



League of Women Voters of Central Vermont

# *Bulletin*

Spring 2014

## March Message

Repeat after me: Spring is coming...spring is coming...spring is coming.

After a couple of years of encouraging growth, in the past year, while we gained two new members, we lost five. Not good. Along with the state League, we have made real progress in visibility, offering public programs and appearing on the state League's public access TV series on current issues. Unfortunately, that good work has not translated into new members. Therefore, we are trying something that proved successful for the LWVME. In the next two or three weeks, members and will be receiving an invitation to a social event to introduce other invitees to the League. This event will take place at the The Vermont Thrush Restaurant on April 23. Details are on page 3. **Save the date!**

Earlier in April, as part of the LWVVT public banking study, the LWVCEN is sponsoring a forum of advocates and oponents of a state bank on April 16. See page 2 for details. This is a good way to get the information you will need for our consensus meeting later in the spring.

Further ahead, the leadership of the Quad States Leagues (ME, NH, RI, VT) are planning the 8<sup>th</sup> Annual Quad States Conference, to be held on May 3 and 4 at the Hampton Inn in Wells, ME. See the Spring *Green Mountain Citizen* for details. All League gatherings are great events, stimulating, educational and fun. I hope you will be there. I can take three in my car, leaving early Friday afternoon.

And don't forget the completion of the LWVUS Agriculture Position Update study consensus, on Monday, March 17, 10:30 a.m. At the home of Sue Racanelli, 270 Brazier Road, East Montpelier.

*Kate*

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## ***LWVCEN to Host Public Banking Forum***

On Wednesday, April 16 at 7:00 p.m. In Room 10 of the State House, the LWVCEN will present a panel discussion of the pros and cons of a public bank, the topic of the current state League study.

Moderated by LWVCEN member Claudette Sortino, chair of the study committee, the panelists will be: Washington County Senator Anthony Pollina; Vermont State Treasurer Beth Pearce; Gwen Hallsmith, founder of Global Community Initiatives; and Chris D'Elia, President and Treasurer of the Vermont Bankers Association.



*Senator Anthony Pollina addresses the LWVVT at their recent Legislative Day at the State House.*

Senator Pollina is the lead sponsor of Senate Bill S.204 which, if passed will provide the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) with banking authority to accept deposits and make loans. While not creating a state bank as such, it would be a first step toward that end. See the Spring state newsletter and our website ([www.lwvofvt.org](http://www.lwvofvt.org)) for more information.

Hallsmith has spearheaded a popular movement for a state bank, while Treasurer Pearce and the banking community have reservations, if they are not in outright opposition.

This is both an important public information program, and important to our study.

## ***March for Paid Sick Leave Draws a Crowd***

Sue Racanelli and Kate Rader represented the League of Women Voters on Sunday in a march to support paid sick leave for all Vermont employees. The event was organized by the Vermont Workers Center in Burlington.



*Supporters of paid sick leave 150 strong marched down State Street on Sunday, March 9.*

Both the House (H.208) and Senate (S.255) are considering legislation to mandate “paid absence from work for health care and safety.” The League supports these bills under LWVUS positions on health care and basic human needs.

### ***April 23 Member Event Scheduled***

On April 23, 5:00-7:00 p.m., the LWVCEN will host a social hour at The Vermont Thrush Restaurant, with hors d'oeuvres and a cash bar.

Agency of Natural Resources Secretary and former Secretary of State **Deborah Markowitz** will speak, and music will be provided by East Montpelier's own **Colin McCaffrey**. We want to show our guests what a great organization the League of Women Voters is and why they should support our work in voter service and advocacy by becoming a member. Watch for your invitation and do join us.

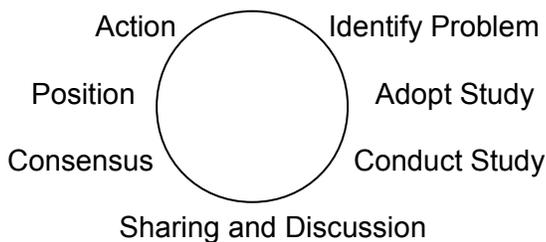
*Ed. note: With consensus on the national agriculture update and the state study on public banking, we thought it appropriate to remind our members of the importance of the League's consensus process.*

## Consensus: Linchpin of League Program

Several years ago, a national poll showed that the LWV was judged for trustworthiness only below the National Heart Association.

That credibility comes from how the League works – how it arrives at its lobbying (action) positions. However, not everyone understands just what the process is, and new members, especially, need an explanation of how the League works. Below is a brief review, which we hope will demonstrate how important member participation is.

The process:



The League “program” (issues chosen for study and action) is adopted by the membership at the local annual meeting and at biennial state and national conventions. There are local program planning meetings at each level in advance to determine the will of the membership and to guide the leadership in recommending programs.

Upon adoption of the program, study/action committees are self-selected. After several months of study by interested members, findings are presented and discussed by the general membership and consensus is (or is not) reached. *Consensus is a process which aims at arriving at some general agreement through group discussion.* It is not determined by a simple majority, nor is it unanimity, but an overall sense of the group.

A position statement is drawn up on the basis of consensus, and is in turn the basis for League action.

It is because League positions are based on research, discussion, and critical examination by the membership that the LWV has such credibility when it takes political or educational action.

The process is the same for every level of the league: information is presented to local units which then take consensus. Results from all over the state or country are then tabulated to develop a position at the study level. Local action may be taken under state or national positions. Members or local Leagues need not agree with a state or national position, but may not take action as a League (or League member) in opposition to it.

It is easy to get the impression that the study (or research) portion of the program is the most important part. But as you can see for the chart, there is much more involved. Up to this point, except for adoption at the annual meeting, only a relatively small group of league members have been involved. But the work is only half finished.

All members now have a chance to participate in a study through consensus. Consensus questions should elicit responses that will give the League the basis for an action position. Information is provided, through the newsletter and/or at a consensus, to allow members to give informed responses. Without broad participation in consensus, a study is of benefit only to those who conducted it. A handful of people cannot presume to speak for the League membership on controversial issues. Without a position backed by research and the informed opinion of the membership, no action can be taken.

You joined the League because you believe in its mission as a force for political action and voter service. We recognize that not everyone has time for active involvement in League program. But please make a commitment to come to consensus meetings – two or three hours out of 365 days in the study year. The life of the League depends on it.



**LWV Central VT**  
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### **LWVCEN Calendar**

<u>March</u>	Monday	17	10:30 a.m., LWVUS Agriculture Study Consensus, followed by LWVCEN Leadership Team Meeting. Home of Sue Racanelli, 270 Brazier Road, East Montpelier. Members are encouraged to attend.
<u>April</u>	Wednesday	16	7:00 – 9:00 p.m., Public Banking Forum, Room 10, State House
		23	5:00 – 7:00 p.m., Member social, The Vermont Thrush Restaurant
<u>May</u>	Sunday-Monday	3,4	Quad States Leadership Conference, Hampton Inn, Wells, ME

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and  
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