

New Hampshire Voter –a publication of the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire

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Officers and Directors

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

Sally Davis, Co-President
726-3775
sally.davis36@gmail.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

Kathy Meyer
763-4042
iskidoo2@hotmail.com

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

Sally Embley, Kearsarge/Sunapee
426-2315
gembley@tds.net

Upper Valley
www.uppervalleyleague.org

From the President's Desk...

This may not be an election year, but the League's board members haven't noticed any slowdown in activities. We thank the members who approved an extension to our study of incarceration in NH so that we can better understand the courts and sentencing. To that end, several study committee members spent a very full day in Haverhill NH at the Grafton county drug court. What an astonishing experience to see this alternative to incarceration! Please read the summary of our visit in this issue.

The League and especially our election law specialist Joan Ashwell were busy in the spring opposing SB129, the law requiring a photo ID to vote. The bill passed but was vetoed by Governor Lynch. However, the battle isn't over. By the time you read this, the verdict will be in. But as I write, a push in the legislature to override the governor's veto is underway. Many League members have been actively calling their key legislators asking them not to overturn the veto of what would be an onerous burden to state, local election officials, and voters.

While this isn't a state election year, there are some special elections in September and primaries in some cities for city elections. The League will moderate a candidates' forum for a vacant state House seat in Peterborough on Sept. 12. We haven't had a local League there for many years, but it's important to be able to offer non-partisan forums throughout the state. Please read the article in this NH Voter about our very lively brainstorming session about voter service. We hope other League members in the state will agree that having more trained moderators will spread the League's influence. And we hope some of you will volunteer to become moderators!

Enough from me. Lots more news inside.

Liz Tentarelli, co-president

LWVUS 2011 Council

Kelly Monahan, a new LWV Member, represented New Hampshire at the LWVUS Council meeting this spring. Here is her report of the happenings at the meeting.

The situation regarding the Scott Brown/Claire McCaskill ads was the first order of business. In my opinion the way that this situation was addressed was handled admirably. All concerns were heard. LWVUS admitted at mistakes were made. There was clear regret that at least the state boards involved should have been notified, all state boards preferably. Talking points and notice will go out ahead if anything like this should come up again. Members made clear that the lack of disclosure on ad funding upset many. Why were these two senators chosen? Scott Brown's voting record in the Mass. state legislature was very different from his vote in the US Senate, and Claire McCaskill was chosen because the Midwestern Democrats need to be moved on this issue. The board was commended for trying something new. Lessons learned. Voices heard. A new website is in the works. August 2011. Looks GREAT!

Coalition Building was discussed and encouraged at Council ... a great example just happened locally. The Old Man Mountain Profile Plaza Dedication, by combining efforts with veterans groups, the motorcycle clubs, and by dedicating the plaza to NH Veterans, I believe that next spring the attempts by some Legislators to reintroduce a bill to lease Cannon Mt. will be met with an unbeatable coalition.

Thank you all so much for sending me. I met SO many fantastic women, learned so much and was truly inspired!

Voter Service Ideas

In planning for the 2012 election cycle, the state board met on August 5 with representatives of three local Leagues and also three League members who had recently or previously run for state office. We discussed a number of possible voter education activities that the state and local Leagues could engage in. The board will discuss the many aspects we brainstormed and come up with a Voter Service Plan. Below is a summary of our discussion.

In the 2010 elections we had an **online presence** using VOTE411. This site had been funded by LWVUS Education Fund until now. In future, Leagues will have to pay to participate. Cost for covering all races in NH would be \$5000. LWVUS has promised to promote VOTE411 heavily in an advertising campaign. Making the initial contact with NH candidates is difficult because they don't give email addresses when they file. We want to overcome this by convincing the Secretary of State to ask for email addresses. Another online alternative is Project Vote Smart, sponsored by LWV California. We will try to find out more about this site's potential in NH.

In general, we realize that many people throughout the state are relying more and more on Internet sources for information, but with limited high-speed access in the northern part of the state, access is difficult. We generally assume that younger voters will use

the Internet more than older voters, but we also realize that some younger voters will not seek out that information. Social networking sites appeal to many young voters. Does a League Facebook page have voter service potential?

Older voters and others who don't use the Internet much may prefer paper guides. We could do this via **newspaper inserts**. If we want to do this, we should start very soon finding out which papers would consider doing this us and start corporate fundraising to make it possible) Paper **guides** in libraries and town halls would be costly to print and distribute, but could also be on state League's website in PDF format for libraries to download and print out additional copies. Realistically these can cover only a few questions to each of a limited number of candidates. Would we want them to be district-specific so they can include state senate and house candidates? Who would prepare these multiple version?

Some voters want personal contact with candidates, such as in **candidate forums**. We discussed increasing the number of **League-moderated candidate forums** across the state by training more moderators and offering their services to local and regional groups wishing to host a forum. This could be accomplished with letters to the editor explaining the service, asking groups such as a chamber of commerce or a PTO or a women's club to contact the state League. A willing moderator would then discuss and oversee the steps the group needs to go through to have the event, make sure all is place, and then moderate the event.

Those in attendance accepted this model enthusiastically. So at this point the state board is eager to hear from League members who are willing and eager to take moderator training and be available to go to communities in their general part of the state. Please contact the League via our website if you want to discuss this further and maybe volunteer! In addition, the model could be used to hold **single-issue forums** as well (such as a forum on education issues for a PTO group).

Voter Registration and Photo ID voting requirement: We would have to publicize this if it becomes law (if the governor's veto of that bill is overturned in September). That would include letting people know where non-drivers can get approved ID cards.

We also discussed the need for the League to get out information about voting registration to **high school students**. Upper Valley League was successful in getting supervisors of the checklist to go into the high schools to register students. We could also put posters in high schools to get students' attention, state simply how they go about registering.

Get out the vote campaign ideas: School-aged children can have a strong effect on getting their parents to do anything, including going to the polls. "Take your parents to vote" message could be promoted in schools. Put voting information posters in day care centers to reach young parents, many of whom may be new to an area or to NH and not sure how or where to register.

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Asking candidates questions: LWVUS usually suggests questions to ask Presidential candidates. LWFVNH board will also draft some questions (input from local Leagues invited) that members can ask of state candidates at whatever venues they appear.

Discussion then shifted to the likely Constitutional Amendments:

Check the state website to see the complete text of these CACRs.

CACR 6 has passed the House, is now in the Senate. It would require a 3/5 supermajority to raise new taxes or fees or to borrow money. The League is opposed to this amendment.

CACR 12 and CACR 14 (one is a Senate bill, one a House bill that will likely be presented as one bill after a committee of conference decides on final wording). This would essentially require state funding to schools to be “targeted” to neediest school districts, put the burden of school funding back on communities almost entirely. One version specifically takes the courts out of the mix. It could, in effect, make public schools “optional.” League also opposes this legislation via our funding government position.

Which of these actions would be most effective for the League?

1. taking no public stand on these amendments and instead do a major campaign so that voters will understand, before going to the polls, what these amendments are and what a yes or no vote means.
2. Publicly opposing these amendments.
3. Trying to do both simultaneously.

We welcome feedback from our members.

Membership and Leadership Development Update (MLD)

As explained in the last Voter, LWVUS is devoting considerable time and resources developing a best practices coaching program to address membership recruitment and leadership development at national, state and local levels. Kelley Monahan has agreed to lead our state MLD team with Mary Perry and Mary Davies as members.

We have participated in three monthly conference calls with our national coaches, Lottie Fox and Eva Rogers and have made headway identifying local league members, Irene Fairclough (Concord Area), and Sally Wood, Jan Krueger, and Pat Rogers (Kearsarge/Sunapee).

We are still looking for one or two people from the Upper Valley and Manchester leagues to join us at an all expense paid training session at Quad State in Wells, ME Oct 15th and 16th. Contact Kelley Monahan kelly.monahan@gmail.com, 787 6921 or me, marybperry@tds.net, 648 2488 if you are interested. Time would involve about 1 hour a month for a conference call with a state coach and a few words at your regular meetings to encourage getting your league name out there.

Incarceration study update: Drug courts in NH

At LWVNH convention in late May, two of the guest speakers were Lara Saffo and Robert Gasser, staff members of the Grafton county drug court team. Attendees were much impressed with their presentation about this alternative to incarceration. On July 5, seven League study members spent most of the day meeting the Grafton county drug court team, attending the staffing session, and observing the drug court in action. This visit was made possible by drug court coordinator Robert Gasser, prosecuting attorney Lara Saffo, and Judge Timothy Vaughan. We are very appreciative of their giving us so much of their time and access to otherwise closed sessions.

Drug court in Grafton County has been in existence just a few years. It is one of two drug courts in the state. Its first “graduates” are now in the community on their own. The program was designed for 35 participants at a time, and there are about 18 people in the program right now.

Drug court is an alternative to incarceration for drug related felony offenses. The “carrot” for offenders is that they continue to live and work in the community and upon successful completion of the program will have their offense expunged. The “stick” is serving their prison sentence for participants who don't comply with the program.

Participants must report to court for weekly updates at first, then monthly. In addition they must attend local AA meetings several times a week, attend counseling sessions, hold a job, abide by court-ordered regulations that may prohibit contact with certain people or places, and be subject to random drug tests. They must submit a weekly schedule of where they will be at all times, and must be reachable by phone at all times. Two corrections officers from the Grafton HOC keep track of all participants with random visits to home, work, etc. and administer drug tests.

The program generally lasts about 18 months. The clock may be reset for major infractions/dirty blood tests. Participants are given sanctions for infractions, missing meetings, being out of touch by phone, etc. But participants are also given rewards: The Friends of Grafton County Drug Court is a volunteer group that raises funds for such things as Wal-Mart gift cards, gym memberships, celebrations, etc. for successful participants. In 3 years they have raised \$25,000.

The drug court team includes, in addition to the judge, prosecuting attorney, and Bob Gasser, the following: the two corrections officers, Judith from Headrest (counseling service), the clinical psychologist who is a Licensed Alcohol/Drug Counselor, the public defender, the two volunteers who run the “Crossroads & Decisions” program funded by the HOC (a mentoring program, replacing the former “Thresholds” 5-step program), and Jen, the staff guru and case manager who aids participants with student loans applications, housing issues, etc. In addition they reach outside for assistance: they may send someone to DHMC for a psychiatric evaluation, for example, or contact women's supportive services to help someone get straightened out with home/child issues.

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This group meets weekly before the open court session to discuss the progress or issues of each offender. They discuss how best to help each one, but ultimately Judge Vaughan decides. Participants who want to go out of state or do something other than their approved usual routine must request permission; the team suggests whether the requests should be granted (a trip to Cape Cod for a baby shower was granted to one expectant father, for example). We were hugely impressed by the commitment and thoroughness with which the team discussed each offender. What we found interesting was that, even when the week's report was not completely positive for an offender, when the judge talked one-on-one with the offender in the courtroom, he was hugely supportive, acknowledging that there had been a setback but expressing his confidence in the offender's ability to do better.

In court the judge can also be stern when needed, as he faced two participants who had gotten in trouble over the weekend and were in the county jail. He said he'd give them his answer about whether they could continue in the program or should serve their prison sentences next week, and sent them back to jail to think about things for a week.

The judge gave one woman an essay assignment on "honesty" because of an infraction. He also asked most participants how long they'd been clean. The answer got a round of applause from everyone in the courtroom. Two young men finished their programs the day we visited. Each was given a chance to speak to the entire group about their experience. One said, "It works if you work it." Another said, "You can't do it by yourself. Don't Lie. Let others help you."

The team also in the staffing session evaluates new applicants. Details are given and discussed. The group and the judge may decide that the offender is too high-risk to participate.

The current controversy as reported in the Valley News (July 1 or 2, 2011) is whether to admit low-level dealers into the program. Until now that has not been allowed. During the staffing session we heard about a young man who had been approved earlier but has been dealing small-time, got caught, and wants to be in the program. The team discussed this at length; judge is still deciding. Atty Saffo wants the team to decide this on a case by case basis, but she does not want the dealing charge to be wiped off the offender's record. Since that is the primary "carrot" for many, team members in opposition worry that removing that incentive will erode the program bit by bit.

The program serves men and women. Of the first six women in the program, five failed to comply and eventually went to prison to serve their sentence. Generally failure rate is about 30%, but it's much higher in women with co-occurring disorders. This may illustrate the need for a new program at Headrest, called Dialectical Behavioral Therapy, that has gender specific activities for women with borderline personality disorders. Focus is on change—learning what one can change—to help women with bipolar disorder who can't otherwise cope.

Girl Scouts Beyond Bars

The League's study of the impact of incarceration on women in New Hampshire has given us this important fact: the children of incarcerated parents are six times as likely to be incarcerated themselves eventually.

The Girl Scouts of the Green and White Mountains Council is trying to counter that statistic by giving girls and their imprisoned mothers alternative models of behavior. The Girl Scouts Beyond Bars is not a new program, but it is being revitalized in NH with women at the prison in Goffstown and their daughters.

The girls and their mothers meet monthly at the prison and work on Girl Scout programs under the direction of trained Girl Scout staff and volunteers. Meetings are held on Saturday afternoons. However, some of the girls have trouble getting to the meetings. If they are in the care of foster parents or grandparents, their caregivers may not be able to drive them to and from meetings. So the Girl Scout council is seeking volunteer drivers to transport the girls from their homes to the prison.

Three of the LWVNH board members and a former board member are already on board as volunteer drivers. But more drivers are needed, especially people who live in southern NH and on the seacoast and in the Rochester area. If you would like more information about becoming a volunteer driver so that Girl Scouting can make a difference in the life of a girl who is living apart from her mother, please contact Rachel Green at the Girl Scout council: rgreen@girlscoutsgwm.org or phone her at the council office: 1-888-474-9686 x 142.

Education Study – Meetings and Consensus

The LWVUS study of the federal role in education is underway. At this point two local Leagues are working on the study. Any League members in New Hampshire are welcome to attend the discussion meetings and to participate in the consensus.

The Capital Area League is having two discussion meetings. On Sept. 21 the guest speaker will be Dr. Mark Joyce, Executive Director of the NH School Administrators Assn. Further discussion will be held on Oct. 19. The consensus meeting will be Nov. 16. All meetings begin at 10 am at the Baker Library, 509 South St., Bow NH 03304.

The Kearsarge/Sunapee League is having discussions on Sept. 13 and 27 at 1:30 pm at 28 Hilltop Place, New London 03255. The consensus meeting will be held in early November. Check the LWVNH.org website's calendar page in October to find the date and place.

Articles for study are available as PDF files on the LWV.org website on the "For Members" page, then click on "Projects and Programs"

MAL DUES NOTICE

As you read this the 2011-2012 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. We called on several MALs this summer to help support our position on Voter ID and hope to do more of this as the election cycle gets up to full speed. Mary Perry, LWVNH Treasurer

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League
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Tel. 603-225-5344
www.lwvnh.org

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