



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS NEW HAMPSHIRE

Welcome to the League of Women Voters!

We hope this will give you a better understanding of League terms, program and activities.

If you have joined as a member of a local League, you are also a member of the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire and the League of Women Voters of the United States. All members are welcome at any board meetings. State board meetings are posted on the state League's website.

Local Leagues and units:

- LWV of the Kearsarge/Sunapee Area
- LWV of the Greater Capital Area
- LWVNH Greater Nashua unit
- LWVNH Seacoast unit
- LWVNH Peterboro Plus unit
- LWVNH Mt. Washington Valley unit
- LWVNH Upper Valley unit (inactive in 2018)

Members in NH (not living close to the local League areas) may attend any study meetings or general meetings of the local Leagues as well as state League events. A group of members living in an area may form a local or regional unit, to work on a particular project or local voter service events, with guidance from the state board.

League of Women Voters New Hampshire
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Publications

All members receive the *NH Voter* published by the state League approximately eight times a year, sent via email. Back issues are on the Publications page of LWVNH.org. Local League or unit members may receive additional unit newsletters, either print or electronic.

During the legislative session in NH, members also receive weekly emailed legislative alerts.

A weekly electronic newsletter from the LWVUS president is available by signing up at the www.LWV.org website. The national League website also offers information on current topics of study or common concerns among the states.

What is the League of Women Voters?

When women received the vote in 1920, Carrie Chapman Catt and others formed the League of Women Voters as an outgrowth of the National American Woman Suffrage Association. The League's first goal was to teach women how to exercise their new right to vote. The scope was

soon enlarged to include service to all citizens to become well-informed voters. The League wants to help all citizens understand their national, state and local governments, important issues, and the many ways an individual can effectively influence her or his government.

Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Nonpartisanship

The League takes action in support of or in opposition to governmental issues that it has studied, but it never supports or opposes candidates or political parties. Individual members are encouraged to support the political party of their choice. To protect the non-partisanship policy of League, publicly visible board members and League leaders do not work actively in their parties or for specific candidates while serving on the board.

Organization

The League is organized on three levels: local (or regional), state, and national. Each level has a board or a steering committee, elected by the members, to organize League activities.

At the local level members have a direct voice in the selection of officers and program. Members gather information on whatever a local League has chosen to study. Members then can participate in whatever action is decided.

At the state level, a board of directors elected by members at the State Convention performs functions parallel to those of the local board.

At the national level, state and local delegates to the National Convention elect the directors.

Local annual meetings and State and National Conventions also choose the program (action priorities) for the coming year, adopt a budget, and amend by-laws.

State and national Board members take the lead on state and national studies. They supply excellent materials and bibliographies to the committee members working on these studies at the local level. Once a position is adopted, they also suggest ways in which members can take action, often through phone calls and letters to key political figures or by observing elected officials in public meetings..

Membership

Membership in the League is open to everyone, women and men, 16 and older. Two or more members living in the same household may enroll as **Household Members** for less than the cost of two full memberships.

Life members have belonged to League for 50 years or more and are not required to pay dues. **Student members** are those enrolled at least half-time in a high school or post-secondary institution. A new national League ruling allows their membership on a "pay what you like" dues basis, with no PMP due to the national League (until 20121).

When you join the League, you become at the same time a member of the League of Women Voters of the United States and the League of Women Voters of New Hampshire. If there is a local League or unit in your area, you also become a member of that League. If not, you are considered a state-level member of LWV New Hampshire.

Financing

The League of Women Voters is a non-profit, volunteer organization. There is a small number of paid staff at the national office, but none of the officers or directors at any level are paid. In NH we are all volunteers. Your dues support League projects and League publications. Because we are a political advocacy organization, your dues are not tax deductible.

Members' yearly dues and contributions finance the League, supplemented by grants from the LWVNH Education Fund for our voter service and education work. The dues you pay your local League are shared with the state League and the national League via per-member payments ("PMPs") assessed annually. Supplemental fund raising may be necessary for local Leagues to cover their program expenses. Donations are always welcome, from members and non-members.

Tax-deductible donations may be made to the LWVNH Education Fund (same address.)

What We Have Accomplished

National

The work of the League has kept pace with the changing times. In the beginning the League worked hard to improve the legal status of women and the welfare of children. It also worked to extend the merit system in the federal civil service, to improve the Food and Drug Act and other legislation protecting the consumer, and supported several measures later embodied in the Social Security Act. It championed the reorganization of Congress and civilian control of atomic energy. The League was also instrumental in the passage of Clean Air legislation. Campaign finance reform and voting rights are consistent priorities.

State

The League of Women Voters of New Hampshire was established in 1919. The League has studied a number of issues over the years (see our state Positions on our website). Recently we spent three years studying the issues surrounding the incarceration of women in NH and alternatives to incarceration. In summer 2017 we began a study of education issues in the state. We continue to be active in election law issues in NH, opposing restrictions on the right to vote.

Local

Local Leagues have spurred improvements in the structure and efficiency of town and city government. They have worked on such issues as public kindergarten, housing, health services, water protection, recycling, public transportation, and community planning. Local members decide which local issues their League should study, based on the needs of their towns or region.

What We Do

Action

The League of Women Voters is an action group. Taking political action is basic to the League's purpose to "Let the people know, make the people care, help the people act."

Action includes (1) providing information, (2) building public opinion, and (3) supporting or opposing legislation. Action methods include testifying at public hearings, use of public forums and mass media, panel discussions, League publications, and letters or phone calls to local, state and national officials.

The League may take action only on issues that have been extensively studied and on which the members have reached consensus. This reputation for thorough study is the main reason for our political effectiveness. Facts on all sides of an issue are studied. Members participate in discussion in study committees and in large meetings; everyone has an opportunity to express an opinion. When a position is reached through the consensus of membership, the League and the members as individuals work to implement that position.

The League Board at the appropriate level of the organization decides the timing of action as well as the kind and degree of action the League will undertake.

A "Call to Action" is a notice to members that now is the time most effectively to express the League's position to legislators on a specific measure.

Voter Service

Voter Service activities include informing the public about voting procedures; urging citizens to vote; giving factual information about candidates based on their records and their views on important issues; organizing and moderating candidate forums; and providing speakers to groups interested in hearing presentations about ballot issues. Besides providing factual information, Voter Service publications and speakers may summarize the "pro and con" opinions on ballot issues.

League's Voter Service program presents absolutely impartial non-partisan information on issues and candidates. Voter Service publications and speakers give equal time to all candidates if they give time to any, and equal time and space to the proponents and opponents of issues. Voter Service may present the pros and cons of any issue in an election, not just those that the League has studied.

Observer Corps

League keeps abreast of what is going on by sending observers to the meetings of governmental bodies. Observers do not speak for the League nor express an opinion, but they may ask questions for clarification, take note of what occurs and report to the appropriate study committees or to the Board for possible action in areas where League has a position. This can be done at the local, state, or national level.