



The League of Women Voters of the Kearsarge Sunapee Area

May 2023

Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy

President's Message

Dear League Members and Friends:

It's that wonderful time of year when the grass is green and flowers are blooming. Best of all, it's a time to reconnect with friends and colleagues. Our Annual Luncheon and Meeting is coming up and we have a great speaker on an important issue. You will be receiving your invitation shortly so please save the date: Wednesday, June 14th at the Lake Sunapee Country Club in New London.

Kearsarge - Sunapee is the largest unit in the state League with nearly 100 members. Together we contribute our time, money, work, and skills because we believe that voter services are the safeguard of democracy. We hold candidate forums, most recently for town elections, and host meetings pertaining to current issues. To all, from our writers, editors, moderators, coordinators of speakers and sites, letters to the editor writers, financial contributors, and those who show up to set up; I salute you and thank you for your service.

Patricia Rodgers

President of LWVKS chapter - patrodgers2000@yahoo.com

Our League's 2023 Biennial Convention and Support for Public Schools

by Janet Ward

On Saturday, May 6, the LWVNH welcomed nearly fifty attendees, including 38 League members and their guests, to our Biennial Convention. Our guest speakers, Rep. Rick Ladd of Haverhill, chair of the NH House Education Committee, and Rep. Mel Myler of Hopkinton, member and former chair of the NH House Education Committee, were invited to share their views on "*Public Schools and Democracy: How Are They Connected?*" First, Rep. Ladd shared information about bills relating to education but he did not address the connection between public schools and our democracy. Then, Rep. Myler called public schools "the great equalizers," and pointed out that an educated citizenry "makes the consent of the governed possible" in our democracy. Finally, ConVal School Superintendent Kimberly Rizzo Saunders spoke about "*The View from a NH Superintendent's Office in 2023.*"

Attending public schools provides not just necessary academic learning, but also the opportunity to encounter different perspectives and to learn how to collaborate and compromise, skills essential to a self-governing people.

Continued on next page...

2023 Biennial Convention and Support for Public Schools Continued

Superintendent Saunders shared with us the challenges faced by school administrators given that our society is sending children with greater needs to our public schools. Meeting these needs requires financial investment at a time when adequate funding of public schools is a challenge. Superintendent Saunders emphasized that the education provided by public schools is an essential public good that, given the history of our democracy, deserves to be funded. Superintendent Saunders also noted that citizens in every school district should be aware that the 306 regulations which shape the administration of our public schools are currently being reviewed. Many of the proposed revisions to these rules may appear innocuous, but these changes, if enacted, would significantly impact longstanding regulations. If approved, these revisions could lead to the commodification of educational services and to the possibility that private entrepreneurs could be paid with public tax dollars to take over elements of our children's education. This is a further expansion of the approach to education embodied by the school voucher system which in NH is termed Education Freedom Accounts which, with virtually no oversight, have cost NH taxpayers millions. It is clear that the League's support for public schools will require continued vigilance and informed activism.



New Hampshire School Funding Fairness Project by Projects Outreach & Engagement Director Casey Neal

The New Hampshire School Funding Fairness Project is a 510c(3), nonprofit, nonpartisan organization educating and advocating for change regarding the decades-long problem in New Hampshire around the School Funding & Property Taxes issue. The State has a constitutional responsibility to fund New Hampshire's public schools and they choose not to fulfill this obligation and instead downshift the cost to taxpayers via property taxes. The Project educates Granite Staters on the issue and aims to provide folks with the tools to advocate for change and support efforts through the courts and otherwise that are in line with this mission. To stay in touch with the Project, sign up for our newsletter on our website (<https://fairfundingnh.org/>) and follow us on social media.

We run an extremely active events program and typically have an event going on at least once a week if not more. We travel to every part of the state and put on presentations by request in addition to other planned events and webinars. Our staff has an open-door policy, and you may reach out to Casey Neal with any questions at cneal@fairfundingnh.org.

Upcoming Events

The League of Women Voters of the
Kearsarge Sunapee Area

The public is cordially invited to join us for our
ANNUAL LUNCHEON & SPEAKER
A short business meeting will follow.

Speaker: **Lisa Hall**, Patient Services
Coordinator

joined by **Jinelle Hobson**, Executive Director
of The Equality Health Center - Past & Present
(This Concord health facility opened in 1974
following the passage of Roe v Wade.)

Wednesday, June 14 - 11:30 am ~ 2:30 pm

Lake Sunapee Country Club,
289 Country Club Lane, New London

Tell us your entree:

chicken, salmon, or mushroom ravioli
and then send a \$45 check payable to:

LWVKS, POBox 660, New London, NH. 03257
Please RSVP by June 8th

Coming this Fall - *Date to be announced*

New Hampshire Constitution

Lethbridge Lodge - ALL classroom Colby
Sawyer College ~ New London

- What Rights does our state constitution protect?
- Why are some bills challenged as being "unconstitutional"?
- What amendments have been added over the years?
- What amendments might we look for in the future?

Guest speaker: **Henry Klementowicz, Esq.**

Senior Staff Attorney at ACLU-NH

No cost or advance registration. Seating is
limited.

Organized by the League of Women Voters of
the Kearsarge / Sunapee Area

Warner Candidates Forum by Sara McNeil

On February 27th, the LWVKS hosted and moderated a candidate's forum in the Warner Town Hall. The contested seats for this town election were for Select Board and Library trustees. Following introductions from all the candidates, Moderator Patricia Rodgers posed a number of timely questions to the two Select Board candidates, Karen Coyne and Harry Seidel. Once again, this was a well-attended forum and we received a number of compliments from those in attendance, including one who was appreciative of how "it moved right along but also covered many issues".

As some of you likely know, prior to a forum the Moderator will ask the local League member(s) what "hot button" issues are happening in that town so those topics can be addressed by the Moderator prior to taking written questions from the audience. By writing out the questions, the Moderator is able to ensure that a question is appropriate for the position the candidate is seeking and it also cuts down on redundant queries.

CIVICS 101

by Sara McNeil

Prior to graduating from high school, do you remember attending classes in Civics, U.S. History, and/or Social Studies? You may have been taught these as separate courses but they all connect to one another. Civics can simply be defined as the study of the rights and obligations of citizens in society. In order to understand civics, one must learn about our History whether it be within our town, state, or country. And Social Studies is a broad term for the study of social relationships and the functioning of society.

Recent test scores reported by the National Assessment of Educational Progress have shown that an increasing number of students are lacking a basic understanding of history and civics. Part of the problem is likely a result of many months of home-based classes required during the pandemic but many of us might agree that there needs to be more time spent on teaching how our government works and our responsibilities as citizens in a democratic society.

N.H. Senate Bill 216 may be the answer. As of May 4th, this bill has now passed the Senate and House and will very likely become law in July of 2023.

Here is the initial bill: "Making changes to the requirements of civics education in schools" was then amended by the House to include establishing requirements for the teaching of civics and defining a civics education. It must also include courses in U.S. and N.H. history, government, constitutions, and civics. In addition, the amendment would require civics to be taught from K thru 12th grade, rather than beginning in 8th grade. And, it would include all public, chartered public, non-public, and privately incorporated schools that serve as public schools in NH.

I found some of the original and amended portions of SB 216 to be very interesting. For example, civics would include "the acquisition of skills, such as the ability to analyze text and determine the reliability and biases of sources", an appreciation for free speech and civil discourse, opportunities and responsibilities for civic involvement, and teaching skills to effectively participate in civic affairs. In addition, the bill was amended to include "Dedicated class time for civics in each elementary grade, which can be integrated with other subjects".

This sentence, from the original bill, remains intact: "How intolerance, bigotry, antisemitism, and national, ethnic, racial, or religious hatred and discrimination have evolved in the past, and can evolve, into genocide and mass violence, such as the Holocaust, and how to prevent the evolution of such practices." I certainly hope that this can be taught, not once, but over and over again from K thru 12th grade.

And now, for the section of SB 216 that has caught the attention of many high school students: In order to be eligible to graduate from high school, students must have a "locally sanctioned passing grade on the competency assessment and a grade of 70% or better" on the 128 question civics naturalization exam.

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Civics 101 Continued

So, do you think you would be able to pass these requirements in order to graduate from high school?

Here are a few questions from the 2020 US Citizenship and Immigration Services:

- How many amendments does the U.S. Constitution have?
- What is the purpose of the 10th Amendment?
- What territory did the US buy from France?
- James Madison is famous for many things. Name one.
- What amendment gives citizenship to all persons born in the US?

Were you able to answer these questions or is it time to open that textbook again? I think we all could use a bit of a review, don't you?

Congratulations to League member Jane Van Bremen of New London. Jane today was honored at the "Women Who Make a Difference" luncheon for her work in the community with a family support organization (TLC, based in Claremont), her work raising awareness of the importance of early childhood education (which includes the study done by the LWWV Kearsarge/Sunapee local League), and other civic endeavors. Way to go, Jane! Well deserved.

**For newsletter suggestions or comments
The newsletter is now available on the
state website, lwnh.org**

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Newbury Candidates Forum

by **Patricia Tivnan**

The League of Women Voters Kearsarge/Sunapee hosted a candidate forum at the Newbury Veterans Hall on March 8. Over 70 citizens attended to meet the three candidates for the select board - Alison Kinsman, Kristen Schultz, and Russell Smith. Pat Rodgers from LWWK/S moderated the forum, asking relevant questions of each candidate, and allowing those in attendance to also ask questions.

The candidates introduced themselves by giving their personal and family histories of their involvement with Newbury. They answered questions such as how they would involve more citizens in town governance, what were their goals if they were to be elected, their view of the Freedom voucher for private schools (all three candidates were not in favor), and how to protect the key resources of Newbury - its people, Lake Sunapee, and Mount Sunapee. The candidates and the audience were very pleased to have this opportunity to interact and they expressed gratitude to the League for organizing the evening.



HB 170

Did you know that NH House Bill 170 was signed into law by Governor Sununu on May 3, 2023, and will become effective on July 3, 2023? This law will require cursive handwriting and memorization of multiplication tables to be taught in all public and chartered public schools by the end of fifth grade.

If you were one of our legislators, would you have voted for HB 170? Please share your thoughts and we'll print them in the next newsletter.

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