



Green Mountain CITIZEN

Spring 2017

Program Set for 2017 Quad States

The 11th Annual Quad States Conference will be held on April 7-9, one again at the Hampton Inn in Wells, ME.

This year's theme echoes that of the LWVUS: *Making Democracy Work for All*. To that end, we will be looking at some of the apparent challenges to our civic life, and how the League can address them. We think our program will be stimulating and inspiring, and we look forward to seeing you. Registration information is on p. 7.

Friday evening, April 7 (optional): dinner out and socializing with other League leaders.

Saturday, April 8

Registration & Welcome, 9:00 - 9:30 am.

Keynote Speaker, 9:30 - 10:15 am. To be announced.

Workshop #1, 10:30 - 12:00 pm. ***Integrity of Journalism***. [John Christie and Naomi Schalit](#), Maine Center for Public Interest Reporting.

John and Naomi are the co-founders of MCPiR. John continues to serve as senior editor for the Center. He is a media executive whose 40-year career includes work in four states as a writer, editor, general manager and publisher for newspapers owned by Tribune Co., Dow Jones and Co. and the Seattle Times Co. Naomi is a senior reporter for the Center. She has written for magazines and newspapers around the country, worked as a columnist for the Maine Times, and for five years was an award-winning reporter and producer at Maine Public Radio.

Lunch & LWVUS Update, 12:00 - 1:00 pm. Included with Registration Fee.

Workshop #2, 1:15 - 2:45 pm. ***Civics Education***. [Tom Kerr-Vanderslice](#), Rhode Island Executive Director for Generation Citizen.

Tom came to Generation Citizen in 2012 after working in politics for a number of years. He has worked in public and private lobbying in Washington, D.C. and Rhode Island for good government organizations, education nonprofits and healthcare institutions. He also served as the Finance and Campaign Director for a Maryland state campaign for Comptroller.

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Message from the Board

Winter 2016

WOW! 2017 is off to a great start! We welcome Madeline Motta and Ashley Hill to the Leadership Team. We have had a steady increase in new members and lots of activity on the State and Local level. [#] Leaguers participated in the Montpelier Women's March. Kate has testified for the League on the Ethics Commission Bill and Madeline Motta is serving for the League on the Campaign Finance Committee formed by Secretary of State Condos and Attorney General Donovan. We had a successful Legislative Day despite the dire weather prediction and met with Lt. Governor Zuckerman. Governor Scott was in Quebec on Legislative Day, so we met with Governor Phil Scott on March 1st.

The MAL unit in the Northeast Kingdom has formed and is actively promoting voter education and voter participation. The Castleton MAL unit has prepared a Town Meeting Voter's Guide which will appear in the Rutland Herald and be available for local residents. This is a first for Castleton. Central Vermont has been hosting a lecture series at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library and had a League Birthday Party on February 23rd. Champlain Valley had a very successful meeting on the Electoral College.

The Voting in Vermont brochure has been updated with the information on Election Day registration and on-line registration. Let us know if you want copies! We continue to register new citizens at Naturalization Ceremonies. If you want to help, contact me!

Don't miss the third Annual Citizens Engagement Luncheon, Saturday, March 25th at 11:30 AM.

Sonja Schuyler, State Board



Democracy is not a Spectator Sport!

Show your pride in the League. Buy one of our great T-shirts! \$15 plus \$3 S&H. E-mail your order to hertzrader@myfairpoint.net.

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Kate Rader, Editor

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

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Legislative Day 2017

An engaged and enthusiastic group of Leaguers – nearly double last year’s attendance – gathered at the State House on Feb. 15, despite the daunting weather forecast.

The League began the day offering coffee and bagels to Legislators (and any other passers-by). This provides the best opportunity of the day to talk one-on-one with lawmakers, and tell them about our positions.

At 9:30 we met to Room 10, where we reviewed legislation of interest and set some priorities. Bills we will support to some degree are:

Health Care: (S.53 and H.248), companion bills for Universal Primary Care

Energy: (S.32, S.51, S.66) climate change considerations in State procurement; renewable energy goals for Vermont’s total energy consumption; cap and trade

Gun Safety: (H.151 and S.8), background checks for transfer of firearms

Clean Water: (H.95, H.116, H.211) funding the Clean Water Fund; contamination of a public water system or a potable water supply by a hazardous material release; the water resources and water supplies of the State.

These bills as introduced are available on the Legislative website:

<http://legislature.vermont.gov/>.

At 11:30 we met with Lt. Governor (and Acting Governor for the day) David Zuckerman in his office. Our conversation mainly was about how constituents can most effectively convey their views to their Legislators. Personal phone calls and individual letters are much more effective than “robo-messages.” Contact information for lawmakers can be found on the Legislative website <http://legislature.vermont.gov/>, or through the Sargeant at Arms Office, (802) 828-2228 or sgtatarms@leg.state.vt.us.

In the afternoon, we were introduced in the House Chamber by Rep. Kimberly Jessup.

“Snow Date” with Governor Scott

(Heather Alger and Karen Bufka)

Twelve League members met with Governor Phil Scott at the State House on a rainy March 1st day. Scott had just returned from the National Governors Association meeting in Washington, D.C.

Scott vehemently opposed the federal immigration policy. The Republican governor was one of the first governors to speak up against the president. The Governor stated that “we have a moral obligation to help others.” Vermont continues rely on immigrants to counteract the ongoing migration out of the State. Our population continues to be stagnant and even has even encountered slight declines over the last decade.

Our state population would be stagnant or dropping without the influx of immigrants. Since 1989, at least 6,300 men, women and children have come to Vermont through a federal refugee resettlement program. Ninety percent have become naturalized citizens. The population of Vermont is 627K, the smallest after Wyoming. Immigration is a significant factor to the economic health of Vermont. A robust population equals more tax filers and a more competitive pool for programs such as health care.

Governor Scott restated his campaign promise that he would not raise taxes or implement any additional fees. He again echoed his commitment to level fund the state’s budget and education spending. The Governor’s primary focus is economic growth, “We can not take care of our people if there is no revenue to do so.” *It’s the economy, stupid* is the snowclone that has epitomized the political realm for decades and Scott is not deviating from this adage.

At \$30B, Vermont has the smallest economy in the US. Vermont is experiencing some of the lowest unemployment rates in the country at around 3.1%. Business costs continue to remain prohibitive, ranking Vermont at 47th most business friendly. Compared with a population base similar to Vermont, Wyoming ranks 1st as tax-friendly for businesses. Vermont’s economic outlook over the next five years is projected to be

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Madeline Motta Appointed to Committee to Study Campaign Finance

Attorney Madeline Motta, LWVVT board member and professional ethics consultant, has been appointed to represent the LWV on the new committee to study campaign finance in Vermont. Heather Alger, member at large from Ryegate, is her alternate.

In January, Vermont Attorney General T.J. Donovan and Secretary of State Jim Condos announced the launch of a cooperative effort to create a joint Committee on Campaign Finance Education, Compliance and Reform. Condos and Donovan touted the effort as an important step forward in encouraging compliance with current law and facilitating the development of solutions to address potential shortcomings in Vermont's campaign finance regime.

The Committee has been tasked with gathering information, analyzing the current state of Vermont's campaign finance law, and making recommendations for changes or improvements in the law and its implementation. The Committee will initially seek input from Vermonters, including elected officials, activists, PACs, parties and, most importantly, voters at a series of public forums to be held throughout the state. The issues raised by stakeholders will guide the Committee's work in formulating their analysis and report.

Another purpose of the planned forums will be to promote a broader understanding and awareness of the current campaign finance system in Vermont. "As Secretary of State my focus has been to encourage compliance through education rather than the threat of punishment. I believe the work of this Committee will provide an opportunity to improve education on, and compliance with, Vermont's campaign finance laws," Condos stated. "These are important discussions to have and will help to raise the profiles of these issues. I believe this outreach process will ultimately promote better compliance with less stress and less confusion for candidates, parties, and PACs as well as their contributors."

Four initial appointees to the Committee including two of the leading campaign finance attorneys in Vermont : Attorney Jake Perkinson

Refugee Resettlement Focus of LWVVT Spring Lecture

Join us for the third annual Civic Engagement Luncheon on Saturday, March 25th at 11:30 AM, Best Western, Waterbury. Our speaker will be Amila Merdzanovic, Director of the Vermont Refugee Resettlement Program. She will speak on the global refugee crisis and refugee resettlement here in Vermont. Ms. Merdzanovic has over ten years' experience with refugee resettlement and is the first Director who is a former refugee, having arrived from Bosnia and



Herzegovina in 1995. She holds an MA in Law and Diplomacy from Tufts University and a bachelor's degree in Inter-national Relations from Mount Holyoke College.

The luncheon is free and open to the public, but reservations are required by March 20th, since space is limited. You can register at <https://lwvrefugeeresettlement.eventbrite.com>. The lecture will be filmed by ORCA Media for public access television.

(former chair of the Vermont Democratic Party) who will serve as Chair of the Committee, and Attorney Brady Toensing (current Vice Chair of the Vermont Republican Party). Also among the initial appointees were Josh Wronski (Executive Director of the Vermont Progressive Party) and staff member Natalie Silver from the Vermont Attorney General's Office. The Committee will receive technical support from the Secretary of State's and Attorney General's offices.

In addition to Motta, Denise Casey and Erika Wolffig were appointed to the Committee.

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one of the worst in the U.S. The Governor continued by stating that Vermont has a \$70 million revenue shortfall compared to this time last year and that corporate revenue was down by 200%.

With this reality and federal policy in flux, Scott is concerned. "Half of our budget is based on federal funding." While Scott anxiously awaits what cuts will be made to our discretionary domestic spending, he was assured that the budget would increase around public safety, national security and the military.

In January, Scott called for a local school budget freeze and level funding of the State's general budget. He stated that there was plenty of money in the system and that it needed to be reallocated. He proposed eliminating the \$75 million General Fund budget gap through teachers retirement at \$35 million, the other \$40 million with cuts in human services and reallocation in Medicaid program.

Questioned about a more progressive individual tax structure on the top 1%. Scott responded swiftly, "No." Vermont is currently ranked 7th for its tax rate on the 1%, one of the most progressive tax structures in the country.

Governor Scott reminded us that Vermont is serving 86,000 students at an average of \$19,000 per student, the second largest portion of our State budget. He wants to reallocate \$9.6 million from K-12 education to early childhood education and childcare programs. Higher education will also be allocated \$6.5 million. District budgets would be tied to student population growth rates moving forward under the Scott proposal.

The effect of compliance with the budget freeze was discussed and that in fact the State is transferring their piece of the financial burden onto a local level by allowing a 5% assessment on the grand list to cover costs.

We moved on to health care. Medicaid is the largest portion of Vermont's budget at \$1.7B. Scott states, "One-third of our population works with Medicaid." Scott discussed the rollout of a

pilot program for OneCare, an Accountable Care Organization (ACO), involving 30,000 individuals. With OneCare, focus is on quality care and improved outcomes. This pilot helps to ensure a more holistic approach with Medicaid. Scott wants to ascertain its success before applying it to whole state. Currently, \$93 million in state and federally-matched funds is allocated to this program.

We continued on with questions around universal primary care. The League asked about the two new tri-partisan supported bills, [S53](#) and [H248](#), which propose creating publicly financed primary care for all. Governor Scott was clearly not impressed with universal health care, and stated that it was too expensive. Scott stated we are going to need to look at creative ways to manage costs. Perhaps we will need to expand our aging pool with other states nationally to remain competitive.

We briefly touch on the \$2 per night Occupancy Fee Bill Proposal [H.217](#). This legislation predicted to raise as much as \$10 million per year to support affordable housing in Vermont and reduce homelessness. Scott quickly responded that he will stand by his promise to not raise any taxes or implement any additional fees. He did say that we need to make a commitment to affordable housing so that we can keep families here and attract families to move here.

As we closed, Governor Scott reminded us how important it is to find common ground and work together.



Workshop #3, 3:00 - 4:30 pm. ***Distrust of American Institutions.*** [Dan Shea](#), Professor of Government at Colby College and Director of the Goldfarb Center for Public Affairs and Civic Engagement.

The author or editor of more than 15 books and dozens of articles/chapters on the American political process, Dan Shea continues to pursue research on campaigns and elections, the dynamics of the party system, the changing nature of the presidency, the politics of scandal, and grassroots political activism. In 2012 he authored *Let's Vote: The Essentials of the American Electoral Process*, and coedited *Can We Talk? The Rise of Rude, Nasty, Stubborn Politics*.

We close on Saturday with our annual raffle to benefit this Conference, with prizes contributed by League members. Prizes will be on display and tickets will be available all weekend, \$5 each or five for \$20

Sunday, April 9

Until 9:00 am. Breakfast included with room reservation.

Workshop #4, 9:00 - 10:30 am. ***Hillbilly Elegy.*** Book discussion led by Barbara McDade.

Barbara is a League leader in Bangor, Maine, and member of the LWVME state board. Since 1991, she has been executive director of the Bangor Public Library and serves on the Maine Library Commission, in addition to other civic engagements.

Following the book discussion, we will have an update on national League work and also share the good work we've been doing in state Leagues. Don't leave early -- this could be the best part.

Wrap-up and adjourn, 10:30 - 11:00 am.

The LWVVT Well Represented at Women's March

About one quarter of our state League members took part in the Women's March on January 21. Swamped by the unexpected turnout of an estimated 15,000, we weren't able to gather as a unit, but we were there. Meanwhile, members of the St. Johnsbury group organized a vigil for that morning, and seventy-five people gathered at the Atheneum. In addition, LWVVT members marched in Washington, DC and St. Petersburg, FL.



Crossing the Bailey Ave. Bridge



The View from the State House



The St. Johnsbury Vigil

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