



Green Mountain CITIZEN

Fall 2016

Middlebury Meeting Sets Priorities for Election and Beyond

Sonja Schuyler

Fourteen league members gathered at the Middlebury Inn on Saturday, August 27th for a retreat. The purpose was to provide an opportunity for leaguers from different parts of the state to get to know each other and find out what is happening around the state. Karen Bufka from St. Johnsbury came the farthest. Bill and Masie Wood made the trip from Castleton.

Of course the up-coming elections were on everyone's mind. Forums and debates were discussed. The League's successful Lieutenant Governor's Debate was reported on. Central Vermont was doing forums for legislative candidates. Jean Hopkins, Champlain Valley, explained the "speed date" format for state senate candidates. With six seats, a traditional forum is unwieldy. St. Johnsbury MALs and the state League were working on forums in the Northeast Kingdom. Kate Rader reported on the Governor's debate that the Vermont Commission on Women was planning with a co-sponsorship by the League and the Business and Professional Women.

However, most of the discussion centered on getting more people involved during this time when many people are turned off by the political process. The League needs to get more visibility for its message to vote and become involved. After January 1, 2017, when election day voter registration goes into effect, the need for voter registration drives will diminish significantly and the real challenge will be to get out the vote.

One theme that developed was Empowering the Voters of Tomorrow. This will require building relationships with educators, finding out how voting and civic participation are taught now. Some questions that came out—Do current curriculum guidelines for civics include teaching students how to vote? How much civics education is being taught now and at what levels? Is a mandatory civics requirement needed? Dottye Ricks, Sue Mock, and Sue Racanelli are interested in working on this, and some potential members to join the cause were mentioned. If you are interested in this effort, please contact Dottye (drdaerin@gmail.com) or Sue Racanelli (iracansue@gmail.com)

We all thought the day was a success and that we should do this more often.

Message from the Board

Fall 2016

As we approach another presidential election, many of us have likely given some thought about how candidates are selected by our two major parties.

The only requirements in the Constitution as to who can be nominated for president is that the candidate must be born in the U.S.A. and be at least 35 years of age. The rest is up to the voters who, through the Electoral College, choose the president. In a parliamentary system of government eligible voters choose their legislators but the individual who becomes president or prime minister is the head of the party which wins the largest number of seats. There is no popular vote for the executive. Neither system guarantees that the person who “wins” the position of executive is the best choice for the job.

We have had 44 presidents since ratification of our Constitution. It's likely that a majority of us don't know much about most of them. Many of us couldn't name the last ten except that all were men. We do, however, know the names of the best ones, and likely those who were least successful. What is different in 2016 is that one candidate is female and the other is a businessman with no prior experience in governing. Change is looming regardless of which one wins.

It was just under 100 years ago that women were given the right to vote. The League of Women Voters was an outgrowth of the suffragist movement and has played a significant but nonpartisan role in elections ever since. Encouraging voter registration is one of its major priorities along with voter education.

When my mother was born women did not yet have the right to vote. Today, she could be elected president. Suffrage has come a long way. The LWV has played a major role in expanding the franchise and will continue to play a major role in promoting voter education and participation in the years ahead.

Claudette Sortino



Democracy is not a Spectator Sport!

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Kate Rader, Editor

Membership in the League includes a subscription.
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2016 Election Season a Busy One for LWVVT

This has been an unusually busy election year for the LWVVT, with Vermont Leagues and MAL units around the state hosting candidate forums.

The season started with an overflow crowd at Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier, where the LWVCEN hosted a forum for seven primary election candidates to fill retiring Representative Tony Klein's seat.

The Hayes Room at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library was filled again for the primary candidates for Lieutenant Governor, sponsored by the state League. This forum was streamed live by Onion River Community Access TV (ORCA).



LWVCEN member Susan Clark, Moderator, with Lt. Gov. candidates David Zuckerman, Kesha Ram, Shap Smith and Randy Brock

After some weeks off following the primary election in August, we are back in the business of hosting candidate forums.

On September 22, the League partnered with the Vermont Commission on Women and



The audience gathers for the VCW/LWV/BPW gubernatorial candidate forum on September 22. Business and Professional Women-VT to sponsor a gubernatorial forum for candidates Bill Lee, Sue Minter and Phil Scott. This was live-streamed by ORCA and VPR. The candidates were asked questions of particular importance to women.

This forum can be seen at <http://www.orcamedia.net/show/gubernatorial-candidates-forum-9222016>.

The new Northeast Kingdom unit will be hosting two forums in October, for House District Caledonia 3 (St. Johnsbury) on the 20th in St. Johnsbury, and for the Essex/Caledonia District, in Lunenburg on October 24.

The Champlain Valley League will be hosting the Chittenden County Senate "Speed Dating" event on October 22, at the O'Brien Community Center in Winooski.

LWVVT Hosted National Voter Registration Day Events Around the State

Vermont joined Leagues throughout the country in National Voter Registration Day (NVRD) on Tuesday, September 27th. The Vermont League was out in force at several venues, available to assist voters who wanted to register or update their registration if they have moved. November 2nd is the deadline to register or update your registration in Vermont,.



Registering Cadets at Norwich University in Northfield.

The League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley partnered with Champlain Voices Self-advocates at Champlain Community Services, in Colchester. There was a Kick-off event at noon on September 27th, with people available to register voters from noon to 2 PM, September 27 - 30. The Central Vermont League registered students at Norwich University in Northfield and helped out-of-state students register in their own states through VOTE411.org. League members in the Castleton/Rutland area registered voters earlier in September (Voter Registration Month) at College of St. Joseph in Rutland.

Now in its fifth year, [National Voter Registration Day](#) has been a game-changing annual nonpartisan campaign to register hundreds of thousands of voters in communities and online. Embraced a host of celebrities, bipartisan elected officials and organizations, NVRD leverages the collective impact of thousands of community partners, including hundreds of League of Women Voters groups, nationwide, every year.

“The League of Women Voters of Vermont empowers voters through education, registration and get-out-the-vote activities in every election,” said state board member Sonja Schuyler. “We host candidate and issue forums and registration drives while also providing trusted and timely elections information on VOTE411.org. We believe our democracy is strongest when every voice is heard.”

New Immigrants and Refugees: The Vermont Story

Thursday, October 13 at 7:00 p.m.

A panel discussion moderated by Rep. **Kesha Ram**

Panelists:

Lori Pietropaoli, USCIS
Northeast Regional Director;

Amila Merdzanovic, MALD, Director
USCRI Vermont Refugee
Resettlement Program;

Yacouba Bogre, Executive Director of
Association of Africans Living in
Vermont; and

Susan Sussman, Caseworker, Office
of Senator Patrick Leahy.

Sponsored by the Kellogg-Hubbard Library
and the League of Women Voters

Working to End Human Trafficking in Vermont

Jean Hopkins

We had such a great turnout for our Spring Lecture last March on Human Trafficking with Rosalee Keech and Lt. Lance Burnham that a couple of us are still pursuing the topic with other organizations. Attendees at our lecture in Waterbury included people from United Way, VT Dept. of Justice, a high school class, church groups and legislators.

Since then I have met with the Burlington Area Ministerial Association's task force on human trafficking and Edith Klimoski of Give Way to Freedom (givewaytofreedom.org) – an organization that helps persons who are escaping from a trafficker. The United Way's 211 phone line can help.

The BAMA Task Force meetings I've attended have offered many suggestions of ways to work with churches, hospitals, police and immigration officials. January is human trafficking awareness month and there may be a public event in January 2017 at the First Baptist Church in Burlington.

How can we *prevent* people from being enslaved? Let's look at our global economic system. Who's benefitting and who's suffering? A note from a BAMA meeting reads, "Challenge the thinking of the world of commodification." This includes the drug, gun and sex trades.

Let's work together to create a world of economic equality where everyone is respected and no one is empowered to enslave others. If you would like to join our small working group of League members and spring lecture attendees, contact me, Jean Hopkins at seaheidi@earthlink.net

For more information you can go to these websites:

<https://medcenterblog.uvmhealth.org/mens-health/the-faith-based-communitys-response-to-human-trafficking-in-vermont/>

<http://www.orcamedia.net/show/human-trafficking-0>

HOW MUCH TIME DOES IT TAKE TO BE ACTIVE IN LEAGUE?

Do you have an extra 5 minutes once a year?

In 5 minutes you can pay your dues.

THAT IS BEING ACTIVE IN LEAGUE

Do you have an extra 20 minutes once a month? In 20 minutes you can read what your dues pay for: The local LWV Newsletter or The Vermont State LWV Green Mountain Citizen or The National LWV Leaders Update (online) all three if you are a speed reader

THAT IS BEING ACTIVE IN LEAGUE

Do you have an extra hour or two here or there? Look at all the things you can do with that time: Vote Make phone calls Attend a League meeting Work on an Action Priority Join a Study Committee

THAT IS BEING ACTIVE IN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

The following was excerpted from Minnpost.com, a nonprofit, nonpartisan enterprise whose mission is to provide high-quality journalism for people who care about Minnesota. They publish online at www.minnpost.com. You will note many similarities with Vermont, although Vermont has not yet implemented same-day registration. In 2012, MN ranked first in turnout, with 76.1% turnout, and Vermont ranked 25th, with 60.9%. It will be interesting to see how Vermont does after automatic and same-day registration go into effect. - Ed.

The five reasons why voter turnout in Minnesota is so high

By [Briana Bierschbach](#) and [Greta Kaul](#) | 09/29/16

For nine election cycles in a row, Minnesota voters turned out to the polls more than any other state in the nation. In fact, the state actually holds the all-time record for turnout, when 78 percent of registered voters showed up to cast a ballot in the 2004 election.

Turnout among eligible voters has dipped in many U.S. states in recent elections. Minnesota has generally had higher turnout than even its high-turnout peers in presidential elections. Arkansas and many of its neighbors generally have low voter turnout, and Hawaii's is often the lowest in the U.S.

But even if Minnesotans go to the polls in record numbers in November, it still won't explain a fundamental question: Why, exactly, do they show up in such large numbers in the first place ?

Easy access to the ballot

When it comes to high voter turnout, MN Sec. of State Steve Simon is quick to cite the state's long history of clean elections and its emphasis on making it easy for people to access the ballot.

But one of the biggest changes, he argues, occurred all the way back in 1974, when Minnesota became the second state to allow same-day voter registration (after Maine). Today, 13 states plus the District of Columbia have passed laws allowing for same-day registration. [VT's same-day registration law takes effect in 2017.] In the 2012 election, about 18 percent of Minnesota voters registered at their polling location.

Proponents argue that same-day registration increases voter turnout by eliminating arbitrary deadlines that cut off registration when voters are most interested — usually a week or two before the election. According to a study from Demos, a public policy group that supports same-day registration, such laws increase turnout from [3 percent to 6 percent](#). And Pew Charitable Trusts found that in states with same-day registration one in eight voters used it in the 2012 election.

There are other new voting laws that Simon is watching this fall to see how they impact voter turnout. They include early voting ...[and]... no-excuse absentee voting law. Previously, Minnesotans had to have a valid excuse if they wanted to mail in their ballot early, but now all Minnesotans can vote more than 40 days before the election via an absentee ballot. Research shows early voting increases turnout by [2 percent to 4 percent](#), particularly boosting voting among minorities.

Demographics and civic culture

In a 1966 paper, political scientist Daniel Elazar classified the 50 states' political cultures according to three main motifs: moralistic, individualistic and traditionalistic. Moralistic states are concentrated in the upper Midwest, plus Vermont and Maine. In moralistic political cultures in the Upper Midwest, Upper New England and some western states, individualism is tempered by the desire to have government intervene when it's in the best interest of everyone, and states with moralistic culture tend to have higher voter turnout.

Minnesota and other high-turnout states tend to have high rates of educational attainment and income — two factors that studies associate with higher voter turnout.

When it comes to other measures of civic engagement, Minnesota does pretty well, too. Minnesota Compass found that Minnesotans [helped or were helped by their neighbors](#) and [volunteered](#) at higher rates than most of the U.S.

Political scientists associate high voter turnout with civic engagement. Volunteerism, just one measure of civic engagement, tends to be high in high-turnout states like Minnesota, South Dakota, Wisconsin, Oregon, Colorado and New Hampshire, according to the Current Population Survey.\

Strong third party movements

Minnesota also has a long history of third-party movements, which gives voters more choices on the ballot than the traditional two-party system, and some argue third parties have turned out voters over the years who would've otherwise stayed home.

In 1998, Minnesota's Reform Party (which would later become the Independence Party) had a notable victory when Ventura beat Republican Norm Coleman and Democrat Skip Humphrey. Ventura was credited with his ability to mobilize voters — particularly young men — who usually didn't vote. A [Star Tribune exit poll at the time](#) found that 10 percent of voters wouldn't have bothered to come out had Ventura not been on the ballot.

Competitive and interesting elections

[Despite a reputation as a solid blue state] Minnesota's congressional delegation is split between Republicans and Democrats, and at least three seats are considered competitive this fall. Control of the Legislature flipped from Democratic control to Republican control in 2010 and back again to Democratic control in 2012. For the last two years, the House and Senate has been split between the two parties. The governor's office often switch hands between parties, too, with Ventura, an independent, handing the baton off to Republican Tim Pawlenty who handed it off to Democrat Mark Dayton.

While the houses of the Minnesota legislature have experienced periods where one party was in control of the chamber for an extended period, the balance has rarely been so skewed as to deprive voters of the minority party any hope of regaining control.

Belief that government works

What's more, Minnesotans just seem to like their government more than others do. According to the Census, Minnesota has more than 3,600 units of government — from township governments all the way up to the governor's administration — meaning there are about 68 government entities per every 100,000 people. That's higher than many states in the nation.

“There's a perception that government is less corrupt and still works in Minnesota, which some believes leads to higher voter turnout,” Jeff Blodgett, a political consultant and former campaign manager for U.S. Sen. Paul Wellstone. “People have, relative to other states, a little more confidence in public institutions and government. They are not as cynical.” That notion is backed up in a 50-state Gallup Poll in 2014, where Minnesota ranked number seven among states with the most confidence in government, with 69 percent saying they believed government still worked and 31 percent saying it didn't.

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