



NH Voter

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League of Women Voters New Hampshire

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President's message

LWVNH STUDY of EDUCATION IN NH UNDERWAY

In 1980, the League adopted a position regarding the provision of education in New Hampshire as part of its position on funding state government. Since then, legislative policies governing education have become a focus of bipartisan attention, and public attitudes regarding education appear to be undergoing significant change. Many foundational assumptions are facing challenges. There does not appear to be public consensus about the role of public education in our democracy. Given these realities, LWVNH members at convention in June 2017 voted to review, update and expand the League's 1980 position on the provision of education in New Hampshire. The study will begin with an historical account of the role of public education in New Hampshire.

The LWVNH Education Study will then focus on the following: equity in access to educational opportunities, financing, governance, accountability and outcomes, standards and guidelines, and school choice.

The school choice phase of the study will include an examination of alternatives to traditional public education such as charter schools, vocational education, magnet schools, home-schooling, private schools, vouchers and tuition tax credits, as well as the accountability, transparency, and quality of outcomes involved in these choices.

The study will be conducted in phases with work done by the state study steering committee and local League committees and reported to the membership at large in the NHVoter and on the LWVNH.org website. The first consensus meetings will be held in December or early January in time for action to be taken in the next session of the Legislature. The state board will arrange for mail-in or electronic participation in the consensus for those people unable to attend local meetings.

For those members living near a local unit, participation in the study meetings is one way to become better informed and directly involved. Meetings will be posted on the Calendar page of the LWVNH.org website. All members are encouraged to read the fact sheets that local and state study committees will produce as well as to learn more about education in their local areas. Fact sheets and background information will be posted on the Education Study page of the LWVNH.org website.

Liz Tentarelli, President

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Voter Registration Headaches

As we go to press, the state League board cannot discuss our recent work regarding the new voter registration impediments. A full report will come in our next NHVoter. For now we can share that the task of making voter registration procedures clear, in short simple form for potential voters, is daunting to say the least. When SB3 was passed in the NH Legislature last spring, the bill was 14 pages long and included multiple pages of the new voter registration forms. Different forms are to be used depending on whether one registers 30 days or more in advance of an election or on election day. Lists of proof of domicile documents are a strange mixture and include third party written letters that carry penalties for perjury. Failure to provide documents can result in thousands of dollars of fines. All of this is ostensibly to remove from the public's minds the suspicion of possible voter fraud.

In reality, this amounts to voter intimidation for many potential voters. If someone can't understand the legal wording of the registration form and signs a commitment to present forms in future that one may not have, the consequences can range from a letter from the Secretary of State to visits from law enforcement to substantial fines. Students, people who are in transitional housing or informal co-housing, people with disabilities who don't have domicile documents in their own names—these are among the potential voters who will be discouraged from even trying to register. They are also among the people who most need their vote to be their public voice. The new procedures are supposed to go into effect on September 8, just in time to create great confusion in our cities that hold local elections in the fall. The cities are also home to the most transient populations in our state, those people who need to register in their new districts.

When the voter photo ID law went into effect in 2012, League was able to explain it in simple terms, in both fliers and presentations around the state. For voter ID requirements, we were able to explain that if you couldn't supply one, you could still vote by signing a document stating you are who you claim to be. Sigh of relief all around. That is still true for voter ID. But the affidavit option for proof of where you live is now gone. Thus the problem League faces: how do we explain a complicated new requirement that some people will simply not be able to fulfill?
More on this topic to come.

LWVUS Council Report

President Liz Tentarelli and Vice-President Gwen Mikailov represented LWNH at the June meeting of League leaders in Washington DC. The intense four days were spent in workshops discussing the structural changes that are needed for the League heading into our centennial year in 2020. Gwen notes, "I think everyone is in agreement that these changes will be a welcome step toward system and process modernization. At the heart of these changes will (eventually) be a new centralized membership database, which will alleviate administrative burden on local and state leagues and allow us to focus more on 'program'. Other changes and issues that were central to our visioning sessions included the dire need to shift emphasis to fundraising for League expenses (rather than relying heavily on dues), consistent and cohesive cross-League messaging, and fostering communication and trust between the different leagues and levels."

Gwen continues, "While many overtly partisan 'competing' groups have popped up in the wave of activism following the election and the women's march, it's imperative that LWV continue to be the beacon and non-partisan standard-bearer for grass roots activism, good government and parliamentary process (forgive my

commercial interlude). The challenge remains: Attracting and retaining new members who can and want to do more than wave signs, getting them up to speed quickly on League process, empowering them to represent and be a public face for the League at whatever level they are working at (in other words, nationally-fueled energy implemented at the local level), and understanding how it's ALL important and ties together.”

To which Liz can only add, “We here in NH have been bending some rules in recent years to increase engagement in League, and I was pleased to be able to say to some of the suggestions from other states, ‘We’ve been doing that in NH for 5 years and it is working.’ The LWVNH board is ready for positive change.” More information will be coming from the national League’s board over the coming months. Stay tuned.

Dues sre Due Soon

In early September the League of Women Voters NH treasurer will mail out membership renewal notices. When yours comes, please mail your dues check so there is no lapse in your membership.

We’ve had strong growth in new membership since the start of 2017. For those new members, the dues you already submitted are all that are needed for this year.

For renewing members, we thank you very much for your continued support. The dues you pay support both state League work and national League work through the per-member-payment model. \$32 of each member’s dues are forwarded by our treasurer to LWV-US, where it is used for advocacy on the national level as well as support of 17 staff members who keep everything running.

Here in New Hampshire, dues paid by members in the greater Nashua area and the Peterborough Plus area are handled by the state treasurer, who also covers approved expenses of those units. The same will be true of the Seacoast unit when it gets organized. This model, which we in NH have been using for several years, was met with enthusiasm by other state Leagues at Council 2017. Nice to be in the forefront of change in League.

Although there was consensus among state leaders at Council 2017 that League should evolve to have less dependence on dues to fund our activities, for now we still need your dues. Keep a lookout for you notice in the mail.

News from Greater Nashua Unit

LWVNH Greater Nashua has remained active over the summer with its Observer Corps and is making preparations for the city’s “all nonpartisan” municipal elections this fall. The November 7th ballots will include positions for twelve ward aldermen and aldermen-at-large (Nashua’s “city council”), four Board of Education seats, Board of Public Works and Fire Commissioner.

Lurking at the bottom of the ballot are Ward Moderators, Clerks and Selectmen: Nashua has 45 elected ELECTIONS officials, in addition to our appointed Board of Registrars, the City Clerk and her staff, and the dozens of volunteers recruited to oversee the city’s nine ward polling stations at each election. Recruiting candidates to fill these positions is a challenge, as duties are vaguely written, there is no recruitment plan specified in the city charter (leaving it to parties and interest groups to recruit for these nonpartisan positions), not to mention that it can be confusing to people who have relocated to Nashua from New Hampshire towns, where these terms may mean something very different. We are beginning efforts to rectify this lack of clarity, as we would like to be able to better educate the public about what exactly they are voting for and why it matters.

We are excited to be partnering with the Nashua Public Library and the Nashua Telegraph for a series of five candidate forums (dates on the Calendar page of LWVNH.org website). This may be the first time in many years where ward residents will be invited to engage with their ward alderman candidates in a structured setting. Members Sherry Dutzy and Jean Lewandowski have prepared a series of articles about Nashua’s local elections, which will be printed in the Nashua Telegraph in the weeks leading up to the election. The first article is slated to be published on Sunday, August 13th, and will accompany a Telegraph editorial about the importance local elections. We may even make it “below the fold”!

News from LWV Kearsarge/Sunapee Area

The LWV of the Kearsarge/Sunapee Area will hold its annual Pot Luck Dinner on Wednesday, September 20, at the Meeting House in the New London Historical Society, from 5 to 7 PM. The guest speaker will be Dan Vallone of Reaching Higher NH. He will address aspects of the League's new study on education. A donation of \$5 is requested and please bring a dish to share. Members, friends and spouses, and potential members are welcome!

The local League's education study committee will meet on Tuesdays, August 15 and 31, at 10 am at 28 Hilltop Place in New London. Call Pat Rodgers for directions if needed. The group welcomes new League members who want to participate in the study.

The next local League's board meeting is Thursday, Sept. 7, 10 AM at Hilltop House. League members are welcome at all board meetings.

Reminder that dues notices were mailed in July. If you haven't yet paid, please send your dues to LWVKS, POBox 660, New London NH 03257. We value your membership and don't want it to lapse. Your dues support the important work of the local, state, and national Leagues.

Peterboro Plus Unit Up and Running

Our newest League members in the greater Peterborough area are meeting monthly, have already prepared a Know Your Elected Officials to be distributed in the area towns, and are eager to do more League work. Anyone interested in finding out more should come to a meeting (check the Calendar page of LWVNH.org) or contact the steering committee via email at LWVpboroplus@gmail.com

Seacoast Unit

Board member Janet Doyle and several other League members in the Portsmouth area are working on some "Meet the League" events in the Seacoast. Spread the word to friends in that area that a unit is soon to become a reality. Contact Janet for more information.

Sad news:

We note with sadness the passing of long-time League member from the Kearsarge/Sunapee area Eddi Mordecai of New London on July 22, 2017. Eddi was a loyal League member for many years, serving on the incarceration study committee in 2009-2012 and never failing to remind people of the importance of rehabilitation for women offenders. In spite of health issues including reduced vision, she wanted to keep abreast of the news and League activities; she enjoyed having people read newspapers and the NHVoter to her. Eddi will be missed.