



GREEN MOUNTAIN CITIZEN

Spring 2009

Legislative Day Set for March 24

Because of the Legislature's extended Town Meeting break, our Annual Legislative Day was postponed to March 24.

The format will follow the one that has proved successful in the past two years: members will converge on the State House in the morning and attend committee meetings dealing with issues of interest to the League, or watch the full House or Senate if they are in session.

Now here's the important part: At noon we will adjourn to Positive Pie II on State Street (there is parking in the lot opposite the end of Elm Street). **Ask your legislators to come along.** This is where we get to know them and vice-versa. We talk to them one-on-one about our issues and learn how they are dealing with the problems and issues facing VT.

Legislation of interest: The House Natural Resources and Energy Committee is discussing Vermont Yankee and its decommissioning.

The Senate Government Operations Committee has asked for an omnibus election law bill. A variety of changes in the law have been proposed, including mandatory election procedure training for Town Clerks, forty-eight hour notice for write-in candidates, earlier primary elections, and the use of IRV for the gubernatorial election. We hope this bill will be drafted by the 24th. There will be a separate EDR bill before the committee on March 18. We are particularly interested in EDR and the training of election officials.

This format has worked well, but it depends on you for its success. Contact your legislators, tell them we will be there on the 24th, and ask them to lunch with us. Contact information can be found at:

<http://www.leg.state.vt.us/legdir/legdir2.htm>. These are interesting times at the State House. Be a part of it.

Quad States Schedules Third Annual Leadership Conference

The Quad States Presidents and LWVUS Liaison Judy Davis are making plans for the third annual Leadership Conference, to be held on May 30 and 31. These conferences have been well received in the past, and we hope to make that a tradition.

This year's conference will focus on public financing of election campaigns and will have some new features. In addition to three workshops, we will have a keynote speaker on Saturday morning. Workshops will be built around the issue of campaign finance, but the skills we learn there will be transferable to any issue.

The keynote speaker will cover campaign finance law.

The workshop topics are:

Advocacy - conducting a public campaign for an issue;

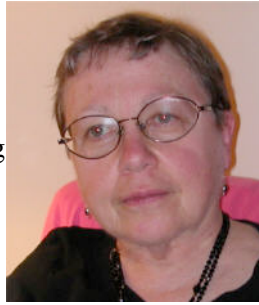
Fundraising - using an issue as a fundraising device;

LWVUS Advocacy Priorities - how the state Leagues can work with LWVUS on federal issues (including campaign finance) and prioritizing in lean times.

We expect to once again meet at the Hampton Inn in Wells, ME, and doing the "dine around" as we did last year. The registration fee for the conference is \$20, and the registration form is on the insert, along with that for the LWV T Convention.

We are waiting to see if the House and Senate Government operations committees come up with a new public funding bill for Vermont. Last Fall the League was represented on a special committee recruited by the committee chairs to look at the issue. If and when such a bill is filed, members who attend this conference will be the world's leading experts on the issue!

President's Message Spring 2009



I recognize that this has been a long winter, but I have to say I have enjoyed the weeks on end of beautiful snowshoeing weather. It has been a pleasure to follow the deer and coyote tracks through the woods of East Montpelier. But it's time for seed orders and thinking about the garden, too.

It is with regret that I pass on the news that long-time treasurer June Carmichael has had to relinquish her duties because of poor health. A tribute to June appeared in the Winter issue of the GMC. Fortunately for us, the nominee for Treasurer, Tara Rogerson, was willing to step into June's shoes in advance of our May 2 Convention.

There's a lot of activity ahead for the state League.

First up is our annual Legislative Day. Originally scheduled for the week after Town Meeting Day, it was postponed to Tuesday, March 24 to accommodate the Legislature's extended TM break. More information about Legislative Day can be found on p. 1.

The local Leagues have scheduled consensus meetings for the LWVUS study of the National Popular Vote Compact. Dates are shown on the calendar of events. ***Individual members-at-large and the Brattleboro MAL unit can participate by downloading the study information and consensus questions from the LWVUS website, completing the questions, and sending their responses to the state League, c/o Kate Rader, 1186 Towne Hill Road, East Montpelier, 05651.*** They will then be compiled and submitted to the LWVUS as from a local League. Pro and Con arguments are provided on pp. 6 and 7, but you are encouraged to go to the LWVUS website for more information about the NPV Compact concept.

Next up is our 51st Convention, on May 2 at Vermont College in Montpelier. The final Call and Warning for Convention begin on p 3.

Plans for the Quad States Leadership Conference on May 30 and 31 are progressing, and some details are given on p. 1. This annual event has been well received, and we hope to see a good representation from Vermont there, especially those of you who are relatively new to the League.

We've been busy as well trying to raise our visibility.

Since the year began, we have submitted the following:

Letter to the PSB supporting Searsburg wind project;
Letter to Legislative leadership, the Times-Argus and the Burlington Free Press in support of continued funding for conservation;
An Op-Ed in the Burlington Free Press in support of Instant Runoff Voting;
Letter to House and Senate Natural Resource and Energy Committees in support of wind power generation.

Now, some housekeeping:

Please, please, please give us your e-mail addresses. We have them for only about half of you, and I know there are more out there. In the interest of time and money, we will be relying increasingly on electronic communications. We will not give your addresses to anybody, and we will try very hard not to inundate you with unwanted messages. Please let us keep in touch with you. Just send a message to me at president@lwvofvt.org.

And once again, we need of an editor for this journal. It's not a huge job, but it is an enormous service to the League. Think about it.

Kate

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is published four times per year by
The League of Women Voters of Vermont

Kate Rader, President
Kate Rader, Editor *pro tem*

Membership in the League includes a
subscription. If you would like to join the
League, e-mail, write, or call:

League of Women Voters of Vermont

P.O. Box 94, Cabot, VT 05647

802-657-0242

e-mail: League@lwvofvt.org

The 51st Convention of the League of Women Voters of Vermont

Saturday, May 2, 2009

Noble Hall, Vermont College of Fine Arts, Montpelier

Nominating Committee Report 2009-2011

Officers

President: Kate Rader
Vice President: Sonja Schuyler
Secretary: Stella Bukanc
Treasurer: Tara Rogerson

Directors

Amy Bond
Terry Bouricius
Joanna Cole
Vee Gordon
Florence Young
Francis Knibb/Judith Myrick (shared position)

In addition, the Board may appoint up to six more directors. Nominations may be made from the floor with permission of the nominee.

Jean Norton

Recommend Program

Transportation Study: To examine the state's transportation needs and explore potential means of meeting those needs.

Scope: This study would focus on passenger transportation in and between the state's regional hubs, particularly in underserved rural areas. The study would include but not be limited to: availability of passenger rail service, inter- and intra-urban bus service, energy efficient transportation, facilitation of carpools, and state and federal funding for infrastructure. The impact, particularly on infrastructure, of commercial traffic and transportation of goods may also be examined.

The League Remembers Gail Cooper

Gail Cooper, founding member of the SE (Brattleboro) MAL Unit died peacefully surrounded by family on Jan. 31 at the age of 66. All who knew her - and there were many, because she was so active in so many varied community organizations - remember her as a woman whose passion for people and human rights was contagious.

Gail, who became a good friend through our membership in the newly formed in 2003, was the unit Secretary and Chair of the Voter Registration Committee. When about a dozen of us revived the unit, she said her interest was fueled by a desire to see the state of VT adopt Instant Runoff Voting - a system under which voters rank candidates of their choice, instead of choosing only one. She also, in 2004, helped formulate and distribute (with Town Clerk and League member Annette Cappy's help) an informational brochure on Town Government and the Brattleboro's Representative Town Meeting. She helped organize forums of candidates who were running for election, and worked with local access BCTV to produce "live" shows for community education.

Brattleboro Selectboard Chairman Dick DeGray said: "She was an unsung hero who made Brattleboro a better place to live." As a Justice of the Peace, she worked at elections and took ballots to people unable to get to the polls. We know she also joyfully performed over 200 weddings and civil unions as a Justice of the Peace. Over the years she also was a volunteer for Early Education Services and a member of the Board of Civil Authority, as well as a Board member of the Morningside Shelter for the homeless.

All of this she did quietly and without fanfare just for the love of being active in her so-called "retirement" years. Janet Cramer, also of the SE Unit, said Gail reached out to every Vermonter, regardless of their political opinion.

A memorial service is planned for May.

Support for the National Popular Vote Compact

Because the League already supports direct election of the president, arguments against the Electoral College (EC) are not included in the material supporting the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact).

Constitutional Issues The NPV Compact is a way to assure that every person's vote counts equally and that the person receiving the most votes is the winner of the presidency. The same result would be achieved by constitutional amendment but the U.S. Constitution is difficult to amend. The NPV Compact is a viable way to attain the same goal as amending the Constitution to eliminate the EC.

A constitutional amendment is not needed to effectuate the NPV Compact because states already have the right to implement changes in how electors are appointed.

The NPV Compact is a compact between states – a method of concerted state action that has long been sanctioned by the Constitution and the courts.

Evaluating Fairness A candidate can be elected president by receiving the most electoral votes even though he or she did not receive the most popular votes. This is not a result voters expect or desire. As election campaigns are now waged, major emphasis and resources are concentrated in key EC battleground states because that is where elections are won or lost. The NPV Compact would eliminate the emphasis on battleground states and would be more apt to assure campaign strategies that appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate which would foster greater voter participation.

The argument that the plan would negatively impact states' rights is countered by poll results showing that most voters want their individual vote to count, rather than allotting them to electors representing the state as a whole.

Any claim that the NPV Compact is an unprecedented disregard for the U.S. Constitution ignores the reality that voting rights have been changed through state action many times. Women's suffrage, for example, was instituted by twenty states before passage of the constitutional amendment that made the right universal.

Mechanical Considerations Those opposed to the NPV Compact cite mechanical issues that might lead the NPV to fail, but the Compact includes provisions that address issues of enforcement, winning levels and recounts.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act and the NPV Compact are in harmony, assuring equality of votes throughout the United States.

League Issues Opponents say that the NPV Compact conflicts with the League's support of uniform voting standards. Supporters of the Compact advocate its passage in all states, which would result in uniform voting standards. It is true that the NPV Compact could be in effect for an interlude when not all states had signed on to it. The same could be demonstrated for other laws, such as the Equal Rights Amendment. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that uniform voting standards are not now in effect. The NPV Compact could help assure that every vote would be counted equally.

Further, implementation of a method which assures direct election of the president by popular vote is in keeping with the League's long-held position.

To prepare for the consensus meeting, please read the complete version of this paper (available at www.lwv.org) by the LWVUS National Popular Voter Compact Study Committee.

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Opposition to the National Popular Vote Compact

There is little respect for the Electoral College (EC). The League opposes it and most voters want a direct popular vote. But is the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) an appropriate way to achieve that result?

Evaluating Fairness Voters supporting the candidate who receives the majority of votes in their state want their state's electors to support their choice. Adoption of the NPV Compact may require a state elections official to direct its state's electors to cast their ballots in support of a candidate who was not favored by the voters of that state.

Passage of the NPV Compact will result in the emphasis of presidential campaigns shifting from the battleground states to areas of large concentrations of population. So, while some voters are disenfranchised by the EC, others might be disenfranchised by the NPV Compact. Because the Compact requires entry into a contract with other states which binds state elections officials to direct electors to vote in a certain way, regardless of the outcome of the election in their state, states' rights are diminished.

In addition, one can question the advisability of a method that bypasses the normal constitutional amendment process in this manner.

Constitutional Issues Many constitutional scholars argue that this plan will lead to extensive litigation involving challenges to the NPV Compact on issues such as the scope of constitutional powers, the Compact itself, the need for congressional approval, the concerns of non-compacting states, and constitutional protections of state interests and their role in elections.

Mechanical Issues/Flaws The methods for enforcement of this plan are unclear. Opponents question the power and timing to withdraw from the Compact and the power to enforce compliance.

Others express concern about an onslaught of lawsuits between compacting and non-compacting states, as well as procedures in close elections.

The plan, allowing the election of a president by a plurality of votes, does not improve on the current system; neither the present system nor the NPV Compact requires that the president be elected by a majority.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act requires pre-clearance for legislative changes. This, too, has the capacity to engender lawsuits to ensure compliance.

League Issues This proposal does nothing to achieve the goal of uniform standards of voting. The NPV Compact is effective when passed by states representing 270 electoral votes, effectively negating the impact on presidential elections of the voters in states which represent the other half of electoral votes. A system which assures no voter disenfranchisement is a better way to assure that every person's vote counts.

The League has long supported the abolition of the EC. Although the NPV Compact purports to foster the same result, it creates additional concerns. Amending the U.S. Constitution is a difficult process, and we should seriously consider supporting the normal amendment procedures to abolish the EC versus this specific "work-around."

To prepare for the consensus meeting, please read the complete version of this paper (available at www.lwv.org) by the LWVUS National Popular Voter Compact Study Committee.

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GREEN MOUNTAIN CITIZEN

League of Women Voters of Vermont

Post Office Box 8266
Essex, VT 05451-8266

Calendar of Events

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|-----------------------------------|--|
| Thursday, March 10, 7:00 p.m. | SE (Brattleboro) Unit, NPV Consensus Meeting, Hanna Cosman Room, Municipal Center, Brattleboro |
| Wednesday, March 18, 7:00 p.m. | LWVCV, NPV Consensus Meeting, Speeder and Earls, 412 Pine St., Burlington |
| Tuesday, March 24 | LWVVT Legislative Day, the State House |
| Monday, April 21, 4:30 p.m. | LWVVT Board Meeting, Kellogg-Hubbard Library, Montpelier
All members welcome |
| Saturday, May 2, 9:00 a.m. | LWVVT Biennial Convention, Noble Hall, Vermont College |
| Thursday, May 14, 5:30 p.m. | LWVCV Annual Meeting and Potluck, 20 Peterson Lane, South Burlington |
| Tuesday, May 19, 6:00 p.m. | LWVCEN Annual Meeting and Potluck, Location TBA |
| Saturday/Sunday, May 30,31 | Quad States' Annual Leadership Conference, Wells, ME |

QUAD STATES LEADERSHIP TRAINING CONFERENCE

**REGISTRATION for the meeting is \$20, payable to the LWV of NH-Quad States. Return form and check to Jane Armstrong, LWVNH, 4 Park St, Suite 200, Concord, NH 03301-5344. Saturday lunch and Sunday breakfast are included. Make your own hotel reservation at Hampton Inn & Suites, 900 Post Road, Wells, Maine 04090 (1-207-646-0555). Room rate is \$95.24 for a double.
DEADLINE FOR HOTEL RESERVATION AT GROUP RATE IS 2009.**

Name

Address

Phone

51st Convention of the League of Women Voters of Vermont Saturday, May 2, 2009

Noble Hall, Vermont College Montpelier

9:00-9:30	Registration
9:30 – 10:45	Morning Business Session
10:45 – 11:00	Break
11:00 – 12:00	Renewable Energy Panel
12:00-1:30	Luncheon
1:30- 3:00	Afternoon Business Session
3:30	Keynote Speaker: Scudder Parker, Efficiency Vermont

Directions to the campus: Take Exit 8 from I89 and follow the signs for the Statehouse. Continue east on State Street, through the intersection with Main Street. East State Street ends at College Street, immediately opposite College Hall. Noble Hall is two buildings to the right of College Hall as you face it. Parking is available at College Hall and behind Noble Hall.

If anyone would like to come the night before, please contact Kate Rader, 229-4737 or radercatherine@myfairpoint.net

REGISTRATION for the meeting is \$40, payable to the LWV of VT. Luncheon Guest or Non-Member: \$25. Return form and check to Tara Rogerson, Treasurer, P.O. Box 8266, Essex, VT 05451

DEADLINE FOR REGISTRATION IS April 24, 2009.

Name

Address

Phone
