



LWVUS Social Policy

Equality of Opportunity

Fiscal Policy

Health Care

Meeting Basic Human Needs

American values in U.S. Constitution

- Form a more perfect Union,
- **Establish Justice,**
- Insure domestic Tranquility,
- Provide for the common defense,
- **Promote the general Welfare,**
- **Secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity.....**

Declaration of Independence

- **All men are created equal**
- **Unalienable Rights - Life, Liberty, and pursuit of Happiness**
- **That to secure these rights, governments are instituted, deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed.**

LWVUS Social Policy

- **Secure equal rights. (1920-2010)**
- **Secure equal opportunity. (1969-2010)**
- **Promote social and economic justice. (1984)**
- **Promote the health and safety of all Americans. (1993-2006)**

LWVUS Fiscal Policy Position (1984)

- Adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an **equitable tax system that is progressive overall** and that relies primarily on a **broad-based income tax** with minimal tax preferences;
- Responsible deficit policies;
- Federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

LWVUS actions

1985-86

- Urged Congress to pass broad-based, fair and progressive legislation.
- Opposed value-added tax as regressive.
- Supported taxing capital gains as ordinary income.
- Urged removal of loopholes in the tax law.

More **LWVUS** actions

1990

- Urged reductions in defense spending
- Increase revenues through progressive taxes.
- Opposed reducing Social Security benefits to achieve deficit reduction.

1992

- Rebuild nation's infrastructure.

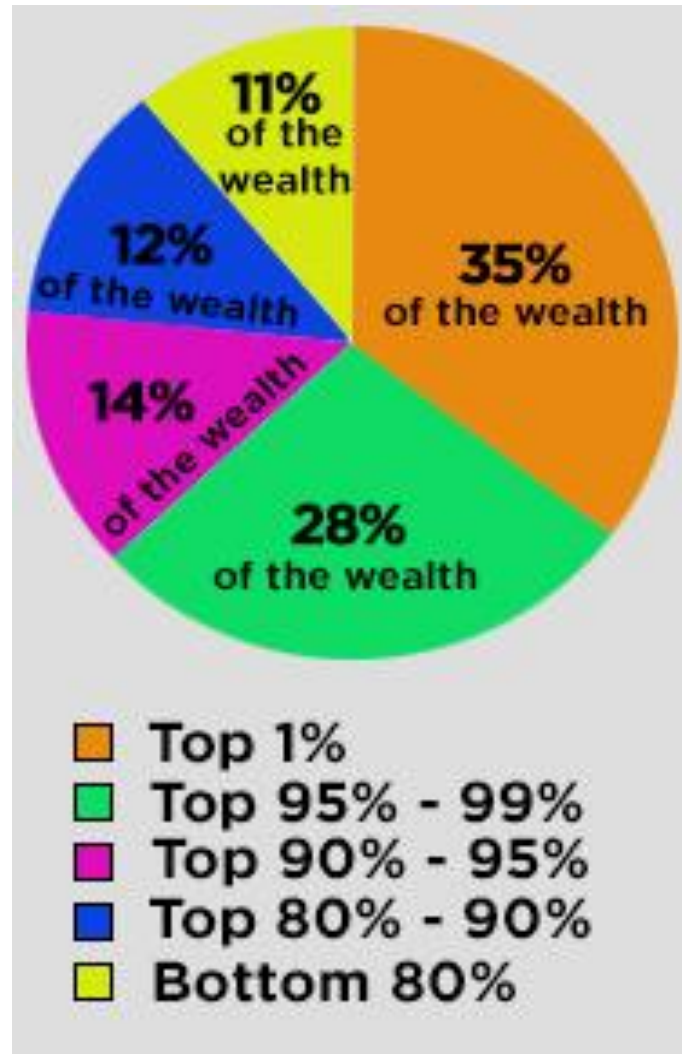
1998

- Use budget surplus to invest in education, health care, human needs and the environment.

2012

- Restore fair and progressive tax system to provide needed revenue and ensure social equity

Huge wealth gap – How did this happen?



“Redistribution of Wealth”

Jeff Kolnick & Doug Anderson, LWV The National Voter, 2009



Nations address distribution of wealth – 3 ways

1. Labor laws
2. Income taxes
3. Social programs

Labor Laws

- 1935 - US National Labor Relations Board (NLRB)
- 1938 - US Fair Labor Standards Act
- Unions push wages up for all.
- Middle class expands.

Income Taxes

1861 – Congress passes Revenue Act, including tax on personal income, to pay for Civil War costs. Repealed in 1871.

1913 – The 16th Amendment ratified; establishes individual income tax.

1940s – Higher rates help pay for WW II.

1951-1963 – Top rate on salaries 91%, but capital gains rate of 25% dropped effective rate on top earners from 49% to 27%.

Warren Buffet's Tax Expos 

- 2007 - Buffet said he paid 17.7% and his office staff paid on average no less than 39.2%.
- Disparity due to the low tax rates on dividends and capital gains
- 2013 - Capital gains tax 20% for individuals over \$400,000; married couples over \$450,000; for rest 15%.

Social Programs

- **1935** - Social Security established.
 - Rationale: Those with jobs bore some responsibility for the elderly and those who could not work or who lost a breadwinner.
 - Significant redistributive program for the elderly, and disability and survivor benefits, aid to dependent children, and unemployment benefits.

League Position - Entitlements

- Universal mandatory coverage:
 - Old-age insurance
 - Survivors insurance
 - Disability insurance
 - Health insurance

- Federal deficit reduction should not be achieved by reducing Social Security benefits.

Is the sky falling?



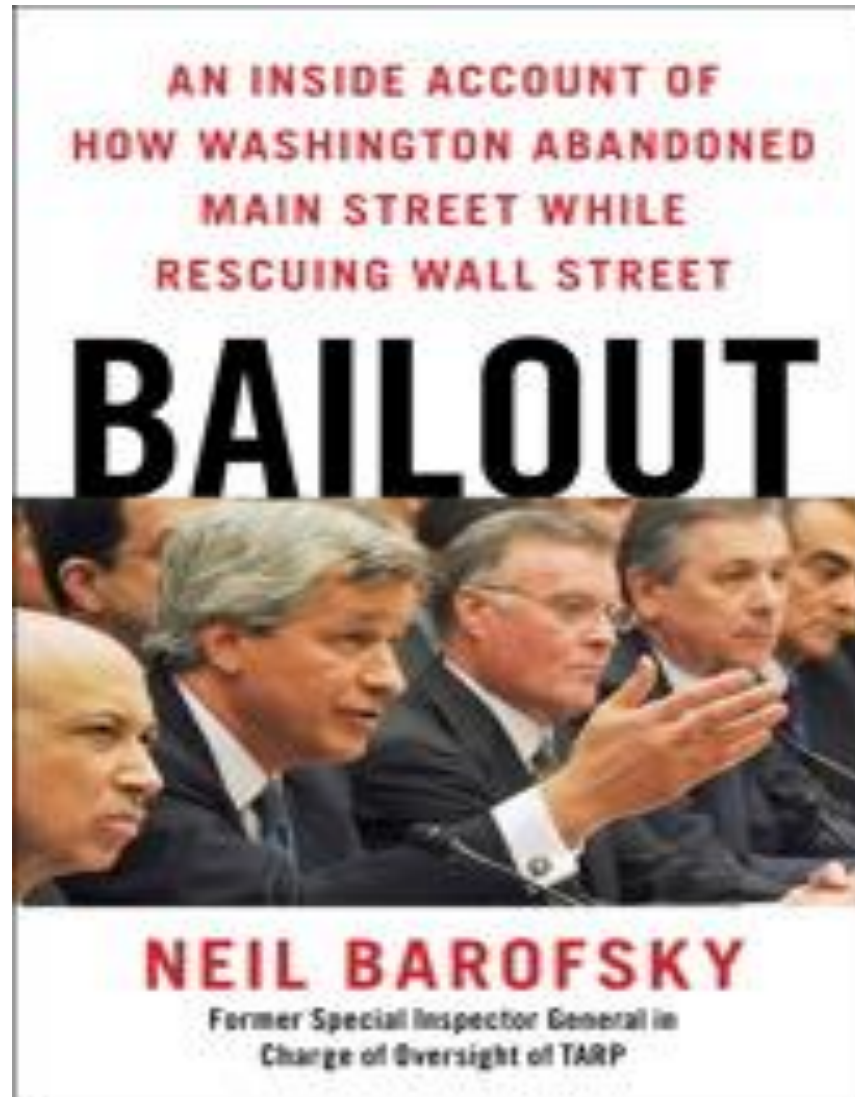
Status Report

- Wealth inequality is growing.
- Approximately one in six households had zero or negative net wealth. Economic Policy Institute, 2004
- Top 1% richest have 35% of wealth.
- Top 10% richest have 77% of wealth.
- Bottom 80% (most of us) have 11% of wealth
- Current unemployment rate at 7.7% - but worse for minorities and youth
- 1983 – 2009 Union membership decreased 40%.
- 2013 – NLRB under attack by courts & Congress

Status Report - continued

- High rates on student loans
- Education funding cut.
- 1980-2013 OSHA compliance staff cut 50%. (NPR 4/18/13)
- Before Affordable Care Act 50 million people without health insurance – today 30 million people without coverage.
- More doctors refusing Medicare patients
- Social programs threatened.
- *Citizens United* - Supreme Court allows money to talk louder to lawmakers and corporations are people.

Wall Street vs. Main Street?



**Winners and losers?
Or equal opportunity?**



WHAT CAN LWV DO?

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- **LWV**: Advocate LWV positions with elected officials.
- **LWV**: Collaborate with other organizations for common good.
- **LWV**: Educate members and community.
- **LWV**: Study income gap; develop position.
- **You**: Contact elected officials to advocate League positions.
- **You**: Educate family and friends.
- **You**: Engage support from other organizations.