



League of Women Voters of Central Vermont

Bulletin

March 2011

Co-President's Message

This issue is pretty much all about Health Care, because that is what Nancy has been living these days.

H.202 (and S.57), the Governor's house, bill which proposes a version of a single-payer health care system for Vermont, has been working its way through the Legislature's committee system, with many hearings addressing different aspects of the bill.

There will be a state-wide public hearing on H.202 on Monday evening, March 14, 6:00-8:00 PM at all the Vermont Interactive Television (VIT) sites. This meeting was originally scheduled for the previous week, and was postponed because of the snowstorm. Montpelier's site is at Vermont Department of Labor, 5 Green Mountain Drive (right turn just before the National Life light) if you are interested in attending. The LWVVT has submitted written testimony in support of the legislation.

Crossover Day, the day in mid-session when bills are to move from the chamber of origin to the other, was postponed a week, to March 18, again because of the storm and the postponement of the VIT hearing. It remains to be seen whether this bill or another one the League is following, on campaign finance will be ready to be voted out.

Come to Legislative Day on Tuesday, March 15 and find out the fate of these and other bills. We'll be having lunch with our legislators in Room 10 at noon. It's an opportunity for us to find out what's happening at the State House, and for our Legislators to hear what we have to say about the issues. See the LWVVT website (www.lwvofvt.org) for details.

For more on health care, we hope to see you at City Hall on Tuesday, March 22 to hear Dr. Deb Richter talk about H.202 and the federal Affordable Care Act.

And, last but not least, we are still working to schedule a showing of the documentary *Flow*. Stay tuned.

In celebration of democracy,

Nancy Lynch and Gia Biden

On March 5, the LWVVT partnered with Oxfam America to present an Oxfam Hunger Banquet in observation of International Women's Day (March 8). At that event, we were asked to sign a petition asking Congress not to cut appropriations for international investments. The following is a letter sent by the LWVUS and others to Senators Leahy and Graham. A report on the event will appear in the next LWVVT Green Mountain Citizen.

The Honorable Senator Leahy
Chair, Subcommittee on Dept of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs

The Honorable Senator Graham
Minority Ranking Member Subcommittee on Dept of State, Foreign Operations and Related Programs

Dear Senators:

On behalf of the millions of members and supporters of our faith-based, development and environmental organizations, we urge you to support appropriations for international investments to address the causes and consequences of a changing climate. The fiscal year 2011 total international appropriations for these investments should be no less than that enacted in FY 2010. These modest international investments—less than 3 pennies of every 100 federal dollars spent—are vital to promote global stability and security, create economic opportunities for U.S. businesses and workers, address global health challenges, and ensure cost savings through disaster preparedness measures.

Recognizing the need to invest in addressing these vital concerns, the President appropriately proposed to increase FY 2011 investments in global forest conservation, community resilience, and clean technology in developing countries from the levels enacted in FY 2010. Holding total appropriations at FY10 levels will mean deferring critical investments, but—if necessary—it is preferable to reducing these programs in the face of a serious and growing need. We especially urge you to oppose the drastic cuts to international climate change funding passed in the House Continuing Resolution, H.R. 1. The House bill slashed funding for critical efforts to promote resilience to extreme weather impacts, reduce tropical deforestation, and invest in clean technologies in developing countries. Such cuts are short-sighted as they undermine U.S. economic and security interests as well as threaten our past and present investments in poverty alleviation and development. Funding for climate programs should be part of strong overall development assistance and should not lead to cuts in complementary humanitarian, development, and conservation programs in any way.

Extreme weather variability spurred by a changing climate will exacerbate food insecurity, water scarcity, and natural disasters in some of the most volatile regions of the world. Supporting disaster-preparedness among poor communities will help avert global instability caused by migration, displacement, and conflicts over scarce resources, protect development gains, and save major costs down the road in emergency relief and military engagement.

Similarly, maintaining critical forest ecosystems is essential to reduce natural resource losses that can lead to food insecurity as well as reduce the incidence of illegal logging that can undercut legitimate agricultural and forest product producers in the U.S. and elsewhere, foster stronger economic linkages with strategically important economies, and helps support sustainable economic development and carbon emission reduction in developing countries.

By developing new markets for technologies and services to reduce emissions and build resilience in developing countries, we can help build a thriving global market that presents enormous innovation and job creation opportunities for U.S. businesses.

We understand there are many competing priorities and challenges that must be addressed in the U.S. budget, yet cutting these already modest international investments in climate change programs will bring losses to our nation and others that far outweigh any marginal gain.

Sincerely,

League of Women Voters
Oxfam America
...and 22 others

Dr. Deb Richter to Speak

LWVCEN is pleased to present Dr. Deb Richter, talking about Vermont's prospects for creating a single-payer health care system for Vermont, and how it might work in the context of the federal Affordable Care Act. Dr. Richter serves as president of Vermont Health Care for All, an organization that educates the Vermont community about the structure and features of universal health care systems.

The event will take place on Tuesday, March 22, at 7:00 p.m. in the Memorial Room of City Hall, Montpelier.

The principles of Vermont for Single Payer are very much in tune with the LWVVT advocacy position on health care (see p. 4).

Vermont for Single Payer Statement of Principles:

We support a universal health care system for the State of Vermont, one that includes all Vermonters, offers free choice of providers, is progressively financed, decoupled from employment, affordable for all, and pays for all necessary care out of public funds; a system which retains the private delivery of health care and has a publicly accountable budget process to ensure adequate capacity to meet the health care needs of all Vermonters.

Dr. Deborah Richter practices family medicine in Cambridge, VT. She is a past president of Physicians for a National Health Program. Her extensive speaking engagements include addresses to community and church groups, Rotary Clubs and other business groups, medical student and physician groups, about the need for and merits of a universal health care system.

She received a 2-year fellowship from the Open Society Institute, which allowed her to educate employers about the benefits to them of a universal health care system.

She has co-authored 2 books with former Health and Human Services Secretary Cornelius Hogan and journalist Terry Doran. *At the Crossroads:*

The Future of Health Care in Vermont, was published in 2005, followed by *Gridlock: The Unhealthy Politics of Health Care in Vermont* in 2009.

This event is cosponsored by OWL and VPIRG.

See *Gerrymandering* at the Green Mountain Film Festival

Democrats and Republicans collude to maintain total control over the ultimate political weapon: the ability to directly determine the outcome of elections. Why bother stuffing ballots when they can just redraw districts? The secrets of perhaps the most effective form of manipulating elections is exposed in Jeff Reichert's riveting – and sometimes very funny – documentary about a subject that would seem unlikely to be either. Howard Dean is one of the officials discussing the difficulties of changing the status quo.



The film will be shown twice on Saturday, March 15: at Noon: in the Pavilion Auditorium, 109 State Street (enter at rear) and at 3:30 p.m. at the Savoy Downstairs, 26 Main Street. In Montpelier

Post-film event: director Jeff Reichert will discuss the film at both showings.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont and Vermont Public Interest Research Group are community partners for this event.

Web site <http://www.gerrymanderingmovie.com/>

HEALTH CARE POSITION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters of Vermont believes that, until such time as a basic level of quality health care is available to all United States residents at an affordable level of cost, a state program can and should provide such health care to the residents of Vermont.

Therefore, the League of Women Voters of Vermont supports:

A publicly-funded, single-payer, comprehensive, universal, equitable health care system. Funding should be separated from employment status, supported by broad-based taxes on earned and unearned income.

Increased access to primary health care facilities through community-based health centers, including existing space in schools and senior centers, mobile treatment units, and telemedicine.

Addressing the shortage in professional personnel by forgiveness of tuition loans for new doctors, dentists and nurses practicing in underserved areas in Vermont, and greater use of nurse practitioners and physician's assistants.

Covering all medically necessary services, using evidence-based best practices. This should include preventive, chronic, psychiatric, dental, home care and licensed alternative care.

The establishment of mechanisms to adequately control total system expenditures for health services while maintaining standards of quality care.

The League believes that the rate of increase in medical spending can be controlled through savings in administrative costs inherent in a single payer system; efficiencies provided through information technology, emphasis on preventive care, price negotiation for pharmaceuticals, and global budgeting for hospitals.

Making the necessary up-front investment in order to take advantage of the benefits of a coordinated, statewide information technology system.

All the proposed solutions for Vermont's health care crisis include coordinated health care information technology. The state's Health Resource Allocation Plan lists the following priorities: electronic health/patient records; chronic disease registry; bar-coded medication administration systems; computerized physician order entry; clinical decision support; telemedicine; picture archiving and communications systems. Technology also has a role to play in billing and purchasing and personnel records, etc. The Veterans Administration has found their IT system has reduced medical error rates and duplication of care.

Education and incentives for healthy lifestyles.

Healthy lifestyles can and should be encouraged through, for example, school-based programs including universal physical education; good nutrition in school lunch programs; workplace incentives for exercise; use of advertising as has been done to cut down on the use of tobacco.

Oversight by a citizen board or commission.

Oversight of the state health care system should be independent of the government. Membership on such a board should include representatives of all stakeholders: providers, consumers (balanced demographically and geographically), the legislature and the executive branch.

LWVCEN 2010/11 Calendar
(Public events are in boldface)

March

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| Tuesday | 15 | LWVVT Legislative Day, State House. See the spring <i>Green Mountain Citizen</i> and the LWVVT website (www.lwvofvt.org) |
| Tuesday | 22 | 7:00 p.m. Dr. Deb Richter, speaking on single-payer for Vermont and the the federal Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act, Memorial Room, Montpelier City Hall |

May

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| Wednesday | 11 | 6:00 p.m. LWVCEN Annual Meeting, home of Kate Rader, 1186 Towne Hill Road, East Montpelier |
| Saturday | 21 | LWVVT Convention, T.W. Wood Gallery, Vermont College |