Strategic Plan
2017-2020
For more than four decades, LCV, in close collaboration with state LCVs, has shifted elected officials’ political calculus — demonstrating that there are benefits to voting to protect the environment and consequences for not doing so. We influence the political process—the battleground on which most environmental issues are won or lost. We do this through advocacy, accountability, and elections, which means our expert staff work hand-in-hand with communities across the nation to reach lawmakers at all levels of government. Together, we are turning environmental values into lasting policy priorities.
Dear Friends,

Elections have always mattered, now we know just how much some matter more than others. After years of making progress on key environmental issues, climate change in particular, the national 2016 elections dealt the environmental movement a devastating blow. Everything in which we believe has been put at risk.

The next four years will be pivotal for the future of this planet. We face a president and Congress that pose the most serious threat we’ve seen to the very foundations of our democracy and our core values, including the notion that everyone has a right to a clean, safe, and healthy environment.

These dangerous political challenges arise precisely as scientists are deeply alarmed about the accelerating pace of climate change. We have already irreversibly altered the climate through human activity and now face the prospect of future generations inheriting a planet that bears little resemblance to the one we know. Antarctica’s ice sheets are melting at a dangerously accelerated pace. And catastrophic impacts to ecosystems like Great Barrier Reef continue. Here at home, communities already face the real and costly impacts of polluting energy sources from extreme weather to asthma.

The League of Conservation Voters (LCV) and our state league partners have a critical role in meeting the challenge of this moment. LCV is peerless in our work to elect environmental champions, defeat opponents, and hold politicians accountable once they are in office. We are the leading environmental organization with the infrastructure and track-record to win elections and hold elected officials accountable when in office, both federally and in the states. We can, and must rise to the occasion.

To chart the path forward in this Trump era, LCV spent the first half of 2017 engaged in a strategic planning process that questioned our assumptions, took a hard look at our strengths and weaknesses, and evaluated priorities for success in this new political reality. The process included significant input from hundreds of thought leaders, funding partners, Climate Victory Council members, business allies, pollsters, researchers, and senior policy makers across the country. A big thanks to all who generously made time to participate in this important effort.

Even in the face of increasing political volatility and challenges, we found tremendous hope for the future. The 2016 elections unleashed an unprecedented grassroots response with record numbers of people paying close attention to the legislative process, showing up in federal and state legislative offices across the country, and demanding change. We’ve seen a doubling of activists signing up for updates and alerts, thousands of strong candidates exploring running for office, and state leaders working across party lines to push forward climate and clean energy laws. The vast majority of the public is with us and, more than ever, are ready to join our cause. We know that we can still win.

Yet, the path forward will not be easy. This already difficult work will occur against a backdrop of an increasingly polarized electorate; unprecedented public mistrust in politicians, the media, and many institutions; and a fractured media environment, abetted by the rise of “fake news” and filter bubbles that make it more and more difficult to deliver a credible message. Perhaps most daunting is the unprecedented assault on voting rights as many states are enacting draconian restrictions to disenfranchise people of color, young voters and generally undermine confidence in our democratic process.

Much more is demanded of all of us in this critical moment if we are to emerge from these four years more powerful, more united, and positioned to win in the decade ahead. We hope you will join with us in making this vision a reality.

Onward,

Gene Karpinski
President | League of Conservation Voters

Carol Browner
Board Chair | League of Conservation Voters
Vision

Over the next four years we will build a more powerful, unified, and diverse movement that galvanizes our democracy, secures pro-environment majorities at all levels of government, and makes meaningful progress on clean energy and climate change at state and local levels, all while strongly resisting environmental rollbacks by President Trump and Congress.
New Strategies and Approaches

We must stretch as an organization to scale-up efforts that are working, retool and innovate where we have fallen short, and expand our efforts by investing in new strategies and programs. Only by doing so can we bring about the political change this planet urgently needs. This means LCV will continue to invest heavily in advocacy, accountability and elections, will continue exploring ways to make that work more effective, and will also explore new approaches to our work by:

- **Investing more in the states.** Investing in state-level work has long been a valued component of what makes LCV unique and effective, and is now more important than ever. We will strike a new balance between federal and state work by striving to invest half of our resources in winning state-level policies and elections and strengthening the capacity of the state LCVs.

- **Broadening and strengthening our base for the long term.** Building a broad, active, and diverse movement will eventually and permanently shift the politics of our issues. We will expand the number of voters who are motivated and mobilized by the need to act on climate and, at the same time, win solutions for poor communities and communities of color who are most impacted by climate change and polluters’ abuses of power. These investments in base building and movement building will take time and are essential to our long-term success.

- **More deeply integrating state and federal strategies.** In the short term, LCV and the state LCVs are working to transition from simply being a network of organizations into a more cohesive conservation voter movement with national LCV more invested in state outcomes and the state LCVs more engaged in regional and federal fights.

- **Sustaining deeper investments in a few key states.** We intend to both broaden our work and maximize opportunities at all levels of government and in all corners of the country, while at the same time, focusing on long term, multi-faceted programs in 4-6 states that will most shape the national political landscape over the next four years. A new approach in this plan involves making multi-year investments with the goals of achieving major gains at the state and federal levels on both policies and politics.
Goals

While success in the coming years will be measured by short-term victories and how well the institution is positioned for the decade to come, the LCV Board has set four overarching goals to guide the organization through 2020:

1. **Defend landmark federal environmental protections and federal authority.**
   - Make environmental issues a critical component of why President Trump and key congressional opponents are unpopular.
   - Prevent any rollback of permanent authority, especially EPA’s ability to regulate carbon and other greenhouse emissions under the Clean Air Act.
   - Stop any significant changes to bedrock environmental laws that would limit our ability to make progress in the future.
   - Block legislative efforts to permanently weaken how federal regulations are crafted.
   - Partner with state LCVs to run significant accountability programs for 10 senators or representatives, so that we can demonstrate a measurable impact on the elected officials’ approval ratings and/or so that the elected officials’ voting records improve.
   - Ensure that by 2020 at least two-fifths of the Senate and one-fourth of the House are environmental champions who know LCV senior staff, regularly seek our input, and engage in proactive and public-facing activities.

2. **Build power in the states by advancing clean energy, climate, conservation and other policies and winning key elections.**
   - Secure at least six major wins on clean energy and other conservation issues at the state, local and regional level to build momentum towards national progress.
   - Increase by at least six the number of states with pro-environment governors and at least three states with pro-environment legislatures, particularly in states that will lead to redistricting and climate policy gains.
   - Strengthen the capacity and stability of state LCVs.
   - Increase the number of champions in states by building relationships and alliances with leaders of both parties on clean energy and other conservation issues.
   - Engage swing voters, including rural, white working class voters, particularly in states where they are key to winning.
   - Pilot a candidate recruitment and training program with an emphasis on women and people of color in 4 states that recruits 50 candidates by 2020.
3. Work to establish a pro-environment majority in Washington by 2020 with strong leadership on energy and climate

- Defend the Senate firewall in 2018 elections.
- Ensure more candidates are leading on our issues and elevating our issues in their races.
- Elect a pro-environment president.
- Ensure there are at least 50 pro-environment senators or 218 pro-environment members of the House by 2020.
- Raise $6 million for federal candidates through GiveGreen in 2018 and $7.2 million in 2020.
- Recruit 15,000 GreenRoots volunteers over the next two cycles in order strengthen our relationship with pro-environmental candidates and bolster their campaigns.
- Build a more powerful, cohesive, active and racially diverse organization and conservation voter movement

4. Build a strong grassroots base of support within and across states that can be activated to help advance environmental policies that are racially just and equitable.

- Invest in a robust effort to engage young voters in the democratic process, including by developing an integrated, packaged program targeting young voters (18-34 year olds) online and offline in 2-4 states.
- Develop new partnerships with groups led by people of color to strengthen our commitment to communities of color and continue to expand our work with Latinos.
- Recruit 50,000 LCV and state LCV volunteers to take action in key states to win federal, state and local issue advocacy and electoral campaigns, with a goal of 20,000 volunteers under 35 years old.
- Significantly expand LCV’s Online Network to 5,000,000 by 2020.
Strategic Imperatives

The six imperatives below are key to how LCV will go about executing this plan; they are a combination of key areas where we need improvement, as well as new initiatives, to ensure that we are more effective and successful moving forward.

1. Prioritizing Climate and Connecting to People’s Concerns. We must continue to be more strategic about how we talk about this problem and the suite of potential solutions, particularly with people who aren’t already deeply concerned about climate change. In particular, we will develop a more audience-specific communications strategy to build support for addressing the threat of climate change.

2. Enhancing Our Partnership with States LCVs. Maximizing legislative and political opportunities in the states will require an evolution in the relationship between national LCV and the state LCVs. As we go deep in some states, we will also work with all the state LCVs in a “go broad” strategy to expand our base and build power by maximizing shorter-term opportunities when they arise.

3. Increasing Commitment to Racial Justice and Equity. Current social structures significantly impact who bears the greatest burdens of environmental issues, and who is at the table crafting solutions. Low-income and communities of color disproportionately shoulder the burdens, while often being sidelined when decisions are made. It is imperative that we address these disparities by fostering a strong, participatory democracy and environmental movement rooted in racially, politically and geographically diverse communities.

4. Modernizing and Expanding Our Communications. The communications landscape is changing at a rapid pace and will continue to do so. Mastering the new ways in which people absorb and share information is vital to elevating the institution’s brand, connecting with voters, particularly younger ones, and helping to shape a narrative about our issues and our opponents.

5. Putting the Environment Ahead of Party. Enacting strong conservation laws often depends on support from both political parties. LCV is a non-partisan organization that will work with anyone who supports our issues. We will hold all candidates and elected officials to high standards, regardless of their party and continue to actively explore opportunities to work with officials in both parties, on camera and off, particularly at the state level where such opportunities are more plentiful.

6. Launching new strategies and programs. Integral to achieving the ambitious goals in the plan will be the need to launch a handful of new strategies and projects; not only do we have to improve on the work we have already been doing as an institution, but we need to find new ways to shape the outcomes we desire. Embedded in the plan are several strategies and programs including recruiting and training candidates, so we find and build more leaders on our issues; exploring new tools and tactics for undertaking effective accountability work; and growing our engagement with young voters, who are more concerned about climate change but also among the least engaged in politics. On camera and off, particularly at the state level where such opportunities are more plentiful.
What will it take to succeed?

Over the past four years, thanks to several transformative gifts from a handful of donors, and increased donations from tens of thousands of savvy political donors across the country, LCV and state LCVs raised more than $200 million dollars for our collective work. These resources have enabled us to significantly scale up our work and profoundly expand the political power of the environmental movement. These resources were also critical in building a stronger, more stable institution, and strengthening our infrastructure across the Conservation Voter Movement.

Nevertheless, at a moment when we simply cannot fail, we are not yet able to operate at the scale that it will take to win. To ensure we turn this vision into a reality, we must collectively raise at least $325 million by 2020. Success in the years ahead will require that those already investing in this work continue to do so and also double down where possible. We also need new savvy funders to invest in this work at every level.
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