



League of Women Voters of Smithtown Township

VOTER

The LWV is a non-partisan organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy

January 2016

<http://www.lwv-suffolkcounty.org/LWVSmithtown.html>

Important dates and information in this issue of the Smithtown Voter:

- Tuesday January 12 12:30pm at Old Street Pub, Smithtown

**Community Conversation Lunch with
SC Legislator Leslie Kennedy**

- Thursday January 14 10am at SCCC Main St. Riverhead

LWVSC Board Meeting

- Wednesday January 20 1:30pm at Horizons in Smithtown

Money in Politics Consensus Meeting

- Monday January 25 7:00pm at Cinema Arts in Huntington

“Chosen” film on human trafficking

COMING IN FEBRUARY...

**LWV's 96th Birthday
Celebratory Lunch in Smithtown**



Monday, January 25 7:00PM

The League of Women Voters of Huntington & The Cinema Arts Centre present the movie

“Chosen”

(modern day slavery)

This is our fourth program to inform and educate the public on Human Trafficking.

This documentary is about two young girls who were chosen to be trafficked, and how they were groomed. These girls are far different from the stereotypical human victims you might imagine and easily could be your relatives, neighbors or friends living in suburbia. This is an important film for teenagers to see.

Admission is \$10 for members

After the documentary there will be a Q & A with a panel of experts.

Refreshments in Skye Room following discussion.

LWV SMITHTOWN

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Regular Meeting

January 19 at 7pm

Smithtown Main Branch

Smithtown Town Board Meetings

Tuesday: January 21

7:00 pm regular meeting

Eugene A. Cannataro

Senior Citizen Center

420 Middle Country Road, Smithtown

Planning Board

First + third Wednesday of the month 8 pm

Eugene A. Cannataro

Senior Citizen Center

420 Middle Country Road, Smithtown

Board of Zoning Appeals

Second + fourth Tuesday of the month 7 pm

Eugene A. Cannataro

Senior Citizen Center

420 Middle Country Road, Smithtown

We are resuming our **Community Conversations** with a luncheon with **Legislator Leslie Kennedy** of the 12th Legislative District.

For the past 3 decades she has held various positions in the private sector and in local government (including working for her husband SC Comptroller John Kennedy, Jr. when he held the 12th LD seat).

The lunch will be at the **Old Street Pub**, 92 E. Main St.. Smithtown (in shopping center) at **12:30 pm on Tuesday, January 12, 2016**. These meetings are informative and social and you are welcome to bring a friend.

Please contact Sondra Irvine, tfsirvine@hotmail.com or 631-862-4042 to confirm your reservation.

Before you come to the Money in Politics consensus meeting on Wednesday, January 20 at 1:30 pm, please read the New York Times Editorial below.

Beggars Banquet in Congress

The New York Times Editorial Board, Jan. 7, 2016

Talk to members of Congress as they retire after years in the Capitol and a disturbing thread runs through their adieus that has nothing to do with serving the people — yes, the people. Far from it: It's more about how happy they are at having no further obligation to romance the donors — yes, the campaign donors. Departing lawmakers can hardly contain their joy at leaving behind the job's awful necessity of darting from the Capitol day in and day out to cubbyholed precincts down the block known as "call rooms," where they beg shamelessly for campaign money to keep their political careers going.

The law forbids incumbents from soliciting inside their Capitol offices, so they indulge an elaborate pretense that seeking electioneering money at a nearby party headquarters or a colleague's townhouse is a convincingly less grubby way of wooing donors hoping for favors.

"It's horrific," Representative Steve Israel of New York admitted this week in announcing his retirement after eight terms. "I don't think I can spend another day in another call room making another call begging for money," he said. He estimated he has spent 4,200 hours in call rooms, plus 1,600 more at fund-raising dinners, raising \$20 million in donations. Plus untold multimillions more in his time running the campaign machine of the Democratic Congressional Campaign Committee.

Money grubbing is so relentless for both parties that a Democratic directive for arriving freshmen members that surfaced in The Huffington Post two years ago candidly advised them to devote four hours of each working day to "call time" if they entertained hopes for re-election — as opposed to three to four hours for the actual job of lawmaking. Members are regularly seen leaving the Capitol after a vote to put in more call time, as if feeding gluttonous parking meters.

"Every hour a member of Congress spends on call time is an hour less spent on critical issues," Mr. Israel regretfully noted, arguing that this is the ultimate case for the public financing of federal elections and for full disclosure of well-heeled donors.

"When I decided to resign, the first group I called were my donors, to give them the good news that I no longer would be begging them for money," said Mr. Israel, a published writer who plans to satirize the degrading process in his next novel.



Money in Politics

LWV of Smithtown Consensus Meeting

January 20, 2016

**PLEASE READ THROUGH THE FOLLOWING
COPIES OF THE PRESENTATION SLIDES
BEFORE ATTENDING THE CONSENSUS MEETING ON
WEDNESDAY JANUARY 20 AT 1:30 PM
AT HORIZONS ON MAIN ST. IN SMITHTOWN**



Money in Politics

LWV of Smithtown Consensus Meeting

January 20, 2016

**The First Amendment to the Constitution protects
the right of every American to speak out.**

*Congress shall make no law . . .
abridging the freedom of speech, or of
the press . . .*

(1st Amendment)

*Independent expenditures, including those
made by corporations, do not give rise to
corruption or the appearance of corruption.*

(2010 – Citizens United v. FEC)

1974 To 2010

For almost 40 years, the League's approach and the Supreme Court's approach and intersected in one important aspect.

Adopted in 1974, the League's current campaign finance position focuses only on the financing of election campaigns as it relates to the democratic process, i.e., opportunities for undue influence, opportunities to ensure equity among candidates, protection of the public right to know and to fully participate.

The Court determined that campaign finance protects the rights of:

- Individual candidates to disseminate their message
- Donors to express their own views through her message
- Other political actors who may wish to make election expenditures independent of the candidates or to advocate in support or opposition to particular public policy issues.

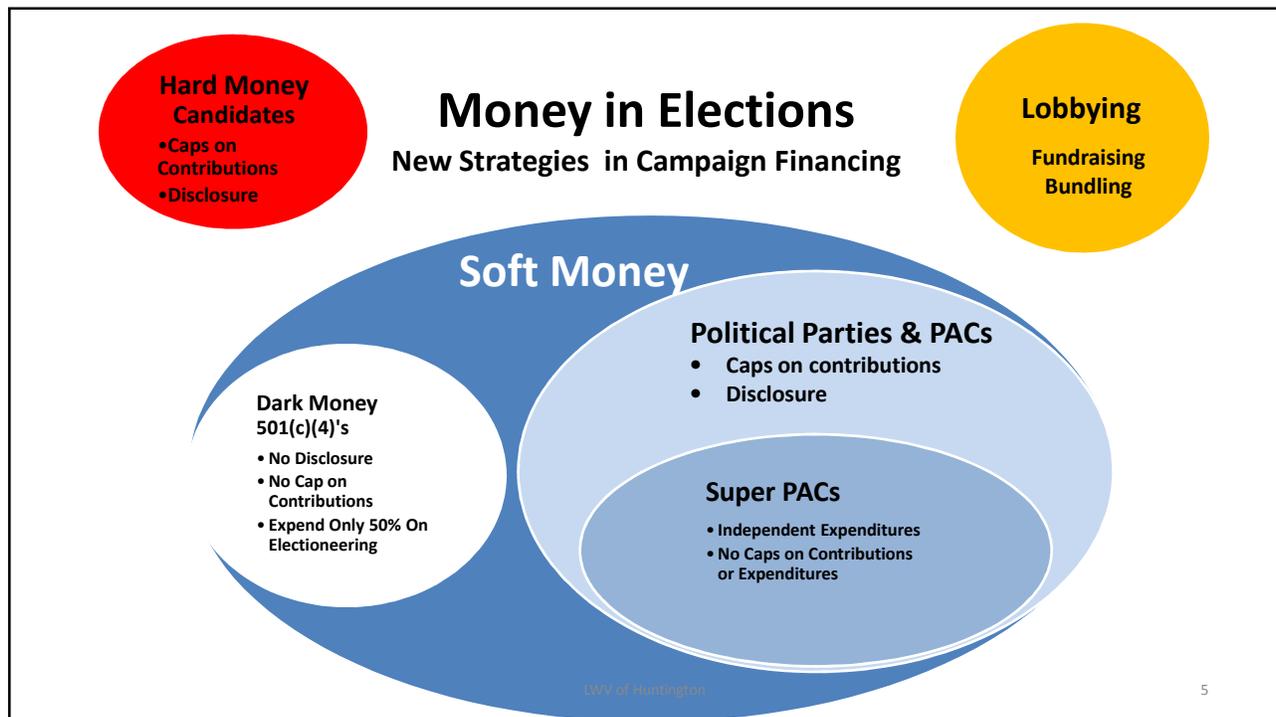
The Court drastically extended its views on free speech to allow :

- Unlimited independent spending in candidate elections by corporations and unions and
- Discounted any danger from any undue influence other than *quid pro quo* ("something for something") corruption.

**That changed with the
Citizens United decision
in 2010.**

The League's current position does not balance the First Amendment interests of :

- Candidates, donors, independent spenders, and issue advocates
- Against the interest in equitable competition among candidates for office, preventing undue influence, and enhancing voter participation.



Arguments in Favor of Unlimited Campaign Spending

- ✓ **Money allows the funding of modern communications, which is essential to reach voters.**
- ✓ **Political communication informs the voters.**
- ✓ **Government should not regulate political speech, which is basic in a democracy.**
- ✓ **Just because a candidate takes contributions does not mean that as an elected official s/he will do favors for the contributor—particularly if the spending is “independent.”**
- ✓ **The funds simply flow to representatives who believe in the position on the issue of the group who is making the donation.**

Some Reasons To Control Election Spending

- ✓ **Combat corruption and undue influence in government through special access and special treatment.**
- ✓ **Prevent distortion of the election process by big spending.**
- ✓ **Enhance political equality.**
- ✓ **Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office.**
- ✓ **Reduce the time and effort that elected officials and candidates for public office expend on campaign fundraising.**
- ✓ **Prevent office holders from pressuring donors for campaign funds.**
- ✓ **Ensure through disclosure that voters have sufficient information to make their choices.**

Consensus Questions

Part 1

Democratic Values and Interests

Part 2

Free Speech and Freedom of the Press

Part 3

Methods for Regulating Campaign

LWV Study Points: Democratic Values and Interests

LWV looked for evidence of whether reforms in the current system are justified.

- **Public Opinion.** No studies were found that reported a high level of public satisfaction with the current state of campaign financing.
- **Political Participant Experience.** The substantial growth in the amount of independent campaign spending in the past few years has created significant impacts on campaign activities and some impacts on the legislative process.
- **Academic Research.** Most scholars agree that *quid pro quo* corruption related specifically to campaign contributions is relatively rare or rarely discovered. Also, research raises questions about the interests to which officeholders are responding and whether the bias toward economic elites is related to Money in Politics.

Consensus Questions: Democratic Values and Interests

Question 1: What should be the goals and purposes of campaign finance regulation?

Agree Disagree No consensus

- a. Seek political equality for all citizens.
- b. Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns.
- c. Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office.
- d. Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public.
- e. Ensure that economic and corporate interests are part of election dialogue.
- f. Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices.
- g. Ensure the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections.
- h. Combat corruption and undue influence in government.

Consensus Questions: Democratic Values and Interests

Question 2: Evaluate whether the following activities are types of political corruption.

Agree Disagree No consensus

- a. A candidate or officeholder agrees to vote or work in favor of a donor's interests in exchange for a campaign contribution.
- b. An officeholder or her/his staff gives greater access to donors.
- c. An officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them.
- d. An office holder seeks political contributions implying that there will be retribution unless a donation is given.
- e. The results of the political process consistently favor the interests of significant campaign contributors.

LWV Study Points: Free Speech and Freedom of the Press

To understand the current framework of campaign finance in the U.S. requires a basic understanding of the First Amendment. Today's communication environment, however, differs dramatically from the one that existed at our nation's founding. Should lines be drawn?

Limits on Free Speech

The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the government sometimes may be allowed to limit speech. Historically, a fundamental distinction arose between the **content** of speech and the **means** whereby that speech is expressed.

Freedom of the Press

The First Amendment protects freedom of the press. This is important in the money and politics context because the media spend large sums of money in candidate elections, and can have a decisive role through communications directly to the public.

Independent Expenditures

Since 2010, "independent expenditures" have increased greatly while "electioneering communications," which require reporting to the FEC the size of the expenditure and identification of people involved with the expenditure, have decreased.

Consensus Questions: Free Speech and Freedom of the Press

Question 1: Many different individuals and organizations use a variety of methods to communicate their views to voters in candidate elections. Should spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited?

- Spending banned Some spending limits Unlimited spending No consensus
- a. Individual citizens, including wealthy individuals like George Soros and the Koch Brothers.
 - b. Political Action Committees, sponsored by an organization, such as the League of Conservation Voters, Chevron, the American Bankers Association, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), whose campaign spending comes from contributions by individuals associated with the sponsoring organization, such as employees, stockholders, members and volunteers.
 - c. For-profit organizations, like Exxon, Ben and Jerry's, General Motors, and Starbucks, from their corporate treasury funds.

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Consensus Questions: Free Speech and Freedom of the Press

Question 1: Many different individuals and organizations use a variety of methods to communicate their views to voters in candidate elections. Should spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited?

- Spending banned Some spending limits Unlimited spending No consensus
- d. Trade associations, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Wind Energy Association, and the American Petroleum Institute, from the association's general treasury funds.
 - e. Labor unions, like the United Autoworkers and Service Employees International, from the union's general treasury funds.
 - f. Non-profit organizations, like the Sierra Club, Wisconsin Right to Life, Coalition to Stop Gun Violence, American Crossroads, and Priorities USA, from the organization's general treasury funds.

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Consensus Questions: Free Speech and Freedom of the Press

Question 1: Many different individuals and organizations use a variety of methods to communicate their views to voters in candidate elections. Should spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited?

Spending banned Some spending limits Unlimited spending No consensus

- g. Non-partisan voter registration and GOTV (get out the vote) organizations and activities, like the LWV and Nonprofit Vote.
- h. Political parties, like the Republicans, Libertarians, and Democrats.
- i. Candidates for public office spending money the candidate has raised from contributors.
- j. Candidates for public office spending their own money.

Consensus Questions: Free Speech and Freedom of the Press

Question 2: The press plays a major role in candidate elections through editorial endorsements, news coverage, and other communications directly to the public that are often important to the outcome. Should such spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited?

Spending banned Some spending limits Unlimited spending No consensus

- a. Newspapers, like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal.
- b. Television and other electronic media, like Fox News, CNN, MSNBC and CBS.
- c. Internet communications, like Huffington Post, Breitbart, Daily Kos, and individual bloggers.

LWV Study Points: Methods for Regulating Campaign Finance

As the LWV Money in Politics Committee seeks to inform members and citizens about the complex issues surrounding the financing of election campaigns, a brief examination of enforcement of federal campaign finance law is warranted.

The Federal Election Commission (FEC)

The FEC has sole jurisdiction over the civil enforcement of federal campaign finance law. While it is facing several major organizational challenges in leadership, funding, and partisanship, the agency has made significant strides in educating the public. In 2012, the FEC made the first criminal prosecution (Tyler Harber) in the U.S. based upon the coordination of campaign contributions between political committees.

Action in the States

Many campaign finance reformers recognize that the state and local levels are the arena where voters retain the most influence and where political action is possible. Laws governing campaign finance in the states are as varied as the states themselves.

Consensus Questions: Methods for Regulating Campaign Finance

Question 1: In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, should the League support?

Agree Disagree No consensus

- a. **Abolishing SuperPACs and spending coordinated or directed by candidates, other than a candidate's own single campaign committee.**
- b. **Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists? (Restrictions may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.)**

Consensus Questions: Methods for Regulating Campaign Finance

Question 1: In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, should the League support?

Agree Disagree No consensus

- c. Public funding for candidates? Should the League support: (You may respond to more than one item in Question 1 c.)
- i. Voluntary public financing of elections where candidates who choose to participate must also abide by reasonable spending limits?
 - ii. Mandatory public financing of elections where candidates must participate and abide by reasonable spending limits?
 - iii. Public financing without spending limits on candidates?

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Consensus Questions: Methods for Regulating Campaign Finance

Question 2: How should campaign finance regulations be administered and enforced?

You may choose more than one response.

- a. By an even-numbered commission with equal representation by the two major political parties to ensure partisan fairness (current Federal Election Commission [FEC] structure)?
- b. By an odd-numbered commission with at least one independent or nonpartisan commissioner to ensure decisions can be made in case of partisan deadlock?
- c. By structural and budget changes to the FEC (e.g., commission appointments, staffing, security, budget, decision making process) that would allow the agency to function effectively and meet its legislative and regulatory mandates.
- d. No consensus.

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