



League of Women Voters of Massachusetts

EMPOWERING VOTERS PROJECT

A force for change

Advocacy Agenda to Empower Voters

The Empowering Voters Project is a strategic, comprehensive project to ensure that voting in Massachusetts is easy and fair and that voters are informed and engaged. The Project will focus on those constituencies that are underrepresented in the electoral process and are the most vulnerable to voting problems. The Project will advocate for reform to voting laws and procedures to ensure that all voters in Massachusetts can register and vote without complication or discrimination.

This Project is being conducted by the League of Women Voters, the most trusted name in nonpartisan voter services and voter information. Founded in 1920, the League encourages the active and informed participation of all citizens in the electoral process.

Issues and Advocacy Objectives

Promote reforms for easier and more accessible registration & voting

Allow Election Day registration

- Increase turnout by allowing voter registration at polling places
- Lessen the need for confusing and time-consuming provisional ballots

Increase accessibility of voter registration forms

- Allow downloading and photocopying of forms
- Promote changes to make the forms more user-friendly

Establish online access to voting lists

- Allow voters across the state to check their voter registration status online
- Ensure that online voter registration records are kept accurate and up-to-date

Reform absentee voting

- Permit unconditional absentee voting by amending the Massachusetts Constitution
- Allow early absentee voting at municipal election offices before an election

Expand right to leave work to vote

- Amend existing law to allow all workers to take a two-hour leave to vote if they do not have three consecutive hours away from work when polls are open

Ensure that voting is equitable and efficient

Oppose restrictive identification requirements

- Ensure that requirements for presenting IDs, which can be discriminatory, are not expanded

Expand recruitment of poll workers

- Allow municipalities to hire poll workers residing in other towns and cities, including college students, and to reassign public employees to serve as poll workers
- Permit hiring of high school students to serve as poll workers

Mandate display of Voters' Bill of Rights in every polling place

- Voters should have easy access to the Voters' Bill of Rights so they can protect their rights at the polls

Boost voter confidence in electoral system and elected officials

Ensure continuing impartiality of elections administration

- Remove any perception of bias in election administration by barring election administrators from holding responsible, fiduciary positions in political campaigns other than their own

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133 Portland Street, Boston, MA 02114

617-523-2999 • Fax 617-248-0881 • www.lwvma.org • lwvma@lwvma.org



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Citizen Education Agenda

The League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Citizen Education Fund, the most trusted name in nonpartisan voter education since 1920, is embarking on a strategic, comprehensive project to ensure that voters in Massachusetts are informed and engaged.

The Empowering Voters Project will focus on those constituencies that are underrepresented in the electoral process and are the most vulnerable to voting problems.

The Empowering Voters Project will embark on programs to ensure that all voters in Massachusetts know their rights and responsibilities on Election Day and go to the polls informed and empowered.

Project Goals

- ✓ Provide reliable information about voting and candidates
- ✓ Address low participation rates in specific communities
- ✓ Ensure that voting is equitable
- ✓ Boost voter confidence in electoral system and elected officials

Project Plan

Voting and election aids: print-video-online

- Pamphlets on voting reforms: absentee voting, Election Day registration, right to leave work
- Voters' Bill of Responsibilities
- Translations of Voters' Bill of Rights and voting information
- Voting information packets for the formerly incarcerated
- Comprehensive, nonpartisan Massachusetts-specific voting website - www.votinginfo.info
- Video demonstration of new electronic voting machines
- Comprehensive Voters' Guide for *The Boston Globe* for Election 2006
- Distribution of the Voters' Guide to underrepresented populations
- Electronic voting reminders greeting cards
- Email reminder service for voter registration deadlines and election dates

Community outreach

- Focus groups to identify voting problems and possible solutions in underrepresented communities
- Information on voting systems that are secure, accurate, re-countable and accessible
- Election information sessions for the homeless and those in corrections facilities
- Train independent, nonpartisan moderators for candidate debates
- Election 2006 forums on issues that affect underrepresented constituencies
- Tool kit on civic participation and voting aimed at young voters
- Aids to recruit poll workers

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