



League of Women Voters of Central Vermont

Bulletin

Fall 2015

Fall Message

We had a good time at the State House on Friday, September 11, where we registered new citizens to vote after the annual special 9/11 commemorative naturalization ceremony. Thanks to LWVCEN members Joanne Bair, Hedi Ballantyne, Ken Hertz, Sue Racanelli and Neely Washington for your important contributions to this event. There are plenty of pictures in this *Bulletin* and the LWVVT newsletter.

I want to call your attention to p.2, which outlines the two important studies the national League is wrapping up this fall. We hope to reach advocacy positions on money in politics and a potential Constitutional amendment in response to the Citizens United decision. Page 5 gives a short course on how the League works, and why everyone's participation in the consensus process. Do put the consensus meetings at 7:00 p.m. on November 19 and January 26 on your calendar.

Also on p. 2 is information about a 2016 campaign to register eligible high school students to vote. Here is an activity for those of you who are more interested in direct voter service rather than advocacy. We want to hear from you!

But we're not just policy wonks. With your help, we'll have a memorable holiday event, and soon after the Legislature is in session we'll have a "happy hour" event at a local watering hole to introduce younger people to the League.

Going back to the proposed holiday event, we're sure that there are members out there who are a lot better at planning parties than we are! Don't hide your talents under a bushel – get in touch with me (229-4737) or Sue (225-6032) to give us a hand.

Kate Rader

A Message from Elisabeth McNamara

“The headlines get worse every day.

Kochs Pledge Nearly \$1 Billion for 2016 Election

Small Pool of Rich Donors Dominates Election Giving

‘One Man, One Vote’ Becomes ‘One Billionaire, One Ballot’

That gives all of us who care about our democracy two choices.

Shrug our shoulders and quit.

Or fight even harder. And that’s exactly what the League of Women Voters is doing.

The only way to defeat the unprecedented flood of cash swamping our elections is an unprecedented commitment to citizen participation. And that begins with our youngest voters.

That’s why the League is launching a special **Be Counted – Youth Vote 2016** campaign to help register new voters at high schools across the country. The program is a key part of the League’s work to protect and expand democracy ahead of the 2016 election.

Our High School Voter Registration program has always focused on reaching and empowering young people who are least likely to register, including those from minority and low-income communities.

We’ve registered tens of thousands of young people from underrepresented communities since 2010.

Our **Be Counted – Youth Vote 2016** campaign will build on that record by bringing registration programs to an additional 200 schools this academic year.

For 95 years, the League of Women Voters has fought to protect voting rights and expand citizen participation in our democracy—and with you by our side, we’re not about to quit now.”

Food for thought. The LWVUS provides good

material for successful high school voter registration programs at <http://lww.org/content/high-school-voter-registration-training-manual-3rd-edition>. Let’s make use of it. Contact Sue or Kate join this campaign.

National League Studies on the Docket

As you will see in the GMC, the LWVUS is nearing the conclusion of two important studies, prompted by recent Supreme Court decisions that resulted in election campaigns swimming in unprecedented funds from outside sources. One addresses the effect of all this money in politics, and the other the process of amending the Constitution in the wake of reaction to those Court decisions.

The LWVCEN consensus meeting on amending the Constitution will be held at 1186 Towne Hill Road, East Montpelier, on Thursday, November 19, at 7:00 p.m. You are strongly encouraged to attend this meeting, to help the League reach an advocacy position on the issue. Information about the study can be found on the LWVUS website, www.lww.org, or contact Kate and she will e-mail you the downloaded documents.

We have some exciting related activities coming up this fall, beginning with a talk on money in politics by Ann Luther, LWVME. Ann currently serves as Treasurer and Advocacy Chair of the League of Women Voters of Maine, and is on the board as treasurer for Maine Citizens for Clean Elections. MCCE works to advocate for, increase public support for, defend and improve the Maine Clean Election Act and related campaign finance law. Ann will be speaking at 2:30 on Sunday, November 8 at Montpelier City Hall.

Ann also serves on the LWVUS Constitutional Amendment study committee, and will be interviewed by our own Claudette Sortino on Onion River Community Access TV, to be aired before the consensus meeting on the 19th.

See the *Green Mountain Citizen* for more information about the two studies.

An Album from the 9/11 Naturalization Ceremony



Checking in with INS



Getting ready for the post-ceremony reception



Photo op!



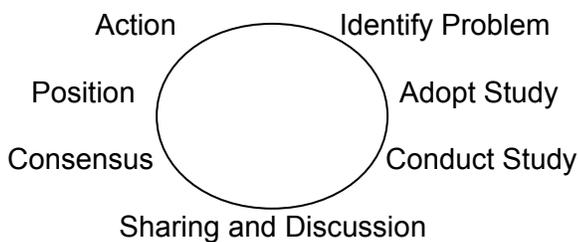
The final step: registering to vote.

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

1186 Towne Hill Road
East Montpelier, VT 05651

Calendar of Events

Oct.

Monday 12 10:30 a.m. - Leadership Team Meeting, Location TBD. All members welcome.

Nov

Sunday 8 2:30 p.m., *Money in Politics*, Ann Luther, LWVME, sponsored by LWVVT.
Memorial Room, Montpelier City Hall.

Monday 9 10:30 a.m. Leadership Team Meeting. Location TBD. All members welcome.

Thursday 19 7:00 p.m., Consensus, LWVUS Study on Constitutional amendment.
Home of Kate Rader, 1186 Towne Hill Road, East Montpelier

Dec.

TBD Holiday event

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