

# ELECTION AND

BY KELLY L. CEBALLOS

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## 5 Things You Need

The period following the 2000 election was a confusing time for our nation. The 37 days that it took to determine the 43rd President of the United States revealed an election system in disarray. The core pillars of our democracy were shaken. Voter confidence plummeted.

Images of a broken election process have remained in voters' minds. Many reformers put their hopes in the passage of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002. The intent of HAVA was to modernize and improve federal elections and restore faith in the election system by ensuring that eligible voters are able to cast a vote and have that vote counted.

Only time, and subsequent elections, will tell, if the historic HAVA reforms will fulfill their intended purpose and make things better, or if uneven application of these requirements will have unintended, negative consequences for the nation's voters. With the presidential election just weeks away, now is the time to focus on the voter and ensure that they have all the information they need to cast a vote and be sure that vote is counted.

In September, the League of Women Voters launched *5 Things You Need to Know on Election Day*, an intensive, targeted media and public outreach campaign. This nationwide voter education effort seeks to familiarize voters with new election procedures and empower voters to take action to personally ensure their vote is counted. The LWV has produced a quarter million *5 Things* voter cards that are being distributed nationwide through state and local Leagues and election reform partners.

### 3 Ways to Make Voting a Breeze

- 1 Call Ahead** Call the elections office or board of elections for your county, city or state to make sure you're registered to vote and to find out where your polling place is. Or check their Web site.
- 2 Avoid the Crowds** If you can, go to the polls during off hours: 10 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. and 1:30 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. That's when it's likely to be less crowded.
- 3 Take a Friend to Vote** Why go alone when you can take a friend or loved one to vote too?

# DAY YOU to Know

## 5 Things You Need to Know on Election Day

- 1 Your Ballot—Your Vote** Don't panic if you registered to vote but your name is not on the list. Get help from a poll worker to make sure your vote is counted. You may be directed to another polling place or given a provisional ballot.
- 2 I.D.—Don't Go Without It** You may need to show I.D. To be safe, bring your driver's license, or a paycheck, utility bill or government document that includes your name and street address.
- 3 Writing on the Wall** Look at the signs at the polling place for directions on how to use the voting machines, a list of your voting rights, and instructions for filing a complaint if your rights have been violated.
- 4 When in Doubt—Ask** Poll workers are there to help you. They'll show you how to work the machines and give you a provisional ballot if you need one. If you're at the wrong polling place, they should tell you how to get to the right one.
- 5 In and Out** You probably won't have to wait too long. But even if the line is long, don't leave without voting. The outcome of this election will be important!

The centerpiece of this campaign is an ambitious travel and media schedule for LWV President Kay J. Maxwell. Maxwell has been on the road since Labor Day, visiting towns and cities in Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin and Ohio. Yet to come, Maxwell plans to visit Florida and Missouri, and to bring this message to national audiences. LWVUS has been working with many state and local Leagues to deliver this important voter education message to the media and the public.

"The League developed the *5 Things* campaign to help lower the perceived barriers to voting and provide voters with information that will protect their votes," Maxwell said. Taking this message directly to the voters and the media has helped to raise public awareness about what voters should expect to encounter on Election Day. In the end, the League hopes to create positive expectations and encourage people to participate and vote.

The *5 Things* arms voters with the information they need to be confident that they can vote and can walk away from their polling place knowing that their vote counts. For example, voters who are registered to vote and do not appear on the voter registration list at the polls should not panic. They should get help from a poll worker,

who should either direct the voter to the correct polling location or give the voter a provisional ballot. The *5 Things* also suggests that voters bring an I.D. just in case they need it. HAVA requires first-time mail-in registrants to provide election officials with identification, and some states will be asking all voters to prove their identity.

Many voters will find some different things at the polling place this year, and these differences will make some feel like first-time voters. The public needs to be educated about what changes they can and should expect. The League's *5 Things* give voters the knowledge to look out for themselves and, just as importantly, their votes on Election Day.

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### VOTER LINKS

- [www.dnet.org](http://www.dnet.org) for candidate information
- [www.lwv.org/voter](http://www.lwv.org/voter) for more information