

## Celebrating Our Past & Embracing the Future

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LEAGUE OF  
WOMEN VOTERS®

State Convention 2015

“Celebrating the Past / Embracing the Future” – with an emphasis on introducing new information about how the political and civic engagement worlds are changing, and what LWV is doing to adjust, and to succeed in attracting **more people to engage with the organization** more people to engage with the organization.



95<sup>th</sup> Anniversary is a good time to celebrate our past and embrace the future. It is a milestone to celebrate this whole year. It's also a great time for reflection – to take stock in our successes and think about what comes next for us as an organization. Now is the time to think about our 100<sup>th</sup> and what's needed for us to be strong and thriving at that milestone.

## CELEBRATING OUR PAST

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**Making Democracy Work® requires determination. In 1920, the activists who fought to secure the right to vote for women founded the League of Women Voters to help new voters engage with their government. For 95 years the League has worked to empower voters to improve their communities, states and nation. The League proudly celebrates 95 years of strengthening our democracy.**

For example, League was instrumental in securing --

- o National Voter Registration Act
- o National Voter Registration Day
- o Bi-Partisan Campaign Reform Act
- o Social Security Act
- o Clean Air Act

How about in this state? What are the League's points of pride? (Brainstorm with room.)

The League had to establish trust and credibility, have a framework for doing its work and engage others to become the association of members and supporters that we are today.

## EMBRACING THE FUTURE



**We are fighting to keep the power of our democracy in the hands of the people. Through our unwavering commitment to Making Democracy Work<sup>®</sup>, the League is building on our legacy, empowering people across the country to make their voices heard in the political process, protecting our planet for future generations, keeping secret money out of our elections and ensuring that our elections are free, fair and accessible for all voters.**

*For example,*

- To keep elections fair, free and accessible, LWVUS, state and local Leagues are monitoring and fighting back against legislation that would restrict access or make it more difficult for individuals to vote. More than 30 state Leagues are doing this right now.*
- To register, educate and mobilize voters, we continue to be the largest on-the-ground partner in National Voter Registration Day. And, VOTE411's reach expands with each election cycle—with 220 Leagues participating in the online voters' guide and 1.5 million visitors coming to the site in 2014.*
- To ensure a sustainable planet, we are trying to affect change by providing public comment to the EPA. Did you know that the League alone was able to generate more than 30,000 comments at a recent call for comments by the EPA about standards to reduce carbon pollution?*

## MISSION VS. METHOD



While our mission hasn't changed – and our core issues remain – the environment in which they exist and the way we approach them, of course, has. It has evolved over time and continues to evolve today.

## TRENDS IN EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

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*Do these sound familiar?*

1. Increasing ability to connect one-on-one
2. Less civility
3. Less belief in power of basic/shared “facts”
4. More polarization & partisanship

When Carrie Catt founded the League, 20 million new women voters could reform democracy by getting educated on the issues, staying independent of the parties, and acting in the public square for the greater good.

However, the reality confronting the League (and other groups) for many years is:

- Less trust in institutions, public or private
- Less civility in public discourse
- Increased availability of mass media reinforcement of partisanship/polarization
- Increasing ability to connect one-to-one (i.e., without the framework of a larger group)

Does this sound familiar?

## TRENDS IN EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

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### Resulting Changes in Civic Engagement

1. Powerful forms and means of engagement have emerged = BIG opportunity for the League.
2. The reasons why people engage have changed.
3. There is less commitment to institutions and organizations.

What does this mean for our core – for civic engagement? It's changed!

1. People engage for different reasons.
2. Because of more direct access, individuals can act on their own, not only within a group.
3. There are a myriad of ways in which people can raise up their voice. Think about how communication (in general) has changed. Now, think about how that impacts our "public square" for debate and discussion.

## TRENDS IN EXTERNAL ENVIRONMENT

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“No matter how people choose to interact with the League in today’s ‘infogagement’ environment, most citizens want to belong to a community, to make an impact on issues and decisions they care about, and to have a say, either through voting or other forms of participation.”

*The Role of the Civic Organization in the Era of “Infogagement,”*  
Matt Leighninger, Deliberative Democracy Consortium

These trends are being researched by foundations and others in the non-profit sector. One individual Matt Leighninger, in fact, has looked at the League in this new light. And, while on the surface the trends described in the previous slides may sound like challenges, they are opportunities for the League. As he notes here:

- People still value the sense of community that a group like League embodies. This community may look different from the one that our foremothers envisioned but in short people want to be part of something bigger.
- People want to have impact on issues that they care about and impact them.
- People want to participate – by voting or in other easy engagement opportunities.

**LWVUS and League’s impact have been growing! Let me stress that again: We are growing!** Through our online presence and flexible opportunities to engage (such as through social media, VOTE411, action alerts and financial contributions), we are building a bigger, wider, deeper pool of activists to support and promote our mission. This is on top of a “holding steady” (versus decades of decline) in more traditional membership numbers.

How are we doing this? We are doing the same thing that we have done: engage individuals on issues that are important to them in our trademark thoughtful and nonpartisan way. But, we are perhaps doing this engagement in some different and more flexible ways -- ways that speak to the expectations of today’s volunteers. How can I have an impact now? How can I influence those things that I care about? And, how do I share my impact with others?



## *What does a “good” League program have?*



How does this translate to what we do at the local and state League level? It should impact everything that we do – everything that we put under the big heading of “PROGRAM.” So, let’s think about this... what makes a good program? (Perhaps we need to define some of our words: “good” and “program.”)

What are the critical elements?

Brainstorm with audience

## Good Programs...

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- Look OUT, not in.
- ASK and Attract new (non-League) people & attention!
- Give our neighbors something that they want.
  - Quality, practical, simple voting help.
  - Protects voters' rights.
  - Info or action opportunities around a pressing issue.
  - Simple volunteer opportunities (in person, online).
  - A follow-up step.

For those of you at national convention, we talked about some of this, but it bears repeating and reaffirming.

We know a great League program when we see it---these are some of the key ingredients:

- Look OUT, not in.
- ASK and Attract new (non-League) people & attention!
- Show and tell (PHOTOS, Media coverage, etc.)
- Give our community things that they want and desire (from a TRUSTED source):
  - Quality, practical, simple voting help.
  - Protects voters' rights.
  - Info or action opportunities around a pressing issue.
  - Simple volunteer opportunities (in person, online).
  - A follow-up step.

These are the same key components that can help us adapt to the new environment around us  
Help us bring in people and welcome them to the League, no matter what level of interest/commitment they wish to make

## League Programs...

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### League programs don't need to be...

- Perfect
- Complicated
- Formal/overly structured

### But they DO need to be...

- VISIBLE
- Welcoming
- Interesting/fun
- Useful to voters and neighbors
- Flexible
- Include an action for people to take

## But they DO need to be...

- VISIBLE – Who was there or who heard about it?
- Welcoming – How did you invite others to participate or become engaged? How do get beyond members?
- Interesting/fun – What does this have to do with their lives? Why is it important? How did we speak to that or offer opportunities for engagement?
- Useful to voters and neighbors – What's in it for them?
- Flexible – In what ways can people engage? What are the flexible opportunities?
- Action – What action can people take? How do they feel engaged? Get others engaged?

## Slide 11

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**KC2** I would consider adding action to the DO list.  
Kelly Ceballos, 04/08/2015

*How do we know we are making an impact?*



Brainstorm with those in room.

## Keep Impact at the Center

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How do we know?

- More voters registered & voting.
- Measurable movement on an issue.
- Increase in **engagement** (online/in person).
- Funding, media, attention from partners.

(bill passed, administrative change made, petitions signed, action alerts sent)

How do we  
think  
beyond  
ourselves?



Who are we talking about?

- Partners & their networks.
- Friends & family.
- People we register/encounter at events.
- People who follow us on social media.
- People interested in advocacy issues in our state.

We engage them in issues that are core to us and to them.

## Voter Protection

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Traditional:

- League leader in the state capitol.
- Meeting with elections officials.
- Op-eds, news articles.
- Advocacy battle in the legislature, on airwaves & (maybe) in court.



## New Possibilities- Voter protection

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- Online advocacy –signing an action alert
- Small-dollar donation campaign
- Partners promoting on social media
- Local visibility campaigns- petition, “election improvement agenda”
- Asking reporters, neighbors, friends to talk about upcoming election & share League info

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## Voter Registration

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Traditional:

- Visiting high school classrooms.
- Naturalization ceremonies.
- Bus stops/grocery stores.
- 400 Leagues on National Voter Registration Day!



## New possibilities: voter registration

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- One-time volunteers (young people, partners)
  - Help making posters
  - Help promoting event
- Ask people to promote and share “I’m registered” and “I voted” stickers on social media
- Leverage online registration as it comes to more states



-one-time volunteers (\*\* PRIME OPPORTUNITY)

-help making posters

-help promoting event (you have to ask them)

Ask people to promote and share “I’m registered” and “I voted” stickers

## Voter Education & Mobilization

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Traditional:

- League debate.
- Printed or online Voters' guide (30 states on VOTE411 last year).
- Handing out millions of printed materials.



## New possibilities: Voter Ed & GOTV

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- One-time volunteer opportunities (hand out info at transit)
- Asking networks to share debate footage/discuss online
- GOTV calls/hotline – people can do on cell phone, from home
- Ask partners to promote & circulate voters' guide
- Ask individuals to make VOTE411 cover photo/publicize voter guide

One-time volunteer opportunities (hand out info at public transit stations- especially in swing states)

Asking networks to share debate footage/discuss online

GOTV hotline – people can do on cell phone, from home – as little as one-hour increments

Create small online ad to promote & circulate voters' guide

Ask individuals to make VOTE411 cover photo/publicize voter guide thru social media

## Recap: What New Methods Exist?

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- Meaningful online actions
  - ✓ Petition
  - ✓ Facebook “share” by a partner
  - ✓ Guest blog or article
  - ✓ Ask individuals to promote League tools/discussions
- One-time volunteer opportunities
- Help promoting events/important deadlines
- Small-dollar donation campaigns



Anywhere and everywhere ... Making democracy work for another 100 years and beyond. It already is working!

Just recently, there was this report on the LWVUS website:

**Unprecedented Week for Voting Rights – Democracy Wins in Three States**

<http://lww.org/blog/unprecedented-week-voting-rights-%E2%80%93-democracy-wins-three-states>

**Legislation that would have cut early voting in Georgia did not pass.** The Georgia legislative session ended at midnight last Friday, April 3 without any cuts to early voting. In 2011, early voting was reduced from 45 days to 21. This year’s attempt sought to limit early voting to just 12 days. This is the second legislative session in a row that the [League of Women Voters in Georgia](#) and their coalition partners have been successful in protecting early voting in the state.

**In Virginia, Governor Terry McAuliffe vetoed a bill that would have required absentee voters to provide a copy of their photo ID with their ballot.** These requirements would potentially disenfranchise thousands of registered voters who do not have a valid voter photo ID due to disability, age, illness, transportation or financial issues. It is unlikely the state Senate will have enough votes to override the Governor’s veto. The [League of Women Voters of Virginia](#) was active in opposing this legislation and [sent a letter urging the governor to veto the bill](#) (PDF) referencing a [visit the Governor made to a League legislative roundtable](#) in 2013 where he promised to protect voting rights in the state.

In Ohio, [at the urging of the League of Women Voters of Ohio](#) (PDF) and other voting rights coalition members, **Governor John Kasich used his line-item veto authority to kill language that would have required out-of-state college students who register to vote in Ohio to quickly obtain in-state licenses and/or vehicle registrations in order to vote.** This is a victory not only for young voters, but also for those fighting in several states against similar attempts to suppress student voters.

What does  
this look like  
in your  
League?



Think about a recent League program in which you had a role and answer these questions:

- How did you engage people?
- Who did you engage?
- Who else would you like to engage?
- What new engagement ideas might you try going forward?
- What are 2 takeaways from today's session that you'll share with your League?

Ask audience members to work in pairs with someone from another League to answer these questions.

As time permits, ask them to share their responses with the full group – especially to the last question.



## Takeaways

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- Real people doing real work remains our strength.
- Becoming a member (board member) NOT the only option for engagement in League.
- We still need to ASK.
- Powerful combinations of in person & online work are already happening.
- We all need to be thinking in terms of new environment!

# Q & A

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INSERT YOUR CONTACT  
INFORMATION

## **Additional resources:**

- *League Update* (delivered via email each Thursday)
- *Blog Round-Up* (delivered via email at the end of each month)
- [www.lvv.org](http://www.lvv.org) (updated daily)
- [Forum.lvv.org](http://Forum.lvv.org) (member resources website)