

New Hampshire Voter – the newsletter of the
League of Women Voters of New Hampshire
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Fall 2013

Words from the President...

The NH Legislature is not in session, major elections are more than a year away, and Presidential candidates are not yet cruising around our state. So you'd think the League might be taking a breather. No way!

We're sharing reports on what the League has been doing, but more important highlighting issues and projects that invite our members' involvement. See our new voter ID flyer (feel free to copy and distribute if you live in a city with a November election). It's also available in Spanish on our website. The town websites project is moving forward. We'll have more to report in January, we hope.

The Election Law study committee set up by the legislature will be holding forums around the state, as is the transportation advisory committee. Details inside. Attend the meetings, become informed and make your thoughts known.

Also inside is an update on the women's prison and an article about the Coalition for Open Democracy (of which the League is a member). We hope you'll read about the LWVUS agriculture study and the work begun by the local Leagues. Lots more on our website too. You don't need to be a farmer to care about farm and food safety!

Be sure to see details (in a separate pdf) of our fall workshop. Save the date of Monday, November 18. All members and friends are welcome. Commissioner of Agriculture Lorraine Merrill will be the featured speaker, and a panel discussion will follow with three NH experts. Do join us!

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Local League Contacts

Setting Priorities for the Coming Year

Every year the state League's board discusses and then sets its priorities for action in the coming year. We determine the importance of the issues and the possibilities for the League to effect change. The board did that in July 2013, with the following results:

Election Laws and Voter Service (including working with the towns to improve the town website voter information; spreading the word about the revised voter ID law; continuing advocacy in the legislature to increase voting access and to improve registration requirements for college students; working for campaign finance disclosure; encouraging registration of high school students in the spring; distributing information on registration and voting at places like WIC clinics)

Education, specifically state's responsibility in financing education.

Support for the new women's prison and improvements in the current facility; county as well as state incarceration issues; alternatives to incarceration; services, programs, and training for women offenders.

Opposition to expanded gambling.

After this meeting we learned that the **NH Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty**, of which we are a member organization, plans to submit a bill in the coming legislative session. We agreed we would support that bill (based on our LWVUS position) and determine what the League's role would be in the effort. Members interested in working on this are encouraged to contact the state board.

Promoting the **LWVUS Agriculture Update Study** is also demanding our attention. The articles and consensus questions from LWVUS study committee have been delayed, but we will work to inform our members statewide about the issues in the study.

As you read this the 2013 -2014 **New Hampshire Members at Large** dues notices have been mailed. We would greatly appreciate a timely return to facilitate updating our

state roster and calculating what we owe LWVUS in per member payments. Remember your dues cover both state and national membership. Many members of NH's local leagues paid their dues at their annual meetings in June. If you belong to a local league and have not paid your dues please do. If you know a nationally recruited member, please encourage them to join the state league. Also, if you know or meet a former member or a member who belonged in another state, please encourage them to rejoin.

Mary Perry, LWVNH Treasurer

Update on the Women's Prison

The 2013 session of the New Hampshire legislature accomplished the amazing feat of actually appropriating and passing the expenditure of 38 million dollars for the construction of a new women's prison. Now the work begins to get a facility that will have a projected life span of 50 years

The prison is projected for 224 beds with capacity in the plan to expand (to 350) if necessary at some future date. The prison will be located on the state owned land behind the men's prison in Concord, thus saving the expense of site selection, purchasing and then preparing a new site.

The actual design and building will be the responsibility of the New Hampshire Department of Administrative Services – Bureau of Public Works Design and Construction. A contract for 2.4 million dollars for the design of the prison was awarded to SMRT Inc. of Portland, Maine. Arthur Thompson, a principal of the firm, will act as the architect. He has extensive experience in correctional facility design and was part of the team that designed the Merrimack, Grafton and Cheshire Counties Houses of Correction so this firm has knowledge of New Hampshire. SMRT also constructed the new Women's Center, the women's portion of the Maine Correctional Center.

The next step will be for a selection of the construction firm and when that bid is complete and a contract signed, a coordinated design start is scheduled for January 2014. The design is to be completed for presentation to the capital budget committee of the legislature by April 2014. Also in April, the timeline calls for public meetings. The planned construction start date is scheduled for April 2015 and completion by 10/1/2016. According to those who understand the complex machinations of designing, contracting and building, this is an aggressive time line and an important step has now been completed on time.

As the Department of Corrections waits for the construction of the new prison, Warden Joanne Fortier of the NH Prison for Women in Goffstown continues to lead her staff in maximizing the available space and financial resources to provide the best rehabilitative services they can. This summer a resident of Shea Farm completed her high school requirements and a graduation ceremony was held outdoors with Department of Corrections Officials proudly attending. Another graduation ceremony will be held on October 2 for an inmate at the prison. Warden Fortier believes that this educational accomplishment needs to be recognized by the woman, her family, and staff of the corrections department, the community and the other inmates. This, then, can serve as an incentive for an increased emphasis on education by all those involved.

The Ten-Year Plan

Just about six years ago, one of NH's state agencies had a ten-year plan with such limited funding that it would take 40 years to accomplish. What state agency was this?... the NH Dept. of Transportation which is charged with maintaining the state's roads and bridges. A few years ago the department faced reality—limited state and federal funding—and disciplined themselves to offer the Governor and the legislature a realistic plan.

>From early September to October 21, the proposed plan for 2015-2024 will be the subject of 25 public hearings throughout the state. Dates and places are on the LWVNH.org website, on the Hot Legislation page, with a link to the draft report.

Every two years the plan is updated by the Governor's Advisory Commission on Intermodal Transportation (GACIT), with significant input from the Regional Planning Commissions. The RPC is the place to start if your town has an issue that should be included in the next plan which will go before the Executive Council for a vote Nov. 18.

Coalition for Open Democracy

On September 6th the Coalition for Open Democracy held a fundraiser in Concord and the speaker was Prof. Larry Lessig of Harvard. He gave an imaginative and inspiring talk about money in politics and its corrupting influence. (A link to a summary of his talk is below.)

He advocates for a "rebellion" here in New Hampshire to get the next Presidential candidates to talk about how they are going to solve the problem of massive and often anonymous corporate financial influence in government. It is an issue that neither Romney nor Obama ever mentioned while campaigning, in spite of the fact that a Gallup poll from July 2012 ranked it as the people's second most important campaign issue.

Prof. Lessig also has a TED Talk (you can Google Ted Talks and then put Larry Lessig in the search bar) entitled "We the People and the Republic we must Reclaim." That talk includes more of the beginning of his Concord presentation (the talk was edited for YouTube).

The League is a member of the Coalition for Open Democracy. If you want to contribute to the Coalition directly, which is working to pass citizen-funded elections and disclosure of election spending in New Hampshire, you can send a check to COD, 4 Park Street, Suite 200, Concord, NH 03301. Yes, the League generously allows COD to use its address. Checks can be made to NHCA-COD. NH Citizens Alliance is our fiscal agent.

So make yourself a cup of tea and take the time to view the video; it's just 17 minutes.
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=d9X2SAiSmLY&feature=youtu.be> (Don't want to type all that? We've put a link to the video on the Publications page of our website: LWVNH.org)

Jane Armstrong, LWVNH representative to COD

Committee to Study Election Law Begins Deliberations

The joint NH House and Senate Committee to Study Election Law, created by HB 521 last spring, has begun its meetings. On September 17, the committee heard from Secretary of

State William Gardner, Attorney General Chief of Staff Anne Edwards, and state counsel Attorney Paul Twomey, among others. The committee includes Sen. Nancy Stiles and Representatives Kathleen Hoelzel (chair), David Cote, Evelyn Connor, and Maryann Knowles.

The goal of the committee is to look at our current large collection of election laws and make suggestions for streamlining and improving the election process. Issues discussed at this meeting ranged from the large number of affidavits from the Nov. 2012 election that must be checked by the Attorney General's staff (17 lawyers working on this right now) to better procedures for absentee ballots in nursing homes to clarifying regulations pertaining to campaign phone calls. The three League members in attendance raised a silent cheer when Atty. Twomey mentioned the inaccuracy or incompleteness of some town websites about voting and registration and the need for a template that towns could use. "We've got it," we wanted to call out. Based on our survey last winter and spring of all town websites, we created a template that we will share with the Secretary of State and the committee very soon. In the meantime we are asking some town clerks to look at the draft and give us a critique.

The study committee has not yet set its schedule, but it intends to hold at least one Forum for Public Election Officials in each county over the next several months. These forums, we assume, will be open to the public. As the schedule is announced we will post it on the calendar page of our website.

In closing Deputy Secretary of State David Scanlon summed up an idea we can support. "A goal of the election process is to keep it as simple as possible for the people who turn out to vote."

Agriculture Update Study...off to a good start

How safe is our food supply? How sustainable are the country's farming practices? When science and farming come together, do we get better crops? At what cost? What about pesticides and our water supply? Subsidies and loans to farmers? ...the questions are endless.

The LWVUS is undertaking a study to update our present but outdated position. Many things have changed since the 1988 position was adopted. Later this fall the LWVUS will post key articles for members to read, and in early 2014 local Leagues will hold consensus meetings on the study questions. Members at large and those unable to attend local League meetings will be given an opportunity to participate in the state's virtual consensus meeting, either online or by mail. More in the January NH Voter.

In the meantime, the Leagues in the Greater Capital Area and the Kearsarge/Sunapee Area have begun research on their own and have been attending hearings of the NH Agriculture and Environment Committee on a proposed bill to require labeling of products sold in NH that contain Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs). League members have summarized the testimony at those hearings, as well as various articles. Those summaries are on the League's website, and we encourage all members with an interest in our food supply to read the articles and do any further research. Summaries are all one page or less.

When the articles and consensus questions from LWVUS are released, we will put those on our website as well. Please visit LWVNH.org and click on Agriculture Study in the menu on the left to find summaries and information. The webpage is updated frequently as the local Leagues do their work.

Get Your NH Voter by Email?

For those snowbirds whose winter mail isn't forwarded and for those who prefer email to paper mail—you may sign up to receive our LWVNH newsletter by email rather than in paper copy. We are no longer using bulk mail; it was just too slow and didn't save us much money. We're now sending the newsletter via first class mail.

Like to read your NH Voter in paper copy? That's fine. We'll keep sending it. But if you prefer reading news online, want to save the League postage and still get all our state League information send an email that includes your name and snail-mailing address, with a message requesting emailed newsletter instead. The NH Voter will come in pdf form as an attachment—almost any email program and computer can open it. Send your request to LWV@kenliz.net

Manchester Local League Disbands

It is with regret that the LWVNH board reports the decision by members of the Manchester local League to disband. While the Manchester League has a long history of outstanding accomplishments, the membership has been in decline for a number of years and the projects of the League suspended for lack of active involvement. The state board appreciates the efforts of the former Manchester board, in particular Joan Timmerman and Sue Capano, and shares their disappointment that disbanding is the logical choice at this time.

League members from the Manchester area are encouraged to renew their membership, either with the LWV of the Greater Capital Area or as members at large. Membership renewal letters will be sent shortly. We sincerely hope that former Manchester members will continue to support the League with their membership and their commitment to League ideals, and we hope to see these old friends at League events in the future.