

Spring 2011

From the President's Desk...

Officers and Directors

Liz Tentarelli, Co-President
603-763-9296
LWV@kenliz.net

Sally Davis, Co-President
726-3775
rsdavis@emlot.com

Peg Fargo, Vice-President
Greater Capital Area President
226-4574
pfargo@hotmail.com

Mary Perry, Treasurer
648-2488
marybperry@tds.net

Jane Armstrong, Membership
526-2066
janenlnh@tds.net

Virginia Higgins, Voter Editor
768-3379
cghiggins@myfairpoint.net

Local League Contacts

Peg Fargo, Greater Capital Area
226-4574
pfargo@hotmail.com

Joan Timmerman, Manchester
Co-coordinator 626-7410
excelsis2@juno.com

Sue Capano, Manchester
Co-Coordinator 622-1031
pscapano@comcast.net

J.L. Tonner, Kearsarge/Sunapee
526-6858
itonner@msn.com

Upper Valley
www.uppervalleyleague.org

Sally Davis and I are completing our first 2-year term as co-presidents. I couldn't have done it without Sally, and Sally has expressed her appreciation for my efforts. So we have agreed to accept another term as your co-presidents. Our other officers and board members are also willing to continue, but we are looking for some new members as well. If you've been waiting for a chance to become more involved with League issues at the state level, this is it! A lot is happening right now, and fresh eyes would be tremendously helpful. Send either of us an email via the LWVNH.org website to find out more about life as a state board member!

This is an exciting time to be part of the League of Women Voters, a time when both our non-partisan presence and our testimony really count. The state legislature is grappling with the budget, protests have arisen over cuts and some late night amendments, and as of this writing there are four constitutional amendments going through the legislative process (it will take a 2/3 vote in November for any of them to pass). The League has testified a number of times since January on election law issues (see article inside by former board member Joan Ashwell, who has been our voice on this issue in the legislature). We have also testified on redistricting, in support of the rail authority, in opposition to expanding the death penalty and to expanding gambling, and on two bills related to incarceration issues.

Our state study of the impact of women incarcerated in NH continues to be exciting. Three local Leagues held consensus meetings in March on phase 2 of our study. But we have realized how much more there is to learn. So we are asking members to authorize an extension of the study when we meet at state convention, giving us time to do phase 3 justice. Please continue to read articles on our website (www.LWVNH.org) and in the newspapers, think about the issues, join us in talks with the experts, and participate in the consensus process.

We hope to see many of our members at our state convention this spring. See the insert for date, place, and more on the guest speakers who will add greatly to our understanding of incarceration. Advance registration is necessary for us to plan these events, so please return the enclosed registration. We look forward to seeing you!

Liz Tentarelli, co-president

On March 15, the LWV Board participated in a very inspiring meeting with 13 women from North Africa and the Middle East. These women were traveling as part of a group of 100 women who were invited to the U.S. under the auspices of the Dept. of State's International Visitor Leadership program. This program was commemorating the 100th anniversary of International Women's Day. These 13 women came to NH to learn about leadership skills, good governance and grassroots civic engagement.

We were contacted by the World Affairs Council of NH and simply told that some women were traveling here on a State Department program and someone suggested they learn about the League, its history and how it works. So each of us took a segment to talk about. What a surprise to see a group of "head scarved" women walk in the room and then we were really impressed as they all put name placards with their titles down in front of them. It was impressive to see the positions they held in Algeria, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Morocco, Oman, Palestinian Territories and Yemen. (The two scheduled to come from Egypt and Libya were not there.)

And the questions they asked were mostly quite overwhelming; for instance, "Could we arrange training for women in Yemen on how and why to run for office." Also we were complimented on all being active in the civic arena in spite of "our age." This was stated very diplomatically explained the simultaneous translator into Arabic.

We are trying to follow up on their requests by getting them in touch with organizations that have existing programs on civic engagement for women in those countries.

Congressional Visits

The state board met with Congressman Charles Bass and Congressman Frank Guinta in February exchanging views on the major priorities for the 112th Congress. We were received warmly and had a most civil discussion. The board also intends to meet with Senators Shaheen and Ayotte.

We knew that both Bass and Guinta had voted against funding of the Affordable Care Act. Each sees flaws in the plan passed last year and believes there are other ways to extend healthcare to those most in need of assistance. Rep. Bass is particularly interested in the multidisciplinary approach that Dartmouth is working on to reduce healthcare costs. He also supports healthcare savings plans for individuals.

Rep. Bass is on the Energy and Commerce committee and indicated he is in support of exploring alternative energy sources. Rep. Guinta, whose wife was a Manchester local League member in the past, says his first priority is to serve his constituents. That includes getting the federal funding promised to the state for the I-93 expansion. But the budget is the big job the Congress must tackle, and he reported that any changes to Medicare and Social Security must not affect anyone currently 55 or older. He also believes there must be major cuts to defense spending.

The LWV Kearsarge/Sunapee Board presented both congressmen with a book on healthcare.*

*Members of the Kearsarge//Sunapee LWV, after reading T.R. Reid's *The Healing of America, A Global Quest for Better, Cheaper, and Fairer Health Care*, were so impressed with his

analysis of global health care systems that they decided to present copies of the book to Representatives Bass and Guinta. In the book Reid, longtime correspondent for *The Washington Post*, took his stiff and aching shoulder around the world seeking treatment for his malady. What he learns is instructive for anyone interested in the US health care debate.

Legislative Action

Joan Ashwell has followed legislation pertaining to the right to vote in this legislative session and she sends this report.

A number of bills introduced in the NH House and Senate this year could greatly restrict the right of citizens to vote. The League has focused on four bills this session. **HB176** would have prevented any citizen who didn't live in NH before starting school from voting. Three other bills would require photo identification either to register to vote or to obtain a ballot on Election Day.

Hundreds of students testified along with citizen groups, legislators and the League against HB176, and the bill was defeated in the House after the Election Law Committee recommended against it. The League expects the proposal to come back in another bill in the future.

Senate Bill **129**, already approved by the Senate, is expected to replace other photo ID legislation retained in the House. The current version of SB129 is completely different from what was introduced, and there was no opportunity for public testimony on the amended version before it was passed in the Senate.

Under SB129, citizens who are already registered to vote would have to produce a current military ID, current passport, current NH driver's license or current NH non-driver ID before receiving a ballot on Election Day. The legislation includes NH student IDs and certain employee IDs with an expiration date but since NH student IDs and state employee IDs don't include an expiration date, they cannot be used.

Citizens without one of the IDs will be required to have a picture taken at the polling place before being given a ballot. The digital photo will be kept "on file." SB129 does not address privacy or security concerns about the photos. It doesn't explain who would have access to the photos or if they can be used for purposes other than voter identification.

While many people think everyone has a driver's license, the truth is that more than 60,000 citizens in NH don't have a photo ID that meets the requirements of SB129. These include elderly people who stopped driving years ago, disabled people who have never had a driver's license, poor people who can't afford the documents needed to acquire a driver's license, minorities who are less likely to own a car or drive, and thousands of students who don't bring cars to school so have never needed to get a NH license. All of these citizens can appear at the polls on Election Day and register to vote using other forms of identification to satisfy NH's voter registration laws. They will not, however, be given a ballot unless they agree to let someone at the polls take their picture. There is no form of voter fraud that can be prevented

by taking citizens' pictures at the polling place on Election Day. The only possible result of this legislation will be to discourage certain groups of citizens from voting.

For the elderly, just getting into another line for another process may be too physically demanding. For those who are too poor to get a license, the process will be humiliating. For many disabled people who struggle already to get to the polls, this is another obstacle to full participation in society. And, for many young people it will, undoubtedly, be seen as a hassle and unnecessary waste of time especially in one of the many polling places that handle 10,000 or more voters on Election Day.

The League has been fortunate to be allied with a large, talented group of people and organizations who support our belief that voting is a fundamental Constitutional right.

Constitutional Amendments - In over 200 years here have been 143 amendments to the State Constitution of 1784 ratified by New Hampshire voters. Prior to 1964, the only way to amend the constitution was to hold a constitutional convention. An amendment in 1964 gave the legislature, as well as a constitutional convention, the authority to suggest amendments to the voters. The bill to propose an amendment must receive 60% of the votes of both houses to be placed on the ballot of the next general election and two-thirds of the popular vote must approve for the amendment to pass.

In 2012, along with electing a President of the US and all state offices, there will be several proposed constitutional amendments for voters to consider. This legislature seems intent on changing the constitution and have formulated 14 potential amendments. As of April, four amendments have passed one house, five have been retained and four have been voted inexpedient to legislate. CACR 5 passed by the Senate, would give the governor line item veto in the budget as presented by the legislature. CACR 6 passed by the House, would require a 3/5 vote of the committees and both bodies of the legislature to impose a new tax or increase taxes or fees or to authorize the issuance of state bonds. CACR 12 passed by the House and CACR 14 passed by the Senate both focus on education. Basically, the legislature is attempting to have total authority to define standards for education, establish standards of accountability, target aid and have full authority to determine the amount of state funding. The four that were deemed inexpedient to legislate concerned the tenure of state judges, the election of state and county officers, establishing a state reserve fund and the right of citizens to develop initiative petitions. CACR 4 which has been retained concerns having all officials take the oath of civil office, CACR 7 is another amendment concerning the state's role in funding education, CACR 8 would give the legislature the power to authorize schools, CACR 11 would define the terms of state judges and CACR 13 would prohibit a personal income tax in New Hampshire. Retained CACRs may be brought up either late in this session or during the January – June 2012 session. More information about the proposed constitutional amendments can be found on our website.

Legislative Redistricting - Apportionment – *the most significant aspect of the basic constitutional right to equal representation. The League believes that government legislative bodies should be apportioned substantially on population. Redistricting is the plan that redraws the maps to apportion population into legislative districts.*

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The League has a long history of working with redistricting at the national, state and local levels. In 2004, LWVNH adopted a position supporting a process and standards that promote fair and

effective representation in the state legislature and in the US House of Representatives. The second part of that position calls for an independent, non-partisan commission with broad-based community representation as the preferred redistricting body. Currently 12 states use such a commission which encourages extensive public input into the redistricting process. Although bills have been introduced regularly in the NH legislature calling for such an independent commission, the bills have repeatedly failed. This year is no exception.

The House appointed a 16 member Special Committee on Redistricting. One of their first actions, totally along partisan lines, was to vote 11-4 to defeat a bill which would establish an independent commission to travel around the state and then offer a recommendation but not a final plan for redistricting. The majority emphatically stated that redistricting belongs to the elected officials.

The committee also voted to retain two related bills. One of those bills (HB592) could be used as a framework for the development of the redistricting plan and the other HCO1 mandates that redistricting be done by House order rather than by a bill, thus preventing the current or any future governor from vetoing a plan. This might also eliminate the possibility of court action.

In the traditional method of redistricting in New Hampshire the House has drawn district lines for election of Representatives to the General Court and members of the Executive Council, while the Senate determines district lines for senatorial districts as well as for the two US Congressional districts. Their plans were submitted as bills which went to the Governor. A decade ago, the GOP-led legislature and then-Gov. Jeanne Shaheen, a Democrat, could not agree on the House or the Senate maps. The NH Supreme Court hired a South Carolina demographer to draw maps that the justices then imposed on the legislature. Two years later, Governor Benson realigned two dozen House districts which were reluctantly accepted by the Court. While accepting this revision, the Court decision clearly stated that the legal view was that the redistricting process should not take place more than every ten years.

According to the initial 2010 Census data, New Hampshire's population is now 1,316,470, an increase of 6.5%. This means that each of the state's 400 Representatives will ideally serve 3,291 constituents, an increase from the 3,060 constituents ten years ago.

In the 2006 general election, voters approved an amendment to the NH Constitution that would give towns with populations of at least 3,000 one House member. At least 85% of the towns must now have their own representative. The second part of that amendment allowed for flatorial districts – taking the excess population of one town and combining it with the excess population of one or more other towns to create a district that crosses several town borders.

The League will monitor the redistricting process in our state and remains committed to advocating for fair and effective representation in New Hampshire.

Granite State Fair Tax- The budget that just passed the House is an outrage. Under the cloak of fiscal responsibility, this budget is an ideological dagger to the heart of New Hampshire. It yanks back a helping hand to those in need; it shoves more and more people through an unraveling safety net by cutting health care for those without insurance, treatment for the
(Continued from page 5 – Granite State Fair Tax)

mentally ill, help for troubled youth, childcare subsidies for mothers trying to get off public assistance, and more. It scapegoats public employees –the very people who keep our state running – for a revenue shortfall caused by the recession. It erodes the infrastructures upon which we all depend, with deep cuts to higher education, highways, public safety, and more. It cuts funding for the arts entirely. On top of that, this budget also prioritizes \$226 million in further tax cuts over restoring funding to these vital programs and services, should revenues come in above the very low projections in this budget.

How do they justify this? By insisting that our state’s top priority is to keep the effective tax rate for our millionaires and billionaires *at one fourth* the tax rate of those living in poverty.

It doesn’t have to be this way.

LWVNH is a founding member of the Granite State Fair Tax Coalition, which is working to change this. We’re building a movement for revenue reform and we need you NOW. Please visit our website, at www.nhfairtax.org, and if you like what you see, please join us. If you have any questions, please contact Sally Embley at 456-2315 (gembley@tds.net) or Peg Fargo at 226-4574 (pfargo@hotmail.com).

LWVUS Membership and Leadership Growth Program Kicks off in NH

Imagine: Confident, energized League leaders, engaged and growing League membership and healthier civic communities. These are the long-term visions of LWVUS’s new Membership and Leadership Growth Program, a 3 tier coaching or mentoring program up and running in 21 states and introduced to coaches from 12 more states including NH at the North East Region training session held March 25th-27th in Warwick RI.

As NH’s first state coach (we’ll need 2), Mary Perry, board member on LWVNH and LWVCA, joined some 30 other coaches where she trained with NH’s national coach, Lottie Fox, and Lottie’s other state team, KS. All eight of the 2011-13 class of Ruth S. Shur Fellows (national coaches) attended the training to begin their work in coaching the state teams who will, in turn, coach and mentor the local Leagues within their state. Enthusiastic LWVUS members and staff led them through coaching exercises and introduced other aspects of the program including best practices in marketing and visibility, ideas and resources for working with the media and allied groups, and planned leadership development.

The coaching program involves monthly conference calls between local Leagues, state coaches and national coaches. It has gone through some five years of planning and testing and is designed not to be work-intensive, but to provide League leaders with a support network, and strengthen the ties among the levels of the organization.

The next phase of the program involves recruiting a second state coach and 2-3 representatives from each local League (including your local League president) to attend a 2-day expense paid

training session at our Quad State meeting Oct 15th-16th in Wells, ME. Regional State Boards and LWVUS will co-host this training, where attendees will meet state and national coaching teams, learn valuable best practices to grow the League, and develop a plan for the upcoming year.

This program is supported by the LWV's Leaders for Leadership Fund. For more information about the fund or to learn more about the program, please visit www.lwv.org.

Incarceration Study Consensus Reached

The local Leagues in the Capital Area, the Kearsarge/Sunapee Area, and the Upper Valley held consensus meetings on phase 2 of the incarceration study. In addition, several individuals mailed in responses to two consensus questions that had been posted in the January NHVoter.

The Leagues agreed on a description of an ideal women's prison. In addition to having a core philosophy of rehabilitation, it would also have safe and humane conditions, gender-specific assessment tools to determine programs and treatment, space and staff and funding for treatment of mental health and substance abuse issues. The ideal prison would also offer educational programs and vocational training, opportunities for exercise and recreation, and space for visitation to strengthen mother/child relationships. Half-way houses for inmates approaching release would include access to continuing treatment and be located so that inmates could travel safely to jobs in the community.

Members agreed that to reduce recidivism and to facilitate rehabilitation, corrections and community service providers should make services accessible to those offenders who would profit from them, using evidence-based outcomes, gender-specific research, and recognized best practices to plan programs.

The study steering committee will draft a position statement based on the consensus reached, from which the board can testify in the legislature.

Proposed Extension to Study - All members of the study committees agree that there are aspects of corrections that we haven't yet looked at in depth. These include courts and sentencing, including the extent to which judges may use their own discretion, alternative sentencing, and the drug courts and mental courts that have been set up in some counties as alternatives to the regular court system for some offenders. We also want to learn more about the re-entry process and to keep following SB500 and its possible revisions. Healthcare in the prisons also warrants more study, particularly the principles that determine levels of care to be provided (We would look at national standards and ethics issues as part of this). Of particular interest is care of the aged or terminally ill who are incarcerated. Also we want to gain a better understanding of the fiscal issues involved in corrections.

For these reasons, the board will ask the members to approve an extension of the study for one year, with consensus on this third phase to be reached in Spring 2012. A vote will be taken on extension at state convention in the spring.

Halfway House discussion – LWV of the Concord Area invites all League members to attend a halfway house discussion in Bow* on Wednesday, May 18, at 10:00 am. The guest speaker will

(Continued from page 7 – Incarceration Study)

tell us about Shea Farm, the halfway house for women allied with the Goffstown Prison for Women. Shea Farm is in Concord and houses 44 women who are within six months of release. It affords the women a chance to find jobs in the community and to readjust to life outside prison, while still being supported and supervised.

*Bow Library, 509 South Street, Bow, NH 03304-3413 . From Rte 89 take exit 1, go left and the library will be on your right in about ¼ mile. Parking is behind the building.

Films Examining the Death Penalty

Documentary film maker Jacqui Lofaro will lead a discussion about the death penalty following the showing of her films “The Empty Chair: Death Penalty Yes or No” and “70 x 7: The Forgiveness Equation” at two events in New Hampshire, co-sponsored by the NH Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty, the League of Women Voters, and Amnesty International. The events are free and open to the public. The films will be shown in New London at 10:30 AM on April 26, at Tracy Memorial Library. They will also be shown and discussed at 7 PM in the Filene Auditorium, Monroe Hall at Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH.

League of Women Voters of New Hampshire
4 Park Street, Suite 200
Concord, NH 03301-6313
Tel. 603-225-5344
www.lwvnh.org

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CALL TO CONVENTION

All League members, spouses, friends, and potential members are invited to the LWVNH convention on May 31, 2011.

See below. Advance registration is strongly encouraged!

LWVNH State Convention – call to all members to attend!

Learn more about our state study topic of women incarcerated in New Hampshire from the experts. The speakers (see below) are ready and willing to answer our many questions.

In addition, complete some business, elect state League officers and board, vote on extending the study of incarceration, and share a tasty lunch with League friends.

When: Tuesday, May 31, 2011, 9:30 am to 2 pm

Where: Bow Old Town Hall, 91 Bow Center Rd, Bow, NH 03304

Road directions: from Rte 89 take exit 1. Turn right at end of exit ramp. Go about 1 mile on Logging Hill Rd., which becomes Bow Center Rd. Continue another 1.6 miles. Old Town Hall is on your left (look for League signs).

Who: All League members, potential members, friends and spouses are welcome.

What: An opportunity to hear from the experts: at press time we will hear from Lara Saffo, the Grafton county attorney who was instrumental in starting a drug court in the county and is now working on setting up a mental health court. She will discuss sentencing with us. Joan Bishop will also speak on incarceration issues. She is the Director of Judicial Branch Education at State of New Hampshire, Judicial Branch.

How: send the form below with your check for \$15 by May 20 if possible.

(If you find out you can make it at the last minute, please do come and pay at the door.)

Why: because this promises to be a fascinating day, learning about an issue that affects our state tremendously. And because getting together with other League members is always a good time. (agenda on next page)

Make your check payable to "LWVNH Convention."

Mail to LWVNH, 4 Park St Suite 200, Concord NH 03301.

If possible send registration by **May 20** so that we can plan the food and seating.

Yes, I want to attend LWVNH Convention and luncheon on May 31! My check for \$ 15 per person is enclosed.

Name _____

Phone _____ Email _____

Please include your phone number or email in case of any last minute changes.

Convention agenda:

9:30 am registration, coffee and morning snacks, socializing

10:00 am Guest speakers:

Lara Saffo, Grafton county attorney, and Joan Bishop, Director of Judicial Branch Education at State of New Hampshire, Judicial Branch.

Discussion with the guest speakers

11:50 am Break

noon Lunch

12:45 Business meeting: By-law change, as instructed by LWVUS: Change the name of the third membership category from "honorary life members" to "life members." Specifically, the amendment strikes the word "honorary" from Article III, Section 2 (A) . It does not affect anything else. Life members will still be exempt from paying dues after 50 years of League membership.

Treasurer's report and budget

Election of officers and board (see below)

Study extension approval

LWVUS Membership and Leadership Growth Program

Reports from coalitions

Local League reports

Instructions to the board

For two-year terms, to be elected at Convention

Co-presidents: Liz Tentarelli and Sally Davis

Vice-president: Peg Fargo

Secretary: Nominee needed*

Treasurer: Mary Perry

Directors: Jane Armstrong, Ginny Higgins, nominees needed*

Nominating committee: nominees needed*

**The board urges all members to consider serving on the state board or on the nominating committee. For more information about any of these positions, phone Liz Tentarelli 763-9296 or Sally Davis 726-3775.*