



THE VOTER



Volume 64

No. 6

February 2011

February

- 1 **Tuesday, 9:30 am**
Eastside Unit
Congressional Redistricting
Bring articles on this subject
Ward 2 Office
7575 E Speedway
Call: Phylis, 885.3271
- 2 **Wednesday, 5 pm**
Board Meeting
League Office
- 8 **Tuesday, 10 am**
SaddleBrooke Unit
Karen Lombardi, LCSW Consultant
Pinal-Gila Council, Senior Citizens
Area Agency on Aging
Senior Services Available
Call: Linda, 241.1043
- 11 **Friday, 11:30 am**
Green Valley Unit
Dr. Virginia Juettner, Supt.,
Continental School Dist.
Madera Room
La Posada
Call: Sue, 399.9763
- 14 **US LWV Birthday**
- 15 **Susan B. Anthony's Birthday**
- 19 **Saturday, 9:30 am**
General Meeting
Charter Schools Consensus
Main Library

March

- 1 **Tuesday, 9:30 a.m.**
Eastside Unit
Call: Phylis, 885.3271
- 2 **Wednesday, 5 pm**
LWVGT Board Meeting
League Office
- 8 **Tuesday, 10 am**
SaddleBrooke Unit
Call: Linda, 241.1043
- 11 **Friday, 11:30 am**
Green Valley Unit
Call: Sue, 399.9763
- 18 **Saturday, 9:30 am**
General Meeting
Main Library

**GENERAL MEETING
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
SATURDAY, FEBRUARY 19, 2011**

9:30 am Refreshments
10 am-noon Program Meeting
Joel Valdez Main Library
101 N. Stone Ave., Tucson, AZ

(Free parking in the Library Underground Garage with entrance off Alameda)

CHARTER SCHOOLS REPORT AND CONSENSUS

School reform has been an issue for some time. We are in the midst of a major debate. The Obama administration is pushing for school reform, and charter schools are in the midst of the debate. Come and learn more about the Pima County charter schools. Your friends and neighbors are welcome.

The LWVGT Charter school committee has been researching and studying Pima County charter schools for the past two years. We are prepared to present our findings to you at this meeting. It is important that we attempt to reach consensus on this issue at the meeting. To help you prepare for the process, please read the executive summary located elsewhere in this month's *Voter*. If you want to read the full report, it will be located on our LWVGT website at www.lwvgt.org

There are many things about charter schools that need clarification. Charter schools are public schools that are privately operated by an owner/operator. The traditional district public schools are also publicly funded and are operated by a school district. Neither type of public school can charge tuition. (Private schools were not included in the LWVGT study.)

Charter schools are here to stay. Charter schools are now an option for public education in 44 states and have been increasing in numbers. Parents and students like them because they are smaller in total enrollment with smaller classes. This makes them very popular for some students. At this point our focus needs to be on improving both charter schools and traditional district public schools.

Joyce Steiner and Carol West, Charter School Committee

Welcome to new members

Sharon Olbert, Sally Sample, Sam Zellman, Jennifer Canright, Eileen Feldgus and Barbara Fortino. And a big welcome back to Mikel Shelling and Evelyn Miller.

President's Report

IN THE CORNER

Happy New Year! We are thankful for the many tax deductible contributions we have received for the League's education fund which allows us to continue our voter service projects. It is not too late to send a check made out to LWVAZEF and notated "for Education Fund." Thank you for your help.

Thanks to the Elegant Garage Sale committee (Carol Shearer, Phylis Carnahan, Betty Geehan, Freda Johnson, Grace Evans, Shirley Sandelands, Patsy Frannea, Maxine Goodman) and our many donors, we were able to realize \$3,000. Special thanks to Frank Ries for the free use of his building. Members enjoyed delicious food and drinks on the preview evening. Great publicity was given by the *Arizona Daily Star* with articles in the Foothills section and *Caliente* and a listing in the *Tucson Weekly* courtesy of Maxine Goodman, Media Relations.

Congress and our legislature are both in session. Many times our national, state, and local League lobbyists request that you contact your representatives about specific issues that the League supports. We strongly urge you to send these messages. The elected officials must hear from us. It does make a difference.

Our work continues with an update of our citizen directory, reaching consensus on our charter school study, program planning, and serving as watchdogs on Arizona's redistricting process. We urge you to become involved as you can.



-- Carol West, President



RUNNING AND WINNING REPORT

Workshop

At Cienega High School, Vail, AZ, on December 9, 2010 the Running and Winning Workshop was a successful experience for 70 young high school women. The high school facilities were good, their administration had chosen the young women, and prepped them to dress up and have a great day. Seventeen elected or "campaign experienced women" included five School Governing Board Members from TUSD and Vail, five Republican legislative or county officials and seven Democratic legislative and city council women who participated with the UA graduate facilitators and high school women at 15 tables.

Discussions centered on the joys and challenges of campaigning for office. After lunch and speeches, the high school women were given Participation Certificates and "goodie bags". Moderators for the day were LWVGT Carol West and AAUW Nancy Woodling. The Workshop steering committee included members from LWVGT, AAUW-Tucson Branch, AAUW-Casas Adobes Branch and the UA School of Government and Public Policy. We thank all who worked and contributed to the success of this Workshop.

--Shirley Sandelands, LWVGT Co-Chair





The League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson wishes to extend its condolences to the family and friends of the victims who were wounded or killed in the deadly shooting in Tucson on January 8th. We wish to support Arizona Congresswoman Gabrielle "Gabby" Giffords, a longtime friend of the state and local Leagues.

Gabby is a strong champion of educating the public on voting, environmental issues, health and welfare and women's issues.

This act of violence is a reminder of the importance of civil discourse in American democracy and what the consequences can be.

We wish Rep. Giffords a full and speedy recovery.

LEGISLATIVE REPORT

The Legislative session started on January 10th on a somber tone with the Governor changing her Address to deal with the tragedy of so many Tucsonans being injured and killed on January 8th. There were 115 bills in the hopper the Friday before session started. Once again more Republicans were elected with two-thirds majorities in both chambers. There are 19 new senators and 30 new House members. The 60-member House will have only 10 of the 30 new representatives having had legislative experience. That leaves a full third of the House reporting with no legislative experience. And they will be facing the Budget problem.

SENATE: While there is talk about streamlining government, President Pearce has expanded the Senate with four more committees for total of 15. They are Border Security, Economic Development and Jobs Creation, Commerce and Energy and Banking and Insurance. Pearce also appointed himself as Chair of the most powerful Rules committee which will give him control over legislation after bills are passed at committee level and before they are debated and voted on by the full Senate. He will also assign bills to committees and schedule floor action.

HOUSE: The House added two new committees and now are at 17. Rep. Jerry Weirs will chair the Rules committee. The very first bill H2001, Rep. Harper, is that concealed firearms may be carried on the campus of a state university by a faculty member if the person has a valid concealed carry permit. HB 2014, Rep. Harper, says the schools cannot prohibit possession of a concealed weapon or transportation or storage of firearms.

DEADLINES: January 31: deadline for Senate bills introduction; February 7: deadline for House bills; March 12: deadline for hearing Senate and House committee bills; April 9: last day Senate to hear House bills and House to hear Senate bills. Bills that don't receive a hearing and regular vote of both are dead.

CONGRESS: The 1st, 3rd and 5th Congressional Districts changed to Republican with Ann Kirkpatrick and Harry Mitchell losing their Democratic seats. Ben Quayle picked up the 3rd District as no incumbent running. Arizona will get another Congressional seat now after the Census reports. This will probably be in the Maricopa/Pinal Counties area.

ELECTION TIDBITS: The recount of a statewide ballot proposition could be the first time in the history of the state and this was set up when Proposition 112, which would move the initiative filing deadline from July 1 to May 1 of an election year trailed by only 128 votes. State law requires a recount for differences of less than one-tenth of 1 % or 200 votes, whichever is less. After the recount, the proposition still failed.

The state voter turnout was 55.6% with Pinal County at 48.48% and Pima County at 65.54%.

CITIZENSHIP BILL: Senate President Pearce plans to introduce the birthright-citizenship bill. Legislators said that they hoped it would not distract him from the Budget and the economy. Fourteen states plan to introduce this same legislation on citizenship. Several legislators went to Washington D.C. for a press conference on this.

MERIT SELECTION: Back in the news again as the process of nominating candidates for the Independent Redistricting Commission gave clout to those who want to scrap this process. Senate Pres. Pearce said going back to electing judges may be the best course of action. Gov. Brewer has said she doesn't like the current restriction that limits her to choosing a new judge solely from the list sent to her by screening panels. Former U.S. Supreme Court Justice Sandra Day O'Connor has spoken out in favor of the system. So we will be watching for bills on this.

CLEAN ELECTIONS: The US Supreme Court has set aside ONE hour March 28th to consider whether it is constitutional for the state to provide matching cash to publicly funded candidates outspent by foes. That paves the way for a June decision.

-Gini McGirr, Government Chair

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER TUCSON CHARTER SCHOOL STUDY EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 2011

What are charter schools?

In 1994 the Arizona legislature established the ability to form public, state-funded charter schools that would be privately operated. The legislature believed that this would improve academic achievement and provide school choice for parents and students.

The legislation allowed anyone who was “sufficiently qualified” to apply for a charter. The applicant or sponsor could contract for a charter with the Arizona Board of Education, the State Board for Charter Schools, or via a local school district. If the business and organizational plan was approved, and it was determined that there was not a religious connection, the charter school could be organized. The bill passed with bipartisan support.

In ensuing legislative sessions, requirements for background checks and fingerprints were mandated for teachers, operators, and charter school boards. Because of the difficulty of bonding for 5 years, the charter was increased to 15 years in duration. Start-up costs would no longer be awarded by the state. Charter schools had to be contiguous to a school district if they were formed by a school district.

Each charter school or group of schools under the same sponsorship is its own local legislated authority, similar to being its own school district. Decisions are made regarding the management of the school by the sponsors/operators who were awarded the charter. The owner of the charter school determines the focus, the curriculum based on state standards, the hiring of staff, and the functions of the board members who are appointed by the owner/operator. A charter school can determine the size of enrollment, but must accept all students, including those with special needs.

Are charter schools accountable? How successful have they been?

Over 100,000 Arizona students are now enrolled in public charter schools. Fully 25% of the state's public schools are charter schools, enrolling 10% of the public school students. In Pima County there are approximately 113 public charter schools with an enrollment of about 21,000.

Charter public schools still have to meet the requirements and standards specified by the State of Arizona for successful completion of K-12 education in a comprehensive program just as the traditional district schools have to do. They also must follow federal, state, and local laws and regulations regarding health, safety, civil rights, and insurance. While teachers do not have to be certified, they must be qualified in their respective subject matters.

In the beginning charter schools had few accountability standards from the legislature or the State Board for Charter Schools; however, recently that has changed. The standards for academic outputs and financial oversight are now being applied more stringently, and there are consequences for non-performance.

Publicity noting that Arizona has the second highest number of charter schools of any state in the nation helped prompt the LWVGT to begin a study to see what impact charter schools have had on student education. Since the schools have existed in Arizona since 1995, it was believed that there ought to be some evidence of their successes and impacts on the public school system.

About this study:

At the 2009 LWVGT annual meeting, members voted to authorize a one year charter school study. (In 2010 an additional year was added to complete the local study.) The study would focus on Pima County charter schools. A committee of LWVGT members was organized. The committee recognized that the final report would be based on what was easily available to a citizen. It did not do its own statistical or scientific data.

Summary, Continued



Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF GREATER TUCSON

CHARTER SCHOOL STUDY CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

Consensus taking meeting – February 19, 2011

A. Which of the **innovations** that many charter schools emphasize could more traditional schools be permitted to implement?

B. Has the **autonomy** from many public education statutes granted charter schools too much independence from the **regulations** required of traditional schools? If so, in what areas?

C. Is current **academic evaluation** of charter schools equitable with district schools?

Yes _____ No _____

D. Is the current **oversight** of charter schools adequate? Yes _____ No _____

E. Now that we have school choice, is there adequate and accessible **information** readily available for parents to make good decisions? Yes _____ No _____

F. Are the **funding formulas** for charter and traditional schools in Arizona equitable and consistent with long-held goals of public education? Yes _____ No _____

G. To what extent has **open enrollment** in public education led to the change of a neighborhood school concept? _____

Committee Members

Betty Geehan, Betsy Zukoski, Sally Davenport, Joyce Steiner, Judy Fischer

Please come to the February 19th meeting to discuss these consensus questions. If you cannot attend the meeting, please fill out this form (use an extra sheet of paper if needed) and return to the League office at 2424 E Broadway, #110, Tucson, AZ 85719.

LETTER AND PRESS RELEASE FROM LWVUS PRESIDENT ELISABETH MacNAMARA

The following letter was sent to League members and we are reproducing it for those who did not get the letter or are not able to read the Press Release.

Dear League member:

I am still trying to make sense of the horrific violence that occurred last weekend in Tucson, Arizona.

But with the recent news of Representative Gabrielle Giffords opening her eyes and the U.S. House passing a resolution condemning the attack, we are hopeful that Rep. Giffords will make a full recovery, *and* that we can create a democracy where all can participate without fear of violence.

For more than 90 years, the League has stood for and worked towards the civil exchange of different points of view. As we continue to honor those who were killed in Tucson and pray for the survivors, I wanted to pass along our statement on the tragedy. We will not slow down in our work to demand a forum for safe political conversation in our democracy. The future of our nation depends on it.

Sincerely,

Elisabeth MacNamara, President, LWVUS

STATEMENT FROM ELISABETH MacNAMARA, PRESIDENT, LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE UNITED STATES:

Washington, DC “The League of Women Voters joins with all Americans in expressing our shock and dismay at the tragic shootings in Tucson last weekend. We express our deep sorrow to the families of the victims, and offer our sincere hopes for the recovery of Representative Giffords and the other survivors. We applaud the courage of the individuals, thinking they were just out for a Saturday conversation, who took immediate action to help the injured and end the rampage.

“What can we make of this madness, this senseless act of violence? And terrible though this even was for all of us now, what might the long term effects be? Will it make public figures the politicians, media figures, celebrities more mindful of the potentially harmful impact of their angry words or will everyone continue to put their own agendas first, without regard to the climate they create? Will it make the public more trusting of the patriotic motivations of their elected leaders or will respect for them be further diminished? Will it make our elected leaders more willing to reach out to meet and hear from their constituents directly or will it reinforce the growing gap between voters and those they put in office? Will it allow Americans to feel comfortable and welcome in the public space or will they conclude that it is safer to stay home and drop out of the conversation? It is clearly time for each of us to consider these issues, individually and as a community.

“For 90 years, the League has worked to facilitate the civil exchange of different points of view, to bridge the gap between voters and the elected, and to help improve the functioning of government. We hope that moving forward our nation will come together to foster and strengthen the very essence of our representative democracy: 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.'”

League of Women Voters, 1730 M Street NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20036. Phone: 202-429-1965

THE FOLLOWING E-MAIL IS FROM ONE OF OUR LEAGUE FRIENDS IN KENYA WRITTEN TO CAROL WEST. When the Kenya women were here, they met with Rep. Giffords. We thank her for her concern.

From: fatuma mohamed [mailto:fatuma.shukri@gmail.com]

Sent: Sunday, January 09, 2011 1:38 AM

To: Neil West

Subject: GABRIEL GIFFORDS

Dear Neil and Carol, Hope all is okay with you all. Just heard the news about the shooting in Tucson which is very sad. Please keep me posted on the issues .

Fatuma

The scope included the following questions:

1. What has been the success rate of charter schools since they were established in 1994?
2. How do charter schools compare with traditional district public schools?
3. How are charter schools regulated and who is responsible for their oversight?
4. How are charter schools funded?
5. Why do some charter schools succeed and some fail?
6. What impact have charter schools had on traditional public schools or the school system as a whole?
7. What specific reforms have charter schools established and how can they be used in traditional district public schools?

Members of the committee conducted interviews with the Executive Director of the Arizona Board of Charter Schools, attended a local charter school operators meeting, and heard speakers on Arizona school finance and charter operations. Numerous articles about charter schools were reviewed.

The committee divided itself into sub-groups: research, finance, interviews, and later a consensus question committee to work on specifics and report back to the entire group. It was evident that there was a need to visit some charter schools and interview administrators, teachers, students, and parents. Tucson Unified School District traditional public schools would also be interviewed to allow a comparison as part of the study.

Based on the information we hoped to gain, the interview committee developed a series of questions for both types of schools. These questions, along with the scope, were submitted to each school prior to the actual interviews.

Committee members conducted the interviews at high schools of both types of public schools in the spring of 2010. In the fall of 2010 elementary and middle schools for charter schools and district public schools were interviewed, using appropriate interview questions established by the interview committee. A summary of their findings are listed in an addendum to the report.

Charter school funding:

Both charter schools and district public schools receive similar per pupil funding of operation and maintenance based on daily student counts. It is difficult to tell whether charter schools or district schools get more public funding. Both get equal per student payments along with the funding formula for special needs students.

Basic minimum per student funding for all schools is figured by the state. Where poor district property taxes cannot cover this per student funding, the state steps in to make up the shortfall for poor districts, thus "equalizing" funding for all districts.

Even though charter schools are not district schools, they are included in the basic minimum per student funding guarantee. Thus they inadvertently are "equalized" with all other schools. The state funds the total guaranteed student amount for charter schools since they lack the authority to tax property and thus generate local funds..

Since charter schools have no taxing authority, the state has given them funds to cover some capital and equipment expenditures along with transportation funds. However, the schools are under no obligation to provide transport and can use these dollars for other programs. Financial audits are required for fiscal accountability for both charter and traditional district public schools.

The voter- elected school boards of traditional district schools have the ability to ask the voters to pass bonds and repay them with local property taxes. There are minimum facilities standards for traditional district schools set by the School Facilities Board, and there are requirements to provide transportation to school for their students.

Charter schools can receive grants from private foundations. Charter schools may own land and buildings, but they have to depend upon other sources of revenue to pay for these. The owners can apply for loans and grants to pay for the facilities. It is possible for a charter school facing the need for expansion to take out a loan on its building equity to finance the addition.

Summary, Continued

LWVGT BOARD OF DIRECTORS 2010-2011

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Carol West	President
Virginia Burkel	1 st VP (Membership)
Sue Ward	2 nd VP (Program)
Victor Bowleg	3 rd VP (Voter Service)
Grace Evans	Secretary

ELECTED DIRECTORS

Patricia Frannea	Hospitality
Gini McGirr	Government
Maxine Goodman	Media/Community Relations

VOTER EDITORIAL BOARD

Betty Bengtson
Gini McGirr
Betsy Zukoski

OFF BOARD COMMITTEE CHAIRS

Marion Pickens	Charter Schools
Sally Davenport	County Book & Kenya
Betsy Zukoski	Communications
Sue DeArmond	Citizens Directory
Sue Girardeau	Nominating Chair
Shirley Sandelands	Running & Winning
Shirley Muney	Forum
Coordinator	
Martha Binns	Speakers'

Academic Accountability

Charter public schools must administer the same standardized tests (Arizona Instrument to Measure Standards or AIMS) as all district schools do each year. Both must annually report the test results and other information (numbers of students taking the test, drop-out rates, graduation rates) to the State Department of Education. Thus both types of Arizona public schools are ranked together as far as academic results are concerned.

The two ranking systems (based on testing) provide a dual accountability system. They are:

1. The federal average yearly progress (AYP) as required by No Child Left Behind. A school and/or district gets a Yes or No grade that they have made adequate progress toward 100% proficiency by 2014.
2. The state AZ Learns ranking which determines whether schools have met state standards in math, reading, writing, and science. A school is ranked as excelling, highly performing, performing plus, performing, not performing, or failing.

The school report cards distributed by the Arizona Department of Education do not show that the academic performance of charter schools is significantly better than traditional district schools in Pima County or at the state level.

If a school does not meet the two standards, the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools asks the school to plan for improvement. The Arizona Department of Education works with the school for progress and improvement.

The State Board for Charter Schools is just starting to implement a five year “high stakes” review of all charter schools. If a school has not shown improvement in growth and proficiency for five years, that school will, after a series of hearings and appeals, be closed. This new system is a result of pressure from charter schools themselves reacting to their public image, which they feel has been determined by the poor schools.

Popular belief was that since charter schools had to follow fewer rules than traditional district schools, they would be free to innovate. While they have offered tutors during school hours or after school to help students falling behind and some have longer school years and online classes, innovation does not seem to be any more prevalent in charter schools than it is in traditional district schools.

Some have succeeded and are ranked high in the nation. Others have gone out of business or been put out of business by the State Charter School Board for poor academic performance, fiscal problems, or not living up to their respective charters.

There is some evidence that traditional district schools are now competing with the charter schools with better quality programs, more flexibility of schedules, emphasis on extra-curricular activities, and better marketing to retain students. Some district high schools now feature online classes and night classes to help those students who are falling behind and who may otherwise have difficulty meeting graduation requirements.

The impact on the traditional education system:

Because of open enrollment, parents now have many choices for their students' education. It is not easy, however, to find information on individual schools. There are a number of websites, including some with performance data for charter schools. Test data is also available via the Arizona Department of Education site for both charter and district public schools www.ade.state.az.us

For parents who do not own personal computers, it is more difficult to gather this information. They can use computers at a library or telephone the Arizona State Board for Charter Schools at 602-364-3080 and request that a parent brochure be sent to them. Most often parents choose schools for their youngsters based on word of mouth.

The introduction of charter schools and school choice or open enrollment has had a major impact on the education system in Pima County in terms of the movement of students among schools. Students may opt to go to any school within or without their district, if there is room for them.

There are now a number of public schools that advertise a special program for students. Because of the open enrollment law, parents have researched public schools outside their neighborhood areas, and in many cases, choose one of these schools. Hence charter public schools and some traditional district schools have waiting lists. As a result, neighborhood schools for all students is a concept that is rapidly dwindling.

Summary, Continued

CONCLUSIONS:

The LWVGT study of charter schools has come at a time when there is high interest in the topic. However much of the idea of reform, as well as actual change, is in flux at the present time, so it is difficult to foretell what changes for the better in education will take place. No final results are evident yet.

Charter schools are here to stay. Smaller class sizes and a focus on the individual students and their needs are appealing. Charter schools with a special emphasis such as science, the arts, or college preparatory attract students with that particular interest.

We believe that there is a mix of student abilities in charter schools. Some of the schools we visited are designed to educate low achievers in diverse minority populations. There may be a wide mix of students within each charter that provide more diversity in the system as a whole.

The introduction of charter schools and school choice has had a major impact on the Pima County education system. Students do move back and forth between charter schools and traditional district schools.

A shift of students to charter schools has diminished funds for traditional district public schools. This movement can affect future planning guidelines and hiring for both types of schools; it has also brought more marketing of special programs to students so that they are aware of the choices they have. However, school choice does undermine neighborhood-based schools.

The school report cards distributed by the Arizona Department of Education do not show that the average academic performance of charter schools is significantly better than traditional district schools in Pima County or at the state level.

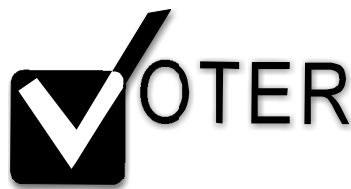
We also learned that there is ongoing debate in the state and the nation about whether the current testing instruments (AIMS) and school ranking evaluations are adequate or fair ways to measure either district or charter schools.

The charter legislation was permissive so that there is variation among charter schools. There is also some variation among traditional district schools, which makes it almost impossible to compare district and charter schools on many features.

We have spent many hours researching and visiting public schools. We submit this report for your consideration for possible policy positions regarding charter schools.

The Charter School Study Committee

Summary, Conclusion



The LWVGT VOTER is published monthly August through April, with a combined December/January issue. Maria Moreno, Nuvoprint, Inc., is the designer. For information contact any member of the VOTER Editorial Board, Betty Bengtson (bbengtson@earthlink.net or 219-3507), Gini McGirr (giniwv@aol.com or 579-2138) or Betsy Zukoski (czukoski@earthlink.net or 299-6312).

League of Women Voters of Greater Tucson
2424 E. Broadway, Suite 110
Tucson, AZ 85719
Tel: 520-327-7652
Email: lwwgt@aol.com
Office hours: 10am-1pm Monday through Friday
Websites: LWVAZ: www.lwvaz.org
LWVUS: www.lwv.org
LWVGT: www.lwvgt.org



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF GREATER TUCSON**
2424 E Broadway #110
Tucson, AZ 85719

Nonprofit Org.
U.S. Postage PAID
Tucson, AZ
Permit #257

(DATED MATERIAL—Return service requested)

WHAT IS GOING ON AT NATIONAL

ACTION ALERT: The House is scheduled to vote on repealing the Affordable Care Act, the comprehensive health care reform law passed by the last Congress and signed into law by President Obama. This is a major step forward in health care for all, which already made a difference by improving health care access for millions of Americans. Repealing it would be a tragic step backwards. You had been previously asked to contact your Representative to ask him/her to vote against the repeal of the Act.

LEAGUE URGES SENATE TO REFORM RULES: Recently League President Elisabeth MacNamara sent a letter to the Senate urging Senators to reform their rules in ways that maintain the best traditions of the Senate, while ensuring openness, accountability, decision-making capability and effective performance. In addition, the League and coalition partners sent a letter to the Senate, urging the members to make transparency and accountability a priority and end needless obstruction by filibuster that threatens the vibrancy of our democracy.

On the Arizona level, the LWVAZ joined a coalition for transparency in the AZ legislature to have a new website, Arizona OpenBooks, which is to give citizens the ability to see how government uses the public purse to bolster public confidence in government and checks corruption. It falls short of providing all the information the public deserves but is a step in the right direction. The website is: www.openbooks.az.gov

PROTECT ETHICS STANDARDS: In December, the League and coalition partners sent a letter to then-designee Speaker of the House John Boehner urging him to preserve or strengthen House ethics rules and standards of conduct.