

THE CAPE COD VOTER

VOLUME 55 ISSUE 7

MARCH 2015

CALENDAR

Tuesday March 3
9:30am

Board Meeting
Cape Cod Five, Dennis

Thursday March 5
1pm

Healthcare Committee
Home of Joan Bernstein

Friday March 6
8-9:30am

Int'l Women's Day Breakfast
Doubletree Hotel, Hyannis
Sold out

Tuesday March 17
10am

Third Week Coffee
Bonatt's, Harwichport

Thursday March 19
7-9pm

LWVMA Forum on Inequality
Bentley University, Waltham
Rescheduled from Jan 28

LOOKING AHEAD...

Tuesday, April 7
9:30am

Board Meeting
Cape Cod Five, Dennis

Saturday April 18
9:30-noon

Healthcare Forum
Harwich Community Center

Legislative Breakfast 4/24 and Day on the Hill 4/28 -- See details Page 5

CO-PRESIDENTS' PAGE

This month's message from Karen Mazza

Dear Members:

Later in this issue, Marilyn Gullett has contributed the second article in our series on *Money in Politics*. We are doing this series to stay abreast of ongoing work that both the state and national Leagues are conducting to consider a constitutional amendment and/or legislation that can reverse the impact of the Citizens United decision. I appreciate the work of Florence Seldin, Marilyn and Renate Sands in the development of this series.

In this Co-Presidents' message I will take the lead in sharing with you the fruition of a project that the Youth Service Committee has been working on for more than three years. As Chair of the Youth Service Committee, I have served as our League's liaison to the Cape-wide strategic planning process facilitated by the Cape Cod Foundation to create a Youth Action Plan (YAP) promoting the success of Cape youth. The YAP is comprised of strategic goals and action steps that will be carried out through the collective work of participating community organizations, county and state agencies, schools, businesses, and civic groups.

As an outgrowth of this process, our League, in collaboration with the Cape Cod Foundation, has created a grant fund to support civic education in public middle schools and high schools in Barnstable County. The grant fund supports the YAP goal of empowering youth in Action Step 16: "Provide the resources, training, and networking needed to sustain strong civic education and community service programs in schools and community organizations." Our goal is to expand access for all students to meaningful opportunities to engage in the civic process through active learning opportunities related to real world issues.

We have selected this approach of offering incentive grants to schools for a variety of reasons. First, teachers involved in civic education have excellent ideas for ways to engage students in civic learning. However, they need support and encouragement to expand opportunities because at present there is little state-sponsored support for civic education. We believe that by creating this incentive we will help to foster a climate that values civic education and that will develop more creative partnerships between schools and the community to foster civic engagement for youth. Second, civic engagement and community service have a positive impact on the development of young people into caring and knowledgeable citizens with the skills to effect constructive change in their own lives and the future of their communities. Third, the learning experiences around these awarded projects will create the opportunity for positive publicity about youth in the news media encouraging greater community investment in youth. Fourth, our work participating in this project will publicize our investment in youth to a younger generation of students and parents. Moving toward the 100th anniversary of the creation of the League, we need to engage a younger and more diverse generation in the importance of participation and leadership in the civic improvement of our communities.

Continues next page. . .

I appreciate the support of our Youth Service Committee members, the LWVCCA Board and the Trustees of the Helen S. Aaron Educational Trust for the LWVCCA for their encouragement to pursue the development of this grant fund. The fund will be known as The League of Women Voters Civic Education fund of the Cape Cod Foundation. Our goal is to raise money for the fund to support grants to school districts, vocational schools or charter schools of up to \$1000 per year. We will be conducting fundraising projects, reaching out to the community and appealing to businesses and civic groups to seek contributions. We will also apply to grant programs. We intend to raise funds this spring and start our first grant application process in September.

If any members would like to participate in this fundraising process, I would be glad to have your help on the Youth Service Committee. While you may not think you have experience that would be helpful, there are simple tasks like addressing envelopes, identifying businesses, and making follow-up phone calls that would be a great help. Like any of our work, having many hands to share the work makes the job much easier.

Our Board is very excited about this new direction. I am happy to tell you that the League of Women Voters of Falmouth is also very excited about it and will be making a contribution to the fund. Similarly, the League of Women Voters of Massachusetts is enthusiastic about this initiative and would like to explore it as a model that can be replicated. I hope the project will give all of us as members of the League of Women Voters of the Cape Cod Area pride in contributing in a very concrete way to the positive development of young people on Cape Cod.

I will close by calling your attention to our **Legislative Breakfast on April 24** and once again encourage a good turnout. Details are listed later in the Voter. I will also be happy to see any members who would like to join other members for our informal **Third Week Coffee on March 17 at 10am at Bonatt's in Harwich**. This is just some light pleasant conversation among League friends and we only stay for about one hour. Come and warm up your St. Patrick's Day!

In League,

Karen Mazza
Co-President

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HEALTHCARE FORUM PREVIEW -- SAVE THE DATE, APRIL 18

Submitted by Joan Bernstein

Progress on the Mental Health Front: Involving the Community in Recovery is the working title for LWVCCA's second healthcare forum on mental health, to be held on Saturday, April 18 at the Harwich Community Center. The program will be recorded for future showing on local TV channels. As the title suggests, this will be primarily a mental health presentation, but substance abuse, suicide, violence, et. al. may be results of mental illness. At the time of writing, the following speakers were committed to participating in the forum:

1. Cheryl Bartlett, Executive Director, Cape Cod Regional Substance Abuse Prevention and Public Health Initiative -- *"How to Recognize There is a Mental Health/Behavioral Health Problem and What to Do About It"*.

2. Beth Albert, Director of Human Services, Barnstable County -- *"Involving the Community in Recovery"*. Beth will discuss progress at the County level and will demonstrate the County's breakthrough Barnstable County Behavioral Health web portal.

3. Sheriff James Cummings will speak about the innovative program at the jail.

4. Outer Cape Health Services in Wellfleet will discuss their mental health services.

5. Betty Ford Center speaker -- *"The importance of family involvement in recovery."*

Additional details will appear in the April VOTER. Meanwhile, please make a note:

**LWVCCA Community Forum on Healthcare -- Saturday, April 18
Harwich Community Center
9:30am coffee, 10:00 - 12:00 program, followed by audience discussion**

VOTER SERVICE

From Joan Grant and Chris Meade

The League has been asked to moderate candidate events in Chatham on April 20, in Dennis on April 30, and in Brewster on May 7. Joan Craig and Barbara Wellnitz will be doing the moderating. We will also be asking members to assist as greeters, timers and card collectors. Specific information on the candidates and key issues will be available in the middle of April.
EDITOR'S NOTE: Please let Chris or Joan know if you can be available to help at an event.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

From Renate Sands, Legislative Chair

PLEASE SAVE THESE DATES -- and look for further details in the next VOTER

LWVCCA LEGISLATIVE BREAKFAST

**CAPE COD COMMUNITY COLLEGE
LORUSSO BUILDING – SOLARIUM
FRIDAY, APRIL 24, 2015
8:30 AM**

DAY ON THE HILL

**STATE HOUSE – GARDNER AUDITORIUM
TUESDAY, APRIL 28
10:00 AM**

**Speaker: Senator Stanley Rosenberg
President, MA Senate**

Legislation. On the local level, the Pilgrim Nuclear Power Station is still a concern for local legislators. Senator Dan Wolf has filed two bills. The first would establish a fee on the storage of spent fuel rods. The second would establish funding to provide money for closure activities at nuclear power plants.

Sarah Peake has filed three bills regarding Pilgrim. The first expands the plume exposure emergency planning zone from 10 to 50 miles. The second bill will direct the MA Emergency Management Agency to do a preparedness study in case of a radiological emergency. The third would require Entergy to install more radiological monitors which, on the Cape, would be located in Brewster and Truro.

LWVMA has determined its legislative priorities which were listed in the Voter last month. The Legislative Action Committee is still evaluating bills to determine which ones should be their focus for advocacy.

The “Directory of Elected Officials” should be published soon, I hope. All the offices of the new legislators have promised to contact me when they receive their permanent room assignments, telephone numbers, etc.

COUNTY COMMITTEE

From Mary Lou Petitt for the County Committee

2015 County Budget Update

The Barnstable County Commissioners, in a 2-1 vote, have submitted their “adaptable” F/Y 2016 County budget to the Assembly of Delegates for review, discussion, and decisions. Now, the approximately \$28 million budget is being reviewed by the Assembly in weekly meetings with county departments and committees. A step taken by the Assembly was to pass a resolution, on majority vote, urging the Commissioners to establish a level-funded 2016 budget. The Commissioners did not act on this request. While it is expected that the budget discussions within the Assembly, and with the Commissioners, will be challenging, spirited and, at times, contentious, there are several positive early signs of agreement. Both bodies acknowledge that this year’s budget structuring, worked on by Robert Lawton, a former town administrator, has produced a clearer, cleaner budget than in past years. It has also allowed for an earlier budget process which should avoid past “last minute” battles.

The county budget is based on revenues pertaining to both this year’s and next year’s projections, making the revenue factor a key issue with mutual recognition of a serious and difficult county economic climate. Obviously this creates varied opinions and diverse approaches to funding county services. This is reflected in the level-funding resolution and the Commissioners’ 2-to-1 budget vote versus a desire to plan for more long-term needs and differing priorities that could surface. It also focuses the entire budget process on the role of county government and what services should be provided and/or supported by government. Social needs, economic and environmental needs, cultural and technological programs have already become areas of concern and of differences, and will be more so as the budget process proceeds.

It is clear that this basic government activity – developing a budget – benefits from involved citizen monitoring and oversight, and the LWVCCA has long provided that service in Barnstable County. A public presence at County meetings leads to a more open government with better decision-making. The League County Committee needs more members to continue this role of County “watchdog”. Members willing to become involved, even short-term, should contact Jari Rapaport (jari2@comcast.net) or Nancy Curley (nabby.curl398@gmail.com). Also the County Committee urges members to contact their own town’s Assembly Delegate and/or the County Commissioners with questions, concerns, opinions. They need to hear from concerned citizens. You can find contact information in the League Handbook and in the December issue of the Voter which listed newly elected members. You can also go to the county website and find listings of the Assembly members and the Commissioners and their contact information.

County Commissioners Meetings -- Every Wednesday 10am

Barnstable Superior Court

Assembly of Delegates Meetings -- 1st and 3rd Wednesdays 4pm

Barnstable Superior Court

Times may vary. Check www.barnstablecounty.org

NOTE: Mary Lou very kindly stepped in to write this report while Chair Jari Rapaport recovers from a chipped collarbone suffered in a fall. Our best to Jari for a speedy recovery.

MONEY IN POLITICS -- PART II

*Since LWVCCA's April 2013 forum on the subject of Money in Politics, not much new has happened except for further draconian rulings by the Supreme Court allowing bigger donations. Last November, a study committee consisting of members **Florence Seldin, Marilyn Gullett, Renate Sands and Karen Mazza** agreed to write a series of articles for *The Voter* on this very important topic. In last month's issue, Florence outlined the history of money-in-politics prior to the passage of McCain-Feingold. This month, Marilyn addresses what has happened since McCain-Feingold and what the League of Women Voters is doing on national, state and local levels. In April, Renate will provide information on current legislation that might provide relief from Supreme Court decisions.*

Money in Politics -- Part II

by Marilyn Gullett

To continue with Florence's excellent description of the history of money's influence in politics, we will look at what McCain-Feingold Campaign Reform Act of 2002 is about and how it has affected spending in campaigns.

Two issues were addressed in the bill. The first was "soft money" contributions, money that comes from organizations and groups, rather than political campaigns and parties. Prior to the passage of this law, soft money could be used in unlimited amounts to support political campaigns with no government oversight.

The bill also took on issue ads, forcing campaigns and organizations to stand behind their political advertisements. That is why you will see "paid for by Organization X", or "I'm Candidate so and so, and I approve this message".

In 2003 in *McConnell v. FEC*, the Supreme Court upheld key provisions of BCRA (Bi-partisan Campaign Reform Act) only to overturn some of them in *Wisconsin Right to Live v. FEC* in 2007 and *Davis v. FEC* in 2008. In the infamous *Citizens United v. FEC*, the Court ruled that corporations can give unlimited funds to a campaign and further in a Federal Appeals Court in 2010, *SpeechNow.org V. FEC*, the legal framework for Super PACs was created.

The cumulative impact of *Citizens United* on state legislation has been enormous. Twenty-four states with laws prohibiting or limiting independent expenditures by unions and corporations would have to change their campaign finance laws because of the rulings.

In 2011 Federal Court, *Carey v. FEC*, a path was provided for Hybrid Pacs by allowing PACs to merge with Super PACs. A PAC has contribution limits and can give directly to a candidate; a Super PAC has no contribution limits but cannot give directly to a candidate.

McComish v. Bennett in a 2011 Supreme Court decision overturned a provision in Arizona that had allowed additional public funds to a candidate to preserve a "level playing field" if he/she was outspent by privately financed opponents or independent groups.

Continues. . .

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Money in Politics continued

And, the latest decision in 2014, *McCutcheon v. FEC*, overturns federal aggregate limits on campaign contributions to candidates, political parties, and political committees. Most of the recent rulings have referred to the First Amendment and held that limiting donations was limiting free speech and is unconstitutional.

This is a brief synopsis of the court decisions that have impacted campaign finance. Whatever else it may have done or not done, the Citizens United decision galvanized the campaign finance reform (CFR) movement and aroused huge numbers of citizens who had never been involved in that movement before. New civic organizations sprang up across the country, proposals for Constitutional amendments proliferated and action was demanded from regulators, legislators, courts and even corporate boards of directors.

Although the defeats of some well-funded candidates were well publicized in 2012, candidates who raise and spend the most money still win in the majority of cases -- 84% of House races and 67% of Senate races in 2012. Perhaps more significant, money plays a huge role in determining who runs for office in the first place. The newly-minted Super PACs dominated outside spending in 2012, aggregating huge sums from millionaires and billionaires and accounting for more than 60% of the total \$1.03 billion in outside spending reported to the FEC. This dwarfed the \$313 million raised from more than 3.7 million individual donors to the Obama and Romney campaigns.

What can be done?

LWVUS

The League of Women Voters has been an active participant in CFR for over four decades. It formally adopted a Campaign Finance position in 1974. It continually monitors and, when appropriate, advocates for campaign finance reform in legislative, judicial and regulatory forums at the federal and state levels. It lobbied strongly for the passage of McCain-Feingold. It calls public attention to the issues through regular press releases and op-ed pieces, and it works in coalition with other organizations.

But the League, no less than the movement at large, faces challenges in the post-Citizens United landscape. The two-track strategy described in its biennial publication *Impact on Issues* (“achieve incremental reforms where possible in the short term, and build support for public financing as the best long-term solution”) seems to be running up against new barriers erected by the Supreme Court at every turn, although the League continues to advocate strongly within the remaining Constitutional arena. A resolution passed at the 2012 Convention urged the League to enlarge the arena by considering other means of challenging the Supreme Court interpretations, including amending the Constitution.

At the 2014 national convention held in Dallas in June, the convention delegates approved a Resolution proposed by LWVMA that expressed the need for a fast-tracked and dynamic study and review of the LWV Position on Campaign Finance, coupled with the proposed study of the Constitutional amendment process and the review of the redistricting process for Congressional districts that will propel concrete, action-oriented outcomes.

Continues. . .

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Money in Politics cont'd.

On the LWVUS website, a comprehensive Primer on money in politics is available and suggested reading for all of us. Go to the website and enter "Primer" in the quick search box. It will lead you to a PDF you can download.

LWVMA

In the 2013-2014 Legislative Session, several bills for which LWVMA had been advocating were passed and signed by the Governor. Those to do with elections were:

- a) Election reform—Establishes early voting, online voter registration, post-election audits, pre-registration of teens.
- b) Massachusetts Disclose Act—Requires timely disclosure of funding behind SuperPACs and listing of top five donors to groups buying ads in those ads.

In the 2015 session, the LWVMA will be advocating for

1. Elections and Voting:

Support early voting in statewide elections, option for early voting in local elections, Election Day registration, and measures to increase voter turnout.

2. Money and Politics:

Favor full and timely disclosure of campaign contributions, rules on corporate campaign spending, and reducing the impact of money on our political system at every level.

3. Public Financing for Campaigns:

Endorse restoring the clean election system the voters chose in 1998 and which were repealed by the legislature in 2003.

As stated above, LWVMA proposed the Resolution that the 2014 Convention adopted regarding campaign financing. In addition they developed a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Democracy in the Balance" which can be downloaded from their website.

LWVCCA

Extensive information and tools are available on the LWVUS and LWVMA websites. We urge you all to take some time to review the information. Our local League is attempting to keep our members informed of the impact these latest court decisions have had on our democracy and what is being done to reverse these trends. We are staying in touch with developments at the LWVUS level to see how they resolve the issues related to pursuing a constitutional amendment. Meanwhile, we intend to continue to work on local awareness of this issue.

The LWVMA forum on money in politics and its impact on income inequality, originally scheduled for January 28, will now take place on March 19 at Bentley University in Waltham. We will arrange for a local showing and will notify our members of the date(s) and time(s).

Finally, through our Voter Service co-chairs, we are attempting to inform voters on local elections and provide a neutral background for all candidates to be heard. Planning for the 2016 election is well on its way.

Next month, Renate will outline current legislation that would provide some relief from the latest court rulings.