

THE LWVUS MONEY IN POLITICS (MIP) REVIEW AND UPDATE: BACKGROUND

2015 and 2016 are turning out to be the “Years of Studies” for the League of Women Voters at every level. Our county-wide League of Women Voters of Orange County (ILO) has just completed a *Study of Money and Ethics in Orange County Politics* and the new ILO Position on that topic will soon be available on the ILO and local League websites. On November 13, 2016, COAST and CAPO held concurrent Consensus Meetings on the LWVUS Constitutional Amendment Study and COAST’s response to the Consensus Questions will appear on the [COAST website](#) as soon as it is approved by our Board. In the spring we will participate in the [LWVC Higher Education Study](#).

You will read about those elsewhere in this *Voter*. **[The LWVUS Money in Politics Update Study is what needs your attention now.](#)**

The problem of the influence of money in politics is one of deep interest and concern for most League members – and many other Americans. The LWVUS MIP Study Team stated it perfectly in their first Issue Paper, the [Money in Politics Introduction and Overview](#):

“Why Money in Politics Matters to the League of Women Voters: Money in politics matters because the goal of campaigning is to convince voters, either for or against a candidate or issue. Thus, campaigning is ultimately about communication. In our modern age, this includes speech and money. It is very important that one continually keeps combining campaign, communication, free speech, and money in their thinking.

Purpose of a Campaign Finance System: A campaign finance system is intended to control and limit the money spent on election campaigns. Why do that? The first reason is to protect the right of voters to know who is spending money to influence their vote. The second reason is to prevent corruption. The only corruption that the current U.S. Supreme Court acknowledges is *quid pro quo* which, in the context of political campaign finance, refers to an explicit agreement by a candidate or elected official to perform a specific act in exchange for something of value. But reformers believe that money in politics should be controlled because it may allow undue access or influence. Third, reformers want to control money out of a belief that unlimited spending gives an unfair advantage to candidates and spenders. Finally, there is a concern that the rise in spending corrupts representative government by downplaying the role of the voters and allowing for unfair competition, possibly leading to lower voter turnout

Conclusion: Whatever else it may or may not have done, the United States Supreme Court’s decisions in the 2010 *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission* and 2014 *McCutcheon, et al. v. FEC* cases galvanized the campaign finance reform movement. Any education and discussion of these issues must attempt to be comprehensive, which means complex. The task of the Money in Politics Committee is to make the issues understandable to the members of LWV and all citizens.”

Two Leagues – CAPO and COAST – have a local Study team working on the [LWVUS Money in Politics Update Study](#) right now. CAPO members on the team are: Sandy Exelby, Marilyn O’Brien and Petti Van Rekom. COAST members are Kathy Hartman, Becky Newman, Diane Nied and Judy Standerford.

Our Consensus Meeting for this Study will be held on January 15, 2016, from 9:30 a.m. – 1:30 p.m. in a NEW LOCATION: Mimi’s Café, 1835 Newport Boulevard, Costa Mesa, 92627. Watch for the MailChimp announcements. [Map to Mimi's](#)

If League members want to see advocacy on subjects which are important to them, then widespread participation in **Studies** is important.

Effective participation requires member understanding and agreement about the issues. The Money in Politics Committee has provided members and the public with information to facilitate member study and consensus.

To be prepared to participate in the Consensus Meeting for the LWVUS MIP Study, please start familiarizing yourselves with the MIP Study materials!

If you read the [LWVUS Study Guide for the Money in Politics Consensus](#) and the [LWVUS MIP Issue Papers](#) you will be reasonably well-prepared for our consensus meeting.

At present, there are 16 Issue Papers. Two are excerpts from a free e-book which can be downloaded from the LWVUS website: [The New Soft Money](#). One excerpt is seven pages long and the other is five pages long. Of the other 14 Issue Papers, the longest two are each eight pages long – both of which include at least a page of references. In other words, you can read less than 100 pages and have read them all. All of these are available on the [LWVUS MIP Website](#).

Our Study Team has also prepared a LWVUS MIP Question and Resource Table which provides links to the specific papers which are related to each set of questions. This resource is available on the League of Women Voters of Orange Coast website: [COAST LWVUS MIP Resource Table](#).

If you have the time, there is an additional list of more extensive [Background Readings](#).