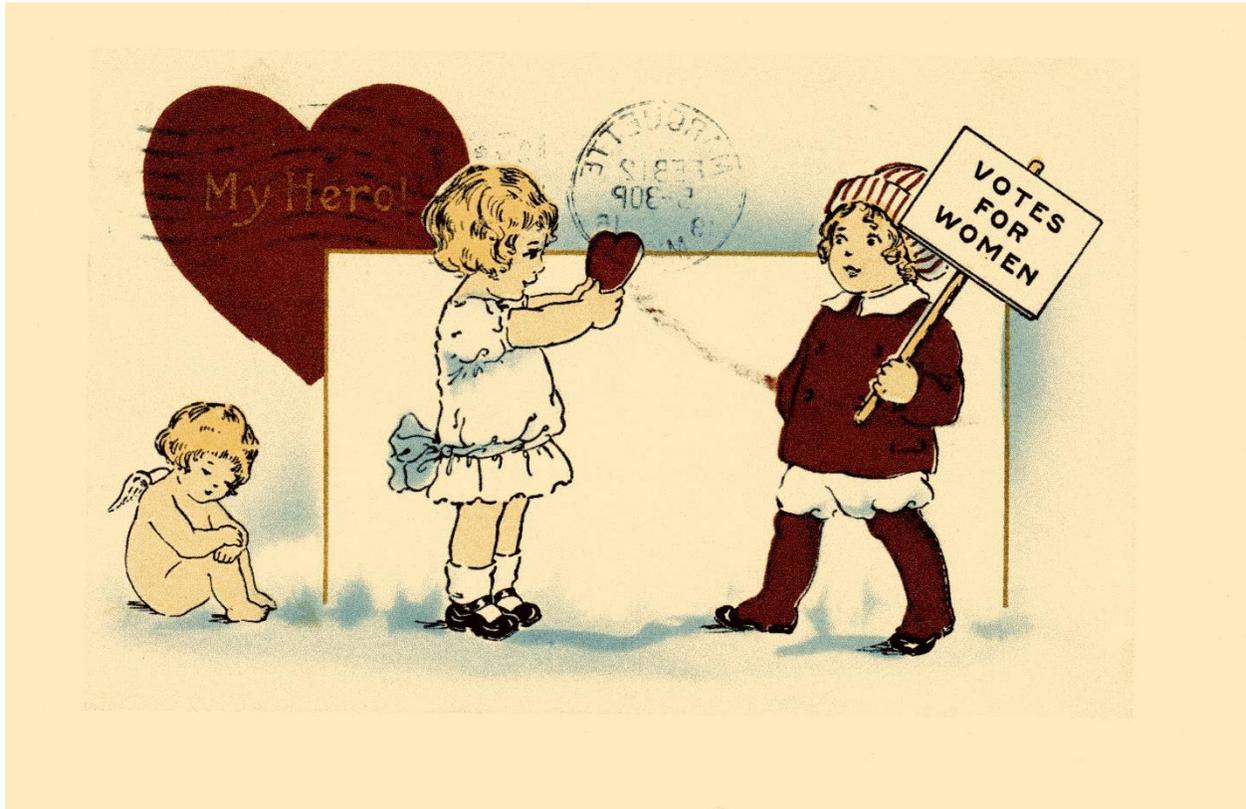


Toni Saldivar. "The League Looks at Valentine's Day and the Ohio 2016 Primary."



In 1910, American suffragists began using Valentine's Day to promote their political goal of "Votes for Women." The National American Woman Suffrage Association created and circulated suffrage Valentines that showed women favorably inclined toward suitors who respected their demand for the vote.

In 1920, on Valentine's Day, five months before the ratification of the 19th Amendment established women's constitutional right to vote, the National American Woman Suffrage Association, led by Carrie Chapman Catt, gathered in Chicago to found the League of Women Voters of the United States. Its mission: "to make democracy work" through voter education for all citizens. Since then, the League of Women Voters at the national, state and local levels has worked to provide all voters with non-partisan information to help them exercise and protect this hard-won right.

Women in our nation had a seventy-two-year political struggle to secure the vote. African Americans, though freed from slavery in 1863, had more than one hundred years of disenfranchisement after the Civil War because of state laws designed to keep them from voting. Native Americans, who won the constitutional right to vote in 1924, faced similar barriers to exercising their rights. Civil Rights activism and federal legislation of the 1960s finally began bringing African Americans and other disenfranchised citizens into the nation's democratic process through the power of the vote.

All Ohio voters – all citizens registered to vote, regardless of race, gender, religion or country of origin – can make their voices heard by going to the polls on March 15, the date of the Ohio Presidential Primary. On the primary ballot, voters will see the names of candidates seeking to become President of the United States, but voters casting their ballot for the candidate of their choice will in fact be voting for delegates who have been selected in party caucuses in each Ohio voting district. These delegates go to the national convention of their party pledged to represent fairly the presidential preference of voters in their voting districts. This preference becomes clear after primary votes are counted and made public.

Voting in the primary is crucial to the democratic selection process for each party's nominee for President of the United States. That nominee selection will occur when delegates vote at the national convention of their party. The Republican Convention will be held in Cleveland, Ohio, July 18–21; and the Democratic national convention, in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, July 25–28. After the conventions, the presidential campaign intensifies as each party promotes its choice. Through the primaries and the subsequent general election on Tuesday, November 8, citizens in every state decide who will become the next President of the United States.

Usually, less than 25% of eligible voters in Ohio go to the polls during the primaries. It is shocking that three-fourths of the electorate would give up their right to vote in this part of the presidential election process. Perhaps media coverage of the recent Iowa caucus and the New Hampshire primary has heightened public awareness of the importance of primary elections. As one leading woman voter put it, "Voting isn't the most we can do, but it is the least. To have a democracy, you have to want one." We have to want it, and we have to make it work by becoming informed, involved and active voters. It takes effort. It takes mind and heart.

For information on voting in Ohio in 2016 – including how to register to vote and how to vote early or absentee – go to The League of Women Voters [VOTE411](#) website. U.S. citizens exercise their right to vote as an individual, voluntary act of participation on our democracy. If you are a citizen of the United States at least 18 years old and have not yet registered to vote, now is the time to do so. You may register by mail using the [voter registration form](#) on the website of the Ohio Secretary of State or you may register in person at designated locations including the Department of Motor Vehicles. For more information on how and where to register, contact the Butler County Board of Elections at (513) 887-3700 or go to its [website](#).