

N H Voter – January 2018 newsletter of LWVNH

Please forgive the informality of this newsletter, the first of 2018. The board of the League of Women Voters NH wants to share with you the new position on education that came out of the study and consensus process we began in June 2017. With a huge number of bills in the NH legislature this year dealing with education, we have a position just in time to advocate one way or the other on some of them.

But our work is not done. On to phase 2. The study committee in the Kearsarge/Sunapee area is hard at work, has submitted a fact sheet on early childhood education for members to think about, has interviewed a number of local and state education officials, and will learn more about home schooling. Their next meeting is Feb. 21, 2:30 pm.

In Nashua the study group will likely work on charter schools, an aspect of public education that some of us know little about. Apparently there are about two dozen public charter schools in NH.

We also need to learn more about higher education, both the university system and the community colleges and technical schools. Why is tuition so high; what are the outcomes? Are we serving NH's higher ed needs?

To keep up with study materials as they are posted, please visit the Education Study webpage of LWVNH.org And if you'd like to be part of a study group, contact us via Membership on our Contact Page and we'll link you with the group of your interest.

Thank you to the members who came to our four consensus meetings in Dec. and January, and to the members who couldn't attend a meeting but submitted their ideas via Survey Monkey. The resultant position on the next page comes directly out of those consensus meetings.

Yours in League,
Liz Tentarelli, president LWVNH

LWVNH Position on EDUCATION.

Adopted by the board Jan. 18, 2018. (note that this position was reached thru the study and consensus process in 2017-18. It will encompass other areas after phase two of the study and consensus process is completed, by summer 2018 we hope.)

The League of Women Voters New Hampshire (LWVNH) believes that the responsibility to provide an equitable, quality public education for all children grades K through 12 is shared by the federal, state, and local governments, as expressed in the US and NH constitutions. A quality public education is essential for a strong, viable, and sustainable democratic society and is a civil right.

LWVNH believes a basic role of the state government in funding education should be to achieve equity among municipalities and school districts. This should be done with full understanding that equity does not mean equal, given that some sub-groups of students are more expensive to educate than others and that localities have specific needs.

LWVNH believes that the voters in each school district have the right and the power to choose to offer more educational opportunities beyond those that the state funds and determines to be an “adequate” education, and to raise funding locally, even if this creates greater disparities among school districts.

LWVNH believes that the disparity between actual per pupil costs in school districts and the amount the state contributes to school districts requires funding beyond current state property taxes. In determining our support for additional state revenue streams, LWVNH believes that revenue sources should be assessed in terms of their impact on the ability to pay, the stability and sustainability of the revenue stream, and whether the revenue stream results in regressive taxation or harmful social impact.

LWVNH believes that parents who choose not to use the public schools do so of their own volition and that public funds should not be used to support home schooling or private schools and academies, including religiously affiliated schools.

If any state funds are to be used to pay for all or part of private and/or religiously affiliated school costs, then LWVNH believes that the private/religious schools must have nondiscrimination policies, recognized accreditation, teachers that meet qualifications as set by the NH Department of Education, and that assessments of competencies must be used and reported to the NH Department of Education according to the timetables applied to public school districts.

Whether or not state funds are given to parents to pay for all or part of the expenses of home schooling, LWVNH believes that parents must be held accountable for outcomes, just as the public school districts are held accountable, by the administration and reporting of test results or performance-based assessments of competencies determined acceptable by the NH Department of Education.

LWVNH supports consideration of innovative approaches to education. If criteria are developed and met and approval is given for innovative programs, the League believes that time frames in which to assess, demonstrate and report outcomes must be included in the plan to move forward.

Local League news:

Peterboro Plus, the unit serving 12 towns including and surrounding Peterborough, had to cancel their January meeting (winter happened) but will schedule the February meeting soon. Check the Calendar page of LWVNH.org for date, time, and place. The group wants to do voter outreach to students at Conval High School and at Franklin Pierce University.

The League in the Kearsarge/Sunapee Area will schedule candidate forums for town elections after they review the filings.

Advance notice to save the date of June 13 for the local League's annual luncheon and short business meeting. Guest speaker will be Dean Spiliotis, political guru specializing in NH politics, Civic Scholar in the School of Arts and Sciences at SNHU. Prof. Spiliotis will discuss the mid-term elections, just as the primary season begins to heat up. Save the date. All League members, friends, and the public are welcome, but advance registration is required. Details on cost and advance registration to come.

Greater Nashua unit meets monthly at the Nashua Library, in the Hunt room (downstairs), usually on the second Tuesday of the month. For an agenda, email LWVGreaterNashua@gmail.com All members & potential members welcome. Feb. 13 is the next meeting to begin planning a Meet Your Representatives event this spring.

Greater Nashua also hosts the LWVNH members forum on Facebook, which is open to all League members in NH but not to the public. Lots of sharing of ideas and information. If you're on Facebook, ask to join "League of Women Voters NH members forum". <https://www.facebook.com/search/top/?q=league%20of%20women%20voters%20nh%20members%20forum>

A couple of members in the Seacoast area are determined to pull together some meetings in the spring. Look on our Calendar page or visit their nascent Facebook page-- League of Women Voters NH – Seacoast Unit -- to find out more as plans develop: https://www.facebook.com/search/str/league+of+women+voters+nh+-+seacoast+unit/keywords_search

Possible Laconia unit? Liz Tentarelli was invited to speak at the Taylor Communities on January 15, where she was delighted to meet seven former League members. Laconia once had a very active local League, worked to register students at the local high school among other things. The former members and others in the room seemed to feel now is the right time to create a local unit. The procedure is much simpler than the formal and complex local League requirements they remembered. If you know people in Laconia or environs who might be interested, have them contact the state board via Membership on our Contact Us page. We'll put them on an email alert list for a future meeting there.

Taking Action in the NH State House

If we have your email, you should be getting our weekly emailed Legislative Alerts. Don't use email? You can always find the alerts on our Hot Legislation webpage, usually by Saturday noon for the following week. Use the list to plan your visit to the State House, if that's your choice, or follow bills from home and in the news, then make your views known to your legislators.

Candidate forums – does your town need one?

It's that time of year again. Selectboards, school boards, library trustees, budget committees—many will have openings and contests for March 13 local elections. The state League or one of our units will be happy to work with a community group to make a candidates forum happen in your town.

It can be as simple as a Saturday morning meet and greet, or a timed forum with a moderator carried on local public access TV. Or something else you think up.

Local people know the ropes: possible venues (we much prefer free ones), how and where to publicize, how best to get the candidates to come, how to have the event covered by the local press and—even better—on community TV. We need a small group from the town to do that kind of planning, but the state board or a nearby local unit can provide templates for invitations, suggest formats, and even supply a moderator if you want a more formal event.

Does your town need a way to meet the local candidates? Check with your town clerk after Feb. 2 to find out whether there are any contested races. Then email us via President on the LWVNH.org Contact Us page and we'll talk.

News from LWV –the national League's take.

If you are not already getting periodic emails from the national LWV president Chris Carson, consider signing up. Her emails will help you follow the work of the national League on federal legislation, and alert you to progress (or not) on the League's priority agenda this year, the Campaign for Democracy (fighting voter suppression, redistricting, getting big money out of politics).

Visit the LWV.org website, <https://www.lwv.org/> scan to almost the bottom, and click on "subscribe" to start getting the emails.

You'll also see on the LWV.org homepage occasional Action Alerts, easy ways that League members can make their views known to Congress on important issues. But please ignore on that page the link that suggests you can register to vote online—not in NH at this time.

Note the League's new motto on the right side of the LWV.org homepage:
"Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy." Right on!