



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF THE UNITED STATES

February 18, 2016

*President*  
**Elisabeth MacNamara**  
Atlanta, Georgia

To: Members of the U.S. Senate

*Vice President*  
**Toni E. Larson, Ph.D**  
Denver, Colorado

From: Elisabeth MacNamara, President

Re: S. 1176, Reinvigorating Presidential Public Financing

*Secretary*  
**Karen Nicholson**  
Midland, Texas

The League of Women Voters urges you to cosponsor S. 1176, the Empower Act, introduced by Senator Tom Udall. The bill would repair and reinvigorate the public financing system for candidates in presidential elections. And it would do so by putting small donors at the center of campaign financing.

*Treasurer*  
**Patricia Donath**  
Bath, Michigan

Our nation is facing a crisis as big money from a select few is coming to dominate our elections. It is undermining the political equality that is based on every citizen's equal voice in the voting booth. It is distorting election debates and our election system. And it is reinforcing the belief that our government is subject to undue influence and corruption.

*Directors*

**Peggy Appler**  
Ridgeville, South Carolina

S. 1176 addresses this crisis by providing presidential candidates a path toward equitable competition based on small donations. The bill provides a six-to-one match for contributions up to \$250, lowers contribution limits for participating candidates, and allows increased coordinated spending by political parties with funds raised from small donors. To ensure that a candidate can respond to any unlimited spending from outside sources, the legislation does not have a spending limit for participating candidates.

**Chris Carson**  
Burbank, California

**Connie Ferguson**  
Kalamazoo, Michigan

**Rosalee Keech**  
Montville, New Jersey

**Anita Loch**  
Whitewater, Wisconsin

It is important to remember that the current presidential public financing system began to malfunction largely because Congress failed to take any steps to update and modernize the system. S. 1176 addresses those failures by indexing key elements to inflation, including the income tax check-off that provides funds for the program. Significantly, it includes an anti-bundling provision.

**Anne B. Schink**  
South Portland, Maine

**Linda P. Wassenich**  
Dallas, Texas

The presidential public financing system served the nation well for twenty-five years. During this period all but a few Democratic and Republican presidential candidates participated in the system, including every President elected from 1976 to 2000. But the presidential system is broken today. It needs to be repaired and updated to deal with the new world of campaign finance, which, unfortunately, includes Super PACs and other groups that can spend unlimited funds to influence an election, often in secret.

**Barbara Zia**  
Mount Pleasant, South Carolina

*Executive Director*  
**Wylecia Wiggs Harris**

The League of Women Voters urges you to cosponsor S. 1176.