



Change was the overarching message at the 2016 LWWUS Convention. As the League moves from the theme of *The Key Structures of Democracy* to the *Campaign for Making Democracy Work*, the delegates were reminded by the national leadership about the controversy in which the League was founded as it focused between issues of broad social change to woman’s suffrage. Strategies were enacted to lead to greater member diversity, expanding our participation on key issues, and

strengthening our effort to “reclaim our democracy and protect the right to vote”.¹



A key change was in LWWUS governance and administrative leadership. The Year 2016 introduced many new members to the Board of Directors. (The members of the 2016-2018 LWWUS Board of Directors is listed later in this report). It also marked the introduction of Wylecia Wiggs Harris as its Chief Executive Officer.

Advocacy Day

The day before the start of the convention, delegates were invited to visit the Capital to urge their US Congressional Representatives and Senators to support the Voting Rights Advancement Act

¹ Welcome to Convention 2016. LWWUS President Message, Convention Program Book. June 16-19, 2016.

(VRAA)(H.R. 2867 / S. 1659). The VRAA was introduced to address the voting discrimination unleashed in the wake of the Shelby County v. Holder decision. Hundreds of delegates participated and their effort was showcased on Twitter (#LWV2016 #RestoreTheVRA).

The Convention Begins

Mornings and evenings were devoted to caucuses, workshops, and information breakout sessions. The topics ranged from how to improve League administration to best practices in advancing League programming. Sessions were also directed to specific issues such as:

- Global democracy
- Electoral redistricting
- Gun safety
- Access to behavioral healthcare
- Criminal code standards
- Youth voter registration tactics
- Immigration policy
- Voter protection and turnout strategies
- Carbon emissions reduction
- Facebook and Vote411 best practices
- Transgender voting rights
- Building membership diversity

Presentations

The delegates were treated to presentations on topics such as voter reform, voter political behavior, and the political process. Following is a list of the speakers:

- *Engaging Millennials in Our Elections.* Jennifer Lawless, Director, Women & Politics Institute, American University
- *Understanding American Authoritarianism.* Amanda Taub, Vox News and New York Times
- *Protecting the Right to Vote and Expanding the Electorate.* Kristen Clark, President, National Lawyers Committee Arturo Vargas, Executive Director of NALEO Christine Chen, Executive Director of APIAVote
- *Money in Politics.* Peter Overby, Correspondent, National Public Radio
- *Our Democracy — Complex Systems and Major Forces at Play in 2016.* Joe Goldman, President, Democracy Fund.
- *Understanding and Telling the Story of Impact for Democracy with Data.* Keesha Gaskins, Program director, Democratic Practice–United States, Rockefeller Brothers Fund
- *Messaging for Impact — What Resonates with Voters in 2016.* Celinda Lake, President, Lake Research Partners.
- *Give Us the Ballot: The Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America.* Ari Berman, The Nation.

Actions

The delegates committed the majority of each day in plenary sessions during which votes were cast on decisions regarding League leadership, administration, and policy positions. The chair of the Credentials Committee reported 784 voting delegates registered. The total number of voting

delegates for June 17 was 674. The total number of voting delegates for June 18 was 685. The required number for a quorum was reached on both days.

Following is a summary of the delegation’s actions.

Campaign for Making Democracy Work

Delegates approved **Motion # 2016-5, LWVUS Board**, and the *Campaign for Making Democracy Work*, and the League’s national program for the 2016-2018 biennium. In sum, these goals are to:

- Grow the vote — by registering a quarter of a million voters, informing them about voting procedures, and preparing them to arrive at the polls with everything they need to cast their ballots;
- Protect the vote — by working with local elections officials, organizing poll watching programs, and continuing to fight voter suppression efforts at the state and local level; and
- Empower six million voters with information, through our nonpartisan voters’ guides and candidate forums and debates, and through our online tools — especially VOTE411.org.

This program also addresses voter turnout, reforming political finance regulations, global democracy, and environmental protections.

- The League has piloted² a program to get out the vote in Ohio and New York by calling registered voters directly about upcoming elections and encourage voter participation.
- The League has been involved with White House, State Department, United Nations, and the Security Council in advancing women’s roles in democracy, the rights of women and girls, and global environment sustainability.

² Results from LWVUS – LWV Brookhaven Pilot Project on Voter Engagement as reported at the LWV of Suffolk County ILO 6/22/16 Board Meeting

	Total Group	Total Voted	Percent Voted
Control group	2879	1465	50%
Phone Bank Calls	1141*	426	37%
Robo Calls	16801	8958	53%
Robo + Phone Bank	17736	9291	52%
Total District Wide	64235	28702	44%

* This number only includes people who were actually reached on the phone (live caller or message)

Two reasons I think the live phone bank calls show a lower voter turnout rate:

- 1) The sample size is much smaller so we don’t have a true idea of the impact a live call has on a voter
- 2) With bad phone numbers it was harder to reach many of those voters, and even about half that number represents messages left for voters rather than a live conversation



- The League has added its voice to supporting the Environment Protection Agency's Clean Power Plan and participated in People's Climate March in New York City.

CONCURRENCE POSITIONS

The following Concurrence Positions were approved:

1. Concurrence Position on Redistricting (Motion # 2016-2, LWVUS Board)

Support redistricting processes and enforceable standards that promote fair and effective representation at all levels of government with maximum opportunity for public participation

After a lengthy debate regarding the authority of the LWVUS Board to recommend concurrence on this position without local and state input, the delegates approved this motion by Card Vote. Total number of votes cast = 652; Yes = 463; No =186; Illegal = 3

2. Concurrence Position on Behavioral Health (Motion # 2016-3, LWVUS Board)

Concurrence with the LWV Colorado position on Behavioral Health including amending the LWVUS Health Care position to include the following as the second sentence under Basic Level of Quality Care:

Every U.S. resident should have access to affordable, quality in- and out- patient behavioral health care, including needed medications and supportive services that is integrated with, and achieves parity with, physical health care.

This motion was approved by a two-thirds vote after a short debate regarding the comparative importance of physical health care vs behavioral health care.

3. Position to retain all current LWVUS Positions in the areas of Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, and Social Policy. (Motion # 2016-6, LWVUS Board)

RESOLUTIONS

The following resolutions were approved.³ Motion to move a resolution responding to gun violence in America. **Motion #2016-48, LWV of Florida.** In the wake of our country's worst mass gun violence in our history that killed 49 people in Orlando, Florida, we ask for a moment of silence to remember those who were killed, pray for peace for their families and friends and strength for the community and our country.

1. Resolution on Gun Safety and Center for Disease Control Research. **Motion #2016-47, LWV of Florida.** *Proposal from the League of Women Voters of Florida urging LWVUS to support restoration of funding for gun violence research at the CDC. In keeping with the LWVUS strong positions on gun control, recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) showing 33,636 Americans died due to firearms in 2013, and an April 2016 letter from 141 medical organizations urging Congress to restore funding for gun violence research at the CDC, we propose a resolution supporting and advocating such research.*
2. Resolution on Supporting Full Rights for the People of DC. **Motion # 2016-46, LWV of District of Columbia** *Therefore, be it resolved that the League of Women Voters of the United States will make statehood for the people of the District of Columbia a legislative priority.*
3. Resolution Supporting Sign On to Our Children's Trust Federal Amicus Brief. **Motion # 2016-52, LWV of California.** *Twenty-one youth plaintiffs from across the United States and Dr. James Hansen, head of the NASA Goddard Institute for Space Studies (1981-2013), on behalf of future generations received a favorable decision from U.S. Magistrate Judge Coffin allowing them to pursue a lawsuit against the federal government "for violating their constitutional rights to life, liberty and property, and their right to essential public trust resources, by permitting, encouraging, and otherwise enabling continued exploitation, production, and combustion of fossil fuels,".*
4. Resolution Supporting the ratification of the UN COP 21 Paris Agreement. **Motion # 2016-53, LWV of Oregon.** *The LWVUS supports aggressive efforts to restore balance to the planet's climate system by reducing the atmospheric CO2 to 350 (ppm), the upper safe limit, and Whereas, the United States signed and now, as one of the largest GHG emitters, should ratify the UN COP 21 Paris Agreement.*
5. Resolution Promoting an update of the White House Climate Plan Published June 2013. **Motion # 2016-54, LWV of Oregon.** *The LWVUS should continue working for full implementation of the EPA Clean Power Plan, especially at the state level, as a first step, and should call on the White House to implement an updated science-based Climate Action Plan that stabilizes global warming by bringing CO2 levels down to no more than 350 ppm by 2100.*

The following two proposed resolutions were not recommended by the Resolutions Committee because the Committee determined that each should be proposed during the Program debate.

³ The full description and rationale for each resolution is available at <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/2016ResolutionsReport>.

- A proposal from the LWV of Tacoma-Pierce County, WA calling on LWV to amend wording of LWV position on Equality of Opportunity Equality of opportunity for education, employment, housing, and access to all governmental benefits and privileges, for all persons in the United States, regardless of their race, color, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, or disability.



- A proposal from the LWV of Tacoma-Pierce County, WA on Climate Change We resolve that the League of Women Voters will sponsor educational events, encourage governmental policy change, and seek to implement real world actions around the nation to limit global warming.

BYLAWS

Motion #2016-29 APPROVED as Amended by Motion #2016-35

Effectively changes age of voting members.

Article III Membership Sec. 2. Types of Membership. **BRACKETS INDICATE CHANGE.**

A. Voting Members. Citizen **[Persons]** At Least 18 **[16]** years of age who join the League shall be voting members of local Leagues, state Leagues and of the LWVUS; (1) [individuals] THOSE who live within an area of a local League may join that League or any other local League; (2) those who reside outside the area of any local League may join a local League or shall be state members-at-large; (3) those who have been members of the League for 50 years or more shall be life members excused from the payment of dues.

B. Associate Members. All others who join the League shall be associate members.

2016-18 BIENNIUM BUDGET

The following motions regarding the 2016-18 Biennium Budget were approved.

- **Motion to adopt a PMP rate of \$32 for the 2016-2018 Biennium Motion #2016-12, LWVUS Board**
- **Motion to adopt the proposed LWVUS budget for 2016-2018.** Motion # 2016-14, LWVUS Board. Delegates left the first day plenary session with concerns about the Treasurer's Report. The report indicated losses in the LWVUS investment portfolio since its last report in 2014. There were also concerns about the revenue projections from donations in the proposed 2016-18 budget. The proposed budgeted also reflected reductions in expenditures in staffing and program support. Of special note was the LWVUS' decision to end the LWVUS support of the

LWVUS of California's website administration services to local, county, and state Leagues. The PMP fee did not change.



Specific delegate questions were addressed in a scheduled Q&A session by the LWVUS Executive Director, Chief Operating Officer, and Treasurer-elect. A second Q&A session was conducted the morning prior to the delegate's decision to approve the 2016-18 budget.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS, DIRECTORS, AND NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Officers

Chris Carson, President
Karen Nicholson, Vice President
Toni Zimmer, Secretary
Henrietta Saunders, Treasurer

Jessica Lowe-Minor
Brenda Rogers
Jessica Rohloff
Deborah Turner

Directors

Maribel Balbin
Amy Hjerstedt
Kim Lauth
Anita Loch

Nominating Committee

Peggy Appler, Chair
Mary Ann Reeves
Susan Smith

Presidential Address

The newly elected President of the LWVUS, Chris Carson's address⁴ to the delegates marked the serious commitment of the League to change. After telling of her own rapid ascendancy to leadership within the League, President Carson spoke of the challenges in created by the current political environment, new technology, and the changing face of the American electorate. She referred to the earliest days of the League:

There is no doubt that as I stand here before you today, our political situation is appalling. The image is bleak, but it is not new.

To put our political situation and its challenges into perspective, we first look to the past, which is not a surprising comment from a historian. Clearly, we have seen nearly the same spectacle played out several times over the course of the past two and a half centuries.

What comes immediately to mind is the Gilded Age and the national reaction to that situation. And in the midst of the resulting upheaval, Congress passed the Nineteenth Amendment, ratified on August 18, 1920. Six months prior to that ratification, on February 14, 1920, the League of Women Voters was incorporated by Carrie Chapman Catt.

Carrie Catt and her fellow founders succeeded in achieving their goal in large part thanks to their sheer willpower, that is true. But they also won this fight because of their carefully-laid strategy and their single-minded determination to follow it.

With this, President Carson emphasized the need for a clear strategy to meet League goals and the importance of collaboration between League at the local, state, and national levels. In closing, President Carson left the delegates with three questions:

1. How do we adapt to this new climate?
2. How do we reach new members in an age of social media?
3. And how do we engage members new and old with a personal, human touch even if they may be in far distant places?

⁴ The full text of President Carson's address can be found at: <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/remarks-lwvus-president-chris-carson-convention-2016>.