

*As new sessions of the US Congress and the NH Legislature get underway, we are sharing with our League members and friends some basic information about contacting your elected officials (below). If you know these advocacy tips already, skip to page 2.*

**US Congress:** The new Congressional members become official in early January. As soon as we get phone numbers and websites for them, we will post on our website. We encourage people to make their views known, preferably in specific short phone calls (call either the NH office or the Washington office). You're not going to reach your Congresspeople personally. Be nice to the interns who answer the phone. Make clear you are a constituent by telling them where you live. Tell them which bill you would like your Representative or Senator to support or oppose. Be as specific about the bill as you can. If you really want to give a reason, make it short. It will go on a form list that tallies pro and con calls.

You may also send an email via each Congress member's website, but only those residents with ZIP codes within the congressional district will actually go through. Again, be specific and brief and clear about supporting or opposing bills.

On the other hand, if you have first-hand experience or knowledge that might help your elected official understand the issue, send a more detailed email via the official's website. Identify yourself as a constituent and refer to a specific bill.

Do not send paper mail. For security reasons, it will be delayed for weeks for inspection.

**NH Legislature:** In NH you can get up close and personal with government. Each NH representative and senator will have contact information on a webpage. You can find that info by using the "Your Legislators" feature of the General Court's website: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/>

Representatives usually post their personal phone numbers. Senators post state house office numbers. Emails are listed, too. If possible, phone your legislator and establish a relationship. You can email, but it may be one of many and you may or may not get a reply. Don't use a form letter—legislators recognize them and ignore them, for the most part.

But here's where a written letter can make a big impact, and all reps and senators have their home addresses listed. Follow the same guidelines about identifying yourself as a constituent (name the town where you live in your opening). Be specific about bills, and offer information if you have it about the impact of a bill on yourself and your family or neighbors.

### **How can we find out which bills are coming up for hearings or votes?**

Starting in January, the League will send out weekly emails (called Legislative Alerts, usually on Friday afternoon or Saturday) about League priority bills coming up for hearings or votes in the next week in Concord. We cull our list from the House and Senate Calendars that are online each Friday morning. Feel free to do your own search, if you're following an issue that isn't one of our priorities. You can find the Calendars links on the NH General Court's website: <http://www.gencourt.state.nh.us/> in the lower right of the homepage.

**Quiz question re the NH Legislature: How many bills will be heard by designated committees in the House and Senate in 2019?**

- A. Only those that make sense
- B. About 400—one for each state rep.
- C. Every bill that is filed by a legislator (over 1,100 as of Dec. 31)

*Likely you've figured C is correct—now consider this must all be done by March 28, plus plan a two year budget. The bills that passed in one body then go thru the same process in the other! And both bodies must vote on a budget by early June. Our legislators are not in this for the money; they are paid \$100 plus mileage for the entire year.*

*We thank them for their service.*

**League priorities in 2019**

**In Congress:** Election law was important to us at our founding 99 years ago, when women's suffrage was on the verge of becoming the 19<sup>th</sup> amendment of the US Constitution. It continues to be our top priority. This coming year we urge our members to tell their US Representatives to support a federal bill, **HR1**, that affirms good election law. Information can be found on the national League's website: <https://www.lwv.org/blog/4-key-elements-hr1>

**In NH:** We will be testifying in support of Independent Redistricting Commission bills and also several other bills that will increase voting access. We don't have language or numbers for all those bills yet, but we'll get specific as time goes on and share with League members.

Public education, the topic of our current League study, is also a priority. Fair and adequate funding of public education is a top concern.

One thing we will NOT support is legislation calling for an Article V convention. In fact, we will support a bill to rescind (reverse) a 2012 NH bill that called for such a convention. Why? A few years ago the League at the national level studied the workings of possible Article V conventions. Through our study and consensus process we reached a position that such a convention raises too many concerns to be considered good government. You can read a summary of the reasons here: <https://www.lwv.org/sites/default/files/Constitutional-Convention.groupletter.4-14-17.pdf>

This puts us in the awkward position of supporting campaign finance reform (duh...big and dark money in politics is a major problem that must be solved) but having to oppose any NH bill calling for a convention on that topic. Our view—it's time for Congress itself to propose an amendment that will reduce the influence of big money in politics. Let's do it the right way!

**A partial list of NH bills that are of interest to League can be found on our Hot Legislation page—includes only bills that have their text drafted as of Dec. 31, 2019.**  
<http://lwnh.org/currentlegislation.html>

League news: plans are gelling for our annual **New England League Leadership Conference**. Save the dates of **April 6-7, 2019**, in **Wells, Maine**.

The theme will be "Advancing Civility in a Diverse New England." What can League do to increase civil discourse that includes a diverse population?

Our next newsletter will give you registration information and a list of workshops and guest speakers. All League members are welcome! Do plan to attend.

**Thank you** to all the members who renewed their membership in 2018, and especially to those who added an extra donation to League or to the League's Education Fund!

***Upcoming meetings and events:***

**Saturday, January 19, is the third annual Women's March**, in Washington, Boston, Concord, and several sister events in NH. We are adding to the list as we find out more. Check our Calendar page for an updated listing of events, with times and locations.

The event in Concord in front of the State House (10 am to noon) is described thus:

*“Join us at the New Hampshire State House in Concord as we celebrate our accomplishments and send a clear message: We've Only Just Begun!*

*This year, the march will celebrate the incredible progress we have made over the last two years, both nationally and in the Granite State, to advance and protect our rights. We will unite once again to send a clear message that we're not going anywhere, and that we won't stop fighting until we have true equality!”*

**Other meetings & events...**

**In the greater Nashua area:** League will be meeting at the **Nashua Public Library** again, every 3rd Thursday of the month starting on **January 17th. Downstairs, from 7 to 9 pm.**

All members and potential members welcome. For more information, contact the new steering committee: Joanne Emus, Kate Welsh and Emily Caswell

**In the Mt. Washington Valley area:** The unit will host 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 greater Peterborough area: January 24, 7 pm, Peterborough Town Library.** Public meeting with several state representatives from the area, first in a series. Reps invited include Vann, Leishman, Balch, and Bosman. (The March meeting will be in Dublin, with reps from 5 other towns.) The public is welcome.

**In the Kearsarge/Sunapee area:** The education study committee will meet on **Tuesday, Jan. 8, at 10 am in New London.** Place to be decided—call a committee member or check our Calendar page. The committee organized two field trips to pre-K schools recently, will post a report on our Education Study page early in 2019.

**In the Atkinson/Plaistow area of southern NH:** First meeting of what members hope will become an active local unit is planned for January or February. Guests from the LWWNH 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 LWWNH.org for date, time, and place of upcoming events.

**Planning ahead for town elections**—If your town needs a candidates forum for town/school officials, League can offer advice on organization and even provide a moderator if needed. Let's talk. Email [LWVNewHampshire@gmail.com](mailto:LWVNewHampshire@gmail.com) and we'll go from there. But planning takes time, so don't wait until the week before the election.

Check our Candidate Forums web page <http://lwvnh.org/Forums-debates.html> for posting of forums as we learn about them. Share with us any that you know are happening.

**Good news from Congress**—League applauds the bi-partisan **federal prison reform bill** passed by the US Senate and House and signed by the President in Dec. 2018. It includes multiple steps in the right direction to reform federal prisons to recognize that a second chance is a goal to work for, to emphasize rehabilitation, to consider alternatives to incarceration.

LWVNH's study of the issues facing women incarcerated in NH (2009-2012 study) made us aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the corrections system in NH. We are pleased that since then steps in positive directions have been taken in our state, including

- drug courts as alternative to incarceration in nine of our ten counties (with a different successful alternative program in Sullivan county),
- diversion programs in most counties for first-time and young offenders
- a new state corrections facility for women that has space for the programs needed to improve outcomes for women upon release
- bail reform (though some details need more work).

Still lacking is enough staff, particularly at the women's prison, to do all that should be done. Recruitment is going on; if you know people looking for jobs, encourage them to find out about careers in corrections! Liz Tentarelli is one of the members of the Citizens Advisory Board to the women's prison and would be happy to talk with you about career opportunities. Use the League's email to contact her.

Related to corrections, a big **thank you** to members and friends in the Peterborough Plus area, especially Martha P., who collected fabric and yarn for the women at the state prison. Some of the women have adopted a Concord cancer center for whom they'll knit hats and scarves; they want to do good for others! And a huge **thank you** to board members (plus Phyllis P.) in the LWV Kearsarge/Sunapee Area who opened their wallets in December to purchase bus passes for the women at Shea Farm, the "halfway house" in Concord, to use as they head to jobs in the community each day. So much appreciated in this chilly season!

League's state study of **public education** is moving on the pre-K front, gaining speed on higher ed, needs help with charter school research. Check our Education Study webpage for research so far and upcoming meetings. Or contact us if you want to be an active part of the study. [LWVNewHampshire@gmail.com](mailto:LWVNewHampshire@gmail.com)

Here's a link to a December posting about school funding issues:

<https://anhpe.org/2018/12/24/the-monitor-contrasts-legislative-efforts-to-address-school-funding-with-the-governors-proposal-to-erase-the-states-obligation-to-children-through-a-constitutional-amendment/>