



NH Voter

League of Women Voters New Hampshire

LWVNH.org

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FEBRUARY 2016

SAVE THE DATES:

New England Leadership Conference

Save the dates of **April 9-10, 2016**, for the League's New England Leadership Conference. This annual League event, formerly called Quad States Conference, brings together most of the New England Leagues for fascinating workshops and discussion.

This year's exciting keynote speaker is author and political strategist [Celinda Lake](#). She is the co-author of the book, "What Women Really Want: How American Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class, and Religious Lines to Change the Way We Live."

The theme for this year's conference workshops will be communications: getting the League's message to the public and to elected officials, as well as improving internal communications at all levels.

More details to come in our March newsletter. Location is the Hampton Inn and Suites, Wells, Maine. All League members are invited to attend.

Day at the Legislature

Another date to save is **Tuesday, April 5**, for LWVNH's annual Day at the Legislature, followed by our biennial Council meeting. Tour the state house in the morning, attend committee hearings with League board members to see your legislators in action, then meet in a Concord restaurant for lunch and debriefing, followed by a very short business meeting and report on what the League has been doing.

Just for fun League event:

If you like folk music, and especially Patty Griffin, Sara Watkins and Anaid Mitchell, come to a concert in the Music Hall, Portsmouth on **Friday, March 11**. This is part of a national concert tour organized by LWVUS, to promote voter registration and participation. LWVNH will be there with our voter information materials, but it's intended as a fun event.

For more details and to order tickets, visit the event website:
http://www.themusichall.org/calendar/event/on_stage_together_patty_griff_in_sara_watkins_anais_mitchell

- Liz Tentarelli, President

Table of Contents

President's Message...p.1

NH Primary Record Turnout...p.2.

Death Penalty in NH...p.2

NH Presidential Primaries Report...p.2, 3

LWVNH Greater Nashua Area Unit...p.2

Death Penalty in NH

The NH Senate will meet in session on **Thursday, March 3**, at 10 a.m. At that time the Senate will vote on SB463, to suspend the death penalty "until methods exist to ensure that the death penalty cannot be imposed on an innocent person." The League's national position is in opposition to the death penalty.

If you oppose having a death penalty in NH, now is the time to contact your state senator and urge a YES vote on March 3 on SB 463.

On the flip side: In mid-February a NH House committee held a hearing on HB1552, which would expand the crimes under which the death penalty could be imposed. One is terrorism, which is already a federal capital crime. We wait to hear the House committee's recommendation on that bill.

The League is a member of the **New Hampshire Coalition to Abolish the Death Penalty** Learn more at their website: <http://nodeathpenaltynh.org/>

LWVNH Greater Nashua Area Unit

Gwen Mikailov and Kim Muise have been elected co-chairs and Bernadette Halloran will be sending out communications to local members and friends of the Greater Nashua Area Unit. We're in the pre-planning stages for state legislature candidate forums to happen later this year (27 house seats and two senate seats are up for grabs in Nashua), and talking about voter registration drives. Members are also discussing developing a proposal for study and consensus on affordable housing and related issues.

The next member meeting is **March 8, 7 p.m.** at the Nashua Public Library (International Women's Day).

- Gwen Mikailov, LWVNH Greater Nashua Area

NH Primary Record Turnout

Hurray for all those voters who turned out on Feb. 9 to vote in the presidential primary. A total of 542,459 ballots were cast (about 6.5% of them absentee). Before the primary NH had 882,959 registered voters—so who didn't vote, in this most exciting primary? Hmmm.

Republicans cast 284,683 ballots, and Democrats cast 254,776 ballots. We're certainly a "purple" state.

NH Presidential Primaries Report

We're seeing the results of constantly changing voting laws and election procedures in NH – and they're not good. The NH Voting Rights Campaign, a coalition of nonpartisan voting rights organizations including the League, monitored a number of polling places during the primaries and found problems that are directly caused by the photo ID law, new election procedures and the lack of education for election officials and the public in regard to voting and elections.

College students in Plymouth were denied a ballot because a ballot clerk said only people with a NH driver's license could vote. Fortunately, one of the monitoring groups sent the students back in to vote. The Attorney General's office also sent a lawyer to speak to the election workers. The same problem came up in a ward in Dover. Both were examples of election workers who were not adequately trained. Despite those incidents, on February 18, the NH Senate voted down a bill the League supported to require the Secretary of State to provide adequate voting and elections education. http://www.lwvnh.org/files/sb_486_sos_voter_info_bill_testimony.pdf

In Manchester, workers were unable to get the new disabled access voting tablet to work and it was three hours before the Secretary of State sent someone to deal with the problem. Disabled rights groups are collecting information about other problems. The new system was chosen without input from those who are affected and then, implemented without adequate training to local election workers. The League has joined with other groups to try to get the Secretary of State to provide working disabled access voting for every election.

Merrimack was, once again, a disaster. In 2008, the town adopted one polling place for all 19,000 registered voters. In 2012, when the photo ID law went into effect, slower lines kept many people from being able to vote. Too many people with cars, meant people couldn't park - never mind get into the building to vote. This election, the line of cars leading to the polling place was three miles long when the polls closed. People in line at that moment were told they could vote but people who left the line and then came back to try again, weren't allowed to vote. Apologies from election officials after each election are not a substitute for the right to vote. Bedford had a similar problem.

The League supports smaller polling places to ensure that people have a chance to vote and bills to create standardized polling hours so people don't miss voting because they don't know when their local polls close. http://www.lwvnh.org/files/hb_1511_1-26-2016_polling_hours_testimony.pdf

In 2008, when many new voters turned out in NH, there were long registration lines but lines to get a ballot were still moving quickly. In 2012, when the first photo ID law went into effect, voters who had the correct form of photo ID took, on average, 60% longer to vote than they used to. Those without one of the required photo IDs took even longer to fill out an affidavit to get a ballot. With the new requirement to get a photo taken along with filling out an affidavit, it takes even longer but it appears that not many people had their photo taken. It's not clear whether this means people just didn't bother trying to vote.

Also causing slower lines are the constantly changing duties of ballot clerks. Some of the changes have nothing to do with record-keeping, like using a different color pen to mark down any out-of-state driver's license used for photo ID. This requirement was adopted at the instigation of the Secretary of State despite the fact that the NH Supreme Court ruled last spring that a citizen's right to vote cannot be dependent on the requirement to get a NH driver's license. The League was a plaintiff in the case. <http://www.courts.state.nh.us/supreme/opinions/2015/2015038guare.pdf>

Good news on election day was the decision from the Attorney General that people registering to vote didn't need to use affidavits. Some towns continued to use them but other towns were able to register people in a more efficient manner. Since everyone who uses a voter registration form has to sign a legal document attesting to the truth of the information they provide, affidavits don't provide any new information or legality. The League has always opposed affidavits because they are unnecessary and serve no purpose other than to complicate and slow down the process of registering to vote.

Most states have adopted online voter registration because it is a more secure system and allows easy, quick corrections to the checklist. The NH Campaign for Voting Rights is supporting a bill before the Legislature this year to adopt online voter registration in NH. http://www.lwvnh.org/files/sb_507-fn_lwv_supports_ovr_1-27-2015.pdf

The bottom line on voting in New Hampshire is that restrictions on the right to register to vote and restrictions on the ability for a citizen to get a ballot are becoming more and more complicated and time-consuming. The result is that citizens are losing their right to vote

- Joan Flood Ashwell, LWV Greater Capital Area