

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF TULARE COUNTY

“... To promote informed citizen participation ...”

THE VOTER

NOVEMBER 2015

LWVTC Calendar

2015

November 3 Election Day
In Tulare County, only
Richgrove has a ballot this
November.

November 12 9:30 am
Board meeting at Faye
Zeeb's home

NOVEMBER 17 Noon
Unit meeting at Sue Sa's:
Program: Money in Politics
study continues (see p. 2);
Reserve by Nov. 13

November 18 7:00 pm
Movie Night: *Mr. Smith Goes
to Washington* (see p. 5)

December 10 9:30 am
Board meeting at Dale
Simmons's home

DECEMBER 15 Noon
Unit meeting at Sue Sa's:
Holiday Fest and Program:
more Money in Politics;
Reserve by Dec. 11

2016

January 14 9:30 am
Board meeting at Dale
Simmons's home

JANUARY 19 Noon
Unit meeting at Sue Sa's:
Holiday Fest and Program:
more Money in Politics;
Reserve by Jan. 15.

**Don't forget to make your
Lunch Reservations**

Contact: **Mary Ann Bringhurst**
on or before Fri. **November 13**
by e-mail
newellgb@hotmail.com
or phone (732-1251).

DUES REMINDER

By Mary Ann Bringhurst

Membership Chair Jeanine Blessing will be collecting dues at the Unit meeting on November 17, or checks can be mailed to the Tulare League of Women Voters at:
PO Box 3011
Visalia, Ca. 93278

A single membership for 2016 is \$65 and a household membership is \$90. This increase is due to the national LWVUS increasing its dues by \$1 and the California League increasing its by \$5 since 2014.

October Program Recap

MONEY IN POLITICS, PART I

By Terry Cornelius

The 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. In October, we introduced the LWV national study on Money in Politics (MiP).

The current League position on MiP states that methods of financing political campaigns should:

- (1) ensure the public's right to know,
- (2) combat corruption and undue influence,
- (3) enable candidates to compete more equitably, and
- (4) allow maximum citizen participation in the political process.

That position is being updated so the League can take public stands on the First Amendment interests of candidates and donors.

LWVTC members Katherine Singh, Newell Bringhurst, and Terry Cornelius laid a foundation for our study. To put it in context, the major Supreme Court decisions on campaign finance were reviewed. In its 1976 landmark *Buckley v. Valeo* decision, a unanimous Supreme Court ruled that the First Amendment rights of candidates to get their messages to the public could not be curtailed by limits on their spending. But the

Court said that limits on donations to candidates can be limited in order to prevent corruption or the appearance of corruption. The Court also said that truly independent spending in elections could not be curtailed. But if any

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Editorial Musings

**CAMPAIGNS ARE
BIG BUSINESS**

“I believe we’re out of time, the time necessary to mount a winning campaign for the nomination.” This was Joe Biden’s assessment on October 21, 13 months before the presidential election. *Thirteen months!*

Also in the news last month was Canada’s national election, the culmination of an 11-week campaign season—the longest in it’s history. In the past, the time from the dissolution of Parliament to the election has been as short as 35 days.

Canadian law also restricts how much money can be spent by a party in each campaign season. Because this one was so “long,” each party was allowed equivalent to \$36 million...to cover *all* it’s candidates.

Compare this to the \$1 billion spent by each of the two major parties in our 2012 presidential campaign alone.

True, differences between the parliamentary system and ours make a one- to two-month campaign impossible here. For one thing, we have primaries—the administration of which is generously paid for by taxpayers, even though they are essentially party proceedings (an issue I will set aside for now).

For another, Congress is “dissolved” on a predictable schedule, every two years. And we have a president elected every four years, rather than a prime minister who can change with each new legislative election. That very predictability fosters longer campaigns. Longer campaigns are more expensive.

But this does not explain why U.S. campaigns for one office—the presidency—chew through more than twice as much money in an average month than our northern neighbor’s campaigns use for all national offices combined.

What bothers me most is that campaign financing is rising hyperbolically in recent years. (See graph on p. 7.) While we voters wring our hands in dismay about the effects of money on our democracy, an entire industry is swelling to absorb these lucrative billions. Pollsters, telemarketers, strategists, image gurus, spin doctors, PR firms, TV stations, direct mailers, event planners, swag manufacturers, etc. are coming to expect these large sums to be up for grabs. The longer current trends prevail, the more dependent such businesses become on these huge revenue streams. If and when the electorate decides to curb the spree, it will not be easy to campaign against the vested interests of the campaign industry.

Money in Politics, Part II
*“What Is Smart
Campaign Finance Reform?”*

Continuing our LWV Study of Money in Politics, the November presentation will focus on ideas for elements of smart campaign finance:

- ★ Bipartisan legislation
- ★ Specific goals — Know what you are looking for.
- ★ Reevaluate current law — What are the possibilities?
- ★ Some differences between California and Federal campaign finance laws and regulations
- ★ Can public campaign financing be effective in a *Citizen’s United World?*

The presentation aims to provide some things to think about before deciding what actions to support in terms of campaign finance reform. Two people who have put a lot of thought into this issue will flesh



out these concepts for us. Peter Weber (LEFT) and Phillip Ung (P. 6) are both from California Forward, a bipartisan nonprofit think tank launched in 2008 with a vision for “governance reforms to break the partisan gridlock, fortify fiscal management, and rebuild the relationship among the state and local governments—as prerequisites to better outcomes.”

Peter Weber’s Business career includes the top positions at Teknowledge, Inc. (AI software) and Riverbend International (agribusiness), and vice-president of FMC Corporation (chemicals).

In his retirement, this Fresno resident’s interests have turned to governance issues at the city, Valley and state levels. Toward this, he serves as co-chair of California Forward where, among other things, he authored a policy paper on “Growing California’s Regional Economies: An Economic Growth Strategy for the State of California.” **See SPEAKERS p. 6**

THE VOTER

Monthly newsletter of the
League of Women Voters
of Tulare County

P.O. Box 3011
Visalia, CA 93278

<http://tularecounty.ca.lwvnet.org>

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|-------------------|------------------|----------|
| President: | Denise Nelson | 627-1306 |
| Membership Chair: | Jeanine Blessing | 635-4456 |
| Editor: | Maile Melkonian | 802-3315 |

OCTOBER from p. 1

spending was coordinated with a candidate, then it counted as a contribution to the candidate which could be limited. This structure—of limits on donations but no limits on spending—has governed campaign finance ever since.

In a 1990 Supreme Court case known as “*Austin*,” Justice Thurgood Marshall, writing for a 6 to 3 majority, recognized a state’s compelling interest in combating a “different type of corruption in the political arena: the corrosive and distorting effects of immense aggregations of wealth that are accumulated with the help of the corporate form and that have little or no correlation to the public’s support for the corporation’s political ideas.” This was indeed a “different type of corruption” than simple quid-pro-quo corruption which focuses on the candidates and elected officials.

Austin recognized the distorting effect of big money on elections and the political system itself.

In *Citizens United v. FEC*, decided in 2010, a 5 to 4 Supreme Court majority held that all forms of corporations—including nonprofits, trade associations and for-profit multinational corporations, as well as labor unions—have a First Amendment free speech right to make independent campaign expenditures, just as individuals do. The majority emphasized its view that free speech rights do not depend on the identity of the speaker, whether corporate or individual, and took the view that independent expenditures do not corrupt political candidates or elected officials. Because independent monies are defined as those not coordinated with any candidate or political party, the Court said, they cannot corrupt.

The *Citizens United* decision effectively overturned the *Tillman Act*, which had prevented direct corporate and union spending in elections since 1907. It also overturned the *Austin* decision and narrowly defined the type of corruption—quid pro quo—that could justify limits on the First Amendment.

In 2014, the Supreme Court reached a 5-4 decision in *McCutcheon v. FEC*. The split among the justices was the same as that in *Citizens United*. Mr. McCutcheon, an Alabama businessman, gave the maximum campaign contribution to many candidates and to state and national political party committees, but was prevented from giving more by the FECA’s overall limitation on individual contributions. The Court held that the overall limitation infringed on his free speech rights, and found no quid pro quo with a particular candidate. Consequently, a donor can legally give the

maximum amount to each and every candidate and state and national political party committee, which could amount to millions of dollars. *McCutcheon* is not about independent expenditures, but refers to direct contributions to candidates.

As the Court has increasingly used the First Amendment as a sword against campaign finance regulation—instead of as a shield protecting the voices of all citizens in our democracy—the question of money and speech has become even more contentious.

What can states do? Many pro-good-government organizations, including the League, support publicly-funded elections as one of the most effective ways to offset the influence of big money donors and diversify the candidate pool. New York City and Connecticut have model systems in place. Jurisdictions in

Maryland, and states like Maine, North Carolina, Illinois and New York State are fighting to keep, strengthen or enact public funding systems. Clean election reforms such as stronger disclosure, anti-

coordination and ethics rules are also needed to restore transparency and reduce the role of big money. In response to *Citizens United*, California, Delaware, Hawaii, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, North Carolina and Vermont have updated and expanded their disclosure regulations and enforcement.

Other advocates are pushing for a constitutional amendment. As of January 2015, 16 state legislatures have passed bills calling on Congress to pass amendments addressing MiP and corporate personhood, with similar resolutions pending in 16 other states.

“This Court now concludes that independent expenditures, including those made by corporations, do not give rise to corruption or the appearance of corruption.”
— Supreme Court Justice Anthony Kennedy

Questions we will be asked to reach consensus on at the conclusion of the study (in January) are:

- ★ What should be the goals and purposes of campaign finance reform?
- ★ What would be considered corrupt in terms of the relationship of candidate/ office holder and donors?
- ★ What should be allowed in terms of spending by individuals, PACs, for-profits, nonprofits, trade associates, labor unions, political parties, etc.?
- ★ Should spending to influence an election by the press, news media and other communications be limited?
- ★ Should public funding be supported as a viable option?
- ★ How should such regulations be administered and enforced?

What can you do right now? Make use of the League’s illuminating online resources on the topic: <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/lwvus-money-politics-mip-review-meetings-box-education-resources-and-sugges> . ★

Voter Services Report

LWVTC REGISTERS HIGH SCHOOL SENIORS ON 7 CAMPUSES

BY TERRY CORNELIUS

By the end of October, we provided the opportunity for eligible students to register to vote at seven high schools: El Diamante, Redwood, Golden West, Mt. Whitney, VTEC, VCIS, and Tulare Western. In some schools we met with the civics classes, and in others we “manned” a table on campus.

When in the civics classes, we provide an overview of the right to

vote in our country, voting practices in other countries, and how just one vote can make a big difference in the course of history. To motivate students to register and vote, we explain how decisions made at the federal, state, and local levels impact their lives. Examples include driving age, funding for school activities and infrastructure, and tax added to their hamburger at the local fast food place. So that they can be informed voters, we show them how to access the resources available at the Secretary of State website—including information on ballot measures, political parties, and how to find their own representatives. We also share contact information about our local Tulare County Election Office so that students can contact them about their registration or other issues. Lastly we demonstrate the online voter registration process and invite eligible students to register online or with the paper form.

When we “man” a table on the school grounds, we come equipped with registration forms, information on resources available to them, the



Dale Simmons at Redwood H.S.

AN INVITATION

If you would like to know more about this project and how you can be a part of it, contact Terry at terrymcs@sbcglobal.net.

Beside voter reg, volunteers can work on our Smart Voter project, candidate forums, and speaker bureau as we move into the primary and general elections.

Details to come.

There will be much to do in advance of the 2016 Elections!

online registration process, and provide paper forms for eligible students to register to vote. We sometimes get our presence announced in the daily school bulletin.

MANY THANKS to all those who helped to make this a successful high school voter registration season!!! It is definitely a TEAM effort!

NEW MEMBERS WELCOMED AT RECEPTION

BY MARY LOU BURBERY

With umbrellas unfurled against a sudden downpour, four newcomers arrived at the home of Mary Lou Burbery on Oct 15—Sharon Bentley, Carol Glass, Cathy Hall and Velvet Gaston. President Denise Nelson, Terry Cornelius and Maile Melkonian also welcomed them, and learned of their interest in the League. For example, Cathy, a former nurse, wanted to investigate LWV, as she had been very active in state-level P.T.A. in the past. Others were introduced by word of mouth from friends who are active in League. Sharon and Carol are retired teachers who are active in A.A.U.W. And Velvet’s engineering career brought her to Visalia only a year ago. These thoughtful, sharp women are welcome additions to our membership.

Over wine and tasty snacks, we discussed the structure of League and its activities nationally and statewide. Terry, our Voter Service Chair, explained the varied aspects of her office. “Registering voters, young and old, is a very important activity of the League,” she explained.

“We go into the high schools, usually a civics or government class, and teach the students about the importance of voting; then helped them to register online. We also offer Candidates’ Forums to the public, which gives citizens an opportunity to hear the candidates and to ask them questions.”

Denise described how an issue study works, and how our local input can contribute to a state or national study. Even though our local group is small, we are part of a network of League units all over the state and country. Working on a specific study, such as Money in Politics, makes us a part of Leagues nationwide. This gives us a voice, even in Tulare County.

The Voter editor Maile pointed out that the newsletter is designed to keep members informed of League activities, provide background materials for programs, and communicate “housekeeping” details.

This gathering helped us to know one another better, and to know League better. We hope to do it again.

WATER JUSTICE CELEBRATION

RIGHT: C.W.C. Co-Director Susana De Anda (on stage) reports on the water access and quality situation in Tulare Co.'s rural communities, as Assemblyman Devon Mathis (lower right) and others listen.



The Community Water Center took time to review a year of accomplishments, on October 27 at 210 Cafe. LWVTC was an event sponsor.

BELOW: LWVTC members Maile Melkonian, Ed Bergtholdt and Mary Lou Burbery enjoy the company of Community for a Better Alpaugh activists Denise Kadara, Sandra Flores and Michelle Hunter, as well as Gov. Brown's Dep. Legislative Secretary Martha Guzman-Aceves.



ABOVE: Guzman-Aceves (right) lauds the work of (from left) Farmersville Mayor Gregorio Gomez, Sultana water district board member Michael Prado, David Mendez and Paul Boyer of Self-Help Enterprises, and C.W.C.'s Co-Directors Laurel Firestone and De Anda. Their projects include bottled water programs, advocating for the installation of water meters community-wide, repairing inadequate water mains, distributing water tanks to people cut off from supplies, and more. "Tulare Co. is by far the most affected, with 2,200 dry wells so far," according to Mendez.



BELOW: Mariachi helps make the event very festive.



MOVIE NIGHT !

As the holidays approach, we're screening a black-and-white classic starring Jimmy Stewart (no, not *It's a Wonderful Life*).

The death of a senator (from a nameless state) results in the naive but well meaning Mr. Smith being chosen by a cynical governor to act as a safe placeholder till the next election. Intrigue, back-room deals, filibustering and political horse trading ensue. Even dam building features cannily in the plot.

The film helps us understand how public opinion is manipulated, reputations are buoyed or destroyed to serve nefarious aims, and power—not always elected—is wielded. Quite controversial at the time (1939), at least one congressman—a senator from Montana—stormed out of a theater in protest of the depiction of corruption on the screen.

Considered one of director Frank Capra's most important, this film garnered 11 Oscar nominations, winning best screenplay for the political comedy-drama. On the 50th anniversary of its release, *Mr. Smith* was included in the Library of Congress National Film Registry for being "culturally, historically or aesthetically significant."

Does Mr. Smith succeed in D.C.? Come find out!

RT: 129 minutes.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington

Wednesday, **November 18, 7:00 pm**

At the home of Dale Simmons
1501 S. Mountain St., Visalia
 (corner Royal Oaks, east of County Center)

SPEAKERS from p. 2 Weber has been an advisor to Fresno mayors Alan Autry and Ashley Swearingin. As the founder of the Fresno Bridge Academy, he worked to transition people from public assistance to self-reliance. Currently he is active in the California Water Fix Coalition, and is on The President's Commission on the Future of Agriculture, at Fresno State.

He has also served on the boards of the California Partnership for the San Joaquin Valley, the Fresno Regional Jobs Initiative, Fresno Citizen Corp., the Fresno Business Council, Fresno Citizens for Good Government, Friends of the San Joaquin Valley, the Lyles Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship, the Stanford Institute for Manufacturing Innovation, the San Jose Museum of Art and the Council on the Americas.

A native of Peru, Weber received a degree in industrial engineering from U.C. Berkeley, and is a graduate of the Executive Program at the Stanford University Business School.



Phillip Ung—who will be joining us remotely via webcast—is director of public affairs at California Forward. His experience leading to this position includes Common Cause, where he was a policy advocate against corruption and the undue influence of money in politics.

Ung developed and led successful campaigns to pass legislation related to voting rights, money in politics, and ethics in government—one of which uncovered California's largest money laundering scheme. He was also active on the "Yes on Proposition 28" (term limits) and "No on Proposition 32" (regarding campaign contributions) movements.

Ung has been a lobbyist for Conservation Strategy Group, a green technology consulting firm, and served as legislative aide to state assemblyman Curren Price, Jr.

Previously, his work focused on civil rights—in public affairs for the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CalCASA), and as a policy advisor to the Sex Offender Management Board during the implementation of "Chelsea's Law."

He is a second-generation American, and holds bachelor's degrees in history and government from California State University, Sacramento.

The insights provided by these seasoned professionals should help us considerably as we ponder the complexities of money in politics, especially regarding the consensus questions (box p. 3) we'll be answering at our January Unit meeting. ★

Elections in the News

This item is excerpted from an article that can be read in full at the [Contra Costa Times](#).

GOV. JERRY BROWN SIGNS "MOTOR VOTER" LAW

By Jessica Calefati October 10, 2015

SACRAMENTO — Legislation Gov. Jerry Brown signed [on Oct. 10] requires California drivers who are eligible to vote to be signed up automatically when they get a new license—a dramatic expansion of voting rights that could grow the state's voter rolls by millions of people.

When Assembly Bill 1461 takes effect in January, California will become the second state in the nation to adopt an automatic voter registration system at a time when many states are restricting their citizens' right to vote. Oregon enacted a similar law earlier this year.

Secretary of State Alex Padilla first promised to expand access to the polls last year as a candidate on the campaign trail. He sponsored the legislation and applauded Brown for taking swift action to help the 6.6 million Californians who are eligible but not yet registered to vote, noting that citizens need not "opt-in" to other fundamental rights such as free speech or due process. ...

Under the legislation, ... Californians who are legal residents and who visit the DMV to apply for, renew or change the address on a driver license would be registered to vote by the Secretary of State's Office.

Voters would still retain the right to cancel their registration or change their party affiliation at any time. The new law also would continue to protect those covered by existing confidentiality policies, such as victims of domestic violence, sexual assault and stalking.

Republican lawmakers voted against the measure, but its only other opponent was the American Civil Liberties Union. Since California's DMV now issues driver's licenses to immigrants who are living in the country illegally, the group fears those drivers will be registered to vote mistakenly, risking their ability to stay in the country. State and federal laws strictly forbid illegal immigrants from voting. ... ★

CITIZENFOUR

By Dale Simmons

Our October Movie Night offering, *CitizenFour*, is largely a series of filmed interviews where Edward Snowden explains his unauthorized release of classified information revealing many global surveillance programs. These programs were run by the United States National Security Agency (NSA) and the “Five Eyes” (an intelligence alliance composed of Australia, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and the United States) with the cooperation of telecommunication companies and European governments.

As American director/producer Laura Poitras was working on a film about monitoring programs in the U.S. after the September 11, 2001, terrorist attacks, she was mysteriously contacted in January 2013 via an encrypted email signed “Citizen Four.” Snowden—alias Citizen Four—said he had important information to share, but needed to meet secretly

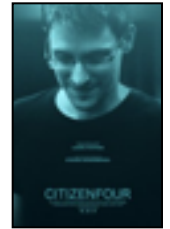
In May 2013, he left his government-contract job in Hawaii, flew to Hong Kong, and stayed in a hotel room where he was interviewed over several days in early June 2013 by Poitras and fellow journalists Glenn Greenwald and Ewen MacAskill. Snowden revealed

many classified documents to them, and his story went international through publication in *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, *Der Spiegel* and *The New York Times*. His identity was made public on June 9, 2013, at his request after much thought.

Later in June, the U.S. Department of Justice unsealed charges against Snowden of two counts of violating the Espionage Act and theft of government property. Snowden tried to fly to Cuba but was stuck in Moscow after his U.S. passport was cancelled. The Russian government granted him asylum for one year. His girlfriend joins him there.

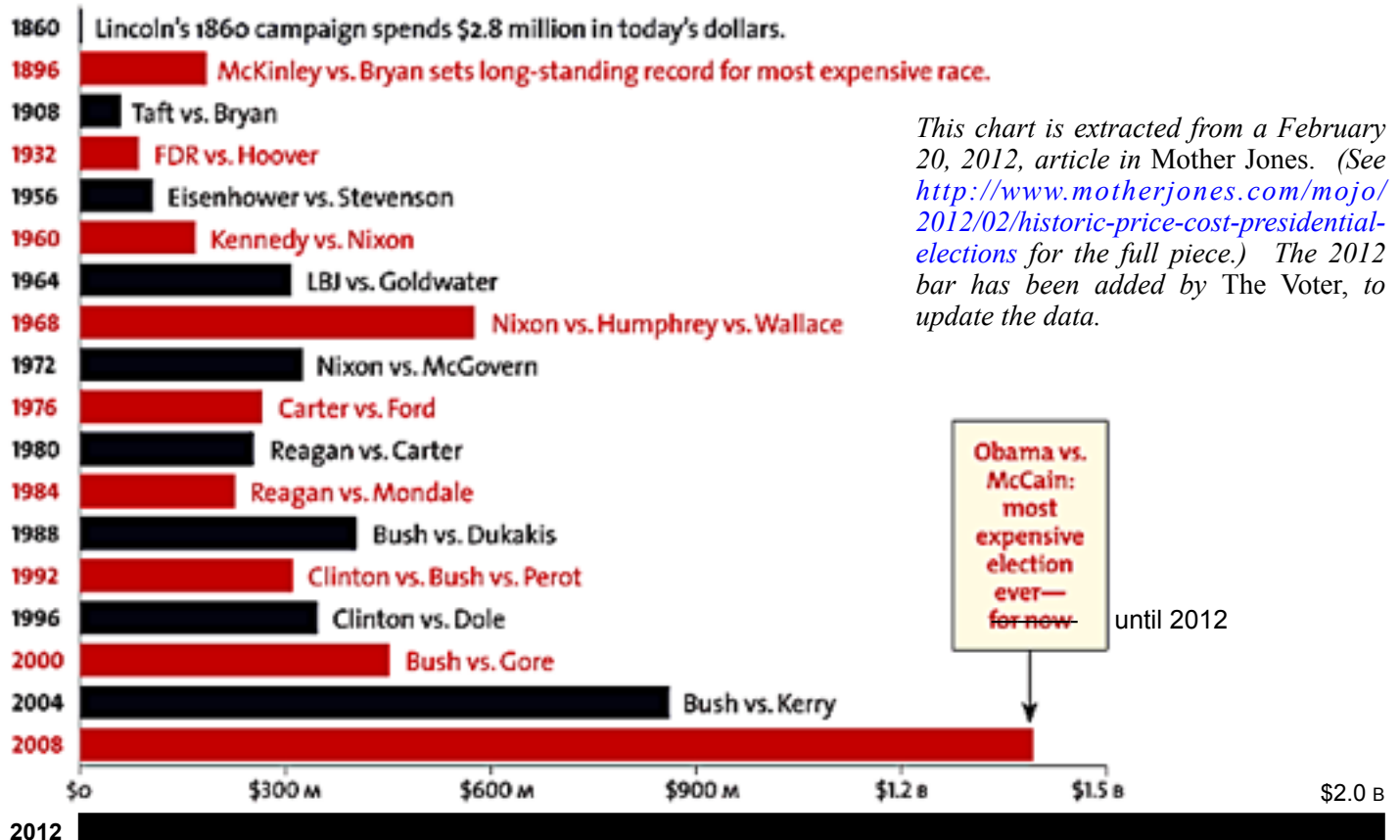
The film offers an unfiltered account of Snowden’s motivations. The last scenes take place in Russia, where current events in the field of U.S. intelligence are shared between Snowden, Greenwald and Poitras. On camera, the words are written on paper, read and then destroyed.

CitizenFour has received at least 16 film awards, including the 2015 Academy Award for Best Documentary.



The Crazy Cost of Becoming President, From Lincoln to Obama

PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN COSTS (IN 2011 DOLLARS)



League of Women Voters of Tulare County
P.O. Box 3011
Visalia, CA 93278



Be an engaged citizen! *Join . . .*

**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF TULARE COUNTY**

The League is a nonpartisan, nonprofit organization that encourages informed and active participation in government through education and advocacy. Members include women and men of every age, race, background and political belief. The more than 1,200 local Leagues work to promote citizen action on local, state and national issues.

Why the League ?

Because you care about the future of America. You recognize that your rights as a citizen come with a responsibility to participate fully in the democratic process. As a member you can:

- Stay informed about the issues that concern you the most,
- Make your views heard by adding your voice to ours
- Sharpen your skills for effective leadership, networking and public outreach.

Annual membership dues are \$65.00 for individuals and \$90.00 for households. Dues and donations to the League are not deductible as charitable contributions for tax purposes.

Visitors are welcome to our regular meetings, at noon every third Tuesday of the month—September through June—at The Clubhouse, 699 W. Center St. in Visalia.