

April 2016



# THE VOTER

*The League of Women Voters Kansas City/Jackson/Clay/Platte Counties*

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**PLEASE ATTEND – MEETING**

**SATURDAY, APRIL 16, 2016**

**Community Christian Church**

**4601 Main St., KCMO 64112 South Side of Building**

## **TOPIC: BARRIERS TO VOTING**

Learn what the LWVKC/J/C/P's own task group on barriers to voting has learned through meetings with local election officials, some actions that have been taken and ideas of what more our League might do to help reduce and ultimately to get more people registered and to vote. This is a great opportunity for discussion among all League members and others who participate.

The Social Time begins at 9:30 a.m. The formal meeting begins Promptly at 10:00 a.m.

## **Co-Presidents' Message – Donna Hoch and Linda Vogel Smith**

Although voting is seen as a precious right of citizenship in the United States, many eligible people do not register to vote and therefore do not vote; and, many people who are registered do not vote. In Kansas City, MO, for example, only 6% of registered voters voted in the 2012 Presidential Primary. Why could that be so, given the fact that the U.S. Presidency is certainly among the most important jobs in the entire world, if, indeed, not the most important? That said, 61% of registered voters voted in the November 2012 Presidential election. (source of data: Kansas City Election Board). What this data tell us is that 90% of those who voted in the November 2012 Presidential Election in November 2012 did not have anything to do with who would be on the 2012 November ballot on which they did vote.

There are numerous reasons that eligible individuals do not register and, if they are registered vote. Included among these are not understanding the process, belief that their vote would not make any difference, not having a permanent address or required ID, disabilities that limit ability to obtain necessary forms and/or getting to the polls.

A group in the LWVKC/J/C/P, initiated by and with leadership from Margie Richcreek , are exploring what barriers to voting exist locally. At the April 16 meeting, they will share with participants what they have found, what has been done thus far and lead a discussion of how we might proceed as a local League and in cooperation with others.

## **KNOW YOUR LEAGUE**

### **Where does the League stand on current issues?**

In February, in our “special edition “of “The Voter,” we launched a new column called “Know Your League.” Our intent is to educate our members about the League’s policy positions (LWVUS, LWVMO and LWVKC/J/C/P) on selected current issues. These may include Missouri ballot initiatives, bills being considered by the Missouri General Assembly, matters before the KCMO City Council, and other elected local governing bodies. While you may read about these issues in “The Kansas City Star” or through other media outlets, these do not tell you the League positions.

LWVUS public policy positions are published in:

“League of Women Voters of the United States  
Impact on Issues  
2014-2016  
A Guide to Public Policy Positions”

Copies can be downloaded from [WWW.lwv.org](http://WWW.lwv.org)

## KNOW YOUR LEAGUE

### **Issue – “Religious Freedom” laws:**

Some States (e.g., Mississippi and North Carolina) have passed so-called “religious freedom” laws. Other States, including Missouri, are seeking to do so, including efforts to enshrine the principles of these discriminatory laws in state constitutions. The purpose of these laws is to allow discrimination by individuals and businesses and religiously affiliated organizations that have “sincerely held religious beliefs or moral convictions” against transgender people, same-sex marriage and sexual activity outside heterosexual marriage. The Mississippi law is particularly egregious. Not only does it permit government-funded social service agencies to refuse to provide services to people who go against their religious views, it also explicitly authorizes businesses open to the public to turn away customers seeking services, including birth announcements, wedding dresses, bakery goods, printing services and more.

In Missouri, SJR39, a broad religious exemption bill that targets same-sex couples, is moving through the legislature. If approved by the legislature, it would then be voted on in a statewide November 2016 ballot.

**Comment:** The First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution provides for religious freedom in the United States. It states:

***“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 redress of grievances.”***

## **Relevant League of Women Voters' Positions:**

The LWWVUS has no position, as such, on freedom of religion because that freedom is already protected in the U.S. Constitution, namely the first amendment in the Bill of Rights.

The LWWVUS has a long-standing history of supporting individual liberties and equality of opportunity. The following policy position was adopted at the 2010 national convention:

***“The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. The LWWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWWVUS supported legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved.”***

The LWWVUS has also **supported ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment** to the U.S. Constitution as well as efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA. Section 1 of the proposed text of the ERA follows:

**Section 1. “Equality of rights under the law shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of sex.”**

**Comment:** Although the ERA has not been ratified by a sufficient number of states in order to go into force, it is clear that the principles of the ERA, if it were fully ratified, would be in direct opposition to the “Religious Freedom” legislation currently being adopted and promoted in a number of legislatures, including Missouri’s.

While the efforts to discriminate against same-sex couples are totally unacceptable, we must also be concerned about the so-called “slippery slope” phenomenon which could lead to discrimination against a broader range of individuals and groups. This cannot be permitted.

## **2016 Election and Related Dates**

July 6, 2016	Last day to register in Missouri to vote in August 2 MO election
July 18-21	Republican Party Convention, Cleveland, Ohio
July 25-28	Democratic Party Convention, Chicago

August 2                      Missouri State Primary Election  
October 12                    Last day to register in Missouri to vote in Nov. general election  
November 8                    General Election

### **League Calendar**

**April 16 – Regular Monthly Meeting - Presentation by our Task Force on Voting in KCMO**

**April 30 – LWVMO State Meeting in Columbia**

**May 21 - LWVKC/J/C/P annual meeting (includes lunch); voting on officers, by law changes reviewed and voted upon, voting on proposed change from 501©4 status to 501©3 status.**

### **OFFICERS and BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

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Caroline Arnold, Nominating Committee Chair  
Peg Prendergast and Linda Smith, Newsletter  
Sue Scholl, Voter Registration  
Charles Steele, Candidate and Issue Forums  
Pauline Testerman, studies  
Carolyn Weeks, Member Development

You will be pleased to notice our website continues to be updated.

Check it out at: <http://www.lwvkc.org>