

League of Women Voters New Hampshire -- www.lwvnh.org

New Hampshire Voter, your League newsletter

Spring 2014

Call to Council

Mark your calendars for the LWV New Hampshire annual meeting. This year is a Council meeting rather than Convention, so our official business meeting will be very short. The rest of the day will be devoted to guest speakers, a lovely lunch, socializing, and discussing issues of interest to the League.

When: Saturday, June 7, 9 am to 2 pm (coffee and registration at 9, speakers begin at 9:30. Details on our website)

Where: Hopkinton Library, 61 Houston Dr. Contoocook 03229 (a few miles off route 89, between exits 6 and 7)

Who: members, potential members, friends and spouses are invited.

Cost: \$15, payable by cash or check at the door

Registration: To help us plan food and seating, please let us know you intend to come by June 1 if possible—by email to LWV@kenliz.net or by phone to Liz Tentarelli at 763-9296

Guest speakers are being confirmed as this goes to press.

Asst. Commissioner William McGonagle will explain the conceptual design of the new women's prison at 9:30 am. We're sure you'll be excited to see the forward thinking design that emphasizes a sense of community with a focus on rehabilitation.

Check the calendar page of our website, LWVNH.org, as the date draws nearer for confirmation of speakers and a detailed agenda.

Over dessert we'll present a 12-minute version of **the town websites webinar**. Improving town websites has been a project for 15 months, with a number of League members helping with the original surveys. See what came of your work!

The **business meeting** will include voting on a **budget** for the coming year (see enclosure) and voting on a motion to change "Article VII Sec. 3. Budget. The Board shall submit to the Convention or Council for adoption a budget for the ensuing year" to allow adopting a two-year budget, beginning at Convention 2015. This would allow more flexibility for Council meetings if we are not bound to voting on a budget in late spring

LWVUS Convention 2014

Joan Ashwell, our LWVNH election law specialist, is taking her expertise to Dallas in June to represent NH at the national convention. One focus of the convention will be the increasing threats to voting rights and fair elections, as reflected in several Supreme Court decisions in the past year. Joan is the perfect person to speak for our state's members on this topic.

Check the LWVNH.org website later in June for Joan's report on the convention. If you're following national events on voting rights, you may want to sign up on LWV.org for the news and action alerts. Choose "Get Involved" in the banner menu and then check off those issues on which you'd like updated information via email.

Breaking News: LWVNH Finalist for Award

We've just found out that we are finalists for an LWVUS award in the **Community Connections** category, along with LWV of Alaska, LWV of Collier County (FL), and LWV of Spokane Area (WA). We described in our application the wide-reaching efforts of our study of women incarcerated and the many segments of the public who are now aware of both League and the issues facing women offenders. Check our website after June's national League convention to find out if we won!

But to help us win...vote for us. Look for the last entry on the page at this link_ [http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2014/general-information/awards?](http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2014/general-information/awards?utm_source=LeadersUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LU20140501)

[utm_source=LeadersUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LU20140501](http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/council-and-convention/convention-2014/general-information/awards?utm_source=LeadersUpdate&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=LU20140501)

First you can read the project descriptions and decide to cast your vote for NH. Then you'll have to log-in with the email you have given LWV. If you don't have a password, ask for one. It will be emailed to you and you can then vote.

Many thanks for doing this.

Quad States Conference grew to Six States

On May 3 and 4, League members from all six New England states attended a conference on energy policy in Wells, ME. Energy production and transmission is a regional issue, so it made sense that Massachusetts and Connecticut be invited this year, and happily several from each state came. An unplanned but much appreciated attendee was LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara! Nine members from LWVNH attended and will post a report on our website lwvnh.org. Click on Quad States in the left menu. As we go to press we are still working on our report to members, so please check the website soon.

Speakers included Jack Cashman, former head of Maine's Public Utilities Commission, who explained how ISO-NE works in relation to the states' various Public Utilities Commissions. Lea Aeschliman, a past League member and former chair of the NH Public Utilities Commission, described the current status of RGGI (Regional Greenhouse Gas Initiative), a regional initiative by states and provinces in the Northeastern United States and Eastern Canada regions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Also leading one of the workshops was a Maine League member who serves on LWVUS Climate Change Task Force. Pam Person discussed LWVUS work on climate and energy and how state and local Leagues can take action.

Looking for Members!

Where do we begin our search for new League members? We know there are people out there, men and women, who are concerned about what's happening in government and want to be involved. We just need to find them.

The target demographic for new League members are women ages 50 to 65, recently retired or about to retire. How can we reach this group? Do you know someone who has just retired and may be looking for new direction? Think about people you've met recently at a community meeting, a book club, a class, or just standing in line.

How do you convince a person that League is the group for them and is perfect for their retirement years? You can tell them that...

- League acts on important issues such as campaign finance, energy policy, election laws, meeting basic human needs and the incarceration of women.
- League stimulates the brain. With a variety of studies and activities a member can continue their education forever.
- Through League they can learn and practice skills they may not have had a chance to develop during a career, such as moderating a candidates' meeting, testifying at a legislative hearing, or writing on a variety of topics in different formats.
- League membership is an opportunity to meet and work with others who share a desire to make government work. League members get things done.
- They will find members who are friendly and fun.

Ask someone to come to a meeting or join. Tell them why you belong to League. Refer them to www.lwvnh.org. Our website has lots of information about what League is doing. But do ask! The future of League depends on it.

“Strength and Resilience”--the Women of Afghanistan

On the eve of elections in Afghanistan, in which three of the major presidential candidates had women as their vice-presidential running mates, LWV Kearsarge Sunapee Area partnered with the World Affairs Council of NH for a program featuring Kim Hunter, the former Senior Deputy Country Representative for Afghanistan for The Asia Foundation.

In an area roughly the size of Texas, nearly half of Afghanistan's 30 million population is under 15 years old. We hear so much about the challenges facing that country, but Ms. Hunter wanted to emphasize the “strength and resilience” she sees in the country. In the last ten years, greatly improved health care has been partly responsible for the growth in the young population. Couple that with new attitudes toward education (at least in the urban areas) and now about 40% of students in elementary through high school are girls, and 20% of university students are female. The greatest need is for more schools, especially in rural areas, and for female teachers, as the law dictates separation of the sexes in classes by fourth grade.

Politically women have also made progress: the constitution calls for 25% of the parliamentary seats to be filled by women at the national level, and 20% at the provincial level. Increasingly women are taking a role in both government and civil society positions of power. The downside of these changes was discussed during the question and answer period, when Ms. Hunter acknowledged potential problems of an increasingly

educated youthful population and a shortage of appropriate jobs. In rural areas, many educated women bow to the societal pressure of working in the home rather than in offices with men.

For more information on projects of The Asia Foundation, visit the website:
<http://asiafoundation.org/>

Visitors from France

The World Affairs Council of NH called on League once again to meet with visiting women from other countries eager to learn about women's political involvement and advocacy. The US State Department organizes these trips for women leaders in various fields. On April 28, four LWVNH board members plus our election law specialist Joan Ashwell and two new members of LWVGCA met three fascinating women from France. With an interpreter we discussed why NH seems to be such fertile ground for women to assume high level political positions. In France even though there is legislation mandating women hold an equal number of seats at some levels of government, the women are often assigned to social policy positions rather than hard-hitting financial or military interests

Voting Rights = Civil Rights

The NH State Advisory Committee of the US Civil Rights Commission has been studying voting rights issues in NH as the result of presentations by a number of people last September, including Joan Ashwell and Liz Tentarelli, representing League of Women Voters. A follow-up meeting is scheduled for later in May, at which Joan and Liz will update the committee about election law and challenges facing voters. The Civil Rights Commission will issue an advisory, probably in the fall, similar to the one they issued about the women's prison inequalities in 2012.

LWVK/S Asks: “If You Are What You Eat, What Are You Eating?”

Leading up to our consensus meeting on agriculture, the Kearsarge/Sunapee League held a public meeting at Tracy Library on March 8, a Saturday. Our featured speakers were Hope Damon, a registered dietician based in New London, and Larry Pletcher, an organic farmer from Warner.

Hope gave a fascinating talk on the new nutrition label that the FDA is developing. Comparing the current label (in use since 1993) to the proposed label (due in 2015), she pointed out how a reorganized format and bolder print reflect recent changes in thinking about the American diet. The new label is intended to focus more attention on calories and serving size, recognizing that earlier serving sizes were not realistic (half a cup of ice cream is one serving?!). Also, there will be separate listings of added sugars versus naturally occurring sugars (On average, Americans eat 16 percent of our calories as sugars that are added in food production.), and calories from fat will no longer be listed. Total, saturated, and trans fats will still be identified, recognizing that the type of fat is more important than the amount.

Larry, whose Vegetable Ranch LLC grows 40 different “specialty crops,” has been farming organically for more than 25 years. In his view, the federal Food Safety and Modernization Act (FSMA) represents government intervention on behalf of U.S.

conglomerates and will have the effect of putting many New England farmers out of business. He said that food safety problems can be traced back to packing houses, huge farms, and imports; the Northeast has had no instances of food poisoning due to local farming practices. Turning to our consensus questions, he argued that direct subsidies should be eliminated (they go predominately to commodity crops such as corn and soybeans); the U.S. should conduct its own basic research or contract with truly independent academic institutions; and GMO labeling should be mandatory, with testing and certification also done independently. The issues of sustainability and food insecurity were raised at the end of the talk. We should all be concerned about the emerging problem of “food deserts” in our land of plenty!

“Imperiling New Hampshire’s Future” – A Talk by Mark Fernald

On March 25 in Concord, members of the public and a number of state legislators turned out to hear Mark Fernald present his analysis of New Hampshire’s continuing disinvestment in essential public services. A former State Senator and a candidate for governor in 2002, Fernald noted that this disinvestment has occurred over the past 25 years under both Republican and Democratic administrations. Nearly every year, revenue falls a little behind expenses, resulting in an ongoing structural deficit. Services are cut because the “narrow-based taxes that NH relies on do not keep pace with the growth in our population, our economy, or the cost of government.” Using spending data adjusted for inflation, he illustrated alarming trends in three areas critical to future economic development: education, environmental protection, and roads.

Mark’s presentation was sponsored by Granite State Priorities, formerly the Granite State Fair Tax Coalition. The NH League of Women Voters was a founding member of the coalition and continues to support its objective to achieve common-sense revenue reforms and to make taxes affordable to all. Mark’s talk was taped and will be available on YouTube at <http://youtu.be/CO9nixrAve>.

Legislative Happenings

What opportunities for making a difference this second year of the Legislative session has brought! For years the House has turned down a bill proposing casinos to fund government services and obligations as they did again this year. Meanwhile, a minimal bill passed out of the Senate Committee and was tabled as the Senate waited for the House to vote on the House bill.

With the failure of the House bill to pass, the Senate bill proposing 2 casinos was brought off the table and amended to incorporate what we consider inadequate regs proposed by the House along with revenue sharing dollars for every town in the state and passed.

The strategy this year was to contact only the Reps we thought were leaning pro or con. I only asked those League members who were constituents of those Reps to call and report responses which I forwarded on to our lobbyist, Brian Behl. We sent an email to all of them with our request that they defeat the House Bill and were pleased with the resulting responses and vote.

You all must know the results of the House vote on the Senate Bill which was a tie, broken by the vote of the Deputy Speaker who supported the Committee recommendation to ITL the bill. This is NOT the end, though because reconsideration is requested. All the members of the coalition will be calling members who changed their vote before reconsideration is voted.

I am convinced, even if one casino or more is defeated this session, we will see legislation AGAIN! What is encouraging is hearing others making our arguments for defeating this way of funding government services. Those League members who want to get involved and who aren't on our email alerts should email me at Sally.davis36@gmail.com or go to our LWVNH website to reach me. You can ~~get~~ ^{get} updates of legislation we are following on our website under hot legislation.... **Sally Davis**, Co-president

Repealing the Death Penalty—We came close!

A huge thank you to the League members who called or wrote to their state Senators in April's final push for repeal of NH's death penalty. Senator Odell (who represents many of the members from LWVKearsarge/Sunapee Area) was undecided two weeks before the critical senate vote. The calls and emails he received from many of you was likely a factor in his voting in favor of repeal. Thank you, Senator Odell, for listening to your constituents.

NH's House of Representatives voted overwhelmingly in March, 225 to 104, to repeal the death penalty. The bill then went to NH's senate. Unfortunately the 12-12 tie vote in the senate meant this measure did not pass. The NH Coalition Against the Death Penalty and its member organizations (including LWVNH) are reassessing its strategy. At this writing we don't know what might happen next, or in the next legislative session. Stay tuned, or visit the coalition's website: <http://nodeathpenaltynh.org/>

If your senator voted in favor, please thank him or her:
Senators Woodburn, Watters, Pierce, Cataldo, Hosmer, Odell, Kelly, Gilmour, Lasky, Larsen, Soucy, and Fuller-Clark voted for repeal.

Update on the Women's Prison

From the 1940s to the 1980s women sentenced to prison in New Hampshire courts were sent out of state by the NH Department of Corrections or a few of them were incarcerated in the Rockingham County Jail with no programs and few services. The women sent out of state were incarcerated in Massachusetts, a corrections system with problems of its own and far away from NH inmates' families.

In 1983, twenty-three inmates sued the State of New Hampshire on the grounds that the state had violated plaintiffs' rights to equal protection under the law (14th amendment of the US constitution). This convoluted case, called the Fiandacca case (lead plaintiff) was settled in 1987 when the judge agreed with the plaintiffs and ordered the state of New Hampshire to construct a permanent in-state facility for the incarceration of women no later than July 1, 1989. A temporary location for the women was to be provided by November 1, 1987. After consideration of three other sites: Laconia State School, NH Hospital in Concord and the Sununu Youth Center in Manchester, in 1989 the state moved the women into the former Hillsborough County jail in Goffstown. With little renovation and less attention to the provision of programs, the state leased this site for a temporary fix while they planned to find a permanent location.

Twenty-three years later, after allowing poor air circulation, a leaking roof, inadequate medical space, little support for vocational and educational programming within the facility, 3 toilets for 60 women and multiple other inadequacies, with different legislatures making attempts to find a new solution, the 2013 NH legislature approved a

\$38million allocation to construct a new women's prison. This 224 bed new facility will be constructed on the grounds of the men's prison in Concord. The site is due for development this summer, construction to begin by 2015 with completion in 2016.

The design for the new facility was unveiled by NH Department of Corrections Asst. Commissioner William McGonagle. It will include a main building that houses classrooms, a medical wing, gym, library, cafeteria, vocational training space, visiting area and an administrative area. Three smaller, satellite living units will be built across a wide courtyard from the main building. Each unit will house a different security class of inmates. Natural light will stream into the buildings and cells. A softball field will be developed nearby.

The philosophy guiding the design is to provide for women inmates a more normative setting. Having to get up and walk outside every day for classes, cafeteria or medical care gives them a purpose and keeps activity within the facility moving.

League members attended two of the three sessions and were impressed with the proposed layout. We had hoped to see natural light, access to outdoor space and adequate educational and vocational space included in the design. Since that time, the estimates of the total cost have been defined higher than the 38 million necessitating changes to the plan. Site development (on a slope behind the men's prison) is proving difficult (rock shelf) and more costly than planned.

Mr. McGonagle will be bringing the new plan to the League Council meeting on June 7 for our review. It will be your chance to view the plans for our long-awaited new women's prison.

Staying in touch

This newsletter comes to you only three times a year. It's important for your state board to share breaking news in between newsletters. To get action alerts on NH bills working their way through the legislature, send an email to Sally Davis at sally.davis36@gmail.com

Also check our website frequently. We update the Calendar page whenever we hear of candidate forums or we schedule events for members and the public. Other pages on our website have loads of information on League activities. So stay in touch; we value all our members.

It is with sadness that we report the death of long-time League member Mary Frilling who was living in Virginia at the time of her death. Mary, a former member of the Durham/Dover League, was for many years the treasurer of LWVNH. When she retired from that job she opened her own business as a CPA. She managed the investments of the LWVNH Education Fund until she and her husband retired to Virginia in 2008. Even after her move to Virginia she maintained her membership in LWVNH.

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