



The League of Women Voters of the Kearsarge Sunapee Area

September 2024

Empowering Voters - Defending Democracy

President's Message

Dear League Members,

Welcome to our latest newsletter. Hope you had a restful summer because things have certainly heated up since our June Annual Meeting. The political landscape has totally changed and there will be a lot of excitement in the coming weeks.

Now that the primaries are over, we will schedule our usual Candidate Forums for races for the New Hampshire House and Senate. In addition, some of us have volunteered to serve as poll workers in the November election. We know how critical that work can be and if you are interested, just contact your local Town Moderator.

We also plan to continue our series of Issue programs such as last year's "Ranked Choice Voting". If you have suggestions for future programs, please send me an email. We are fortunate to be able to use Colby Sawyer College for these events.

Thank you to all who have renewed your annual membership but if it has been lost in the shuffle, a second notice will be mailed shortly.

Patricia Rodgers

President LWVKS - Patrodgers2000@yahoo.com

The League of Women Voters NH Education Fund is seeking new board members.

The Ed Fund is a 501(c) 3 organization, whose mission is to support the goals of LWVNH with financial support through grant awards. These grants are predominantly aimed at supporting voter services projects throughout the state. The Ed Fund board meets twice a year to review the status of grant requests, financial investments, etc.

If you have an interest in serving on this board, especially if you have experience with development or marketing, please contact Pat Tivnan at pattivnan64@gmail.com

Public Education: Then and Now

Superintendent Winfried Feneberg

The LWVKS held their annual luncheon and meeting on June 11th at the New London Country Club. League member, Janet Miller Haines, introduced our speaker, Winfried Feneberg, retiring Superintendent of the Kearsarge Regional School District which includes the towns of Bradford, Newbury, New London, Springfield, Sutton, Warner, and Wilmot. Feneberg has held this position since 2015 and was named Superintendent of The Year by the NH School Administrators' Association in 2020.

Superintendent Feneberg sketched out a history of public education in the United States and New Hampshire. He began by noting that public education changes as the world changes, as has happened with the COVID pandemic, rapidly advancing technology, changes in leadership, etc. The promise of public education was that it would be the great equalizer in society by teaching life skills and creating responsible, accountable, and knowledgeable citizens. Being a teacher was always considered a noble profession. In the 1950s, only half the population obtained a high school degree; now almost 98% of US residents receive a high school degree.

History has shown three types of education available: public, private, and homeschooling. These options easily co-existed until the Education Freedom Account (EFA) program passed in New Hampshire as part of the 2022-2023 state budget. In the past, tax dollars were always dedicated to public schooling but today we are losing public education funding as a result of the voucher program. Not only are finances an issue but we are also feeling a loss of inclusion, gender identity, and dissolution of educational standards. In N.H. we now receive only \$3,800 per year per student to provide an adequate education and that is simply not enough. On the other hand, the State provides \$5,000 for each student's EFA without any requirement for oversight or accountability as to where a family chooses to use their child's funds but then our public school has to accept whatever their child returns with, and apply that "certificate" toward their high school graduation requirement.

In 1974, Congress passed Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act that banned discrimination on the basis of disability by recipients of federal funds. This Act, known as the Americans with Disabilities Act, included funding for special education and guaranteed that accommodations be made for those with disabilities.



Winfried Feneberg

In 1990, the Americans with Disabilities Act broadened the definition of disability to include autism, attention deficit/hyperactive disorder, traumatic brain injuries, among others, as requiring accommodations in addition to school modification and finding additional teachers. Special education requires modification of instruction but not a modification of the standard. Schools run by the state for those with more severe learning disabilities began to close and many of those students moved to public schools. Today, approximately 16% of students are educated under the ADA. In 1974, the original promise by the federal government was that they would pay approximately 40% of the cost for educating these students with local towns and cities paying the remainder of the cost. However, reality has turned out to be quite different. The federal government now pays between 10% and 18% of the costs with the remainder coming mostly from property taxes.

Public Education: Then and Now, cont.

In the 1980s, an education accountability movement began which led to programs such as No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB) which passed in 2001 with overwhelming bipartisan support. It increased the federal role in holding K-12 schools accountable for student outcomes and also attempted to reward "good teachers" but that did not work. (*Ed.Note: In 2015, Congress passed the Every Student Succeeds Act to replace NCLB. This Act pares back the federal role in K-12 education by placing more control with the States but still requires indicators into their accountability systems.*)

In closing, Superintendent Feneberg stated that these are just some of the challenges facing public education today. He added that public education cannot be run as a business. He's concerned that NH schools have been weakened over the last eight years with funding changes due to the Freedom Education Accounts and newly proposed lower standard requirements for education. Nevertheless, Feneberg remains optimistic that N.H. citizens will get involved and vote for candidates who support strong public education. For some inspiration, he highly recommends the book, [Schools Cannot Do It Alone](#) by Jamie Robert Vollmer.

Debbie Hall, LWVKS Board member

Sara McNeil, LWVKS Board member

An Update on Public Education in NH

Much essential information regarding NH public schools was shared at recent meetings by a group convened by Granite State Progress and comprised of individuals who are active in our NH public schools or who are supporters of them.

Of particular interest was the recommendation contained in The Heritage Foundation's Project 25 Report that public schools be eliminated. Given Thomas Jefferson's belief that an educated citizenry is essential to the survival and flourishing of our democratic republic, this recommendation would surely have struck this Founding Father as dangerously anti-democratic.

Christina Pretorius of Reaching Higher NH moderated the August 5th meeting. She informed us that at the State Board of Education [SBOE] meeting on July 11th, Education Commissioner Frank Edelblut and Board Chair Drew Cline noted that further changes to the 306 Rules had been sent to the Joint Legislative Committee of Administrative Rules (JLCAR) for their review. JLCAR attorneys had already alerted the Commissioner and Board about their concerns regarding earlier 306 rule changes. Neither the SBOE nor the Commissioner have yet addressed many of the explicit concerns expressed by members of the public at previous SBOE meetings. A final SBOE vote on 306 Rule changes must take place by September 10th.

Zack Sheehan of the NH School Funding Fairness Project chaired the August 26th meeting. Zack noted that both the Rand School Lawsuit and the Conval Lawsuit will be filing briefs between August 14th and September 30th. There is now a question as to whether the state will attempt to attack the earlier Claremont decision as wrongly decided and therefore present a new level of argument. Also, there is a Coalition Communities group that argues that a uniform statewide education property tax (SWEPT) is good and that the current funding arrangement should be protected. This group has \$220,000 on hand to communicate their position. The full Rand hearing on differentiated aid will begin on September 30th.

In other news related to public education, Governor Sununu recently signed HB1312 which "dramatically and vaguely" expands the current two week notice requirement for "objectional materials" to include any curriculum relating to sexual orientation, gender, gender identity, or expression." This has the effect of "chilling" classroom conversations on these topics. [See Concord Monitor article, July 19, 2024.]

An Update on Public Education in NH, cont.

Recent newspaper articles raise serious concerns about The Children's Scholarship Fund's financial oversight of NH's Education Freedom Accounts. See Garry Rayno's August 24 article, "*Report on Qualifying EFA Families Shows Errors in a Quarter of Applications*", InDepthNH.org, and Sarah Donovan's West Lebanon Valley News article published on August 17, "*Are Account Costs Hidden? Education Advocates Question Financing of Education Freedom Accounts.*"

No matter how the financing of these accounts is managed or mismanaged, the fact remains that public money is being given to parents/guardians to be used in private educational settings over which taxpayers have no oversight. No matter how accurate or inaccurate the accounting by the private Children's Scholarship Fund may be, the fact remains that this is taxation without representation, the very reason this country rebelled against Great Britain in 1776. For information on critical educational topics and opportunities to attend informative Zoom-based presentations, visit the websites of Reaching Higher NH and the NH School Funding Fairness Project.

Janet Ward, LWNH Board member

LWVUS Convention in Washington, DC - June 27 – 30, 2024

The theme of this year's 56th Biennial LWVUS National Convention was "Turn Up and Turn Out". Members did indeed turn up! There were over 1,200 who registered with almost 900 attending in-person and another 300+ virtually. All 50 states plus D.C. and the Virgin Islands were represented. This writer was the only New Hampshire delegate at the Convention and LWNH President, Liz Tentarelli, attended virtually. Hopefully, in two years, we will have a larger, and therefore stronger, delegation at the Convention.

Highlights from the Plenary sessions

Celina Stewart, chief counsel and senior director of Advocacy and Litigation was elected as the CEO of LWVUS.

Dianna Wynn, of North Carolina, was elected President of the Board of Directors. She was appointed as Vice President in 2024 following the sudden passing of former president, Dr. Deborah Ann Turner.

Resolutions presented and adopted by the Delegates

DC Statehood -- Ethics in Government -- Immigration -- Public Libraries (support & increase access to all) -- Elimination of all forms of discrimination against women -- Decline of Local News and Its Impact on Democracy

The Board of Directors made a motion to begin a **one-year Federal Judiciary study** to begin in July of 2024 that would "help clarify judicial accountability, the role of rule of law, and safeguarding judicial independence". It was felt that by formulating a position around the Federal Judiciary, it would help League members "carry out the mission of empowering voters and defending democracy". This "fast-track" study would also serve as a pilot program to see if our usual two-year studies could be streamlined into one year. The LWVUS Advocacy and Litigation Committee stated that a two-year study was too long "considering the urgency of addressing US Supreme Court ethics and related federal judiciary challenges". The motion passed unanimously.

Additional motions presented were healthcare privatization, gun control, and electronic voting. After discussion, each of them failed to pass. Reproductive Rights also failed as this is now controlled by the States.

LWVUS Convention in Washington, DC - June 27 – 30, 2024, cont.

Student Membership Dues: A vote to keep student memberships free when National's new membership system takes effect failed to pass. The LWVUS's rationale was that determination of dues is more appropriate for policy change rather than a bylaw amendment. In addition, more than 50% of local leagues already charge students a membership fee. The biggest discussion centered around the word 'student' as many young people are no longer students but that doesn't mean they should be discriminated against by charging a fee when others of the same age are not.

Voter Girl Project: LWVUS announced they are now partnering with the Girl Scouts of America to assist girls with obtaining their citizenship badges. What a great idea! Guidance, tools, & a public announcement will come in July.

Currently, the LWVUS has **150 legal cases pending** in 36 states including one case in New Hampshire. (Google: LWV Legal Center for details.)

Financial report for 2023 – 24

Both LWVUS and LWV Education Fund have strong financial positions. Revenue is up \$3,595,000, more than expected. Total expenses invested in programs has increased from 48% in 2017 to 70% in 2023. Dues will remain at \$32 per member payment from local and state leagues.

The plenary sessions were divided among three days with the remainder of each day allowing time to attend workshops. I chose to attend workshops about Combating Mis/Dis/Mal-information, concerns about losing local news publications, and workshops about Eliminating the Electoral College by implementing the **National Popular Vote (aka "The Moonshot")**. My main takeaway from this Convention is the power that we, as League members, have if we work together toward common goals. I strongly believe that adding New Hampshire's four electoral college votes to the National Popular Vote Compact is a goal worth pursuing together.

Sara McNeil, LWVKS Board member

Governor Sununu signed into Law House Bill 1569

On September 12, 2024, Governor Sununu signed into law **House Bill 1569** "that would require proof of U.S. citizenship when registering to vote and photo identification when casting a ballot. Under current law, those who don't bring photo IDs to the polls can sign an affidavit attesting to their identity and are required to provide documentation within seven days. **This new law, which won't take effect until after the November elections, eliminates voter identification exceptions and would require those registering to vote to show a passport, birth certificate or other evidence of U.S. citizenship.**"

Although Gov. Sununu stated that "We have a proud tradition and proven track record of elections that are trusted and true", he later added that "this legislation will instill even more integrity and trust in the voting process".

"Critics argue the changes would make N.H.'s voter registration system one of the most restrictive in the country. They note that many people don't have immediate or free access to their birth certificates and say the changes could undermine trust in elections even though it won't take effect until after mid-November."

Reprinted excerpts from Concord Monitor, 9/14/2024 – by Holly Ramer, Associated Press

Don't Forget to Vote on Tuesday, November 5th!

National Popular Vote Interstate Compact: One Person = One Vote (LWVUS calls this "The Moonshot")

Did you know that abolishing the Electoral College (EC) has been a LWV policy since 1970? At this year's LWVUS Convention, a brief refresher course on the Electoral College was given followed by a presentation of how the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact (NPVIC) would make every vote count until the Electoral College can be eliminated by a Constitutional Amendment.

Following a two-year study, the 2010 LWVUS Convention adopted a position to support the NPVIC as "one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished." At the 2018 Convention, a LWVUS National Popular Task Force was created. The extensive work accomplished by this task force has been phenomenal and is now ready for dissemination to all League members.

The NPVIC is defined as an agreement among a group of states and the District of Columbia to award all their electoral votes to whichever presidential candidate wins the overall popular vote.

The NPVIC is a non-partisan issue with the potential to favor or disfavor both political parties. It will make every vote relevant in every Presidential election. It should increase voter turnout as each person will know their vote will be counted.

Today, our democracy is threatened because less than 50,000 or .03% of voters in a handful of states will make the decision as to who will become president rather than the 160,000,000 expected to vote in this fall's election. Although it won't be in effect for this year's elections, the NPVIC is close to being activated, with 17 states and DC having passed it for a total of 209 EC votes; only 61 more votes are needed to reach 270!

New Hampshire has four EC votes. There was a Legislative Hearing held in 2019 in regard to the NPV bill but it failed to pass with a vote of 20 to zero. To date, all other New England states have passed this law.

For more information, go to:
NationalPopularVote.com

Sara McNeil, LWVKS Board member

Electoral College Trivia

1. How many Electoral College votes are there in total?
a. 270 b. 300 c. 325 d. 538
2. How many electoral votes does New Hampshire have?
a. 3 b. 4 c. 5 d. 6
3. How often are the number of electoral votes per state adjusted?
a. Never. It always remains the same
b. Every ten years
c. After every presidential election
d. Whenever Congress votes to adjust the votes
4. What happens if no candidate receives the required number of electoral college votes to become president?
a. The Supreme Court decides.
b. There is a run-off election between the two top vote getters.
c. The House of Representatives decides.
d. The Senate decides.
5. When do the electors in each state meet?
a. On the date set by their State House of Representatives
b. On a date set by the U.S. Constitution
c. Exactly 30 days after the date of the Presidential Election
d. On a day no later than 45 days before the date of the Inauguration
6. What year did the United States initiate the Electoral College?
a. 1787 b. 1820 c. 1878 d. 1900

Answers on page 8



LWVKS Officers and Board of Directors

Photo from left to right: Elizabeth Meller, Nancy Stone, Debbie Hall, Nancy Marashio, Patricia Rodgers, Dianne Bischoff, Pat Tivnan, Judy Pellettieri, Janet Miller Haines, and Sara McNeil

Another successful Meet Your Legislators event

Five of our area's state representatives attended the League's annual "Meet Your Legislators" event on April 23. Attending were Karen Ebel and Dan Wolf (who represent New London and Newbury), Tom Schamberg (representing Sutton and Wilmot), Linda Tanner from Sunapee, and Hope Damon who has a large flatorial district that includes 8 towns from Sunapee to Claremont. Senators Dan Innis and Suzanne Prentiss were invited but unable to attend.

Each of our state reps told us about the work their committees do and some of the specific bills they have championed this year. Rep. Ebel was proud of her bill to eliminate added PFAs (the "forever" chemicals) from products sold in NH. She also told us about her work on the Finance Committee in the House. Rep. Schamberg is on the Ways and Means Committee, or as he explained it, his committee tries to find the revenue that Ebel's committee wants to spend.

Rep. Wolf mentioned his bill to reduce shoreland damage by regulating wake boats under specific circumstances. He also mentioned the medical assistance in dying bill he co-sponsored that has already passed the House. He added that he and other legislators were proud to have stopped some bad bills from passing.

Rep. Tanner also worked on the wake boats bill. The House version has been tabled (killed for the year), but she has hopes of the Senate version being strengthened and passing. Rep. Tanner is on the House Education committee again this session. They had 140 bills to deal with just this year. Rep. Damon is also on the House Education committee, but in addition she also serves on the House Special Committee on Housing. One bill she strongly supports is requiring live-streaming of posted meetings, such as town selectboard and planning board meetings.

Once again we thank Yankee Cable Network for taping our event so that those unable to attend can watch it on cable or access it at leisure on YCNnow.com. Look under "specials" if you don't see it on their website's homepage.

LWVKS member application

These newsletters are sent to LWVKS members and also distributed at various League events. If you are not yet a member and would like to join the League, please complete this form and mail to:

LWVKS
Box 660
New London, NH 03257

Annual Dues: \$50. Family Membership: \$60.

Your Name _____ Family member _____

Mailing Address _____ Town _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone # _____ Email _____

Individual _____ \$50 Family _____ \$60 Additional contribution _____

Total enclosed _____

You can also find this newsletter on the LWWNH webpage.

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EC Trivia Answers: 1. d, 2. b, 3. b, 4. c, 5. b, 6. a.

LWVKS Board of Directors

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