



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

Box 233 Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

LWVL NEWS AND INFORMATION

LWVL APRIL FIRST FRIDAY FORUM April 5, 2013

“OUR STATE BUDGET: MAKING TOUGH CHOICES”

Luc Schuster, Senior Policy Analyst, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center
with State Senators Mike Barrett and Ken Donnelly and Representative Jay Kaufman

9:30 a.m. (coffee at 9:15 a.m.)
Cary Library Large Meeting Room

This forum will provide an interesting look at the Massachusetts state budget and its effect on Lexington. How do we, as a Commonwealth, choose to invest our resources -- through our government -- to strengthen our communities, support vulnerable residents, and build a vibrant economy?

Luc Schuster, Senior Policy Analyst, Massachusetts Budget and Policy Center, will show, through data prepared by MassBudget, how past tax policy choices have contributed to the state's ongoing fiscal crisis -- leading to painful cuts to many programs. Mr. Schuster will also outline how these decisions have affected programs designed to support cities and towns -- general local aid and Chapter 70 education aid. A discussion will follow with Lexington's state legislators about ways we could improve our revenue system.

This is the sixth in a series of 2012-2013 First Friday Forums hosted by the League of Women Voters of Lexington to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. The Community Meeting Room is located on the lower level of Cary Memorial Library, 1874 Massachusetts Avenue. The library is easily accessible by Lexpress and from the Minuteman Bikeway. For more information or to carpool, contact the League at 781-862-6435. All League forums are open to the public at no charge.

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RIDE TO THE POLLS

Thank you to Liz Andrews for volunteering again to coordinate our rides to the Polls on March 4, 2013. No requests were received. The League thanks all those who voted.

LWVL MAY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM May 3, 2013

Let's Do More Than Talk!

Coffee 9:15 a.m.
Forum Begins 9:30 a.m.
Cary Memorial Library Large Meeting Room

Candy McLaughlin: Town Manager's Office and 2020 Vision Committee
Mark Sandeen, Sustainable Lexington Committee

How can Lexington thrive in the face of changing climate? And what can you do to help? Come to the May 3 League of Women Voters First Friday Forum to hear from our speakers and others about what Lexington has accomplished so far, plans for the development of our own Climate Action Plan, and the next steps we can take as individuals and as a community to both reduce its contribution as well as respond to the impacts of the changing climate. Results from the recent LWV Community Conversation on Climate Change will be presented, as well, during what we hope is a stimulating and productive morning.

LWVL ANNUAL MEETING - June 4, 2013

Join us for the League's Annual Meeting on June 4 from 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m. in the Large Conference Room, Cary Memorial Library.

Watch the League's Forums on Demand

If there is a League of Women Voters of Lexington's First Friday Forum that you've missed or would like to see again, log onto <http://www.lexmedia.org/ondemand.html> and scroll down to "League of Women Voters" under Categories.

The League is Looking for Volunteers

The League of Women Voters of Lexington is looking for volunteers to fill board and off-board positions for the coming year. Contact the League at 781-307-3116 for more information.

MOCK TOWN MEETING FOR 8th GRADE STUDENTS

The League's three year planning process to support the reinstatement of Mock Town Meetings for students came to a happy resolution on March 16th when over 65 8th grade students gathered at Battin Hall to play the part of Town Meeting members. Timed in honor of Lexington's 300th Anniversary, the event was also part of the LexCelebrate! Incorporation Weekend extravaganza.

The League formerly supported Mock Town Meetings in 5th grade classrooms. When the Massachusetts Social Studies "Frameworks" changed, the school system discontinued the unit. Jackie Ward, long-time League member, held onto the materials with the hope that it might one day return to serve students. Years passed, and when the town was gearing up to celebrate the 300th, Jessie Steigerwald and Barbara Manfredi brought the idea to the attention of the League Board. The Board agreed that they would roll up their sleeves if the school system would like to try Mock Town Meeting again.

Carol Pilarski, Assistant Superintendent, agreed that it would be a good idea – and possibly a better fit for 8th grade students who are required to learn about local government. Pilarski invited the middle school Social Studies Chair, Matt Mehler, to evaluate the possibilities. Mehler sought a grant from the Lexington Education Foundation to create materials, including a DVD explaining Lexington's government. League and TMMA members worked with Mehler over a two year period to plan class and community Mock Town Meetings. Nancy Corcoran-Ronchetti, David Horton and Nancy Adler played leadership roles with Manfredi and Steigerwald. The Dan Fenn Memorial Award helped fund the March 16th event.

Beginning in January, many League members and Town Meeting Members volunteered as guests in 24 8th grade classrooms. As part of the classroom unit students read pages from the new League sponsored comic book "Lexington Then and Now." The selected pages illustrate Mock Town Meeting in action and readers can follow the progress of a Citizen Article seeking to ban the sale of single-serving plastic bags made of PET plastic. As students complete their reading, they step right into a role play in the classroom, arguing both sides of the plastic bottle ban as either a Town Meeting Member or a citizen. Following the class experience, students were invited to attend

the All-Town 8th Grade Mock Town Meeting at Battin Hall, where they could sit in the actual seat of the town's government.

Volunteers were thrilled with the outcome, and felt inspired as they saw students participate. Tommy Barry, Diamond 8th grader, was the first student to approach a microphone, and many students followed. Emily Zhang, an 8th grade student from Clarke, proposed an amendment to an amendment. After the event, she cheerfully asked, "Can we do this every year?" The next step for the League, Town Meeting Members Association and the Social Studies Department will be to evaluate the program and consider whether to offer it again next year.

LWVMA DAY ON THE HILL

DEMOCRACY IS NOT A SPECTATOR SPORT!

Over 80 League members from around the state attended the morning session, "Democracy is not a Spectator Sport: How to be an effective advocate," then fanned out to the offices of their state Senators and Representatives to seek support of the legislation LWVMA specialists highlighted during the session.

Rep. Thomas Conroy of the 13th Middlesex District led off, using a bill he has introduced to establish a carbon tax in Massachusetts, H.2532, to illustrate the steps a legislator takes to persuade colleagues to support a bill.

Then Elizabeth Saunders, Massachusetts director of Clean Water Action, provided pointers on working effectively with those legislators who support a group's aims.

Whether you are a legislator working on a favorite bill, an activist arguing for a favorite cause, or a League member lobbying for supported legislation, a long-term view is key, speakers at LWVMA's annual Day on the Hill at the State House reminded the audience.

Groups such as the League who support a bill should "interact with, appeal to and prod their legislators" in as many ways as possible, including meeting at the State House, writing letters, contacting the Speaker of the House and Senate President and relevant committee members, and working with like-minded groups

LWVUS

The fate of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) now lies with the Supreme Court. For the second time in as many months, the justices are hearing arguments on vital legislation that has encouraged active participation in our democracy for nearly two decades. The League of Women Voters of Arizona is a plaintiff in the case and the LWVUS has submitted an amicus brief to the Court.

If the Supreme Court rules against the NVRA, states would be free to pass laws that could restrict voter registration activities and thereby prevent eligible citizens from registering to vote. [Pledge to support new voters and the organizations that bring them into the political process.](#)

The National Voter Registration Act, commonly known as “Motor Voter,” became law in 1993 and streamlines the voter registration process. It requires states to provide voter registration opportunities when citizens get a driver’s license or seek government services at other agencies and provides for voter registration by mail, which is particularly important for citizen-led voter registration drives. In so doing, it protects voters against state restrictions on voter registration for federal elections. The League was a key player in the passage of the NVRA – we worked on the initial bill and later co-chaired a national coalition that brought together over 60 organizations dedicated to improving the voter registration process.

What’s more – if the NVRA is not upheld, *the work of the League of Women Voters is at risk!* [Take action today and pledge to support organizations like ours that seek to engage new voters in the political process.](#)

If the opponents of the NVRA have their way, the mission of our organization is in jeopardy. The case endangers the League’s work of running independent voter registration drives. The NVRA streamlined the numerous state laws that hindered citizen-led registration drives, and a decision against the NVRA would leave the voter registration process vulnerable to new forms of political manipulation. The League and our community partners are often the only effective way for many new voters to get registered to participate in our great democracy.

Restricting voter registration is just one way to limit the right to vote and altering the NVRA could reverse years of progress. [Join us as we fight to protect the NVRA and pledge to support organizations like ours that are dedicated to registering new voters so that all eligible citizens are encouraged and able to participate in our elections.](#)

Thank you for making democracy work.
Elizabeth McNamara, President

League Membership!

Thank you to members who’ve renewed their memberships. If you haven’t renewed your membership for 2012-2013, please use the form that you received earlier or the one on our website at www.lwvlexington.org

We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you’d like to submit an article for the May 2013 Bulletin, please send it to Nancy Corcoran-Ronchetti at Nancor1106@gmail.com by April 23, 2013.

Dates to Save:

- April 5 First Friday Forum: Our State Budget – Making Tough Choices
- April 6 LWV Concord – House Tour in Concord – What’s New
10:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. For more information visit
www.lwvcc.org, [House Tour web page](#), or call 978-254-1598
- May 3 First Friday Forum: Let’s Do More Than Talk!
- May 17, 18 LWVMA Convention 2013, Boston Marriott Peabody
- June 4 LWVL Annual Meeting, Cary Memorial Library, Large Meeting Room, 7:00 p.m. – 9:00 p.m.



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