

THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley

February 2010

CVLWV Board, 2009 - 2010

President	Marge Gaskins	879-0003
Vice President	Irene Wrenner	879-0011
Treasurer	Amy Bond	879-0628
Secretary	Jean Norton	879-0872
Director	Mabel Buttolph	863-3990
Director	Sue Golden	985-9524
Director	Vee Gordon	876-7869
Director	Jean Hopkins (Voter editor)	863-5359
Director	Keri Toksu (Website)	658-0962

Calendar of Events

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

Local, Statewide, Regional Meetings

Date	Time	Place	Description
Feb. 4	10:30am	23 Forest Rd. Essex Junction	Board Meeting
Feb. 16	7:00 pm	State House Montpelier	Sally Matson portraying Susan B. Anthony
Feb. 17		State House Montpelier	Recognition of the LWV 90th Anniversary
Mar. 2		Most VT towns	Town Meeting Day

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - Marge Gaskins

Hello all:

We had a very good dinner and turnout for our dinner with legislators Jan 13th. Although Senator Diane Snelling was unable to come, Suzi Wizowaty, a representative and Champlain Valley League member joined David Zuckerman and Martha Heath in sharing our questions and concerns about the current session. It's good to have our priorities listened to and really be able to consider what our elected officials think is possible and will likely happen. I'm sorry you couldn't all be there.

I hope you who live in Burlington are staying attuned to the campaign and news about repealing IRV in the mayoral elections. There is a coalition of organizations and individuals writing letter, signing onto ads and supporting efforts to defeat this motion which will be on the ballot town meeting day, in March. As you know, the LWVVT has an established position in favor of instant runoff voting (IRV), and Champlain Valley

League, as the only unit in Vermont that actually represents a district that uses this voting process, we will support it.

I have written a letter to the Free Press editorial page, and Keri Toksu and I are working with this coalition.

Terry Bouricious, our resident expert member has submitted notes about this in this edition of our newsletter.

Also of note, The League of Women Voters is celebrating our 90th year of women's suffrage and League organization. It took us almost that long to reach this right and privilege, and it will be celebrated with a resolution in both the VT House and Senate, as well as a theatrical one woman show about the life of Susan B. Anthony, one of our most noted founders. You will also be given all of the details about this upcoming production soon.

Our membership, like so many organizations, is not continuing to grow and flourish in this climate of technology, busy lives and economic hardship. So I urge each of you to help us whenever you can by inviting your friends and colleagues to join the League of Women Voters. We need numbers of concerned and caring members to work with us this election year, and their financial support to maintain the work we do.

If you or someone you know would like to know more about League, our issues, and how we can make a difference, come to a meeting or call another member. Remember we are non-partisan. Although we do not support or oppose candidates, we do advocate for issues that our members have voted to take a position for or against.

The League's 90th Anniversary Celebration

Start arranging carpools to the State House now so you won't miss the events on the 16th and 17th. If you'd like to carpool from the Richmond Exit 11 Park and Ride you can call Jean Hopkins at 863-5359. You can call her for other carpools too.

Town Meeting Day It will be here soon! Learn what your town will be voting on. Burlington voters - take note of next article on IRV.

Instant Run-off Voting

The Champlain Valley League of Women Voters has long advocated instant runoff voting (IRV), as an improvement to our democracy. We are currently working with others, to defend IRV and majority voting rules in Burlington against a repeal question on the March ballot. A PAC named "50% Matters" has been formed to run the IRV defense campaign.

The charter amendment (Ballot item #5), initiated by City Councilor Paul Decelles (R - Ward 7) seeks to repeal IRV and repeal the majority requirement for electing a mayor in the first round. It would substitute a 40% winning threshold (with a separate runoff election if no candidate reaches 40%) for IRV's 50% winning threshold.

The Decelles initiative abandons the principle of majority rule. A 40% victory threshold means that whenever there are three or more candidates, we can have "spoilers," in which the majority splits among candidates, allowing a candidate that 60% of voters agree is the worst choice to be declared the "winner."

It is unlikely that using IRV changed the results of the 2009 mayoral elections, a concern of those who wish to repeal it. The ballots show that in a runoff between the top two finishers, Wright and Kiss, a majority of voters preferred Kiss to Wright. The fairness of a voting system should never be judged based on whose candidate happens to win in any particular election.

For more information on IRV, see the FAQs on our special IRV web site... www.vermontvotes123.org. To help the League defend IRV and uphold majority rule in Burlington, please contact us at: burlingtonIRV@gmail.com. Contributions can be made out to "50% Matters" and sent to: Helen Hossley, 325 Ethan Allen Parkway, Burlington, VT 05408

Health Care Reform

At the National level we're still waiting to see what happens there. Here is the Jan.27 statement from our National President Mary Wilson:

"We have a health care crisis in America. Too many citizens lack adequate health insurance coverage and rising costs threaten everyone. The failure of Congress to act on these issues over decades has simply compounded the problems and undermined faith in government.

"The League of Women Voters urges our elected members of Congress to finish work on health care reform and send a bill quickly to the President for his signature. While many of the provisions of the House bill are preferable to those in the Senate version, we believe that the House of Representatives should step forward and pass the Senate bill.

"Both the House and Senate have now passed comprehensive health care legislation, and the bills share many essential elements: they greatly expand health care coverage to include millions more Americans; they protect the coverage that currently delivers care to most; they contain essential elements to reduce costs over the long term; and they

accomplish these goals at a reasonable cost.

“Opponents of health care reform, however, have been irresponsible in adopting a strategy of fear, delay and obfuscation. They have misled and lied about the provisions of the legislation and have relied on the 60-vote rule of the Senate to block progress. These fundamentally anti-democratic tactics cannot be allowed to prevail.

“Medicare was enacted over strong opposition from those who opposed “socialized medicine.” Social Security was adopted despite loud and prolonged complaints. Yet, both these systems are now sacrosanct. Many other accomplishments, from civil rights to environmental protection, were controversial when first adopted but have proven to be critical steps forward. Health care reform is part of that tradition.

“We understand that there may be a number of ways for health care reform to succeed. None of these possibilities will accomplish all that needs to be done, and Congress will need to revisit many issues in coming years. But any of these alternatives moves us toward successful health care reform and thus is better than the status quo. Congress should not miss this historic opportunity to enact comprehensive health care reform legislation.”

At the Vermont state level several League members are observing the House and Senate Health Care Committee meetings as several other bills besides H100 and S88 have been introduced (H.372, H491, H.510) which hope to bring about universal health care.

The Vermont Workers Center's Health Care is a Human Right Campaign, Vermont4SinglePayer and Vermont Citizens Campaign for Health are just 3 of the entities promoting a more universal health care system for Vermont.

Kate Rader and Jean Hopkins were able to get copies of Churchill Hindes' year by year history of health care reform in Vermont since 1620! Contact one of us if you'd like to see it.

Here are a few of the notes that Kate gleaned from it:

Vermont is one of a few states that has retained strict Certificate of Need rules (Vermont is in "most restrictive" tier with 7 other states.
Each biennium, about 125 pieces of health care related legislation are introduced in Montpelier; typically 24 of these will become law
Since 1965, there have been at least five different organizational approaches to regulating health care in Vermont
Since 2003, health planning in Vermont follows "Act 53"
Over a dozen Vermont state government departments have key health roles, from Agriculture to the Vermont Veterans Home
Over 40 health-related professions are regulated by Vermont government, from acupuncturists to veterinarians
Vermont is one of a few states with a "Patients' Bill of Rights" law.

Transportation Study See the State League website

FYI

CCTA PUBLIC HEARINGS FEB. 2-11

By Karen Duguay, Marketing and Public Affairs Manager – Chittenden County Transit Authority, Industrial Pkwy, CCTAfpf@cctaride.org

Fri, 29 January 2010

CCTA is proposing to implement new and enhanced service along the Route 2 corridor between Burlington and Williston. The proposed alternative includes three routes, which would replace the existing Umal/Airport and Williston routes. CCTA is asking for public feedback during this process. Please attend one of the following public hearings to offer your comments, suggestions, and ideas on the proposed service changes and improvements. Please call CCTA at 864-CCTA for more information or visit <http://cctaride.org>

Tuesday, 2/2 at 6:00 p.m.
South Burlington Middle School Library

Thursday, 2/4 at 6:00 p.m.
Brownell Library in Essex

Wednesday, 2/10 at 6:00 p.m.
Contois Auditorium (Burlington)

Thursday, 2/11 at 6:00 p.m.
Williston Town Hall

Weekend Meeting, Saturday 2/20 at 1:00 p.m.
CCTA Administrative Office (Burlington)

League Websites

A way to keep up-to-date on League issues is to check our state website www.lwvofvt.org which will direct you to the national website. If you've ever belonged to a League elsewhere in the country you might also be able to access to their newsletter via the national website.

Dues

Check with Amy Bond, our Treasurer, if you can't remember paying it, or send a check for \$50.00 or \$75.00 for two members in a family made out to Champlain Valley League of Women Voters or simply CVLWV and mail it to

P.O. Box 8344

Essex, VT 05451

Note - This is a new P.O.Box number.

