



## Green Mountain CITIZEN

Summer 2010

### **LWVUS Convention 2010 Adopts Two New Studies**

The biennial LWVUS Convention, held in Atlanta on June 11-15, was an exciting and productive one.

#### **Convention Highlights**

The first plenary session of the convention featured a stirring address by Civil Rights activist and Congressman John Lewis, Representative from Atlanta, which was not announced in advance of the Convention. There were also congratulatory messages from President Obama and Nancy Pelosi. On Sunday afternoon all the living past presidents of the LWVUS presented a panel discussion of the accomplishments of the League during their tenures. The banquet speaker Monday evening was Robert P.J. Cooney, Jr., author of *Winning the Vote – The Triumph of the American Woman Suffrage Movement*. Kathleen Sebelius, U.S. Secretary of Health and Human Services gave the keynote address on Tuesday. It is expected that videos of these and other speakers will be posted on the LWVUS website.

#### **Studies Adopted**

Two new studies, to be conducted over the next biennium, were adopted by the convention. The first, recommended by the board, would focus on the role of the federal government in education's policy-making, with possible consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The scope will be dependent on available resources, including committee and LWVUS staff time. Seventy-one of the 273 local and state Leagues participating in national program planning last winter suggested this study.

Not-recommended items are subject to a two-step process: first they are moved for consideration. If a majority of the convention votes for consideration, then they are debated along with recommended items. This year, the convention adopted a second, not-recommended study of the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services and assets to the private sector.

#### **Positions Adopted by Concurrence**

Under the LWVUS Bylaws, convention delegates may concur with a position statement at convention, provided that the concurrence is passed by a two-thirds majority and provided that notice is given six weeks before convention and that the concurrence statement is supported by pro and con material and an explanation of the rationale for using this form of member of agreement. Historically, concurrence at convention has been based on position statements arrived at after study and consensus in one or more states, but the bylaws do not limit concurrences in that manner.

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## President's Message

Summer 2010

We have a phoebe's nest on a light fixture on the side of our garage, and a second brood is in the offing. The first three babies left the nest while I was in Atlanta for the LWVUS Convention. I hope to see the new ones launched.



With Convention intervening since the Quad States Conference, that event feels like a long time ago. That's a shame, because it was a winner! The topics were timely, and Terry Bouricius's presentation on IRV was a hit. Best of all, it was attended by LWVUS President Mary Wilson, two national board members, and one board-member nominee. Thank you to our LWVUS board liaison, Judy Davis, for her consistent support and promotion of our small state Leagues.

The LWVUS was cited in a New York Times editorial on June 24, in support of the Disclose Act, calling for sponsors of political ads to identify themselves, as candidates have to do. Our own Vee Gordon participated in Rep. Peter Welch's press conference in March, in support of the legislation.

Another bright spot on the calendar: The annual Naturalization Ceremony at the State House will take place on Friday, August 20 at 10:00 a.m. As usual, the Champlain Valley and Central Vermont Leagues will host a reception for the new citizens and their families, and register them to vote.

Enjoy your summer, and come back for another busy year in League.

Kate

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### **Help Wanted – Help Needed!**

Our state convention will be held on May 21, 2011. The bylaws of the LWVVT call for a nominating committee of three members, only one of which can be a sitting member of the board. Our Secretary, Stella Bukanc, is the member from the board. We need two more off-board members.

*If you care about the League, but circumstances do not allow you to be more active, please make a vital contribution by helping with this important task.*

Vee Gordon, Sonja Schuyler and I are working on some talking points about what is expected of board members, to help you when you talk to potential nominees.

Please call me at 229-4737 if you are willing to help.

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I am delighted to report that Vermont had three delegates at Convention this year. I know that we have had two before, but only one in 2006 and 2008. Maybe others can tell me if we have ever had more than two in the past. As you will read elsewhere in this issue, it was an exciting convention, full of accomplishment. We will have plenty to do in the next two years!

One highlight of the convention for me and my colleagues from the Quad States was the mention of our conference, and our Leagues by name, in Mary Wilson's address to the convention in the first plenary session. Go, Quad States!

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## Convention cont'd.

Two motions for concurrence were passed in Atlanta, and consequently became part of the LWVUS advocacy positions. The first was for concurrence with the LWVMD and LWVME position on Marriage Equality to be added to the Equality of Opportunity position. That position now states, in part, that the “LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples.”

The second concurrence added the words “We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact 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.”

There is more about this concurrence on p. as an illustration of how convention goes about its business outside the plenary sessions.

### **Resolutions**

Resolutions lie somewhere between Concurrence and Guidance to the board. Unlike Guidance, which is simply a statement by a state or local League, a resolution requires the vote of the Convention, but without the same degree of background information needed to offer a Concurrence.

Several resolutions were adopted by the convention. They were: in support of lifting the travel restrictions for Americans going to Cuba; in support of safe drilling and mining for energy resources; for the LWVUS to call upon the Senate to change its rules to limit the use of the filibuster; to add the principle of Transparency to the SARA resolution (Security, Accuracy, Recountability, and Accessibility in voting); to call upon the LWVUS board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for improved Medicare for all; and a resolution calling for accountability for the Gulf of Mexico oil disaster and the necessary steps to maximize efforts to respond to it.

Another resolution, adopted by unanimous consent, announced strong opposition to the immigration measure recently passed by the Arizona legislature and signed by the governor that could cause law enforcement officials to target racial and ethnic minorities unfairly. The LWVUS and LWVAZ have since filed an amicus brief in a lawsuit against the AZ law.

### **A Day at Convention**

Convention activities started as early as 7:30 in the morning, and ended at 10:00 at night, with multiple caucuses and workshops held before, after, and sometimes between plenary sessions.

Workshops were presented by the national League board. They included guidance on League procedure, fundraising, advocacy, etc., and information on such topics effective use of the internet.

Caucuses were sponsored by state and local Leagues around the country and some LWVUS groups. The caucuses are primarily a method to advocate for items to be voted by convention, or to lay groundwork for future convention proposals.

On Saturday, the LWV Atlanta sponsored a “dine around,” providing a selection of restaurants for convention delegates to choose for dinner. A group of us from ME, RI, VT, KS and WA passed up that opportunity to go to Fat Matt's, a tiny, crowded barbecue place with live music instead. A good time was had by all.

**Editor's Note:** I included a lot of detail about convention in this issue, because I hoped to give you a sense of the range of issues and activity at the event. Unfortunately, I can't convey the intensity of the caucus discussions, or the energy in the plenary sessions. Serious work is done, but at the same time it is so much fun. I hope you will consider being a delegate of the state or a local League at the 2012 convention in Washington, DC.

# What Happens off the Convention Floor: NPV Concurrence

(with Dr. Barbara Klein, LWVAZ and Chris Pearson, LWV Champlain Valley, VT)

*In the cover story, I told you what Convention 2010 accomplished, and a little of what it's like to be there. Here I use the NPV Concurrence to show you a snapshot of how Convention works, and how it reflects our grass roots concerns. Barbara Klein served on the NPV study committee and worked closely with both sides of the issue. Chris Pearson works for the NPV organization. - Ed.*

## Background

The 2008 national convention adopted a study of the National Popular Vote Compact as a means of achieving the direct popular election of the President without a Constitutional amendment. [The League long had a position in favor popular election of the president through abolition of the Electoral College by Constitutional amendment.] Consensus meetings were held by state and local Leagues in the winter of 2009. No consensus was reached, and the LWVUS added to their position that we had no position on the NPV Compact. At the time there were complaints that the consensus questions were confusing and/or biased against the compact.

## From Barbara:

The NPV Compact Study Committee and Program Planning Committee recommended that the LWVUS continue to examine opportunities to achieve the goal of direct election of the president in addition to the unlikely opportunity of abolishing the Electoral College by Constitutional amendment. Options could include examination of other plans similar to the NPV Compact, proposing a concurrence at Convention 2010 on the NPV Compact, or continued examination of the NPV Compact itself.

Concurrence seemed like a long shot, but there was enough support for us to pursue that idea.

On behalf of LWVAZ, I requested funds and manpower from the NPV organization to help make this happen. They were very generous, and we also had speakers and supporters at convention from Common Cause, FairVote and the NPV organization.

We held two caucuses and had information tables where we spoke with members almost constantly. I am afraid to say there were still some VERY general ideas that members had wrong, but that always happens until they have that 'ah-ha' moment. True to our history, Leaguers asked every possible question about NPV, some to clarify and many to challenge and still others to query us about the League process we chose to take. Other than those who simply support the Electoral College (not a League position), I believe we answered all their concerns.

Many members from Arizona either planned to speak from the floor; spoke at caucus or just helped explain it to other members. As maker of the motion, I had to answer almost a dozen questions from the floor and was able to speak to the motion twice. Since it was a concurrence, we needed a 2/3 vote to win – and we got it. A BIG cheer went up in the room when it passed. A standing division was called for and that was taken, but the support was clear. It had passed. LWVUS support of NPV is now part of our position on selection of the president. The added words are: We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact 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

## From Chris:

In 2008 I watched my first LWV Convention in Portland, Oregon. Even though I was a League member I wasn't there as a delegate; I went to advocate for National Popular Vote (NPV). This is when the League decided to study whether or not to support state action toward a popular vote for president.

As you know, we in the Vermont League decided to endorse NPV, even though the consensus questions were confusing. A majority of Leagues agreed with us but not enough to reach the 2/3 threshold for consensus. After reading through the hundreds of complaints about the consensus

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## Fourth Annual Quad States Conference Held in May

The state Leagues of Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont hosted the four annual Quad States Leadership Conference in Wells, ME on May 23 and 24.

The theme of the conference was “The League in a Changing World.”

Leading off the event was Keynote Speaker Jim Melchior, UME Farmington. With humor and insight, he showed us that the kind of incivility that we are now experiencing in public discourse is neither new nor the worst we have experienced.

Three workshops provided some guidance for navigating our changing world. Each workshop was presented twice, so attendees could go to all of them.

Terry Bouricius, LWV Champlain Valley, VT and senior analyst for FairVote, a national clearing-house for electoral method reform led a discussion of Alternative Voting Systems. He emphasized Instant Runoff and Choice Voting. Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) addresses the common “spoiler” problem by promoting majority winners when more than two candidates are running for a single-seat office. Choice voting is a proportional voting method for legislative bodies, ensuring that they accurately reflect the political spectrum of voters. Information about these and other voting systems can be found at <http://www.fairvote.com>. The LWVWA did a comprehensive study in 2000 that eventually led them to endorse IRV for single-seat elections and its multi-seat variant for proportional representation for legislative body elections. The study is at <http://www.lwvwa.org/pdfs/studies/emstudy.pdf>.

Nontraditional voter outreach was discussed by Judy Davis, the LWVUS board liaison to the Quad States and Barbara McDade, President of the LWVME.

The Maine League works with literacy volunteers to produce an “easy to read” voter guide, written at the fourth grade level. It is distributed to libraries, high schools, community colleges and adult education

programs. They also organize a “Forum in a Box” to facilitate candi-date forums in towns without a local

League. The League provides a template for the forum, and a moderator. The sponsoring organization makes the physical arrangements, takes care of publicity, etc.

Davis encouraged Leagues to take advantage of electronic social networking, in particular Facebook as a way to expand our outreach. A handout provided guidance for managing social media such as Facebook, blogs, etc. This presentation nicely complemented Nancy Lynch's workshop on social networking.

Davis also talked about VOTE411, a one-stop shop for election related information. It provides nonpartisan general and state-specific information aspects of the election process. The LWVUS provides free access to state and local Leagues to post their voter guide information on line. [The LWVUS elections department will be hosting several webinar trainings to walk through the new software. A schedule of [VOTE411.org](http://VOTE411.org) webinars, is in the July 1 Leaders' Update.]

Executive Director of the Peace and Justice Center, Nancy Lynch, President of the LWV Central VT and VT went further into the nuts and bolts of social networking.

She showed examples of Facebook, blogs, websites, and blogs as websites. She then led us through the “how-to's” of setting up a Facebook page. More information about this workshop will be available in the LWV Central VT *Bulletin*, which can be accessed on the LWVVT website under Local Leagues.

We were honored to have LWVUS President Mary Wilson at our conference this year, and in addition to Judy Davis, national board member Carol Reimers and board nominee Marlene O'Brien.

# Legislative Wrap-up

(from Rep. Tony Klein)

## Natural Resources

In the natural resources arena, the House has taken several significant steps to protect our environment, grow local jobs, save Vermonters money, and invest in our future.

H.781, an Act Relating to Renewable Energy, makes another big investment in our clean energy future. It's a package of actions that build on last year's major success, the feed-in tariff, which allowed many small renewable energy developers to start selling their power at a fair and consistent price. This year, again without changing environmental standards, we made the process for permitting renewable energy projects more predictable and efficient. Smaller projects will be able to use a simplified permitting process, and larger projects will see a more defined permitting path. Among other provisions, H.781 also gives much-needed price stability to the pioneering farmers in the Cow Power program by allowing them the same feed-in tariff rates that we allowed last year for newer methane digesters, and it allows the Vermont Air Guard to develop a significant solar project through the simplified net metering process. Across the board, we are signaling that Vermont is open for business and that we are committed to continued investment in our energy independence.

## Health Care: S.88

Everyone knows that the health care system needs to change. Insurance coverage is too expensive or insufficient for many, drug costs are too high, and hospital costs can bankrupt a family. Federal health care reform will help, but... is it enough? How do we make sure Vermont's health care system reflects our care for each other and strengthens our communities?

S.88 answers this question in two ways. First, it moves us toward a *single system* of health care, by authorizing Vermont's health care reform commission to hire one or more consultants to produce at least three such designs.\* One must be a single-payer option (meaning publicly financed and government-administered), and one must [provide] a public option (meaning that you can choose between private insurance and a government-run plan). Every design must take into consideration federal reforms and meet a list of principles and goals that stress fairness, equitable and sustainable financing, and equal access for all.

For example, all Vermonters should have access to comprehensive, quality health care. We should be able to choose our primary care providers. The health care sys-

tem should continually improve and its leaders should continually eliminate unnecessary costs. And the financing of health care must be fair, sustainable, shared equitably, and adequate to cover costs.

But this in itself is not enough. Every developed country in the world, whether single- or multi-payer, publicly or privately run, faces unsustainable increases in costs. Therefore S.88 also furthers Vermont's ongoing reform efforts, because improving the way health care is delivered and reducing costs are key to building strong communities.

The Blueprint for Health, at the center of our reform efforts, organizes care around the patient and his/her primary care provider, who might be a family doctor, nurse practitioner, gynecologist or someone else. These are supported by a "community health team" that might include a nurse, nutritionist, behavior specialist, or other specialist. These people together make up the patient's "medical home" and work together, supported by electronic health records, to keep the patient healthy. Instead of only getting paid per procedure, the participating practice also gets a per-member-per-month fee to support its work—and this model has been proven to lower costs by reducing emergency room visits and hospital admissions. S.88 furthers statewide expansion of the Blueprint.

Investing in the future, S.88 also provides for pilot projects to manage costs at a regional level. It also limits increases in hospital spending and directs a workgroup to address the shortage of primary care providers.

Finally, it says that if the federal government does not release to the states the information it will be collecting from pharmaceutical companies about free drug samples given to physicians, then the companies must provide that same information to Vermont's Attorney General. And, because people choose lower-calorie items when they know the calories, S.88 requires fast-food chains to post the number of calories on their menus and menu boards. This information will allow people to make healthier choices and help reduce obesity and its attendant health and cost issues.

*\* The commission has since chosen William Hsiao, KT Li Professor of Economics, Department of Health Policy and Management, Harvard School of Public Health to design the three systems – Ed.*

What Happens Cont'd

questions, the Arizona League decided to ask for a concurrence on NPV at the 2010 Convention in Atlanta. They suggested the League include language about National Popular Vote within the existing language that calls for abolition of the Electoral College.

So it was back to Convention for me, this time as an official delegate from my state League (thank you very much)!

Again this year there were supporters from around the country who stood at the NPV table in the Wares and Exhibits hall, handing out information. And on Saturday night I led a caucus discussion about the concurrence with over 170 participants. As a woman from Illinois said after the panel, "If we can't pass this, what are we even doing here?"

A concurrence requires a 2/3 vote from the floor. On one hand the process is very rigid – every speaker (pro & con) is allowed only one minute. On the other hand it's a total free-for-all because the question can be called at any time and the speakers are taken on a first-come, first-serve basis. It boils down to a mad scramble to get to the microphones.

All this made planning for the debate difficult. But Leaguers are a feisty bunch and relished the challenge. For me it was tough to figure out which of the standard NPV critiques to answer with just one minute. And how could I address concerns that I knew were out there even if they hadn't reached a 'Con' mic yet?

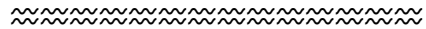
In the end I made it to a mic and spent my minute listing the many endorsements and notable supporters behind NPV. Many others spoke with conviction and over the weekend we encouraged even our shy supporters to get in line even if they didn't dare speak. We knew the question would be called quickly and a long line behind each 'Pro' mic communicated strong support.

The most exciting comments came from George in California. He hadn't been part of our planning, but at the mic he rattled off a series of questions:

Will it advance the LWVUS position? Yes. Will it increase voter turnout? Yes. Will it partner with strong allies? Yes. On and on he went. By the time he hit his 5<sup>th</sup> question the audience began to answer him with louder and louder Yeses. It was a palpable swing in momentum.

Two minutes later the question was called and the chair declared we had passed concurrence with the needed 2/3 vote.

The grassroots nature of the LWV doesn't make for speedy action, but it does offer a full debate and produces positions League members can be proud to defend. Now, lets roll up our sleeves and see that the Vermont legislature agrees that when it comes to picking the president, every vote should be equal.



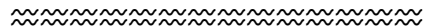
**The Vermont Natural Resources Council,  
the Vermont Peace and Justice Center and  
the Community Sailing Center  
proudly present:**

***Author, activist and United Nations  
Special Advisor on Water Issues***

***Maude Barlow***

**Thursday, July 29, 6:30 p.m.  
Main Street Landing  
Burlington, VT**

**Reception at 5:30 p.m.**



**GREEN MOUNTAIN**

**CITIZEN**

**League of Women Voters of Vermont**

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