



## League of Women Voters New Hampshire

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## January 2015

### President's Message

Board member Peg Fargo has her email signature line set up to include this anonymous quotation:

“You can't sit and wait for the storm to be over; you've got to learn how to dance in the rain.”

Maybe the time is now for all of us—voters and public officials—to learn the Rainy Rumba or Watery Waltz.

A new state legislature is starting its work, as is a new Congress. Less than two months from now most towns will hold town meeting and make important decisions about the future. Do we let our concerns slide, “waiting for the economy to improve” or watching partisan bickering impede progress? In a word...no. As voters we can urge our elected officials at all levels to make the right decisions for a better quality of life for everyone.

Elsewhere in this newsletter and at <http://www.lwvnh.org/> are suggestions for how and when to contact your elected representatives on issues you care about. Legislators may be the ones in the spotlight on the dance floor, but we should certainly be doing our jigs and tangos, rain or not, in the aisles, clicking our heels loudly enough to be heard.

Of course as I write this fat white flakes are coming down outside my window...

Liz Tentarelli, co-president

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## **The Time to Act is NOW**

Your calls and emails to your elected officials can make a difference, and the time to act in New Hampshire is now. Between now and March 26, all bills originating in either the NH House or NH Senate must be acted upon by that body or they die. If they pass in either body, they move on after March 26 to the other body for consideration and a vote. If they pass there, the bills move to the Governor's desk by late June for her to sign or veto.

Here's the process in a nutshell:

Bills are sent to an appropriate committee for discussion. The committee members make a recommendation to the entire House or the entire Senate. The recommendation can be Ought to Pass, Inexpedient to Legislate (that would kill the bill), or Referred for Further Study. The House or Senate vote will either agree or disagree with the committee's recommendation.

It is when bills are being heard by their appropriate committee in public hearings that public comments will be heard or read, and that's where League comes in. When a bill comes up that meets one of our priorities and on which we have a clear position, one of our board members or a designee gives testimony in committee hearings. But a phone call or letter from constituents to those committee members is also important. League members and friends can be a big help. If someone on that committee is known to you or is your elected representative or senator, let that official know your views. Tell him or her why that bill is important. Ask for your representative's vote (either in support or in opposition—depends on the bill so be sure you know what the bill would do if passed).

How to find out when bills are being heard? Either check our ["Hot Legislation"](#) page where we post the next week's hearing calendar, or send an email to Sally Davis ( [sally.davis36@gmail.com](mailto:sally.davis36@gmail.com) ) to get her weekly email with the same information.

How to see the actual text of a bill, whether you know the bill's number or not? Visit the NH.gov website, specifically the page where you can do a bill search: [http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill\\_status/](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/bill_status/)

You can find the phone numbers and emails of your representatives and senators at the "Who's My Legislator?" page of NH.gov: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/members/housemembers.html>

For Senate committee members go to this page: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/Senate/committees.aspx>

For House committee members: [www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/committees/standingcommittees.aspx](http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/house/committees/standingcommittees.aspx)

Last year League prepared a 2-page flyer, "How a Bill Becomes a Law - With Public Input," emphasizing the various stages at which public input can be most effective. That flyer is on our LWVNH.org website, on our [Advocacy Tips page](#), and we happily give permission for printing and distribution to any groups that you think might make good use of the information. It comes in a color version and a black/on/white version, whichever you prefer. Print it, share it, use it; make YOUR views known.

## **Legislation We're Following:**

Bills are still being written and assigned to committees, so check the NH.gov website information in the article on page 2 to find bill numbers and text. Here are some of the bills LWVNH will be following:

**Education**-a bill proposing civics requirement to graduate, a couple about local school board and state school board responsibilities and one that addresses calculating the cost of adequacy.

**Banking**-revision of banking and credit union laws (opportunity for green bank possibility)

**Health** - bills dealing with the end of life and the beginning of life, contraception coverage.

**Energy**-several bills that have to do with energy infrastructure corridors, energy efficiency districts, energy efficiency implementation and caps on privately financed projects for energy efficiency and clean energy.

**Expanded Gambling** - A proposal for a casino will start in the Senate again and the expectation is a bill will be voted in the Senate just before Crossover. No bill exists in public as of this newsletter. We would like to stop it in the Senate but can't count on that. We continue to be active in the coalition which is reaching out to new legislators.

-- For more information on these bills, contact Sally Davis: [sally.davis36@gmail.com](mailto:sally.davis36@gmail.com)

**Election Law** - There are several bills to redefine the definition of domicile for voting purposes. The League opposes these attempts to prevent certain citizens from voting, especially college students, the homeless and people who have recently moved to NH. We are supporting a bill to remove the provision in the photo ID law to take mug shots of people who don't have a photo ID when they try to vote. We also support a bill to allow anyone to vote absentee and a bill to make the governor's term of office, four years.

-- For more information, contact Joan Flood Ashwell: [jfashwell@comcast.net](mailto:jfashwell@comcast.net)

**Women's Prison** - There are bills in both the House and the Senate dealing with the women's prison and women offenders.

-- For more information, contact Peg Fargo: [pfargo@hotmail.com](mailto:pfargo@hotmail.com)

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## **Day at the Legislature**

Our annual attempt to gather members for a day at the NH legislature is being revamped this year. Rather than trying to gather everyone together on one day and face the problems of winter and spring weather and the short notice we have for when our priority bills will be heard, we're inviting League members to join us throughout the Legislative session.

If you would be interested in visiting the state house and attending a legislative committee hearing (sometime in February or March, most likely), please send us an email telling us what topics you would most like to hear discussed in legislative hearings. We will track when relevant bills are heard, then invite you to Concord to attend a hearing or two with board members.

With any luck, several people will have the same topics of interest and we can get a group to attend together, with a briefing beforehand and perhaps lunch or snack afterwards. We could also spend a bit of time looking at the new portraits in the Capitol, where we hope to have Marilla Marks Young Ricker displayed before the end of 2015.

Interested? Send an email to Liz Tentarelli at [LWV@kenliz.net](mailto:LWV@kenliz.net). Be sure to include a phone number so we can contact you when bills relevant to your interests come up.

## **"Know Your Elected Officials"**

The LWV of the Kearsarge/Sunapee Area has just published their new "Know Your Elected Officials" brochure, which is available as a pdf file ready to print and fold, at: <http://www.lwvnh.org/Publications.html>

The brochure includes contact information (phone numbers, emails, and mailing addresses) of the people who represent the 13 towns in the area (Andover, Bradford, Danbury, Grantham, Newbury, New London, Salisbury, Springfield, Sunapee, Sutton, Warner, Webster, and Wilmot) in the NH House and NH Senate, the US House and Senate, and the Governor and President. Town websites and town office phone numbers are also in the brochure.

Paper copies will be distributed to the town offices and libraries in the area towns by LWVKS board members, as a voter service.

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## **Congress 2015**

A survey reported in early January asked the public how they effective they think the new Congress will be. "More effective", "less effective", or "about the same" were the possible answers. Sadly, nearly 50 % answered "about the same."\* Considering that over 80% of people surveyed late in 2014 disapproved of the last Congress's performance, this prediction does not bode well.\*\*

To hold our elected Congress accountable, we need to let them hear from us. Below are the Washington DC and NH office phone numbers and the websites (through which you can send emails) of New Hampshire's US Senators and Representatives. The information is also available on the Hot Legislation and Elections pages of LWVNH.org.

- Senator Kelly Ayotte (202) 224-3324 [www.ayotte.senate.gov](http://www.ayotte.senate.gov) Manchester NH office: 622-7979
- Senator Jeanne Shaheen (202) 224-2841 [www.shaheen.senate.gov](http://www.shaheen.senate.gov) Manchester NH office: 647-7500
- Representative Frank Guinta (district 1) (202) 225-5456 [www.guinta.house.gov](http://www.guinta.house.gov) Manchester NH office: 641-9536
- Representative Ann McLane Kuster (district 2) (202) 225-5206 [www.kuster.house.gov](http://www.kuster.house.gov) Concord NH office: 226-1002

\*I'm sorry I'm not enough of a political wonk to have written down the news network reporting nor the group that conducted this poll. It was reported on a morning TV news show the first week of January.

\*\*Gallup poll data

-- Liz Tentarelli

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## **Nominations, please...**

Your state board would like to have more people, either as board members or in off-board positions, guiding the work of the League. We could use people to help grow membership (mentoring from LWVUS is part of this), to track legislation on a topic of League concern and report to the board, to organize League events, to represent LWVNH at coalition meetings, to write short articles for our newsletter and to write Letters to the Editor.

Our board meets monthly at our Concord office, but off-board members need not come to every meeting. If you would like to be more involved and thus keep LWVNH a vital part of our political landscape, please call or email any board member for more discussion of possibilities that fit your interests and schedule.

## **Big Money = Bad Politics**

The issue of big money in political campaigns is not a new one, but it is one that the League of Women Voters and many ordinary citizens are seeing as more and more serious. Interesting background information and proposed solutions can be found at the **EveryVoice.org** website <http://everyvoice.org>. A spokesperson for the organization recently commented "...our campaign finance system is more loophole than law these days." How sad that this rings so true.

Every Voice supports two bills:

"...legislation like Congressman John Sarbanes Government By the People Act (HR 20). Instead of relying on Wall Street executives and lobbyists for campaign contributions, participating candidates could rely on their constituents back home. ...and the companion Fair Elections Now Act (S. 2023) in the Senate, are modeled on successful small donor systems in effect in cities and states across the country. In places like Connecticut, Maine, and New York City, hundreds of candidates have been able to run and win competitive campaigns for office by relying on a blend of small donations and public matching funds."

Another national group (that got started in 1971 by Ralph Nader) advocating for tighter spending limits is **Public Citizen** (go to [www.citizen.org](http://www.citizen.org)). This is a multi-issue organization, easily scrolled to find issues you might care about in addition to campaign financing.

On the local level, the LWVNH is part of the **Coalition for Open Democracy** working to effect change in NH. That group is supporting the **NH Rebellion's** work to make campaign financing a key issue in the Presidential primary. This from their [website](#) explains "Utilizing the presidential primary as a launching pad, Open Democracy's NH Rebellion campaign will stage mass-participation walks, candidate bird-dogging, and grassroots mobilization to make money in politics a leading bipartisan issue in 2016. Inspired by the "rebellion" clause in the state constitution, NHR citizen activists will challenge the presidential candidates to declare independence from special interests and commit to ending the system of corruption in Washington."

Finally members should be aware that the **League of Women Voters** has long had campaign financing as one its core concerns and is active right now lobbying for the Federal Elections Commission to actually do its supervisory work. Information can be found on the LWV.org [webpage](#) giving the history of the League's involvement, including the League's official position:

*"Statement of Position on Campaign Finance, as Announced by National Board, January 1974 and Revised March 1982:*

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the methods of financing political campaigns should ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and allow maximum citizen participation in the political process. *This position is applicable to all federal campaigns for public office — presidential and congressional, primaries as well as general elections. It also may be applied to state and local campaigns."*

## **What You Can Do...**

League members can get action alerts from LWVUS regarding bills affecting campaign financing by signing up for the short, weekly e-letter from LWVUS. Do so by signing up for the weekly emails at: <http://lww.org/get-involved> Then call or write your Congressional representatives—take action!

## **What League Means to Me**

After several League board members shared their stories of what Leagues means to them in the December, we received emails from other members telling us their stories.

From **Karen Davies**, former League member in Greater Capital Area and now in Kearsarge/Sunapee area:

"I've had an interest in politics since I was 17 and was secretary for the NH Democrat Committee (at 4 Park St. where League office is now) when John W. King was governor and Tom McIntyre was senator. My Dad got me the job. Even appeared in some Concord Monitor photos back then."

From **Linn Harwell**, member of LWV Kearsarge/Sunapee and former NH board member:

"It was 1980 when I joined LWV of Allentown, PA. Disputes over reproductive rights were on fire. The expected president was anti-choice. There were 5 with the same position...only one abandoned LWV. I became president, and called every one of the 5. If the League did anything for me, it was to appreciate others who do not agree with me. I was elected to the Board of LWVPA, becoming its Membership Director. Moving in retirement to Southampton, NY, its League was informed of my arrival. It had 51 members, and a board whose ages averaged 81. I asked to be appointed and assumed the Membership portfolio. On moving to NH, I was given a send-off with 100 members present and I was elected to The National Women's Wall of Fame in Seneca Falls, NY."

*Board Note: Linn has always had expanding League membership at heart. She was prone to ask us "Do you have your membership brochures in your purse?" and she herself was seen passing one along to a woman she met in line at the grocery store.*

From **Alice Krasner**, our oldest League member in NH: Alice is 102, and she enjoys getting our "NHVoter." Her daughter sent us a lovely note after reading the December Voter with Alice. It includes the following:

"[Alice] follows current events and is pleased the League continues the fight for citizen access to the polls and a civil, informative campaign process....From joining the League in Quincy MA in the '40s to the present day, the League is dear to her."

*Board note: Alice was a long-time active member of the LWV Manchester local League and is fondly remembered by many in the area for her thoughtful and firmly stated discussion participation.*

What does League mean to you? How did you get involved? Tell us **YOUR** story. Send via email to [LWV@kenliz.net](mailto:LWV@kenliz.net)