



## League of Women Voters New Hampshire

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**January 2017**

**website: [LWVNH.org](http://LWVNH.org)**

### President's message

#### From the President's Desk:

So many bills, so little time. I've been told the NH Legislature will consider more than 800 bills this session. Clearly League can't (and shouldn't) be following them all. So here are our priorities, as decided by the LWVNH board at its January meeting:

We will push strongly for the adoption of an independent redistricting commission and are submitting testimony on January 18. Update next month on this issue.

We will work on election law bills with our Voting Rights group, an informal coalition. Some proposed bills are merely to correct laws already deemed unconstitutional (a good thing). Some are rehashed from earlier ones (a mixed bag). Some are procedural (that's just the way government works). Text of some bills we are concerned about is not yet available, but we are watching.

Funding for the women's prison and increased staffing is also a League priority. We will attend Finance committee meetings on this topic.

At this time we don't have anyone on the board who is an expert on education, but we will try to alert our members about important education committee hearings as they come up. Volunteer, anyone, to track this for us?

We are excited to be asked by several newly formed groups in various parts of NH to help them understand how the legislature works and how citizens can have impact on legislators' decisions. See a brief description and link to a chart elsewhere here. And our enthusiastic "Go for it!" to those groups.

**Liz Tentarelli, President**

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## How Bills Become Law and How the Public Can Influence the Process

The League has begun sending out legislative alerts regarding bills in the NH legislature. We may tell you there's a hearing coming up on a bill of interest, or we may tell you that the committee hearing the bill has made its recommendation and ask you to call your state senator or representative to make your views known. For those who aren't familiar with the whole process of how bills go through the legislature, here's the simple version:

Let's assume we're talking about a Senate bill (designated SB and a number). A Senate committee (usually 5 people) hears testimony on a bill that falls under their category. They take a vote among themselves (not always according to party lines, but often) and make their recommendation to the whole Senate (24 members), which then votes on the bill within a couple of weeks. For some pro forma bills, especially bills with a unanimous recommendation, the whole Senate is very likely to just follow the committee's recommendation and vote the way they suggest. But on major bills, a flurry of phone calls or emails from a particular senator's constituents would, at the least, get him to think carefully about how s/he should vote or, in some cases, change his/her mind because the constituents mostly want him/her to vote a particular way.

The same process is followed in the House on bills that originate there (HB and a number), but the committees are larger, about 22 people each.

If a bill makes it through its body of origin, the process is repeated in the other body (Senate bills go to House, House to Senate). Only after a bill is passed in both Senate and House would it go to the Governor to sign (or to veto). If it's defeated in either House, it's dead for the session.

If that's all clear as mud, here is a link to a chart on the LWVNH.org website that shows the process graphically, with everything in blue showing how citizens can affect the legislative process at various stages. [http://lwvnh.org/files/how\\_bill\\_become\\_law\\_revised.pdf](http://lwvnh.org/files/how_bill_become_law_revised.pdf)

## **National Summary**

League of Women Voters of the United States issued a summary on Dec. 22, 2016, of the work done by the national organization and local and state Leagues nationwide during the past year. Lawsuits to protect voting rights in a number of states, Calls to Action to affect federal regulations, and Get-Out-The-Vote efforts all had an impact. The document is at the top of the list on the Publications page of LWVNH.org. <http://lwvnh.org/Publications.html>

## **Counties Count Too**

Sometimes it comes as a little surprise when newly elected NH House members find out they are also part of their county delegations, responsible for overseeing county budgets. A December op ed in the Concord Monitor by Merrimack county representatives Dianne Schuett (Pembroke) and David Luneau (Hopkinton) summed up some of the activities at the county level.

Of particular interest to League is the renovation of the unused old Merrimack county jail in Boscawen, known as the McKenna Building (the building is adjacent to the current county jail). It “is being renovated and redeveloped to serve as a community corrections center. This facility is expected to be completed in 2017 and will allow approximately 70 inmates, males and females, to access treatment, counseling and work-release programs, and provide those incarcerated with an opportunity to become responsible citizens. The delegation has strong hopes that this will be an effective tool to work with offenders who have substance abuse and mental health disorders, and will help them to be more successful when they return to our communities.”

The community corrections center is modeled on the highly successful center in Sullivan county, which League members visited several months after its opening in 2010. Superintendent Ross Cunningham oversaw development of the Sullivan county program, and he is now superintendent of Merrimack County Corrections Department. He brings both enthusiasm and experience to the community corrections program being developed for Merrimack county.

The program includes intensive work on substance abuse issues and mental health, educational and vocational opportunities, and job skills preparation to help offenders find jobs in the community. When offenders are ready they are assisted in finding jobs, but it doesn't end there. They are expected to report on a regular basis for support sessions that help reduce recidivism. The results in Sullivan county, if replicated in Merrimack, will mean more offenders becoming wage-earning productive members of society upon release and more families staying intact.

## NH's First Two Female Legislators

The ink was barely dry on the Nineteenth Amendment, making women's right to vote the law of the land, when two New Hampshire women decided to run for the NH House. On August 26, 1920, their right to vote (hence their right to run for elective office, they assumed) became official, but that was too late to file for state representative in the primaries. So they each ran a write-in campaign and won. They ran listed on the ballots in the November general election and again won. But it wasn't that simple. The National Women's History Museum website reports that "some of the state's leaders questioned whether the right to vote also meant that women had the right to hold office. Lawmakers quickly arranged a referendum on the subject in March of 1921, and voters confirmed the right of women to hold office by 30,285 to 24,142. This, however, was short of the two-thirds requirement that New Hampshire had for constitutional amendments – a technicality that lawmakers apparently decided to ignore. The two women were seated." Here is a little bit more about each—and in truly non-partisan League tradition, they were members of different parties.

Jessie A. Doe (1887-1943) came to politics naturally: her father, Charles Doe, was the Chief Justice of the New Hampshire Supreme Court, and her brother Haven served in the House, Senate, and as a mayor of Somersworth. Jessie served as a Republican from Rollinsfield for one term (1920-1922), took a break to devote to mountain climbing, European travel, running the family farm, and civic activities ranging from the League of Women Voters to the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen. In 1930 she ran for the House again, this time in an apparent tie with the Democratic incumbent. After a review of the election results, the Republican-dominated House seated her. She continued with her numerous civic and philanthropic endeavors for many years. A residence hall at UNH was named for her in 1964.

Dr. Mary Louise (Rolfe) Farnum (1870-1965) was a young widow when she entered the male-dominated field of medicine. She went to Boston University School of Medicine and received her MD in 1900. She practiced in Connecticut until the failing health of her parents called her back to NH. In 1920 Farnum ran as a Democrat from Penacook and Boscawen. The district was considered Republican, and she defeated a well-know Republican incumbent. "The vote was 264 to 27, to be exact," according a Boston Herald article for which she was interviewed in December of 1920. This was to be her only term in the NH House, but in 1922 three other women were elected to the House, and two years later over a dozen women were serving. Like Jessie Doe, Mary Farnum was active her entire life in civic activities, including serving on the school board and the Red Cross.

An article in NH Magazine (Nov. 2012) by Rick Broussard quotes the NH Governor (not sure which one) during the struggle for women's right to vote as saying, "We should remember that participation of woman in public affairs always tends to draw her interest away from her most sacred duty, that of homemaking.... When woman wants the ballot, no honest, intelligent man will withhold it from her. The lack of interest among women in securing the ballot is not so much from failure to recognize its value as from a true appreciation of their present exalted position in the homes of the Nation." Clearly he didn't count on Jessie Doe and Dr. Mary Farnum finding their way to the NH House just a few years later.

Rep. Rennie Cushing is sponsoring a bill in the NH House this year to honor these two women with a portrait in the State House. It will be a fitting tribute not only to them but also to all the women who have served and continue to serve in the state legislature if this can come to pass for the 100th anniversary of women's suffrage.

In addition to the sources listed, thanks to [Cowhampshireblog.com](http://Cowhampshireblog.com) by Janice Brown for additional details.

## **Legislative Alerts**

Every week or two the League of Women Voters NH will send via email to our members and friends a list of a few upcoming hearings in the NH Legislature, usually with a link to the text of the bill. They will also be posted on our "Hot Legislation" page of LWVNH.org. If you wish to advocate for or against any of the bills, either in person or by contacting your representative or senator, you will do so as an individual, not in the voice of the League.

League's choice of bills to highlight is determined by our priorities and areas of interest as expressed by members. League board members or designees may testify on some of the bills.

Complete lists of the next week's legislative hearings can be found on this website:

<http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/>

Click on either the House Calendars and Journals or the Senate Calendars and Journals links. The newest Calendar will be at the top of each list and will include hearings in the coming week (or two). Calendars come out each Friday. Room numbers and times are given for the hearings (SH = State House and LOB = Legislative Office Building, across the street behind the State House).

League members may also want to subscribe to the weekly email alerts from the national League, which may include occasional calls to action on federal bills. You can do so on the LWV homepage:

<http://lww.org>

## **Town Meetings & Candidate Forums**

March 14 is election day in most of NH's towns for town and school board offices. If your community is having a hot race and you believe a candidates' forum should be held, the state League's board members are willing and able to help. We need people "on the ground" in the community to do most of the logistics, but we can advise on protocols and even provide a moderator if you wish. Or we can just give you the benefit of our experience if you want to go it on your own but need some advice. In either case, please feel free to email Liz Tentarelli at [LWV@kenliz](mailto:LWV@kenliz).

## **Thank You for Helping Incarcerated Women in New Hampshire--**

Little did we know that when we embarked on a study of incarcerated women, it would turn into a long-lasting relationship between the League and the prison system. Numbers, sentences and conditions within the prison became individual faces and stories.

For the past three years, the League has compiled bags of donated items as holiday gifts for the women at Shea Farm, the only half-way house for women in New Hampshire. This year, delivery day was very cold, our car was stuffed with the 49 gift bags and other donated items. Before my husband could park the car, the residents had come outside (in t-shirts, no coats) to help unload the gifts. We took them inside and placed everything under their tree, softly lit in the late afternoon. The main gathering room serves as their dining room, living room and sometimes program space. The director thanked me, the guard was there to inspect the bags and gradually the room began to fill with the residents. They were as excited as children and came closer and closer to the tree to peek into the bags. They are so young and face so many challenges ahead as they try to rebuild their lives.

## **Thank You (cont'd.)**

We donated bags filled with hats, mittens, toothpaste, toothbrushes, body wash, hand cream, travel size cosmetics, pens, notebooks, puzzle books and of course some chocolate. All of this supplied by generous League members and received with much gratitude. We also donated 3 large laundry baskets filled with yarn as the group in residence right now is learning to knit. The League also provided bus passes from the cash donations of League members. These bus passes give the women the ability to get a ride part-way to work (no transportation provided by the state for the women who get jobs in the community) and it's 4 miles one way to Loudon Road where many of the women find jobs in the fast food industry.

The room was full as the director introduced me and I had a chance to wish the women a peaceful holiday, tell them about the League and that there are women all over the state who believe in them and their ability to make their lives better. They expressed their thanks and some said it was nice to be remembered. Some said to thank my husband who had stayed out in the car, so I could also tell them how happy he was to get all those gifts out of our kitchen! Many came up to me individually, touched my arm and thanked me sincerely.

Thank you to all the League members who generously took part in this project. We continue to make a difference in our community.

Peg Fargo, vice-president LWVNH

### **Correction:**

The name of Virginia Irwin as a League member elected to the NH House was inadvertently omitted from last month's NHVoter. Our apologies. Ms Irwin represents the towns of Newport and Unity in Sullivan district 6. In the last session she had represented Sullivan's floterial district 9.