

Introduction

Wisconsin State Journal editorial Nov. 8, 1854, celebrating a sober election without fist fights, thanks to the presence of extra police:

“No liquor was kept near the polls, and ... we did not see a drunken man during the day. There might have been some who had indulged sufficiently to put them in excellent humor; but there were none of the reeling, foul, disgusting specimens of brutalized humanity that almost invariably are found about the polls on the day of election.”

Note... that was *before* women won the right to vote...

The League of Women Voters was established in 1920... replaced the Wisconsin Woman Suffrage Association, whose work was done... Next up: informing and motivating the 20 million new voters across the country... League is looking forward to celebrating 100 years in 2020.

The League was then & is now a nonpartisan org... nonpartisan status would protect the fledgling organization from becoming mired in the party politics of the day.

- Members encouraged to enroll in the political parties.
- The organization held that “a citizen’s duty is to the country first, and to party second; that a party is only a means to an end; and that the end should be kept constantly in view.”

“Democracy is not a spectator sport.” It’s true... democracy is dependent on active and informed participation in government -that is the mission of the LWV. Beliefs:

- the responsibility of good government rests on the shoulders of its citizens,
- citizenship requires knowledge, as well as the ability and the will to act.
- the rights of U.S. citizens at home and abroad are to be assured and defended.

Everything we do supports. Members register voters, advocate for clean government.

You can be sure that when you attend a League candidate forum, that we *never support or oppose a candidate or a political party*. However, do take positions on issues, *after* our members have studied them and come to consensus... modeling good governance in our own organization, how we develop our policy positions.

Sometimes the League’s positions line up with those of one political party or another. I can assure you that it has gone back and forth... e.g., redistricting...

You may know about the League’s role in opposing voter ID in our state - & other states too. Unneeded and unfair... would prevent thousands of qualified citizens from being able to cast a ballot, have it counted... 300,000 *currently registered voters* ...

Proponents say don’t want to keep people from voting. Well, if you want people to vote....

The League challenged the law based on our state constitution and won an early injunction. Ultimately did not prevail in the Wisconsin Supreme Court, but proud that *because of the injunction we won in state court, no Wisconsin citizen was disenfranchised by the ID law through 5 elections incl. 2012 Presidential election.*

While voting matters may be the League's core issues... also extensive positions in other policy areas... Advocate vigorously at national, state and local levels.

The League will be a visible, vocal advocate in the State Capitol in the coming biennium, fighting for voting rights, clean air and water, accessible healthcare for all Wisconsin residents, strong public schools, and clean, responsive state government. Some of the things we will be watching...

- A push to expand the school vouchers program...
- Continued resistance to accepting federal funds for Medicaid expansion, a decision estimated (LFB) to cost the state more than \$500 million over 3.5 years and denying BadgerCare to some 87,000 Wisconsin residents.
- A push to further relax environmental protections, making it easier for mining companies to get permits and harder for citizens to seek redress when their water is polluted... >40% of frac sand mining companies currently operating in Wisconsin have seriously violated DNR regulations (Land Stewardship Project).
- Voter ID and other voting restrictions - currently law of the land... if ultimately struck down, they will simply pass a new law. Our best hope: less restrictive.
So Leagues across the state will be working to educate citizens about how to comply with the law and assisting people who don't have an acceptable ID.
- State campaign finance laws weakened in the courts, effectively removing contribution limits
- Very significantly... threat to independence of state Govt Accountability Board.
 - o Nonpartisan board formed 2007... virtually unanimous bipartisan support... response to the legislative caucus scandal...
 - o Replaced dysfunctional state Ethics and Elections boards... populated with political appointees. The GAB is made up of 6 former judges...
 - o Unlike the old system, GAB has the authority to enforce ethics laws, and it has "sum sufficient" funding to do so...
 - o Election administration... "America's Top Model"
 - o LWV has worked with - and lobbied - the GAB extensively... we find they do *not* act like a group of political appointees.
 - o Yet Assembly Speaker publicly attacked GAB Chief KK shortly before the election and promised to make changes in the way the Board is structured.

Yes, the challenges are great... but something I learned when I first started working for the League in 2004 is that League leaders take the long view - as suffragists did ...

This state needs the League to speak truth to power, so partisan bullies can't spin the facts without being challenged. The League will do that. As the state League's registered lobbyist, I feel confident when I go and speak to lawmakers about the League's policy positions, because I know they are based in evidence, fact and reason. They are progressive, in general, but they are not partisan. Indeed, many of our positions go back decades before the current political parties as we know them.

And what if the League of Women Voters did NOT speak up against a law that disenfranchises eligible citizens or one that allows mining companies to run roughshod over our state without citizen input? We *have* to do that!

The League is a grassroots organization. We have a national office, a staff of two at the state office, and strong volunteer organizations in 17 local communities around the state. Our strength

is in our members' active participation, volunteerism and commitment to a better society for all. I *love* that when I send out an Action Alert from our state office, I know that lawmakers are going to hear from our members, whose messages will be informed and rational.

So that's how the LWV makes democracy work in Wisconsin. We invite you, if you are not already a member, to join the League of Women Voters and help us make democracy work. Thank you.