

2016-2017 President's Report

Typically, at the end of a League year, we review past actions and accomplishments talk a little about plans for next year.

This year was different. This year was all about unexpected change and the ability to define that impact and focus our priorities on what can be done to address the challenges ahead.

At the beginning of this League year we were all about the 17 state propositions on the ballot. We prepared diligently, working very hard to wrestle the pros and cons down to manageable language that we used to speak to 13 community groups.

I was anxious to learn what propositions passed, but as the election results came in, that interest evaporated.

I was overwhelmed by the fact that we would *not* have a President who would be amenable to the kinds of policies that League favors - but instead one who would likely be down-right hostile.

So, as Maya Angelou said, 'if you can't change something - then change your attitude.' And that's what millions of Americans have done. It's no longer good enough to be well-informed and vote.

Just as the League has championed for almost 100 years - legislators must be reminded regularly of their constituent's policy priorities through phone calls, emails, letters and town hall meetings.

This re-energized activism is great news - but be aware of League's chief concern.

Each legislative victory, each march that brings out thousands of protesters and each investigation - also serves as a warning to the hyper-partisan politicians in several states that citizens are engaged and will vote in the 2018 mid-term election.

We believe, this may encourage hyper-partisan officials to increase their efforts to suppress the vote in 2018.

We saw it last November with restrictive voter ID laws, purging of voter rolls, cuts to early voting and polling places, and use of outdated and faulty voting machines in populous lower-economic districts.

Just one example - in the City of Detroit - 75,000 votes for the office of President were not counted because they were read by old, worn-out voting machines. Instead, they were judged to be 'under-votes.'

Michigan asks us to believe that 75,000 people braved nasty Detroit weather, some waiting in line for hours - got in to their polling place and did not vote for President. Keep in mind - Donald J Trump carried Michigan by 10,900 votes.

League of Women Voters believes voter suppression had a decisive impact on the November election's outcome.

LWV US President said this about Trump's creation of the new "Election Integrity Commission."

"The real problems with our electoral system are the suppressive laws that prevent eligible voters from access to the ballot.

False claims of voter fraud have been used to push through more restrictive voting laws.

This administration is laying the groundwork to usher in widespread discrimination in our systems of voting and manipulate our democracy."

Look for state Leagues to take a stand in statehouses and courtrooms across the county as 2017 may be the biggest year for voting rights since the 1960's.

We should be very proud of ourselves as Californian's to support one of the most fair, transparent and accessible voting systems in the nation.

We heard the good news from Jesse Melgar for Californians. But now, nation-wide, Leagues must and will be vigilant about supporting voting rights.

Joan Donahue, President
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