

THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley

February 2011

Calendar of Events

We sponsor meetings and events for the public and League members.

Local, Statewide, Regional Meetings

Date	Time	Place	Description
Feb. 9	10:30am	22 Carmichael St. Essex Junction	Champlain Valley Board Meeting All Members welcome
Feb. 12	10:30am	Possibly Hartland Public Library TBA	LWVVT Board Meeting All members welcome
Feb. 28	Evening	Many town halls	Public discussion of issues to be voted on in annual local election
Mar. 1	7am-7pm	Your local polling places	Town Meeting Day
Mar. 15	9am	The State House Montpelier Room 10	Legislative Day - Annual event for members to meet with their legislators

Note the Legislative Dinner scheduled for Feb. 16th has been canceled so we can focus on Town Day preparations.

Vice President's Message

Attend Town Meeting? Here's Why! a message from our VP Irene Wrenner

Each year it's safe to assume: 1) most Vermonters won't attend a town meeting, and 2) they won't know what they're missing.

If you've gone to just one town meeting, you might dismiss this civic duty with "been there, done that." However, if you've been to more than one such face-to-face forum, it becomes apparent that no two are alike, even in the same town. And that's one reason to consider heading for your town's annual meeting, likely to be held on Tuesday, March 1 (or Monday, Feb. 28).

Another reason, according to political scientist Frank M. Bryan in his book, *Real Democracy*, is that town meetings are "one of the purest forms of American democracy." Citizens themselves -- not elected representatives -- debate and decide upon the issues.

Realistically, today's bustling lifestyle makes it tough to turn off technology, leave a warm house, and listen to spirited, occasionally long-winded, debate on issues which may or may not feel familiar. Also, lingo like "sewer core" and

"signalization" may intimidate a town meeting novice. And, while town meeting is, ideally, a community-building event, passionate discussions don't always unite us by meeting's end.

So, why hire a babysitter, button up your overcoat, and brace the elements? Because town meeting provides a rare opportunity for citizens to gather and deliberate how our municipal tax dollars will be spent for an entire year! In addition, when only a small percentage of a town's population attends, as is typical in the larger towns, those attendees will make decisions for thousands of others -- just because they showed up!

While you may trust neighbors and friends in varying parts of town to have your best interest at heart, please consider speaking up for yourself at town meeting, just to be sure.

Although you may have appealing alternatives that night, why not start a new tradition? Grab your partner or a friend and see how true democracy works! You will not only feel part of the larger community, but you will also contribute directly to your local government, as Vermonters have for hundreds of years. Prof. Bryan puts it in context: "In America, town meeting predates representative government. It is stitched into the fabric of New England and dominates the patchwork of its public past."

Town Day Preparations

How can we as League members help citizens to participate and prepare for it? As of this writing there isn't much in the local news about the issues that will be on each town/city ballot but there is always the local and school budgets to be approved - or not. Check with your town clerk to see what issues will be on your ballot and discussed at Town Meeting. Burlington's City Clerk's office has issued the 5 page Warning of the Annual Meeting with Articles on the ballot and list of councilors running for election in the wards. It is available online and at the clerk's office. Discussions will be held at each ward's NPA meeting.

What can League members can do to encourage participation? Some ideas are: Help with a potluck, provide rides, post copies of the ballot, help people to register to vote, talk with neighbors and assist at the polling places.

This was just announced on Front Porch Forum

Tune in Feb. 3-16 at 5:25 p.m. for Channel 17/Town Meeting TV Live local election forums. Call in with your questions 862-3966.

Live on TV and the Web. Full details at http://www.cctv.org/live_events
All election forums will be available for repeat viewings on TV and the web.

Voter Education Information

Lousie Ransom has obtained the totals of voters in the 2010 election in each of

24 Chittenden Co. districts from the Secretary of State's office. She will be comparing them with the 2008 totals and provide us with a comparison. To see how she's doing with it you can call her at 985-8706.

Health Care Legislation

Dr. Hsaio presented the 1st draft of 3 health care plans on Jan. 19th. The public comment period ends Feb. 3 but we can still watch what develops.

Here are websites on which you can watch and maybe have input on the action:

www.workerscenter.org/healthcare

vermontforsinglepayer.org/

The National League as well as many state Leagues are getting ready for new legislation to be presented and will keep a close watch to see if it complies with our consensus for improved universal (perhaps 'Medicare for All') coverage

www.lwv.org (Go to 'Take Action' and then 'Health Care Reform')

Several of Vermont State League members are participating in nationwide conference calls that HCR4US (Health Care Reform for US) are holding. Call Jean Hopkins if you would like to participate.

The State Transportation Study

Your comments are still welcome at president@lwvofvt.org

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Membership in the League is open to men and women citizens of all ages. With 90 years of experience and 850 local and state affiliates, the League is one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations.

