

## ***Celebrating Our 95th Birthday:***

### **10 WAYS LWV MAKES DEMOCRACY WORK**

In 1920, suffragist Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters (LWVUS) to democratize the vote. Since then, League members across the country have worked tirelessly to strengthen our democracy and ensure equality for all.

Today, that work is needed more than ever. In the past year alone, League members have helped protect our democracy and ensure the equality of all Americans by thwarting widespread voter suppression efforts, educating and empowering voters, helping pass landmark state gun control legislation, leading the fight to protect our climate and more.

Carrie Chapman Catt understood the importance for all Americans to be engaged in and empowered by our democracy. "Everybody counts in applying democracy," said Chapman Catt. "And there will never be a true democracy until every...adult in it, without regard to race, sex, color or creed, has his or her own inalienable and unpurchasable voice in government."

The League of Women Voters has been working to protect voting rights for over 90 years, and we take heed of our founder's words. From fighting the flood of secret money in our elections to protecting against attacks on voting rights - and so much more - here are just 10 of the countless ways that the League of Women Voters has helped to strengthen our democracy in 2013.

1. **Successfully fought to preserve landmark voting registration legislation.** In June, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) in the case *Arizona v. Inter Tribal Council of Arizona, Inc.* (ITCA). The League is proud to have helped pass the NVRA in 1993. Commonly known as "Motor Voter," the NVRA streamlined confusing state voting laws and made it easier for Americans to register to vote. LWVUS and the League of Women Voters of Arizona filed amicus briefs in the case. The Court issued a victory for voters when it sided with the League, striking down Arizona's restrictions on the voter registration process and reinforcing Congress's power to protect Americans' right to vote
2. **Helping lead the fight to repair and restore the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965.** In June, the Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act, resulting in widespread attacks on voting rights across the country. Immediately, the League sprung to action - calling on Congress to repair and restore the Voting

Rights Act to its full strength. We remain committed to pursuing all avenues to protect the right to vote and decisively close the door to voter discrimination.

3. **Fought voter suppression efforts across the states.** Even prior to the Supreme Court's ruling on the Voting Rights Act, League leaders across the country were busy protecting voting rights by publishing op-eds, participating in protests and rallies and holding community meetings. In 2012 and 2013, state Leagues helped defeat voter photo ID bills in a plethora of states. Many Leagues also took court action, including the League of Women Voters of North Carolina, which filed suit challenging the state's voter suppression law. In states like Texas where new voter ID requirements were implemented, League advocates helped voters understand voting rules and obtain the documentation needed to cast their ballots.
4. **Helped lead the push for gun control legislation at the state and federal levels.** The League believes that curbing gun violence is a critical matter of public safety and public health. Following the tragedy late last year in Newtown, CT, this spring we urged Congress to pass new legislation addressing gun violence. Our supporters helped us encourage Senators to help save lives by calling for vital gun safety measures. We were buoyed by successes in Connecticut, where the League of Women Voters of Connecticut helped lead efforts to pass landmark state gun control legislation.
5. **Encouraged the administration to take the lead to protect our climate.** Following our efforts in 2012, we've continued to push for President Obama to take action to address climate change. Our work has underscored the urgent need to reduce carbon pollution from power plants, which represents the single largest source of carbon pollution in our country, as well as the leading cause of climate change. Our efforts paid off in September, when the Obama Administration announced groundbreaking plans to cut carbon pollution from new power plants. Since then, a number of Leagues have testified at listening sessions held by the Environmental Protection Agency in support of President Obama's proposal.
6. **Pushed for comprehensive immigration reform.** The very roots of our nation's birth and development are built upon the traditions and cultures of people from different backgrounds, and it's this diversity that makes our country unique. That's why this June we commended the Senate for passing a comprehensive immigration package, underscoring how the efforts will strengthen our nation and society. We continue to urge the House to support these much-needed reforms.
7. **Registered thousands of voters.** The League registers voters all year, day in and day out. In order to reach eligible voters, Leagues across the country hosted registration drives everywhere from bus stops and baseball games to high schools and naturalization ceremonies. We also upped the ante in September

when nearly 300 local Leagues joined over 800 partners in leading the [second annual National Voter Registration Day](#), helping to register an incredible [58,000 voters](#).

8. **Advocated for improvements to the nation's flawed voting system.** In his Election Night speech last year, President Obama vowed to address the long waiting lines and array of problems that voters faced at the polls, boldly asserting, "[We have to fix that.](#)" The League continues to hold the President to his promise; when [he failed to adequately address voting problems](#) in his State of the Union speech, we expressed our strong disappointment and called for immediate action to ensure that every American citizen can exercise the right to vote. But we didn't stop there. This summer, the [LWVUS](#) was joined by Leagues in [Colorado](#), [Florida](#), [Ohio](#) and [Pennsylvania](#) that submitted testimony to the [Presidential Commission on Election Administration \(PCEA\)](#) on the need for a free, fair and accessible voting system.
9. **Fought to protect our political system from big-money corruption.** The League is dedicated to reforming the nation's campaign finance system and keeping big money out of politics. We submitted an amicus brief in [McCutcheon v. Federal Election Commission](#) (FEC), the Supreme Court case heralded as "the next Citizens United." Just this month, [the League took a stand](#) on a new proposal by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) geared at curbing the abuse of nonprofit organizations for partisan activities and overcoming the harmful effects of Citizens United.
10. **Educated voters and equipped them with everything they needed to vote.** One of our fundamental goals is to encourage active participation of citizens in government. As Election Day approached, state and local Leagues hosted numerous [candidate forums and debates](#), helping inform voters of where candidates stood on the issues most important to their communities. Hundreds of thousands of voters used [VOTE411.org](#), our nationwide online voter education resource, to learn their local candidate and ballot information, registration deadlines, voting requirements, polling place details and more.

As evident in the famous opening line to the U.S. Constitution, "*We the People*," our country's government is [powered by the voices and engagement](#) of all of its citizens. That's why the League has worked for over 90 years to ensure that all U.S. citizens -- regardless of age, sex, race, or ability -- are able to have their voices heard. Members of [our 800 state and local Leagues](#) across the country are already busy planning what more can be done to continue to empower the voices of citizens in 2014 and beyond.

"Service to a just cause rewards the worker with more real happiness and satisfaction than any other venture of life," said Carrie Chapman Catt. In 2014, we're dedicated to

doing everything we can to advance one of the most just causes there is --  
strengthening our nation, our electoral process and Making Democracy Work.