Tell Your TV Station to Stop Running Untrue/Misleading Political Ads

The League of Women Voters of the US is partnering with the Annenberg Public Policy Center of the University of Pennsylvania on a campaign called “Stand by Your Ad.” The goal is to have thousands of viewers contact their local television stations to ask them to verify the accuracy of third-party ads before agreeing to air them.

While stations are required to air ads that come directly from candidates running for federal offices, there is no such obligation for third-party ads, such as those that come from the parties, special interest groups, or Super PACs. The Annenberg Center has created a web-site Flackcheck.org that shows examples of deceptive ads, tips on analyzing campaign ads, and—most importantly—a link that makes it easy to contact broadcast stations in your area to ask them to refuse to run untrue or misleading political advertisements. It only takes a minute or so, so please do this today and then send the link to your friends and put it on your Facebook page.

Why is this so important? According to an article by Kathleen Hall Jamieson, director of the Annenberg Public Policy Center, published in the June 6 AARP Bulletin, “this year has seen an unprecedented amount of third-party advertising. By May 10th, 534 groups organized as super PACs reported receiving $204,323,416 and spending $99,803,597 in the 2012 cycle. The level of inaccuracy in the third-party presidential ads has been high. As an Annenberg Public Policy Center study shows, from the Iowa caucuses through the Wisconsin primary, almost 57 percent of the $41.1 million deployed by the four highest-spending third-party groups was devoted to 19 ads containing misleading claims.”

The Annenberg Public Policy Center also runs a sister site Factcheck.org. Here you can get analysis of the truthfulness of political ads being aired during this election season. Convincing stations to demand truthfulness in the ads they run might seem like a “pie in the sky” initiative; however, according to the Flackcheck website, “When a group called “Building a Better Ohio” offered Ohio TV stations a deceptive ad last October, a number of stations exercised their prerogative to insist on the accuracy of so-called third-party ads by refusing to air it.” Please take time to help democracy work by using Flackcheck.org to contact your local broadcast station.

LWVMD Holds “Council” in Baltimore

In even-numbered years, instead of holding a state convention, LWVMD holds a one-day meeting called “Council.” The purpose of Council is to adopt a budget for the coming year, review achievements of the past year, and provide an opportunity for information sharing and training. This year Council was held at St. Mark’s Evangelical Lutheran Church in Baltimore on May 19.

More than 50 members from all over Maryland gathered to conduct League business and attend 3 workshops designed to prepare for the 2012 General Election. The first was Hosting Forums and Debates – IRS Rules, FEC Rules, and Best Practices. It was presented by Henry Bogdan, Director of Public Policy Maryland Association of Non-Profit Organizations. Following that, Nancy Soreng, President of LWVMD, presented Preparing for the State and Local Ballot Initiatives—Balancing Advocacy with Voter Service During the Election Season. The final workshop, Vote411 and Voters’ Guides: A Roundtable Discussion of Pros, Cons, Triumphs and Trials, and Tasks for General Election, was conducted by Barbara Sanders, LWVMD Voter Services Director.

Following the workshop, attendees were treated to a lively analysis of the 2012 General Assembly session and its impact on the upcoming election by C. Fraser Smith, senior news analyst, Baltimore Sun columnist and WYPR news director. The day was truly a feast of election and public policy information, a meal that League members will seek out over and over.

Foes of Voter ID Laws Find Ways to Mute Their Impact

Elisabeth MacNamara, national president of the League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan group that works to lower barriers to participation, said that the patchwork of rules across the states is cumbersome and intimidating for historically reluctant groups of voters. “The mere fact that these laws exist can be intimidating and discourage folks,” she said. “The fact they are the least heard and rarely listened to is very disturbing.” Fighting the laws is also a drain on time and resources, she said, and must be waged on a case-by-case basis. And the organization isn’t expecting the tussles over voter-ID laws to subside.

Two Maryland Leaguers, Betsy Singer and Barbara Russell, are ready for the LWVUS convention banquet.

Barbara Russell organized the wares table for the Maryland State League at LWV National Convention and raised over $1200.
RSC REPORTERS HONORED AT STATE COUNCIL

By Barbara Schnackenberg, Action Chair

Five League members were each honored with a long-stemmed rose at State Council on May 19, 2012, for their superb work in reporting on the 2012 General Assembly in Report from State Circle.

Their names and assignments were as follows:

- Sherry Hyman, marriage equality
- Barbara Hankins, budget and state revenue
- Barbara Schnackenberg, environment (except wind energy)
- Ruth Crystal, meeting human needs
- Diana Haskell, immigration
- Nancy Soreng, campaign finance

Barbara Hankins also stayed on the job to prepare a special report on the special session in June. In addition to reporting, Ruth sent out all Action Alerts and distributed the reports to members and subscribers.

While these members worked hard during the session, they were not alone. All together we had a total of 16 members who reported on topics of interest to them. The other reporters and their topics were as follows:

- Election Process, Lu Pierson
- Health, Neilson Andrews
- Transportation, Bee Ditzler
- Administration of Justice, Grace Kubofcik and Marlene Cohn
- Death Penalty, Mandatory Minimum Sentences and Drug Issues, Marcia Reinke
- Gun Control, Marcia Reinke and Doreen Rosenthal
- Education, Lois Stoner
- Children’s Issues, Juvenile Justice, Deborah Ehrenstein,
- Wind Energy, Linda Silversmith.

We could not produce Report from State Circle without our editor Judith Heimann, and our League secretary, Ursula Shubert. All those who were not available at State Council will receive a token of appreciation in the mail for their efforts during 2012.

During the past session, five members were first-time reporters, and two of them had mentors for their first experience. We always need new people who take on an area of interest and/or can fill in on a subject area. Bee Ditzler, Marlene Cohn, Doreen Rosenthal, Diana Haskell, and Barbara Schnackenberg were all first-time reporters for 2012.

Marcia Reinke would like for someone to volunteer to take on the subjects she has been writing on. And we have lost one of our stars, Grace Kubofcik who has retired to take on other activities but she worked with Marlene Cohn as a mentor for the future.

Anyone who would like to join us is welcome. Contact me at baschnack@verizon.net or 410-997-0793.
The League of Women Voters celebrated its 50th National Convention in Washington, D.C. June 8-12 with over 800 members and staff attending, including about 120 volunteers from the District, Maryland, and Virginia.

The Honorable Eleanor Holmes Norton, Washington D.C. Delegate to the U.S. House of Representatives, welcomed the League and praised the organization’s efforts on many issues, noting that it was a pleasure to be in the room “with a group who believes in the right to vote.”

Other speakers during the course of the convention also cited the success of the League and its "Power The Vote" theme. U.S. Attorney General Eric Holder thanked the League for outstanding leadership in “our nation’s ongoing struggle to protect the strength, the integrity, and the future of our democracy.” He added that he appreciated the League of Women Voters partnership “in protecting the most fundamental, and most powerful, right of American citizenship: the right to vote.”

Holder noted that the League played a key role in advocating for the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act, and added, “We saw the important value in your work several days ago, in an important ruling in the case that LWV helped to bring against the state of Florida, in which you have successfully challenged the state’s new voter registration statute, and in so doing protected the rights of perhaps millions of eligible voters.”

He noted that the League advocates for common sense. The right to vote means inclusion and opportunity, he said; it is not a partisan issue.

(Go to http://www.justice.gov/iso/opa/ag/speeches/2012/ag-speech-120611.html to read the full transcript of the Attorney General’s remarks.)

LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara also referred to voting rights in her message to the delegates. “The fight to protect voting rights and make democracy safe is not finished,” she said, noting that many of the barriers to voting that the League found in 1920 are still with us today.

“After 90 years of progress, this is the greatest assault on voting rights in 50 years,” she said, listing secret money, Citizens United, moneyed individuals dominating the information, voter ID and purging registration rolls as some of the attacks.

Convention attendees also heard a discussion entitled “How Do We Unite and Conquer?” with panelists Eleanor Cliff, Mickey Edwards and Trévor Potter.
Edwards, a former Republican congressman from Oklahoma, said the Republicans and Democrats have to listen to each other. “Now there is an incentive to not be civil.”

Cliff, a Newsweek political reporter and The McLaughlin Group panelist, said that each side thinks dominance is the way. “We need campaign finance reform, independent redistricting, and end the filibuster, or threat of, and let the majority rule,” she said.

Potter, former chair of the Federal Election Commission, general counsel of the Campaign Legal Center and a former counsel to the John McCain campaigns, is also connected with Stephan Colbert’s PAC.

Citizens United overturned 50 years of Federal law, Potter said. Noting that not a single member of the Supreme Court has ever been an elected official, he said, “They don’t know how campaign financing works; they haven’t had to raise money.” He added that the Court said the disclosure is important, “but it is not happening.”

Besides some great speakers and discussions, Convention delegates also voted to adopt a concurrence with the sentencing policy position of the LWVDC and to adopt the comprehensive program, recommended by the LWWUS Board, to educate members and the community on the issue of campaign finance.

The delegates adopted one new study: an update of the LWVUS Agriculture position that was approved in 1988. The review would investigate genetic modification, consolidation in the food industry, money in the regulatory process, and the consumer’s right to accurate and comprehensive food labeling.

Workshops ranged from Easy Web for New Users, Power Tools you can use to Power the Vote, Engaging LWV’s Constituents, Learn the Basics of Lobbying, and Using Social Media.

The Capitol Steps provided an amusing Saturday evening with political satire, and pollster John Zogby was the speaker at the banquet Monday night.

The next LWV National Convention will be held in Dallas in June 2014.
Life is a Tapestry
By Barbara Russell

A Maryland native, Bonnie Bailey-Baker grew up in Baltimore County. After graduating from high school, she worked as a secretary for the Westinghouse Defense and Space Center near the BWI airport, and moved to Prince George’s County. Not satisfied in her job, Bonnie decided to enroll at the University of Maryland, where she majored in geography and minored in political science. She was also becoming very interested in the environment and hoped to work as a lobbyist for an environmental group. Another plus to her university years was meeting her future husband.

With college behind and looking for a less urban area to live, they actually thought at the time that the house they were going to see was in Frederick County. It turned out to be in Pleasant Valley, in southern Washington County. However, since Bonnie was working in Gaithersburg, Frederick became their city for socialization and other activities, including her membership in the League, which she joined in 1977. With the energy crisis of the 1970s, the LWVUS was studying many environmental issues, including “Energy Resources for the Future.” Bonnie became very active in that study, joining the local Natural Resources Committee and soon after, the board of the Frederick League. Through a grant offered by LWVUS, the LWVFC worked with the Union of Concerned Scientists to produce two videotapes: one on “The Role of Nuclear Energy in the Future of the U.S.”; another on renewable energy technologies. Both tapes were donated to the school system.

Bonnie has remained a board member of the Frederick County League since 1977, with the exception of the six years that she worked for a state delegate. By the time the League celebrated its 25th Anniversary in 1985, Bonnie was not only its president, but also a county resident, having built a passive solar home on the outskirts of the city. She has served as president and co-president many more times since then, including the 50th Anniversary year of 2010. She sees the League as a hands-on training organization for learning about government. In Frederick County, she has served on the Citizens Zoning Review Committee, and the 1991 Charter Board.

She also sees controversy as bringing opportunity for growth in the League. People want information to understand what is happening. At the same time the LWVUS was doing its “Privatization” study, Frederick County was doing a local study on the issue because the County Commissioners had proposed to privatize county government operations. LWVFC asked a U of Md. dean who is a privatization expert to evaluate the proposed legislation. The League held a press conference questioning its merit. The proposal was withdrawn.

Bonnie feels that the League has, overall, been very effective in Frederick County and growing because of studying and taking a stand on issues like this one. When she is not involved in League activities, Bonnie likes to explore family history, take pictures, and create albums. Fortunately, the League remains her greatest source of entertainment. •
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