



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

Box 233 Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

LWVL NEWS AND INFORMATION

LWVL MARCH FIRST FRIDAY

A Community Vision: Where We Are, Where We Would Like to Be.

A special presentation by Marian A.O. Cohen, Ph.D., Vision 20/20 Committee Member and Principal Investigator on Friday February 6, 2015.

In 2013, the 20/20 Vision Committee conducted a Town-wide survey to investigate residents' opinions on issues including: diversity; economic development; education; environment; physical character of the community; and Town government and services. Residents rated both the importance to them of each issue and how well they judged the Town to be performing with respect to each issue. The survey was designed to gather new, forward-looking information for guiding community decisions affecting our Town's future. Results of this survey are being broadly shared with the Town's Boards and citizens. In addition to guiding decision-making by the Boards, results are helping the 20/20 Committee to identify new areas deserving further review.

Dr. Cohen's presentation of findings will stimulate a discussion of what we value, how successfully we are addressing those values, and what we'd like to change.

This is the fifth in the series of 2014-2015 First Friday Forums hosted by the League of Women Voters of Lexington to promote awareness and understanding of public policy issues. Coffee will be available at 9:15 a.m. and presentations will begin at 9:30 in the Community Meeting Room on the lower level of Cary Memorial Library, 1874 Massachusetts Avenue.

For more information, email lwvlexington@gmail.com. All League forums are open to the public at no charge.

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**SAVE THE DATE!
TOWN-WIDE ELECTION – MARCH 2, 2015**

**CANDIDATES' NIGHT – JOIN US!
Thursday, February 12TH, 7 PM at the Clarke Middle School!**

Candidates' Night is an annual event organized by the League of Women Voters of Lexington to provide Town Meeting and Town-Wide Office candidates an opportunity to present their positions on issues and to listen to constituents' concerns.

During the first part of the evening, candidates for Town Meeting will gather in the Clarke School cafeteria and individual classrooms to meet over refreshments and exchange ideas with voters from their precincts.

At 7:45 pm, participants will gather in the school auditorium to hear the views of some candidates seeking Town-Wide elective office (School Committee, Planning Board, and Town Moderator).

The evening promises to be informative and to provide a lively forum for discussion of topics that may be voted on at Town Meeting.

To get to Clarke Middle School: Take Brookside Avenue off Waltham Street, park in the school parking lot, and enter the school at the main entrance; the cafeteria is just down the hall.

**LWVMA
New Report Faults Money in Politics**

U.S. Senate candidates must raise an average of \$3,300 per day over six years to equal the median haul of winners during the 2014 election cycle, according to a report released Wednesday by groups opposed to a U.S. Supreme Court ruling on campaign finances.

U.S. House candidates have to raise \$1,800 a day over two years, according to the report from MassPIRG's national affiliate and Demos.

The report was released at a rally across the street from the State House, on the fifth anniversary of the Citizens United ruling, which allowed greater spending by corporate and union interests to influence electoral outcomes. Rep. Cory Atkins (D-Concord) also attended the small gathering.

“We need to get big money out of campaigns,” said Janet Domenitz, executive director of MassPIRG, a consumer advocacy group, who was joined by representatives from the League of Women Voters and Common Cause.

But another group celebrated the 2010 ruling as a win for “free speech” and “free association rights.”

“The Supreme Court got it right in Citizens United, which allows anyone of any means to be heard, and we hope the decision will stand in the face of so much misguided activism,” Paul Craney, executive director of the nonprofit Massachusetts Fiscal Alliance, said in a statement.

Pam Wilmot, the executive director of Common Cause Massachusetts, called for additional campaign finance reform efforts and praised the 2014 state law that required greater disclosure by super political action committees (PACs), including listing their top five donors at the end of television and internet ads.

“There’s still a few loopholes that need to be closed,” she said, adding that her organization will be filing legislative proposals calling for additional disclosures. The League of Women Voters will seek more frequent campaign finance reports from super PACs, according to the group’s co-president, Anne Borg.

Rep. Atkins said she plans to file a bill calling on Congress to amend the U.S. Constitution and knock down the Citizens United ruling. The bill would set up a six-month time limit, and if Congress fails to pass the amendment, Massachusetts would push for a constitutional convention with other states.

“People who have more money, have more speech,” she said.

Domenitz highlighted a reform bill at the federal level that will be re-filed by U.S. Rep. John Sarbanes, a Maryland Democrat, which would offer refundable tax credits to donors in order to incentivize small donations.

The USPIRG/Demos report described several recent Congressional candidates as “locked out” because they were out-raised by their opponents and lost, including Kelly Westlund, a Wisconsin Democrat; Rev. Michael Walrond, a New York Democrat; David Smith, a Florida Republican; and Amanda Renteria, a California Democrat.

According to the report, Senate candidates would have to snap up 17 daily contributions from small donors, while House candidates would have to pick up nine a day, if they wanted to keep up with the winners.

“The House winner reporting the largest contribution total in 2014 raised nearly \$8 million in contributions, while the Senate’s leading fundraiser collected more than \$18 million,” the report said.

“This system makes fundraising prowess – rather than good policy ideas, a genuine desire for public service, or strong connections with a broad base of potential constituents – the primary qualification for holding elected office,” the report added. “The first question any aspiring candidate for Congress must him or herself is, ‘How much money can I raise?’”

In a post on Twitter, the social networking site, U.S. Sen. Ed Markey noted the fifth year anniversary of the Citizens United, and in tagging Common Cause in the post, added, “we’re with you 100% in fight to #GetMoneyOut of elections.”

Markey, who was elected to the Senate in a 2013 special election after 37 years in the House, widely outpaced his Republican opponent in spending when he ran for a full six-year term last year. In November, he received 1.3 million votes to Brian Herr’s 791,950 votes.

According to the Center for Responsive Politics, Markey’s campaign committee’s top contributors included people affiliated with the League of Conservation Voters, Mintz Levin, Harvard University and Granite Telecommunications, and top sectors that donated to Markey included law firms, securities and investments, as well as real estate.

LWVUS

Last week marked the [5th anniversary of Citizens United](#) and this week we saw the announcement that the [fundraising machine run by the Koch brothers](#) intends to raise and spend more money on the upcoming presidential election than the two major political parties. The response at the national level has ranged from calls for more disclosure and strict coordination rules to abolition of candidate contribution limits to allow the parties and candidates to compete with these independent efforts.

The League’s [Money in Politics Committee](#) has been hard at work. A [reading list](#) has been posted to help our members and others understand the legal and political underpinnings of the rise of independent political actors. (See also the Constitutional Amendment Committee’s [newly-posted reading list](#) below). While the decision in *Citizens United* did not create this phenomenon, it certainly turbo-charged the spending by these shadowy outside groups. In addition to educating ourselves, the League is working to limit the influence of dark money. Last year, the [League submitted comments to the IRS](#) on its proposed rule strictly limiting the political activity of 501(c)(4) organizations. Those comments were highly praised and while the IRS withdrew the proposed rule, we expect that another attempt to control 501(c) organizations in the near future. The [League also commented on new FEC rules](#) and will continue to comment as the FEC engages in rulemaking to address not just *Citizens United* but the *McCutcheon* decision as well.

The League expects that in the 114th Congress there will be legislation addressing the worst abuses and we must continue to push for reforms like disclosure, limits on coordination and public financing for congressional elections. Money in politics is a pervasive problem at all levels of government and while the prospects for passing meaningful reform now may be bleak in Congress, opportunities to make inroads at the state and local level do exist and the League can play an important role in making our politics more transparent and more responsive to voters.

In the end, the only lasting antidote for floods of money in our elections is floods of voters at the polls. The League's outstanding work in registering and informing voters continues to be, as it has for the past 95 years, the best approach to Making Democracy Work®!

In League,
Elizabeth McNamara, President

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 of Women Voters of Lexington is on Facebook!

"Like" us at

<https://www.facebook.com/LWVLexington>

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.

We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you would like to submit an article for the March 2015 Bulletin, please send it to Nancy Corcoran Ronchetti at Nancor1106@gmail.com by February 24, 2015.

Dates to Save:

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| February 6 | First Friday – A Community Vision: Where We Are, Where We Would Like to Be. |
| February 12 | Candidates' Night, Clarke Middle School, 7:00 p.m. |
| March 2 | Town-Wide Election |
| March 6 | First Friday – “Is Lexington Ready for Complete Streets?” |



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