

The NH Voter - the newsletter of the state League December 2018

Summing up the Nov. 2018 election news:

Young people are voting! NH Public Radio on November 10 reported significant increases in areas around New Hampshire's college campuses. More than 50 percent more ballots were cast this year in Durham, as well as in Keene's first ward, as compared to the last midterm election in 2014. Those precincts are home to the University of New Hampshire and Keene State College, respectively.

Groups like NextGen America worked for months at UNH, Keene State, Plymouth State University and Dartmouth College to register students. (League also participated in voter information sessions at some colleges.)

Voting was up 31 percent in Hanover (home to Dartmouth) and 37 percent in Plymouth, again over 2014 levels.

Some students said they were also independently motivated to vote by recent changes in voting laws in New Hampshire, which they perceive as a threat to young voters.

Overall, voter turnout was up about 17 percent statewide.

Diversity: Last session, in the 400 members NH House, there were just 23 state representatives under the age of 35.

Democrats and Republicans say there will be almost double that next session: 42 representatives under the age of 40 [including 19 year old college student Cassandra Levesque, who fought in the last session for raising the marriage age in NH]. This more diverse legislature also includes the first black state senator, Melanie Levesque of Brookline, and the first former refugee in the House, Safiya Mazir of Concord.

Final election stats in NH as of December 1, 2018:

580,214 voters cast ballots in NH, a midterm election record.

Recounts are now completed, with only two House districts changing in the recount. Don't ever say one vote doesn't matter...in Laconia (Belknap district 3), the recount gave the fourth state rep seat to the Republican by just one vote! In Hillsboro District 5, the flip in the recount gave the Democrat the seat by just 8 votes.

When the legislative session begins in January, the NH Senate will have 14 Democrats and 10 Republicans (exactly opposite the numbers from the past two years). The NH House will have 233 Democrats and 167 Republicans. The Executive Council shifts from a 3-2 Republican majority to a 3-2 Democrat majority.

What about the Libertarians in NH? Jilletta Jarvis, the Libertarian candidate for Governor, failed to reach the 4% required for the party to retain ballot access (She got 1.46%). You probably noticed the Libertarians were on the 2018 ballot, the first time in about 20 years, because they had received over 4% of the vote in the 2016 election. As far as we can see, no Libertarians per se were elected in NH in 2018, unless they were running as Democrats or Republicans. (If that is an error, please let League know.)

Both ballot questions passed by over 80%, will become part of the NH Constitution.

NH House and Senate leadership: this won't be news, if you've been following the media. But to sum up, the House and Senate have chosen the following:

House Speaker Steve Shurtleff (D. from Penacook)

House Minority Leader Dick Hinch (R. from Merrimack)

Senate President Donna Soucy (D. from Manchester)

Senate Majority Leader Dan Feltes (D. from Concord)

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Morse (R. from Salem, the previous Senate President)

Secretary of State: When the legislature met on Dec. 5, official voting for the NH Secretary of State took place, the first time in decades that has been a strongly contested race. Each representative and senator cast one vote. Vote was 209-205; Bill Gardner will serve his 43rd year.

National news – from LWV comes the following good news following the November election:

Voters Crack Down on Gerrymandering

In states across the country, the League worked to put the power to draw lines in the hands of the people, not politicians.

Michigan voters passed [Proposal 3](#), transferring the responsibility of drawing districts to an independent redistricting commission, as well as expanding access to the polls. It also allows for same-day voter registration, as NH does.

Colorado voters passed two amendments, creating independent redistricting commissions and setting clear criteria that prohibit gerrymandering in that state.

Missouri passed an amendment that will [increase transparency](#) in the legislature, close lobbying loopholes, and lower contribution limits for legislative candidates. It will also ensure that political parties are not given an unfair advantage when it comes to drawing legislative maps through the appointment of an independent demographer.

On a slightly different topic:

Floridians voted to restore voting rights to the 1.4 million people who have served their time for a felony conviction—the most number of people re-enfranchised at once since the 1965 passage of the Voting Rights Act. (NH has been restoring voting rights to felons upon completion of their incarceration for many years.)

Upcoming meetings and events:

From the new steering committee in the Greater Nashua unit:

Please come join us!

We'll be meeting at the Nashua Public Library again. Every 3rd Thursday of the month starting on January 17th. Downstairs, from 7 to 9 pm.

There's a mayoral race, new voter law for students starting next summer, and important elections in 2020. The public deserves accurate voting information, AND we have a big 100th birthday in 2020. Learn how to protect our right to vote and make sure everyone eligible gets to vote. Let's get moving forward with an active Greater Nashua League of Women Voters unit.

Joanne Emus, Kate Welsh and Emily Caswell

In the Mt. Washington Valley area:

The unit is going to try a lunch-time meeting for its January meeting, in hopes of drawing in some new people. The public is welcome to join League members on Tuesday, Jan. 22 at noon, at the North Conway Community Center. The Honorable Karen Umberger, former state representative from Carroll county district 2, longtime member of the House Finance Committee and chair of the Education Funding and Adequacy Study Committee for the past two years, will talk about school funding.

This is a brown bag lunch meeting--bring your lunch and your questions.

The public is very welcome. Hosted by the League of Women Voters NH Mt. Washington Valley unit

In the Atkinson/Plaistow area of southern NH:

First meeting of what members hope will become an active local unit is planned for January. Guests from the LWVNH board will explain the ins and outs of the NH Legislature, how the public can influence legislation at various stages. The group will also discuss ways to interact more with local legislators. Members and potential members welcome! Come learn more about League.

Please check the Calendar page of LWVNH.org for date, time, and place.

In the greater Peterborough area: Meeting with several state representatives from the area, first in a series. January 24, 7 pm, Peterborough Town Library. Public welcome! Reps invited include Vann, Leishman, Balch, and Bosman. (March meeting in Dublin, with reps from 5 other towns.)

Report from the PeterboroughPlus unit:

We had a busy and productive fall.

- In October, we held a Candidate Forum in Jaffrey. We invited all 23 candidates running for the House of Representatives (Libertarian, Republican and Democrat) and 14 came. We knew we would have a large group so we followed the “candi-dating” structure outlined in the LWVNH *Guide to Organizing and Moderating Candidate Forums*. We had great support from our co-sponsor, the Monadnock Ledger-Transcript. Turnout was not huge (about 35-40 in all, including our LWV) but that was okay. Those who came were enthusiastic, as were the candidates. We learned a lot, and will continue to hold these forums.

- Voter outreach: We did a number of things to Get Out The Vote.

Tabled at *RISE Rally* (Historic Day of Climate Action), September 8, in Keene. Lots of activity. Voter information (how to identify and contact your legislators, how to register to vote). We used the Student Info Brochures developed by LWVNH.

Tabled at Women’s Empowerment Rally, October 27, Keene State College. We gave out voter information and also the LWVNH explanation paper on the state-wide ballot initiatives.

Tabled at Franklin Pierce University, Constitution Day Candidates Fair, September 10. This was a great opportunity for LWV presence! And led to...

Peterborough Plus members returning to FPU October 16 and 17 to help out with very active student voter registration efforts. (Amy W, Gary R, Emily C—with excellent support from Kristen Nevios, Director of the Marlin Fitzwater Center for Communication. We are really excited to have solidified this connection)

Amy and Gary also went to New England College and had a great day doing voter outreach with the college students there.

We satisfied requests for 50 Student Voting Brochures for Con Val HS and a smaller number for Conant High School.

- Upcoming. Next general meeting in January (Date TBD shortly.) Updating “Know Your Elected Officials Brochure.” Adding Rindge and Fitzwilliam to our unit. Plan a series of “Meet Your Elected Officials” events, probably inviting legislators to our regular meetings to tell us what is going on in Concord and allow give-and-take with constituents on a more frequent basis. There seems to be interest in this idea.

Submitted by Kate Coon, Chair

New on our website: The LWVNH—Mt Washington Valley unit has an active Observer Corps. Their reports will now be found on their own page of our website. Check it out:

<http://lwvnh.org/MWV.html>

(and to other units—we can set you up with your own page, too!)

Coming up in 2019:

Starting after the new year—our weekly Legislative Alerts will be sent by email on Friday afternoons or maybe Saturday, depending on how many bills and hearings are on the NH Legislature’s Calendars. We send these to members and to others who request them.

League will highlight bills that reflect our priorities of election law and public education, but we will also try to list important bills of broad public interest. If we miss some, we apologize. If the news of a Tuesday hearing on a bill you care about doesn’t get to you until Saturday, we apologize but explain that all we can do is find the scheduled hearings in the weekly Calendars on Friday morning, and they rarely list bill hearings further out than the coming week.

League would love to have designated members following some other important bills on which we have positions: environmental policy, energy, healthcare, housing, judiciary, public safety...and of course the new state budget. Please let a board member know if you want to take on the challenge of following a particular topic and reporting back to the board! Just a reminder that in NH all League members and League board members are doing this as volunteers—we have no paid lobbyists or staff! So your help is greatly appreciated.

Priority: In the 2019 session, League will support several bills being developed right now to establish an Independent Redistricting Commission, as one important step to end gerrymandering. The NH League has had a position supporting an independent commission since 2005, and the national League developed a position several years ago. This will be a major effort in the coming months, and we will call on League members to contact their legislators at the right times to urge passage of the bills.

An article in the Concord Monitor on Dec. 1 explains more about the redistricting bills, and can be found on the League’s “Hot Legislation” page with comments added by League. Here is the link to that article: http://lwvnh.org/files/redistricting_commission_bills_coming_2019.pdf

A book recommendation-- from League board member Janet Ward:

[Democracy in Chains: The Deep History of the Radical Right’s Stealth Plan for America](#) by Nancy MacLean, the William H. Chafe Professor of History and Public Policy at Duke University. (Published in 2017 by Penguin Random House and available in paperback)

“A young friend with whom I canvassed during this political season handed me this book and told me that I had to read it to understand current political reality here in the United States. She was right. The author is Prof. Nancy MacLean. While researching reaction to the Supreme Court’s 1954 Brown v. Board of Education decision, she chanced upon the archives of James McGill Buchanan, a political economist whose work and long association with Charles Koch laid the foundation for a network of conservative think tanks and organizations like ALEC, the American Legislative Exchange Council.

The newspaper “The Guardian” describes this book as “the missing chapter: a key to understanding the politics of the past half century.” Here is the publisher’s description of Democracy in Chains: “A piercing examination of the Right’s relentless campaign to eliminate unions, suppress voting, privatize public education, stop action on climate change, and alter the Constitution.” Overly alarmist? Read the book, consider what Professor MacLean has discovered, and decide for yourself.” *Janet Ward*

Does anyone have a book recommendation to share focusing on another side? If so, send it along for the next newsletter. You may contact us via our website’s Contact Us page.

Sad news: Long time League member **Mary Epremian** passed away on Nov. 7, 2018. She lived in Sunapee until 2015, then in New London until her death at the age of 93.

Mary became the first woman in her family to attend college, earning a degree in physics from Western College for Women in Oxford, Ohio, where she developed a lifelong interest in art and ceramics in addition to the sciences. Although few women pursued careers in physics in the 1940s, Mary was soon hired by General Electric in Schenectady, NY where she participated in laboratory research involving nuclear isotopes. It was there that she met her future husband Edward Epremian, a metallurgist (who also became a League member). Mary and Ed were married in 1949, and remained together until his death in 2014.

In the late 1960s, Mary earned a masters degree in education and taught middle school science for a brief time.

Throughout her life, Mary was highly accomplished in the arts. She taught pottery and ceramics at the Hudson River Museum and maintained a professional pottery studio in her home. She was also an accomplished painter, studying oil, acrylic and watercolor until late in her life and occasionally entering her works in local exhibitions. An avid gardener, Mary created a splendid flower garden in her Sunapee backyard. Bouquets filled her home from spring to fall, and for many years she delighted in bringing a weekly arrangement to Sunapee’s Abbott Library. She also supplied floral table arrangements for the local League’s annual September potluck suppers for many years.

Mary had a strong commitment to supporting democracy and progressive causes. She was an active member of the League of Women Voters from the 1950s on, serving on the LWVKS board in the 1990s and early 2000s. She supported efforts to end the Vietnam War in the 1960s and 1970s, and was an early member of the local advocacy group Ladies Left of Center. She also supported literacy through her support of local libraries, and enjoyed her book club until just weeks before her death.

Another loss for the League in the Kearsarge/Sunapee area is the passing of **Richard Haines** on Nov. 23. Richard was a League member for several years, and his wife, Janet Miller Haines, is the membership director on the LWVK/S board.

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Members may send League news and items of interest to LWVNewHampshire@gmail.com