



## LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LEXINGTON

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Box 233 Lexington, Massachusetts 02420

### **LWVL NEWS AND INFORMATION**

#### **LWVL FEBRUARY FIRST FRIDAY FORUM The Politics of Food February 7, 2014**

Everyone has a personal relationship with food, but not everyone is aware of the politics and policies that surround the origins of our food and how it actually travels to our plates. Recently, the State of Massachusetts awarded the Metropolitan Area Planning Council (MAPC) a contract to create a state-wide food policy.

So what is a food policy and why should we need one? Will it affect our local farmers, our thriving farmer's market and community based food programs? Will it improve the quality of our food and the efficiency and fairness of food distribution?

Please join the Lexington League of Women Voters for a lively panel discussion on this topic. Our panelists include: Jim Wilson owner of Wilson Farm, Liz Connelly, co-founder of the Lexington Farmers Market and Kids Cooking Green, Charlie Radosolovich (the "Rad Urban Farmer") and Lauren Yaffee, a Lexington farmer.

This is the fifth in the series of 2013-2014 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 or to carpool, contact the League at 781-863-1733. All League forums are open to the public at no charge.

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Bulletin Editor: Nancy Corcoran Ronchetti – [Nancor1106@gmail.com](mailto:Nancor1106@gmail.com)

Membership: Lisah Rhodes – [lisahrhodes@gmail.com](mailto:lisahrhodes@gmail.com)

Lisa Smith [lisa.lavinia.smith@gmail.com](mailto:lisa.lavinia.smith@gmail.com)

Melinda Walker - [melinda.walker@rcn.com](mailto:melinda.walker@rcn.com)

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**The League of Women Voters of Lexington is on Facebook!**

"Like" us at

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

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## **LWVL CANDIDATES' NIGHT LEXINGTON TOWN ELECTION THURSDAY, FEBRUARY 13, 2014**

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 Middle School Cafeteria at 7:00 p.m. to meet over refreshments to exchange ideas with voters from their precincts. At 7:45 pm, participants will gather in the school auditorium to hear the views of candidates seeking Town-Wide elective office (i.e., Town Moderator; Board of Selectman; Planning Board; School Committee; and Housing Authority). Ellen Harde, a League member from Westford, will moderate the debates and Q and A with the town-wide office candidates.

The evening promises to be informative and to provide a lively forum for discussion of topics that may be voted on at Town Meeting. A snow date is scheduled for Thursday, February 27. There is no admission charge and the public is encouraged to attend.

For further information, call the League of Women Voters at 781-863-0474. Or visit our website at <http://www.lwvlexington.org>.

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## **STUDENT MOCK TOWN MEETING IS MARCH 8<sup>TH</sup>**

Planning continues for the student Mock Town Meeting to be held March 8<sup>th</sup> 2014 at Cary Hall. For more information, please contact Jessie Steigerwald at [jess@shininghours.com](mailto:jess@shininghours.com) or Nancy Corcoran Ronchetti at [nancor1106@gmail.com](mailto:nancor1106@gmail.com).

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## **LWVMA**

### **Senate Overwhelmingly Passes Election Reform!**

With passage of an election reform bill by a 37-1 margin Thursday, the Senate has taken a giant step to make Massachusetts one of the leading states in the nation in encouraging its citizens to register and to vote. At a time when many states are actively cutting back access to the polls, the Massachusetts legislature deserves high praise for taking the opposite stance.

The final version of the Senate bill includes Election Day registration, early voting with some required weekend hours, pre-registration for 16-year-olds, online voter registration and an online portal where citizens can check their voting status, and post-election audits of random precincts. It ties classification of a voter as inactive to voting history rather than to returning the town or city census form.

Proposals to require voters to show a photo ID or other forms of identification before casting a ballot were defeated in the Senate.

Among the many amendments which passed in the Senate were provisions to:

- Eliminate the check-out table in the polling place, a move supported by the clerks' associations
- Require that the link to the online portal to check registration status be posted on city and town websites
- Require that the legislature provide funding to cover the costs of early voting on weekends
- Take a step toward permanent voter registration by enabling the Secretary of State's office to update voting lists based on change of address information from the Registry of Motor Vehicles and the U.S. Postal Service
- Allow a voter registered "in a political designation that is not a political party" to be considered unenrolled for the purpose voting in a primary and eligible to receive a ballot of a political party of the voter's choosing.

The Senators passed a provision to allow 17-year-olds in Lowell to vote in municipal elections, a move inspired by teen civic activists in that city which has also been considered as a home rule petition. Voters in Lowell will have to approve allowing 17-year-olds to vote in municipal elections.

The Senate bill builds on the election reform bill passed by the House last November. It now goes to conference committee to reconcile the differences, then to the House for passage of the reconciled version before it is sent to the Governor for his signature.

The effort to pass this bill was driven by the Election Modernization Coalition, made up of 45 advocacy groups and led by Common Cause Massachusetts, MassVOTE, League of Women Voters of Massachusetts, ACLU Massachusetts, MASSPIRG, the Massachusetts Voter Table, MIRA Coalition and Progressive Massachusetts.

Click [here](#) to see LWVMA's letter to the editor in the Boston Globe Jan. 16 and [here](#) to see the Globe editorial supporting election reform and noting LWVMA's work, also in the Jan. 16 paper.

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## **“Dear Future Governor” Student Video Contest Launches February 1: Join the Fun!**

The Massachusetts gubernatorial election is just 10 months away! LWVMA invites Massachusetts high school students to submit two-minute videos illustrating a problem or issue in their communities that the next Governor should address. **Click [here](#) to download and print a flyer.**

**Are there prizes?** YES! First place wins \$1000; second place wins \$500; and third place wins \$250. **Who can enter?** The Contest is open to any Massachusetts high school student in grades 9-12. **When is the Contest?** Entries can be submitted online at [www.lwvma.org](http://www.lwvma.org) starting February 1, 2014. The deadline for submissions is March 31, 2014. Judging will take place in April, and winners will be announced in May.

**Check back here shortly for further details!**

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## **Annual Lobbying Day is Wednesday, March 26.**

The LWVMA's annual lobbying day at the State House is set for **Wednesday, March 26**. Details on the bills, including specific talking points, will be distributed to local Leagues before Day on the Hill, so you will have the information you need to make the case with your legislators.

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## **LWVUS**

One year ago, in his [State of the Union Address](#), President Obama announced that he was creating a [Presidential Commission on Election Administration](#). The Commission was charged with exploring the reasons for long lines at the polls. Following on the heels of the 2012 Presidential Election and the efforts in states across the country to manipulate voter turnout by requiring restrictive ID, limiting early voting, purging registration lists, impinging on independent voter registration drives and loading ballots

with lengthy initiatives, the Commission seemed to the League to be [a weak response to a major issue](#).

The Commission issued [its report](#). Whatever skepticism the League articulated when the commission was formed, was all [but swept away by the comprehensive nature of the report and its recommendations](#). The bipartisan Commission spent six months taking testimony from election officials, academics and organizations like the League. The League [submitted a five-point reform agenda](#) to the Commission and several state Leagues also weighed in with testimony for the PCEA. In the end, while the recommendations do not go so far as addressing the administrative barriers created by ever more restrictive voter photo ID especially in the implementation of online voter registration systems, the report takes a refreshing step back from the partisan political debate surrounding election administration to look at our diffuse system from the point of view of the voter.

Among the key recommendations: modernization of the registration process through expansion of online voter registration and expanded state collaboration in improving the accuracy of voter lists; measures to improve access to the polls through expansion of the period for voting before traditional Election Day and through selection of suitable, well equipped polling facilities; state-of-the art techniques to assure efficient management of polling places; and reforms of the standard-setting and certification process for new voting technology to address soon-to-be antiquated voting machines.

One important recommendation called for professionalizing election administration by insuring that the responsible department or agency in every state has on staff individuals chosen solely on the basis of experience and expertise. The report goes so far as to call for the creation of an academic track for election administrators similar to that for public administrators.

We know that the details of implementing these sorts of proposals will be very important and there is much work to be done at the state level to insure that our elections are free, fair and accessible to all, but the substance and tone of this report can do much to assist those efforts. We look forward to working with you in your states on implementation. For now, it is great to get a boost on these important concepts in election reform. As we push [to repair the Voting Rights Act](#) and as we continue to advocate for state laws that protect every eligible voter, this report will be a very useful tool.

In League,  
Elizabeth McNamara, President

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**We welcome Bulletin articles from members. If you would like to submit an article for the March 2014 Bulletin, please send it to Nancy Corcoran Ronchetti at [Nancor1106@gmail.com](mailto:Nancor1106@gmail.com) by February 23, 2014.**

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**Dates to Save:**

- February 7      LWVL First Friday, Cary Memorial Library
- February 13    LWVL Candidates' Night, Clarke Middle School
- March 8        Mock Town Meeting for Lexington 8<sup>th</sup> Grade Students
- March 26      LWVMA Annual Lobbying Day, State House, Boston



League of Women Voters of Lexington  
P. O. Box 233  
Lexington, MA 02420