



# VOTER

Volume 8 Issue 4

MARCH 2014

## CALENDAR

March 27, 2014

LWVTC General mtg.  
Traditions Café  
6 pm Social  
Speakers at 6:30  
**Topic:**  
**"Do You Want  
to Live Downtown?"**

## PLEASE NOTE TOPIC CHANGE

April 24, 2014

LWVTC General mtg.  
Traditions Café  
6 pm Social  
Speakers at 6:30  
**Topic: Health Care**

May 22, 2014

LWVTC Annual Mtg.  
Details TBD

**TREASURER  
NEED  
PLEASE  
CONSIDER**

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## LWVTC GENERAL MEETING

TOPIC:

**"Do You Want to Live Downtown?"**

**PANEL OF SPEAKERS TBD**

**WHEN:** March 27, 2014  
6 pm Social  
Speakers at 6:30 pm

**WHERE:** Tradition's Café  
300 5th Ave. SW  
Olympia

The League of Women Voters of Thurston County invites members and the community to engage in a panel on the topic "Do You Want to Live Downtown?" In light of lots of planning, including the Olympia comprehensive plan update and the Sustainable Thurston study, downtown Olympia is ready for new downtown residents. Indeed, we've learned of a 7-story building already planned for downtown. Panel members will present timely and up-to-date information. Please plan on joining us: March 27, 6:00 PM at Traditions Fair Trade, for dinner, information and discussion.

*Marilyn Zuckerman Funk*

*President's Article***CITIZENS UNITED**

In February, our program focused on the Citizens United case with former Supreme Court Justice Gerry Alexander. Citizen's United is the case, in which the United States Supreme Court held that the First Amendment prohibits the government from restricting political expenditures by corporations, associations, or labor unions. I personally asked former Justice Gerry Alexander to speak as I never completely understood the history of the case, nor why the Supreme Court determined that corporations were people.

Along with the history of how the case came before the Court, our former Justice focused on the paramount importance of protecting the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment clause on free speech: *Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people*

*peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.*

I also came to understand that corporations aren't seen as "things", as I view them, but as associations of people. It is important to remember that non-profits, like the League of Women Voters, are also corporations. So when we discuss whether there should be constitutional amendment to address the concept of corporations as people, any amendment abridging corporations' free speech rights could also bind the speech of non-profit corporations like our League. We would need to be highly cautious as to how any amendment would affect our ability to advocate.

Having former Supreme Court Justice Gerry Alexander put the 1<sup>st</sup> amendment plus 'corporations as people' together for me; I could finally understand the ra-

tionale behind the Citizens United decision. That doesn't mean however, I am not personally perturbed by the amount of money flowing into elections and the lack of disclosure.

Gerry Alexander's talk didn't leave anyone feeling that there was nothing to be done. Disclosure of funding can still be addressed and the former Justice noted that the Supreme Court does overturn itself, although from his perspective it seemed unlikely. We were very lucky to have Gerry Alexander join us to explain a situation which I found to be much more complex than many of us, certainly including me, fully understood.

*Allyson Brooks  
LWVTC President*



## **NOMINATING COMMITTEE - DEADLINE APPROACHING -**

The deadline to get suggestions to the Nominating Committee is approaching fast.

If you'd like to be part of a dynamic, fun group of people doing interesting work in the community, let Rita Robison, chair of the Thurston County League Nominating Committee, know by March 24 that you'd like to be on the League board.

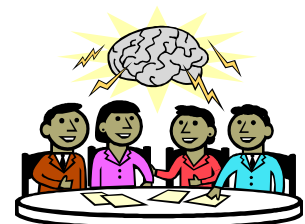
Or, if you know someone who would be a great League leader, call or email Rita.

This year the terms expire for president, vice president, and two elected board members. A Nominating Committee chair and two members of the Nominating Committee also need to be elected.

If this sounds like an opportunity you or someone you know might

want to pursue, contact Rita at [ritarr@comcast.net](mailto:ritarr@comcast.net) or call 360-754-9651.

*Rita Robison  
2014 Nominating Committee Chair*



## LWVUS PROGRAM PLANNING

On Thursday, February 21<sup>st</sup>, the League Board and interested members met to discuss potential topics for League studies at the national level.

Every two years, local Leagues get the opportunity to pick topics they determine are the most important or critical at this time, and forward those ideas to the national League.

Along with Board we appreciated having Bob Jacobs, Rob Kirkwood and Rita Robinson joining us for an important discussion and decision. The group came up with a number

of great topics to study including: climate change, regulation of financial institutions, review of the 40 hour work week, packaging, public funding of arts, culture and heritage; tax exemptions for religious institutions and private non-profits, update and enforcement of anti-trust laws, loss of sovereignty under international agreements and treaties, public mail delivery, update on the previous study on trade agreements, assuring stable retirement incomes, and upgrading the energy grid system.

Each League is allowed to pick two topics, one at 100% and one at 50%. Our first pick at 100% was a

study of financial institutions (e.g., Too Big to Fail). Our second choice, at 50%, was to have an updated study on trade.

The Board and our participating members debated long and hard on these issues. Each of the topics put forward would have made for a terrific study but financial institutions and trade were by far and away the picks of the evening. Join us next time to determine what study topics our national League should be focusing on.

*Allyson Brooks*

## OUR WORK CONTINUES – 94 YEARS AND COUNTING –



Ninety-four years ago on February 14, 1920, pioneering suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters to secure the right to vote for women. Within just a few months, Congress would grant American women the vote after decades of advocacy.

But that did not complete the League's work – and our work is still not done today. Barriers to the ballot box might look different today, but threats to our democracy remain. Last year, the U.S. Supreme Court issued a decision which gutted a key component of the monumental Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965, but last month members of Congress introduced legislation to update the VRA through common sense solutions.

This bipartisan legislation was carefully crafted to protect the rights of all voters from discrimination and repair the damage to the VRA inflicted by the Supreme Court's decision. The updated legislation seeks to better protect all voters against discrimination and ensure Americans are guaranteed their right to vote.

The modernized VRA will ensure that equal access to the ballot box is about fairness and equality – something that Carrie Chapman Catt knew when she founded the League of Women Voters. Tell Congress that the Voting Rights Amendment Act needs to be restored this year.

Nearly 100 years after the League was founded, we continue to hold fast to the belief that our nation is at its strongest when the voices of all voters are heard. "There will never be a true democracy until every responsible...adult in it, without regard to race, sex, color or creed has his or her own...voice in government," said Chapman Catt. The Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014 is a critical step to ensure just that.

The League refuses to remain silent as voters across the country face grave barriers to the vote. Urge your elected officials to support this important legislation and encourage them to act swiftly to move toward final passage.

*Elisabeth MacNamara*  
02/14/2014  
[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

# PROTECTING AND ENGAGING VOTERS

Rooted in the movement that secured the right to vote for women, the League has worked to foster civic engagement and enhance access to the vote since we were founded in 1920. Over time our work has evolved from efforts to gain and foster women's suffrage to ensuring that all eligible voters – particularly those from traditionally underrepresented or underserved communities, including first-time voters, non-college youth, new citizens, minorities, the elderly and low-income Americans – have the opportunity and the information to exercise their right to vote.

Through national programs and state-based volunteer activists the League uses public education, advocacy, grassroots organizing and legal strategies to engage, support and protect voters. Our work falls into the five categories below:

**Voting Rights** – We seek to protect and expand voting rights through proactive reforms, ensuring existing pro-voter laws are being followed and challenging voter suppression tactics that limit the ability of voters' to exercise this basic right. The League opposes voter photo ID laws, advocates against barriers to the voter registration process, works to prevent last-minute Election Day barriers, and helps voters get what they need to vote.

**Improving Elections** – We work to improve how elections operate at all levels and support proactive reforms to keep our nation's elections free, fair and accessible. We seek to modernize registration and voting processes, streamline the administration of elections and promote transparent and accountable redistricting.

**Registering Voters** – League volunteers hold thousands of voter registration drives across the country each year and encourage all citizens to vote. We concentrate our registration drives at locations that reach large numbers of unregistered voters, including high schools and community colleges, sporting events, naturalization ceremonies and more.

**Educating Voters** – We work to educate voters about candidates running for elected office and the state-specific rules governing the election process. In efforts to foster civic engagement, League members host hundreds of candidate debates and forums across the country each year and prepare straightforward voter guides on candidates and ballot issues. We equip millions of voters with critical information about the election process in each state, including information on voter registration forms and deadlines, polling place locations and ID requirements, through both print materials and [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org), our online one-stop elections information hub.

**DC Voting Rights** – We advocate for the rights of citizens of the District of Columbia to be afforded the same rights of self-government and full voting representation in Congress as are all other citizens of the United States.

## TELL CONGRESS TO FIX THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT

This summer the U.S. Supreme Court erased fundamental protections against racial discrimination in voting that have been critical in protecting our democracy.

The damage to the VRA can and must be fixed – Congress has the power to act swiftly to restore the effectiveness of the Voting Rights Act. Tell your members of Congress to work quickly to repair and restore the VRA.

Before adjourning for the August recess, both the Senate and the House of Representatives held hearings to begin discussing solutions to discrimination at the polls and the path forward for the VRA. We were encouraged by what we witnessed – members from both sides of the aisle expressing a need to address the Supreme Court's mistake and vowing to ensure our elections are free, fair and accessible to all citizens.

Join with the League of Women Voters and thank your elected officials for starting the process to fix the VRA and encourage them to repair and restore it quickly.

The League will continue to pursue all avenues to fight for voters' rights, but we need strong action by Congress to restore the Voting Rights Act protections that have helped us prevent racial and language discrimination in our elections for decades.

The Voting Rights Act remains vitally important and must be restored – tell your members of Congress to work quickly to repair and restore it to its full strength..

[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

## Member Spotlight



**VICTOR M. MINJARES**

This month, we talk with Victor M. Minjares, who (along with his wife Melissa Minjares) is a League of Women Voters member.

***Where did you grow up?***

Los Angeles County, California.

***What made you move to Washington?***

Melissa is a native of Seattle. We met in college, and in 2001, reconnected and later married. While expecting our second child, we realized we didn't want to raise our kids in L.A. Melissa was familiar with the South Sound because her mother grew up in Shelton. In 2006, we moved to the South Capitol neighborhood of Olympia. We're very happy here. The state of Washington, and especially Thurston County, is a beautiful place to live!

***What do you do?***

I've been a lawyer for over twenty years. I have a law practice in downtown Olympia that focuses on small-to-medium sized businesses and nonprofits. Before that, I was a civil litigator for the state of Washington, an in-house counsel for Honda, and a criminal prosecutor. Outside of work hours, Melissa is on the Board of the Lincoln Options Community Council. We've both served on the Board of our local neighborhood association, and volunteer for various charity events. Sometimes I serve as a judge pro tempore in our district court.

***Why did you join the Thurston County League of Women Voters?***

I became friends with the League's then-president Clydia Cuykendall, a fellow Stanford Law alumnus, who convinced me to join. Melissa did as well. I enjoy the fellowship of the League's members and am proud to support voter education.

*Victor Minjares*



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THURSTON COUNTY

## MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

Please refer to [www.lwvthurston.org](http://www.lwvthurston.org) for more information about League activities and membership, or mail in the membership form below.

Enclosed is a check in the amount of \$\_\_\_\_\_

DATE:

◇ \$60 for my membership

◇ \$\_\_\_\_\_ for an Educational Fund Donation

NAME \_\_\_\_\_

ADDRESS \_\_\_\_\_

CITY/STATE/ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

HOME PHONE \_\_\_\_\_ WORK PHONE \_\_\_\_\_

E-MAIL \_\_\_\_\_

### LWVTC Newsletter:

The LWVTC newsletter, VOTER, will be distributed by e-mail.

Check this box to specifically request a paper copy by regular mail

☐

### LWV Mission

***The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan, nonprofit political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government. The League influences public policy through education and advocacy. Anyone of voting age may become a League member.***

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS THURSTON COUNTY**

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