



Statement for the League of Women Voters
US House Committee on Small Business
“Weaponizing Federal Resources: Exposing the SBA’s Voter Registration Efforts”
June 4, 2024

On behalf of our 1+ million members and supporters, the League of Women Voters (the League) submits this testimony on the merits of nonpartisan voter registration. As a grassroots organization that registers voters in all 50 states and the District of Columbia, the League is an expert on voter registration opportunities. Volunteer voter assistance has been at the heart of the League’s mission for over one hundred years, and our Leagues are experts at supporting voter registration efforts that engage the whole community, regardless of participants’ political affiliation. The League works at the local, state, and national levels of government to increase opportunities to register and vote for all eligible citizens. As the committee moves forward with its deliberations, we urge you to consider the importance of nonpartisan voter registration as a vital community activity nationwide.

The League was founded in 1920 by activists working on the front lines of voter education to assist newly enfranchised women in casting their ballots following the ratification of the 19th Amendment. For over a century since, the League has remained committed to our mission to empower voters and defend democracy. The League focuses on advocacy, education, litigation, and organizing with our grassroots network of more than a million members and supporters across over 750 Leagues in all fifty states and the District of Columbia. The League is nonpartisan — neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government — and is committed to protecting the freedom to vote.

Our work is done through our sister branches, the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF). LWVUS encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. LWVEF works to register voters and provide them with election information through our election resource VOTE411.org, as well as candidate forums and debates, registration drives, and other civic opportunities.

The League has historically focused on implementing policies that break down barriers to voting. This is best exemplified by the League’s contribution to the passage of the *National Voter Registration Act (NVRA)*¹ in 1993. In the 1980s and 90s, the League led a campaign to pass and implement the landmark NVRA. In doing so, we founded the Motor Voter coalition alongside organizations like the ACLU and NAACP National Voter Fund. Through a high-visibility,

¹ Department of Justice, “About the National Voter Registration Act,” <https://www.justice.gov/crt/about-national-voter-registration-act>.



grassroots drive, the coalition pushed the NVRA toward its eventual passage in 1993. President Clinton, who signed the NVRA into law, gifted his pen to the League and deemed us “fighters for freedom” in the continued fight to empower voters.

The NVRA makes it easier for all Americans to register to vote and maintain their registration. In addition to ensuring that states provide voter registration opportunities, the legislation mandates that Americans be allowed to register to vote when they apply for a new driver's license or renew their license. It also requires states to offer voter registration at offices that provide public assistance and state-funded programs serving persons with disabilities. Finally, it guarantees that eligible citizens can register to vote by mail through a state voter registration form or a national form maintained by the Election Assistance Commission. It then ensures that voters are informed if their applications are accepted or rejected.

Census data following the 2022 election reported that 29.8% of voters registered to vote at the Department of Motor Vehicles, which was also the most common answer.² This is proof that the NVRA’s purpose is still being fulfilled.

Communities across the nation rely on nonpartisan organizations like the League to navigate the voting process. That is why the League supports millions of voters with registration and developing a voting plan each election cycle. As a nonpartisan organization, we register voters of all party affiliations, and we have a key focus on those who are new voters or have not been part of the process; this includes communities of color, young people, returning citizens, and new citizens. League affiliates host voter registration drives in high schools, especially Title I and vocational-technical schools, and community colleges. Our affiliates also work to serve returning citizens and aid them in the paperwork necessary to restore their votes.³

The League fights to expand voter registration by promoting opportunities at the state and federal levels to expand citizens’ access to voter registration and election the information needed to participate in the electoral process. Through our work with coalition partners, the League has advocated for the expansion of voter registration and promoted voting rights at agencies like the Department of Health and Human Services, US Customs and Immigration Services, the Board of Prisons, the Department of Education, and the General Services Administration. Expanding opportunities for eligible citizens to register and cast their ballots ensures that some of the most underrepresented communities within the voting community receive the opportunity and information needed to cast a ballot.

² Census Bureau, “2022 Voting and Registration Data Now Available,” <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/2022-voting-registration.html>.

³ US Vote Foundation, “Can felons vote? Can prisoners vote in jail?,” <https://www.usvotefoundation.org/voting-rights-restoration>.



Voter registration has continued to increase. Census Bureau data reports that the registration rate in the 2022 election was 69.1 percent.⁴ While this is the highest rate of registration since 1986, it still shows us that there is much ground to cover to ensure a fully participatory electorate.

Populations within which registration has the most opportunities to increase include younger voters ages 18-29, voters of color, specifically those who identified themselves as Black, Hispanic, or Asian, voters who are self-employed, and voters whose education was at or below the high school level.⁵ It is these populations the League and other non-partisan organizations seek to serve as we engage in voter registration and education activities in communities across the country.

Nonpartisan voter registration is vital to ensuring that the electorate is representative of the full population of the United States. By continuing to register voters from all racial, ethnic, educational, employment, ability, and age groups, organizations like the League can continue to ensure that there is full participation in our democracy.

If you have questions or would like to discuss this further, please contact Jessica Jones Capparell, Director of Government Affairs at jjones@lwv.org.

⁴ Census Bureau, “2022 Voting and Registration Data Now Available,” <https://www.census.gov/newsroom/press-releases/2023/2022-voting-registration.html>.

⁵ See Table 2, Fabina, Jacob and Michael Martin, “Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2022,” Current Population Survey Reports, P20-586, U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC, 2024, <https://www2.census.gov/library/publications/2024/demo/p20-586.pdf>.