposals to equalize government services for challengers and incumbents so that candidates can compete more equitably. The League favors shortening the time period between primaries and general elections.

In 1989-1992, the League fought for comprehensive campaign finance reform to address the abuses in the existing system, supporting bills that curbed special-interest contributions and provided public financing for candidates who accepted voluntary spending limits. The League called for limits to PAC and large contributor donations, for closing the soft-money loophole and for public benefits for candidates, such as reduced postage and reduced broadcasting costs.

Both houses of Congress enacted reform bills in 1990, but a conference committee was unable to resolve the differences before adjournment of the 101st Congress. Both houses passed strong reform measures in 1992, and the bill that emerged from the conference committee promised the most far-reaching campaign finance reform since Watergate. The President vetoed the bill, and an attempt to override was unsuccessful.

In 1991-1992, the League defended the system of public financing for presidential candidates through check-offs on income tax forms. Faced with an impending shortfall in the Presidential Election Campaign Fund, the League countered with an attack on many fronts: an appeal to taxpayers and preparers to use the check-off; testimony before the House Elections Subcommittee to increase the check-off from \$1.00 to \$3.00, with indexing for inflation; opposition to IRS regulations that would weaken the system; support for a House bill guaranteeing matching funds for qualified presidential primary candidates and participation in an *amicus curiae* challenging, unsuccessfully, Treasury Department regulations that subvert the language and congressional intent of the presidential public financing system.

In 1993, the presidential check-off was increased to \$3.00, with support from the League, assuring continued viability for the fund. The League also supported comprehensive campaign finance reform, which stalled in partisan wrangling.

In 1995 and 1996, the League continued its support for comprehensive reform through lobbying, testimony, grassroots action and work with the media. Members pushed for voluntary spending limits; public benefits, such as reduced-cost broadcasting and postal services, for participating candidates; aggregate limits on the total amounts candidates could receive in PAC and large individual contributions; and closing the loopholes that allow huge amounts of special-interest money to influence the system.

Also in this period, the LWVEF launched a comprehensive program for articulating a public voice

on campaign finance. Entitled "Money + Politics: People Change the Equation," the project brought citizens together to debate the problems in the system and discuss possible solutions.

In 1996, opponents of League-favored reforms, arguing that politics is underfunded, sought to increase the amounts of special-interest money flowing into the system by loosening many existing contribution limits. The League and its allies soundly defeated this approach in the House but were unable to overcome opposition from most congressional leaders in both parties. Reformers did build bipartisan support for reform outside the leadership circles.

The near collapse of the federal campaign finance system during the 1996 election focused national attention on the need for reform. In December 1996, the LWVUS endorsed the goals of a reform proposal developed by a group of academics. The approach focused on closing gaping loopholes in the law that allow special interests, the political parties and others to channel hundreds of millions of dollars into candidates' campaigns. Among the key goals: a ban on "soft money," closing the sham issue advocacy loophole and improving disclosure and enforcement.

The LWVEF mounted a major advertising and grassroots education initiative calling attention to achievable campaign reforms. Working with experts from diverse political views, the LWVEF published a blueprint for reform: *5 Ideas for Practical Campaign Reform*. Other efforts included ads in major newspapers, a PSA featuring national news anchor Walter Cronkite and citizen caucuses in 20 states.

An unrelenting push by the LWVUS and other reform advocates succeeded in shifting the campaign-finance debate in the 105th Congress from a deadlock over spending limits to real movement to close the most egregious loopholes. The League supported the bipartisan McCain-Feingold bill in the Senate and the counterpart Shays-Meehan bill in the House, bringing grassroots pressure to bear against efforts by congressional leaders to stonewall real reform. Leagues responded to Action Alerts and lobbied their members of Congress to defeat parliamentary maneuvers blocking votes and to support meaningful reform.

In summer 1998, reformers succeeded in forcing the House Speaker to schedule a vote on reform bills, including Shays-Meehan. Despite concerted efforts to defeat it, the bill passed the House by a vote of 252-179 in August 1998. League members immediately urged

senators to support a cloture vote on campaign finance reform legislation and to vote for real reform. However, in September 1998 the Senate once again failed to break a filibuster preventing a vote.

In 1998, the LWVEF launched a campaign finance reform project, "Strategies for Success in the Midwest," working with state Leagues in Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Michigan, Minnesota, Ohio and Wisconsin. Efforts focused on educating citizens on practical ways to reform campaign finance and to offer citizens an opportunity to participate in the debate. In 1999, the LWVEF distributed "Make the Link" materials to state Leagues, drawing the connection between campaign finance and key issues such as the environment, teen smoking and health care.

On the Hill, House leaders again worked to block the Shays-Meehan bill in the 106th Congress. Using a discharge petition, reformers forced the leadership to move, and the bill passed on a strong vote. Senate passage once again proved elusive, despite citizen pressure. However, the League and other supporters were successful in achieving passage in June 2000 of so-called "527" legislation, requiring political organizations set up under Section 527 of the IRS code to disclose the identity and amounts given by their donors and how they spend the money.

As the League continued to focus on reducing the corrupting influence of big money in elections, League work at the state level contributed to real progress. Public financing, the "Clean Money Option," was adopted in several states, including Arizona and Maine; other state reform efforts have made progress in Massachusetts and Vermont. Reform measures were on the 2000 ballot in Missouri and Oregon, but fell short.

The LWV and other reformers succeeded in putting campaign finance reform on the front burner of the national political agenda. In January 2000, in *Nixon v. Shrink Missouri PAC*, the Supreme Court upheld limits on state campaign contributions that were analogous to the federal limits. The LWVUS joined an *amicus* brief in the case. The Court's decision restated the constitutional underpinning for campaign finance reform formulated in *Buckley v. Valeo*, despite arguments by reform opponents.

In 1999-2000, League members supported 90-year-old Doris Haddock, "Granny D," in her walk across the country to promote campaign finance reform.

The battle for meaningful campaign finance reform has been long and hard. The Senate debated the McCain-Feingold-Shays-Meehan bill for more than a week in

2001. The League pushed successfully for the strengthening amendment from Senator Wellstone (D MN) and to protect against a raft of weakening amendments. On the House side, the leadership once again tried to use the rules to block reform. Our allies in the House, with strong support from the LWVUS, had to resort to a discharge petition to force action.

The LWVUS worked with the bill's sponsors and lobbied swing members of the House and Senate to achieve campaign finance reform. The LWVUS conducted two rounds of phone banking, asking League members in key districts to lobby at key junctures in the congressional debate. The LWV participated in many press conferences and rallies to make the citizen's voice heard on campaign finance reform.

On March 27, 2002, the League's five-year campaign for the McCain-Feingold-Shays-Meehan bill reached fruition when the President signed the legislation into law. The bill, which became known as the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (BCRA), closed the most significant loopholes in campaign finance regulation—the "soft money" loophole that allowed unlimited corporate, union and individual contributions and the "sham" issue ad loophole that allowed undisclosed contributions to campaign advertising advocating particular candidates. The League was instrumental in developing this approach and pushing it—at the grassroots and in Congress—to final enactment.

With the passage of BCRA, the League turned its attention to legal challenges to the law, which continue to the present day. The LWVUS filed an *amicus* brief on "sham issue ads" for the Supreme Court case *McConnell v. FEC*. The brief explained why it is important that funding for attack ads in the final days of an election not be used to circumvent the "soft money" ban in BCRA. In September 2003, the League organized a rally at the Supreme Court to demonstrate public support for the law. In December, the Supreme Court upheld all the key components of BCRA in *McConnell v. FEC*, including the "sham issue ad" provisions briefed by League.

In the first half of the 108th Congress, the League urged Senators to cosponsor the "Our Democracy, Our Airwaves Act" introduced by Senators McCain, Feingold and Durbin. The LWVUS helped targeted Leagues organize in-district lobby visits in support of the Act, and through the National Lobby Corps lobbied selected Senators requesting co-sponsorship of the bill.

The League, along with partners, conducted a national public education campaign "Our Democracy, Our

Airwaves,” studying the role of television in elections, the cost of accessing these public airwaves and the importance of strengthening public interest information coming from broadcasters. The LWVUS put together organizing tools for local Leagues to use while creating educational campaigns in their communities.

In the second session of the 108th Congress, the League continued its work on improving the presidential public financing system. The LWVUS sought cosponsors to legislation introduced by Senators McCain and Feingold and Representatives Shays and Meehan to fix the system. The LWVUS also joined a coalition project that sought pledge commitments from the 2004 presidential candidates to support the public financing system’s reform if elected. In 2003 and 2004, the League again urged taxpayers to check the box to support the Presidential Election Fund.

In 2005 and 2006, the League continued to promote campaign finance reform as well as public funding for presidential elections. In December 2005, the League president spoke at a Capitol Hill conference titled “The Issue of Presidential Public Financing: Its Goals, History, Current Status and Problems.” In 2006, the LWVUS joined with other organizations in a letter to U.S. Representatives urging them to co-sponsor and support the Meehan-Shays bill that would make a series of important reforms to the presidential public financing system.

Throughout 2005, the League urged members of Congress to vote against the Pence-Wynn and other bills that aimed to undermine existing campaign finance regulations. In December, the League joined other groups in submitting an *amicus* brief in the Supreme Court case *Wisconsin Right to Life, Inc. v. Federal Election Commission*, which challenged the application of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act to the financing of television ads in Wisconsin.

Through 2006, the League continued to support meaningful campaign finance reform, urging Representatives to vote for a ban on leadership PACs as well as support a bill that would close soft money loopholes.

During the 2008 presidential campaign, the League pressed all the candidates to support reform of the presidential public financing system.

In 2007 and 2008, the League endorsed legislation to fix the public financing system for president and to establish congressional public financing for the first time. The League also supported banning leadership PACs and

continued to press the courts to properly interpret and enforce campaign finance law.

In the late 2000s, the LWVUS was involved as a “friend of the court” in two pivotal U.S. Supreme Court cases: *Caperton v. Massey* and *Citizens United v. FEC*. In the latter case, the League argued that corporate spending in elections should not be equated with the First Amendment rights of individual citizens.

In 2010, the League reacted swiftly and strongly against the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*. The League President testified before the relevant House committee on the key steps that can be taken to respond, focusing on the importance of including tighter disclosure requirements before the 2010 elections. The League continues to urge passage of the DISCLOSE Act to counter the Court’s decision.

In early 2012, the LWVUS board appointed a Campaign Finance Task force to examine legislative and constitutional efforts to achieve campaign finance reform. Convention 2012 reaffirmed the League’s commitment to campaign finance reform by passing a resolution that called for advocating strongly for campaign finance measures including but not limited to constitutional amendments.

In the summer of 2012, the League ran radio ads in Tennessee and Maine asking Senators Corker, Alexander, Snowe and Collins to support campaign finance reform. The ads were timed in anticipation of Congressional action on the DISCLOSE Act. The ads garnered press coverage from outlets in both states.

In the 2012 elections, huge amounts of campaign spending came from so-called independent groups, much of it from secret contributions. The League took on these issues, arguing that much of the “independent” spending was actually coordinated with candidate campaigns, and therefore illegal. The League also pointed to the secret “dark money” and pushed for enhanced disclosure. Also, the League continues to push for legislation to protect and reinvigorate the public financing system for president. In addition, the League continues to work to reinvigorate the dysfunctional Federal Election Commission (FEC) which has refused to enforce the law.

The League’s Position

Statement of Position on Campaign Finance, as Announced by National Board, January 1974 and Revised March 1982:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process.

This position is applicable to all federal campaigns for public office — presidential and congressional, primaries as well as general elections. It also may be applied to state and local campaigns.

Selection of the President

The League's History

A League study of the presidential electoral process culminated in a 1970 position supporting direct election of the President by popular vote as essential to representative government. The League testified and lobbied for legislation to amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with direct election of the President, including provisions for a national runoff election in the event no candidates (President or Vice-President) received 40 percent of the vote. The measure, which passed the House and nearly passed the Senate in 1971, has been revived in each Congress without success. In 1997, the LWVUS again called for abolition of the Electoral College and for direct election of the President and Vice-President in testimony before the House Subcommittee on the Constitution.

The League has supported national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections to ensure equity for voters from all states and to facilitate the electoral process.

In February 2001, a memo was sent to the state and local Leagues outlining the League's position on the Electoral College under the LWVUS position on Selection of the President.

The League believes strongly that the Electoral College should be abolished and not merely "reformed." One "reform" which the League specifically rejects is the voting by electors based on proportional representation in lieu of the present "winner-takes-all" method. Such a system would apportion the electoral votes of a state based on the popular vote in that state. Instead of making the Electoral College more representative, such proportional voting would increase the chance that no candidate would receive a majority in the Electoral College, thereby sending the election of the President to

the House of Representatives where each state, regardless of population, would receive only one vote. Election of the President by the House further removes the decision from the people and is contrary to the "one person, one vote" principle. The League also does not support reform of the Electoral College on a state-by-state basis because the League believes there should be uniformity across the nation in the systems used to elect the President.

The 2002 Convention voted to expand and update the position. The League came to concurrence on a new position in June 2004, which takes into account the entire presidential selection process and supports a process that produces the best possible candidates, informed voters and optimum voter participation.

The 2008 Convention voted to conduct a study of the National Popular Vote proposal, which would establish the popular election of the President through a compact among the states governing how they would cast their votes in the Electoral College. The 2010 Convention adopted a concurrence to support the National Popular Vote compact as another method of selecting the President until such time as the Electoral College is abolished.

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Selection of the President, as Announced by National Board, January 1970, Revised March 1982, Updated June 2004 and Revised by the 2010 Convention:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.