
CITIZENS UNITED DECISION SETS OFF REVOLUTION IN CAMPAIGN FINANCE

Supreme Court Erred, Decision Undermines Basic Pillar of American Democracy

By Mary G. Wilson, President of LWV US

The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake. Their decision announced today in *Citizens United v. FEC* is constitutionally irresponsible and will surely bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. Today, basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined – that elections should not be corrupted by vast corporate wealth and that the voters should be at the center of our democratic system.

Justice Stevens had it right when he said, in his dissent, ‘The Court’s ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.’

In creating a new constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of their shareholder’s money to determine the outcome in candidate elections, the Court has unleashed into our elections tremendous sums of money from for-profit corporations that cannot possibly be matched in quantity by contributions from ordinary citizens. The only possible outcome of this is that big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy.

Congress and the President enacted campaign finance laws over a series of decades for a reason – to protect our democracy from the perverse influence of big money in our elections. In making this decision, the Court has ignored the best interests of the American public and our representative form of government.



*LWVMD Board member Susan Cochran speaks at a February 22 rally at Lawyers Mall in Annapolis, urging the update of campaign finance laws in light of the decision of the US Supreme Court in *Citizens United*.*

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THAT'S WEATHER, STUPID!

A chronicle of the actions that have been taken to address man-made climate change

By Carole Conors

As temperatures dropped this January and February and the snows ensued, cries came from some educated people and elected officials: "Tell me about global warming now, Al Gore." But global warming pertains to climate change, not weather, and climate means average weather conditions over a period of years while weather is temperature, moisture, cloudiness, etc. at a particular time and place. It is troubling that some educated people and elected officials are ignorant of global warming and climate change after so many years of discovery and the danger and challenge it presents.

Apparently, it was 1896 when a Swedish scientist wondered if perhaps man's burning of fossil fuels with all its carbon dioxide emissions would affect the earth's atmosphere and in turn affect the species that live on earth. He came to the conclusion that fossil fuel burning would cause a greenhouse effect. That was 114 years ago.

By the 1930s, due to scientific observation, it was realized that North America had warmed significantly over a 50-year period. Scientific interest and investigation grew. Data were compiled. Research and discovery was taking place on an international scale. A variety of disciplines took note and got involved. With the emergence of the computer, models and calculations improved, and massive data processing became possible.

In 1988, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change was created. It was a group of thousands of the world's scientists established for the purpose of addressing the subject in an organized and comprehensive manner. The IPCC was founded by a United Nations General Assembly resolution at the request of the United Nations Environmental Programme and the United Nations World Meteorological Organization, and charged with evaluating the risk of climate change caused by human activity.

As a result of world interest in global climate change and the institution of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Changes (IPCC), a United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) was scheduled and took place in 1992 in Rio de Janeiro, the purpose of which was to take action on the IPCC's findings. All 192 member nations of the United Nations were present and unanimously signed the treaty, agreeing to cut carbon emissions by 2000 to 1990 levels.

By 1994, all 192 member nations had ratified the treaty as well. But 1997 came, 2000 was not far off, and little progress had been made. No system of inspection or penalties had been established, and no binding commitments had been made. Beginning in 1995, now that the countries had ratified the UNFCCC, each year there was a follow-up conference of the countries, held in different places around the world, and in 1997 at the third follow-up conference (COP3) in Kyoto, it was clear that some specifics had to be established to, if not meet the goal, approach the goal. Some developed countries agreed to specific emissions-cutting targets as well as financial contributions to help those developing countries already suffering with the results of climate change. It is called the Kyoto Protocol.

As time went on, some of the signatories of the Kyoto Protocol owed emissions cuts and financial contributions. Not only was it noted that the polar bears were endangered but several bird species had disappeared, and the same for sea life, and life of all descriptions. Tropical diseases were being found in nontropical climates. Some arable lands for planting and grazing were no more. Migrations of people, not simply fauna and flora, were taking place.

At COP13, 2007, in Bali, the Bali Action Plan was adopted: for COP15, 2009, Copenhagen, there would be an action plan to sign, complete with specific commitments and

inspections. The two-week Copenhagen conference, the 15th following Rio, failed to produce the intentions of the Bali Action Plan. Instead the Copenhagen Accord was produced, a statement that some 12 situations existed and two lists (appendices) to sign, one list for developed countries and the other for the balance of the countries. The developed countries who signed indicated by signing that they acknowledged the 12 situations and provided their individual commitments to cut emissions to a percentage below what they emitted in whatever year they chose by 2020. The United States wrote that it would cut emissions by 17% below 2005 levels by 2020. Those countries who signed the second appendix indicated what they would do to help contain global warming. The Accord did not provide for inspections that countries were carrying out their commitments. Rather, all signatories agreed to report every two years.

Was the US commitment okay? The IPCC's figures indicated that the world must cut carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions 25% to 40% below 1990 emission levels by 2020 and 85% to 100% below 1990 levels by 2050 in order to avoid catastrophe for all living things. Whatever action is taken now will not be realized for approximately 50 years. Even making a commitment of 25% rather than 17% below 2005 levels is not satisfactory

because emissions jumped considerably between 1990 and 2005.

With some of the US population and some elected officials confusing weather and climate, it seems understandable that the United States has not committed the necessary 25% to 40% below 1990 levels by 2020. If there can be that all-important commodity called public education, citizens will prevail upon their elected officials to increase the United States commitment, and we could possibly save not just the polar bears, but some of the hard-pressed species of every description including our own.

Carole Conors was Head of Delegation, League of Women Voters of US Delegation to United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change Conference of Parties 15, Copenhagen, of which there were eight League of Women Voters members. (The League of Women Voters of the US enjoys Special Consultative Status with the United Nations Economic and Social Council.) In addition to eight years as an officer and board member of the LWVMD, Conors is the Chair of the League of Women Voters of the US Lobby Corps, the coordinator of League of Women Voters members in Prince George's County and a member of the Howard County League of which she is a past president. She is also a 50-year member of the League.

It is Easy to Support the League

Electronic donations to the League are now welcome! Friends and supporters can make a secure online donation by clicking the **DONATE** button on our website (www.lwvmd.org) Contributions go to the League of Women Voters of Maryland Education Fund and are tax deductible.

We are grateful to a generous League member who has committed to matching the donations that we receive electronically, so please encourage your friends and neighbors to contribute, and consider showing your support for LWVMD as well.

League of Women Voters Participates in PlanMaryland

By Nancy Soreng

PlanMaryland is a new planning process designed to create a better and more sustainable future for Maryland. The state legislature created the authority for such a plan in the 1970s, but a broader recognition of the costs of unsustainable types of land use has grown in recent years to the point where such a plan is now urgently needed. Governor O'Malley has begun a process that will produce a draft plan in 2011. The state hired an independent contractor to interview key stakeholders including nongovernmental organizations, and representatives from environmental and agricultural organizations.

In the fall, I was asked to give the League's perspective on land use planning. As a follow up to these individual interviews, the Maryland Department of Planning will be holding forums around the state in hopes of involving thousands of Marylanders in the process. They plan to facilitate innovative activities and small table discussions at each forum.

I urge you to attend one of the forums listed below. To RSVP your intention to attend a forum, go to: <http://plan.maryland.gov/getinvolved/PublicForums.shtml> .

Thursday, March 18 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Coppin State University

Talon Center, Dining & Meeting Hall

Wednesday, March 24 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

UMD Universities at Shady Grove

Building II, Multi-Purpose room

9630 Gudelsky Drive · Rockville, MD 20850

Thursday, April 8 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

College of Southern Maryland

Center for Business and Industry, Atrium

8730 Mitchell Road · La Plata, MD 20646

Wednesday, April 14 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

**Community College of Baltimore County,
Essex Campus**

College Community Center Lobby

7201 Rossville Boulevard

Baltimore, MD 21237

Wed., April 21 (tentative) - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Anne Arundel Community College

The Student Union Dining Hall

101 College Parkway · Arnold, MD 21012

Thursday, May 6 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Salisbury University

Guerrieri University Center

1101 Camden Avenue · Salisbury, MD 21801

Wednesday, May 12 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Chesapeake College

Caroline Student Center

Routes 50 and 213 · Wye Mills, MD 21679

Wednesday, May 19 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Frostburg State University

The Lyric Building

20 E. Main Street - Frostburg, MD 21532

Wednesday, May 26 - 6:00 to 9:00 p.m.

Cecil College

Technology / Conference Center

1 Seahawk Drive · North East, MD 21901

**OTHER REGIONAL LOCATIONS TO BE
SCHEDULED – KEEP POSTED**

Northwestern Suburban Washington Area

Middle Eastern Shore

Harford League takes on Census Project

Several months ago, spurred on by the information from LWV about our partnership with the Census Bureau, the League of Women Voters of Harford County also took on the 2010 Census as a central project. Partnering with their local census office, Jane Howe, LWV Harford board member, was made Team Leader of the Undercount Subcommittee whose job is to identify and reach out to the "hard to count" populations in their jurisdiction.

Jane was successful in writing a grant to the federal Census Office which provides items for distribution to increase awareness of the upcoming census; she received fabric grocery bags, note pads and pencils with the Census 2010 and the LWV logos. These are being handed out at events that the League co-sponsors as April 1st approaches.

LWV Harford is actively participating in Census 2010 presentations and helping local organizations reach out to the hard-to-count population in Harford County. At the request of the local census bureau and the League, the Harford County Council proclaimed March "Census 2010" month. A Census 2010 insert was placed in local publications and included an ad by LWV Harford.

Census 2010 questionnaires will be mailed out to every household in mid-March. Those forms need to be mailed back by Census Day, April 1st. Harford County is working to make sure that the mailback rate is as high as possible, because after April 1, the costly door-to-door canvas starts to households that did not return the Census 2010 form.

Go to <http://2010.census.gov/2010census/how/interactive-form.php> to preview the questionnaire. The Census 2010 form is only 10 questions long - the shortest form in the history of the Census.



IT'S IN OUR HANDS



On March 1, the League was honored in the Maryland Senate with a proclamation commemorating our 90th birthday. Following the session, members of the House and Senate joined League members to enjoy a gorgeous birthday cake donated by Graul's Market in Annapolis. Above, Marjie Slater- Kaplan cuts the cake and, at right, Annette Funn shows it off.



League Members Participate in *Sisters on the Planet* Climate Summit

by Nancy Soreng

LWVUS, along with a number of advocacy groups, has entered a partnership with Oxfam America to promote an initiative called *Sisters on the Planet*. The purpose is to increase awareness of the disproportionate impact of the climate crisis on women around the world and to encourage people to join the fight against climate change at home and abroad. A two-day "Leaders Summit" was held in Washington, D.C., on March 8 and 9 that included Mary Wilson, President of LWVUS, League leaders from around the nation, and Carole Conors, chair of the LWVUS Lobby Corps. I represented the Maryland League.

Attendees were given briefings by experts on the impacts of drought, flooding, and other effects of global warming on the poorest and most vulnerable populations world-wide. Testimonials from women who had experienced threats to their communities as the result of growing extremes in climate included representatives from Peru, Senegal, and Mississippi.

Following the briefings, attendees visited members of the House, Senate, and the Administration to make the case for implementing strategies to help those communities around the world that are facing immediate threats due to climate change. These strategies, called "adaptation," include implementing water conservation techniques, installing early warning systems, and planting mangrove trees along coastlines to diffuse storm waves. For every dollar spent on adaptation, six dollars on relief aid can be saved.

To learn more about the issue go to oxfamamerica.org .

State Workshop hosted by Calvert League & Winter Weather!

LWVMD President Nancy Soreng and League members around the State were welcomed to Calvert County with plenty of hot coffee and hot chocolate, but no warm weather!

The Winter Board Workshop held at the Holiday Inn, Solomons, was a success in spite of the on and off snow forecast! Over 40 members braved the cold and windy weather with sub-freezing temperatures on the horizon to attend the informative training sessions. Two workshops were held that focused on the State League Study about the Administration of Justice and the action items to be addressed at the League's Annual Legislative Day in Annapolis on Feb. 25.

Carole Conors, a LWVUS representative to the world-wide UN Climate Change Conference held in Copenhagen, Denmark, in December 2009, was the luncheon speaker.

The Honorable Wilson Parran, Calvert County Board of County Commissioners President, presented a Proclamation to the League of Women Voters in honor of their 90th Birthday celebration. The League was congratulated for its 90 years to improve government and impact public policies through citizen education and advocacy. Since 1920, the League has been a leading voice for change, strengthening our democratic system at every level of government and tackling the most important issues of the day.

As the day continued, the snow got very heavy. It took double the time to return home. Several Leaguers spent the night at the hotel or with friends!

League of Women Voters Calvert County looks forward to hosting the League of Women Voters Maryland's State Convention May 20, 21, 22 in 2011. Calvert Leaguers promise that there will be NO SNOW in Solomons at that time!



**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARYLAND
IS CELEBRATING OUR 90TH BIRTHDAY
WITH A FUN-FILLED AND INFORMATIVE DAY
IN WASHINGTON D.C.**

**Saturday, April 24, 2010 10:00am - 3:30pm
\$30.00 per person**

Join us - and bring your friends and family!



Meet fellow-Leaguers and friends at 10:00am at the Capitol Visitors Center where our tour of the Capitol begins.



The Capitol Visitor Center, the new main entrance to the U.S. Capitol, is located on the East front at First Street and East Capitol Street, NE. It is located underground on the east side of the Capitol. The closest metro stops are Union Station or Capitol South. For those driving into Washington, there is a parking garage at Union Station. (For more information, go to www.visitthecapitol.gov)

**After the tour, Lunch-Around!
Choose from various nearby restaurants
where LWVMD Board members will escort small groups,
or select your own lunch option.**



At 2:00pm, we will be guided through the Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, headquarters of the historic National Woman's Party and the Washington home of its founder and Equal Rights Amendment author, Alice Paul.



The Sewall-Belmont House and Museum, 144 Constitution Avenue NE, is located at the corner of Constitution Avenue and 2nd Street, NE, next to the Hart Senate Office building.

Space is limited - Please respond ASAP! Final date for registration is April 20.

Name(s) _____
Phone _____ Email _____
Mail your check for \$30 per person made out to LWVMD to: LWVMD, 106B South St., Annapolis, MD 21401

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