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Harmful Voter Registration Law Blocked in LWV of Tennessee Case

Victory for voters ahead of state voter registration deadline October 7

NASHVILLE, TN—Today, in a victory for Tennessee voters, a federal district court judge granted the League of Women Voters of Tennessee a preliminary injunction in their case *League of Women Voters of Tennessee v. Hargett*. The case challenged a recently passed Tennessee law that leveled civil fines and criminal penalties on organizations that register voters.

"The voters of Tennessee are the beneficiaries of this decision that strengthens our democracy by protecting the voter registration process. Now, the League can proceed with the important work of registering voters and providing reliable election information," said **Marian Ott**, president of the League of Women Voters of Tennessee. "Many community partners halted registration activities to avoid the hefty penalties associated with this law, but now we can all get back to the important business of equipping voters for our upcoming elections."

Because of the injunction, the law's damaging penalties will not be in place during a crucial time for voter registration, as the Tennessee registration deadline is just weeks away. Originally, the law was set to take effect on October 1, right in the middle of an important period for voter registration before the October 7 deadline.

"This is a win for Tennessee voters, who deserve every possible opportunity to get registered or update their registration," said **Chris Carson**, president of the board of the League of Women Voters of the United States. "We're thankful the court recognized that voter registration organizations like the League play a critical role in empowering voters, and therefore shouldn't be punished for their efforts."

Tennessee saw a surge of voter registrations ahead of midterm elections last fall, which local democracy organizations counted as a great victory in a state ranked 44th in the nation for voter registration. But that momentum was halted when the state passed a law aimed at groups who facilitate registration drives. The League of Women Voters of Tennessee and partner organizations challenged the law, with representation from the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), ACLU Tennessee, and Campaign Legal Center.

“Today’s ruling indicates that the court understands the dangerous burdens this law places on organizations simply trying to ensure that as many eligible voters can participate in the democratic process as possible,” said **Hedy Weinberg**, executive director of ACLU of Tennessee. “This decision allows our clients to continue their important work of registering voters this election season — including those who have been historically disenfranchised.”

The decision is timely since September is National Voter Registration Month, and Leagues around the country will be out in force making sure voters are ready for upcoming elections, including more than 300 events on Tuesday, September 24, for National Voter Registration Day.