



# Green Mountain CITIZEN

Summer 2015

## *54<sup>th</sup> Convention of the LWVVT Held in Montpelier*

League members from Central Vermont and the Champlain Valley met in Montpelier on June 13 to celebrate successes and plan for the new biennium.

Public Banking study adopted in 2013 was successfully completed with the announced of a consensus position: *The LWV of Vermont supports the establishment of a State Bank. The League believes that the establishment of this bank should be a gradual process in order capitalize the bank and develop its functions. In establishing a state bank, governance and regulation will need to be addressed to assure transparency as to the use of public funds.*

*Giving the Vermont Economic Development Authority (VEDA) banking powers is consistent with the gradual approach supported by the LWV.*

*While revenues from a state bank may become a significant source of state funding in the future, it should not be the primary reason for establish-ment of such a bank.*

*Bonding for infrastructure should be a primary responsibility of a state bank.*

*Bonding or loans by the state bank should be used to reach state goals for reducing dependence on fossil fuels through weatherization and renewable energy projects.*

*Funding for student loans, business loans and home mortgages are also appropriate activities of a State Bank.*

No new state program in the form of a study was adopted, but we will be participating in the important LWVUS study of money in politics and a Constitutional Amendment, being promoted as a remedy to the Citizens United decision. See the Quad States report on p. 3 for more information, and watch for details about consensus from the LWVUS.

The Leadership Team for the coming biennium will be Jean Hopkins, Kate Rader, Sonja Schuyler (Treasurer) and Claudette Sortino. Rader and Sue Racanelli act as the nominating committee for 2017.

Cont'd on p. 5

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<http://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Vermont/193029977406840>

## Message from the Board Summer 2015

Campaign finance loomed as the 800 pound gorilla at the LWVVT Convention. With Attorney General Bill Sorrell as guest speaker, it was an opportune time to discuss one of the greatest threats to American democracy. Given that the Supreme Court of the U.S. has handed down the decision that money equals speech, and corporations have the same rights to political speech as persons, U.S. citizens are left with very few weapons to prevent those who choose to flood elections with unrestricted financial support for candidates of their choosing from doing so. Buying a candidate has become easier than ever.

There are two ways to overturn a decision of the Supreme Court. One is by passing a Constitutional Amendment. The process is very straightforward, but difficult. First, two-thirds of both houses of Congress must approve it. Then three-fourths of state legislatures must also approve within seven years.. The Equal Rights Amendment, first written in 1923, was finally approved by both houses in 1972. It then went to the states where 38 votes were needed. The first 30 came rapidly, but it was a struggle after that, and time ran out. Fifteen states, most of them in the south, never ratified the proposed amendment. As previously noted, not easy.

The second option is Constitutional Convention. If two-thirds of the states support the calling of a convention, it takes place. But Article 5 of the Constitution is vague on what can happen once a convention is called. It almost came about in 2014 for a balanced budget amendment, but some states rescinded their decision because of fear of what else might come up for debate. Conceivably, the entire Constitution could be changed. Unlike the first method described above, where a specific amendment is the only item on the agenda, this second option leaves the agenda wide open.

Fixing the mess created by the Citizens' United decision will not be an easy task. That decision strikes to the heart of what the League of Women Voters stands for...a guarantee of one person one vote, each vote of equal weight in the electoral process. With a small percentage of citizens now having been given the opportunity to spend as

much as they want to sell their candidates to the public, elections no longer treat candidates as equal. Your voice is still your vote, as the League says, but your vote is no longer as loud.

*Claudette Sortino*

## 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](mailto:hertzrader@myfairpoint.net).

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Membership in the League includes a subscription.  
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## *Notes from the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Quad States Conference*

Thirty Leaguers from ME, NH, RI and VT gathered in Wells, ME last month to learn about election issues and brush up on League policy and skills.

The theme of the conference was election law, and the issues of redistricting, money in politics and open primaries as the focal points for the workshops on using an issue to recruit new members, working with other organizations, and conducting a study.

### Workshop I: Using an issue to recruit members

Nancy Marashio (NH), a member of the LWVUS task force on redistricting, explained how redistricting at Congressional or state level can have a local impact. Voters are unhappy when they arrive at their usual polling place and find they have been “redistricted,” and must vote at a new location.



*Nancy Marashio, LWVNH*

Marashio pointed out that the public knows little about the redistricting process, and made suggestions for how the League can make the process more accessible to the public and draw people to the League and its mission.

Her suggestions included: encouraging transparency by those responsible early on; have a college class create redistricting models to help public understanding of how it works; show the movie

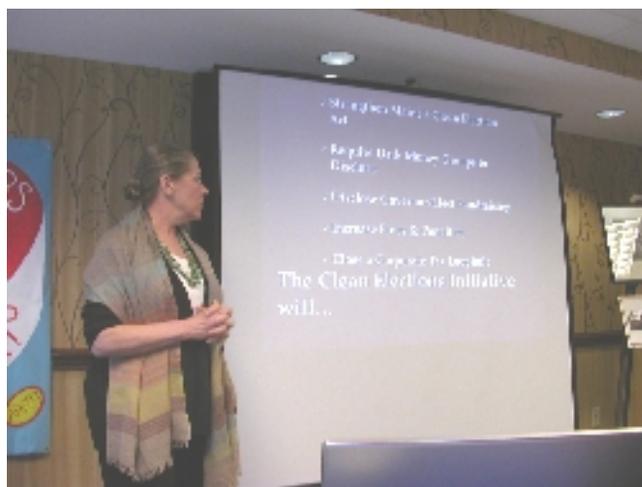
*Gerrymandering: the documentary*; send out action alerts through e-mails, Facebook, blogs; get credit for what the League does. She strongly recommended one-on-one meetings with potential members.

Marashio showed some (incomplete) data that the task force has gathered. This information will go “live” this month, after the LWVUS Council, but the task force will continue its work until the LWVUS convention in 2016.

### Workshop II: Working with Others

Money in politics was the timely topic for the workshop on working with others. The session was led by Ann Luther (ME), member of both the LWVUS task force on money in politics and the Constitutional Amendment study committee.

For a look at the current state of money in politics Luther recommended going to [www.opensecrets.org](http://www.opensecrets.org).



*Ann Luther, LWVME*

When considering working with other organizations, Leagues should look at the 3Ps: Positions, Priorities and People.

The League speaks with one voice, and on any issue, the position of any potential partner must be in line with that of the LWVUS. In this case the League supports disclosure of campaign contributions, public financing of elections, support of the Federal Elections Commission, and limits on contributions.

The League does NOT support a constitutional amendment at this time. Consensus on the issue will be taken this fall, when the study committee completes its work. Suggested readings in preparation of consenses are posted at:

<http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/constitutional-amendment-study>

In finding possible partners in advocacy, the League should be the leader on select issues. Two sets of 3Cs come into play here: Coordination, Collaboration and Cash. The League can coordinate with other organizations on an issue they agree on, without necessarily having to agree on every issue. Luther showed a slide of many groups the LWVME has worked with in support of, say, a single piece of legislation where they share a position and, e.g. co-sign a letter in support. Collaboration requires a higher level of trust. In Maine, the League has worked closely and long-term with Maine Citizens for Clean Elections, with whom they share many common goals.

The second sent of 3Cs when choosing a partner is Credibility, Consistency and League Control of the message.

### Workshop III

The final workshop, conducting a study using open primaries as the topic, was led by Sonja Schuyler and Kate Rader (VT).

The topic was chosen because no League has a position on open primaries. Nor is there a common understanding of what open primary means. The substance of their presentation can be found at [http://www.lwvofvt.org/quad\\_states.html](http://www.lwvofvt.org/quad_states.html).

### Keynote Address

Nellie Gorbea, Rhode Island's Secretary of State is the first Hispanic to win a statewide office in New England. She was elected in November 2015 on a platform that focused on modernizing voting and elections in the state, among other issues.

A lively speaker with infectious energy, Gorbea described the professional experience that brought her to statewide office, and how her goals as a public servant align with the mission of the LWV.

Secretary Gorbea's new proposed legislation, dubbed the Voting and Elections Modernizations Act of 2015, would allow online registration and make available early in person voting up to 28 days prior to an election using the emergency mail-balloting process. This bill would make voting available on the weekend before Election Day in 2016 and would extend in person early voting to two weeks before Election Day by 2018.



*RI Sec. of State Nellie Gorbea*

Secretary of State Gorbea's goals also include ensuring preservation of and access to historic and public records and working closely with the over 60,000 small businesses in Rhode Island.

### Sunday's Session

Sunday was a relatively light day. We began with a session identifying expertise represented in our various Leagues. That list, including such areas of interest as energy, transportation, fundraising, juvenile justice, employment law among many others, will be completed with contact information and made available on our respective websites.

There was productive discussion of how to attract and regain young members. Important points of that discussion are:

- Welcome and support them
- Coach and mentor them
- Provide leadership opportunities
- Ask them what makes LWV attractive to them
  - What do they want from us?
  - What will make them stay?
  - What do they bring to the organization?
  - Respect and love for the brand.

Late in the summer plans will be started for next spring's conference. These weekends are fun and energizing, with dinners on Friday (for early arrivers) and Saturday providing valuable networking and social time. Ideas for next year's theme/workshops are welcome.

Convention (con'td) from p.1

Marge Gaskins, gave the report of the LWVVT Education Fund. Four scholarships of \$1000 were granted this year, with more than 60 high school senior responding to two questions: 1. Do you have a comment about Vermont's voting regulations? 2. What are your ideas on current issues?

Gaskins added that while members usually respond generously to the annual appeal for funds, this year's receipts were lower than expected.

The morning closed with a lively "asset mapping" exercise, which identified skills and interests of the members present. It was gratifying to be made aware of the wealth of talent we have in our midst.



*Atty. Gen. Sorrell talks with League members at lunch.*

Lunch was followed by a talk by Attorney General William Sorrell on campaign finance. He gave a clear history of the growth of political campaign spending since the infamous Citizens United decision, and talked about public financing of election campaigns in Vermont. The talk was recorded by Onion River Community Access (ORCA) TV.

The business meeting reconvened following the keynote address, and closed with "Directions to the Board" from attendees:

There was a need expressed for better communication with members. Telephone calls are for some members a more reliable and effective way to communicate than e-mail.

There was a request for the Keyes Fund to divest from fossil fuel interests.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.



*Sonja Schuyler presides at 2015 Convention.*



*Guest Marcia Hirshberg (LWVMA) makes a point as Sue Racanelli, Claudette Sortino and Amy Willis listen.*

## *Legislative Wrap-up*

In our March issue we gave a brief summary of legislation of particular interest to the League. Here's a review of what became of those bills so far in the biennium.

H.207/S.88: This bill proposes to establish the framework for universal, publicly finance primary health care for all Vermonters beginning in 2017. It also called for a study to determine how much it would cost the state to provide universal primary care. [Support]

The bill remains in the House and Senate health care committees. However, funding for the study is included in the final health care bill, S.139 passed by both houses.

H.1/S.20: An act relating to establishing and regulating licensed dental practitioners. [Support]

S.20 passed in the Senate and is currently in the House Committee on Human Services. The term practioners has been changed to therapist, which is in more general use.

H.77: An act relating to increasing consumer access to health care cost information. [Support, provides transparency]

Remains in House Committee on Health Care.

H.79: An act relating to creating a statewide per pupil spending amount. Would also allow municipalities to increase spending, using just local property tax. [Oppose on grounds of inequity.]

Remains in House Committee on Education

H.76: An act relating to the requirement of mandatory binding arbitration and to the elimination of strikes and imposed contracts in connection with collective bargaining for teachers' and school administrators' contracts.

Failed to pass in the full House

H.35: An act relating to improving the quality of State waters [Support]

Passed both House and Senate.

S.29: An act relating to election day registration [Support]

The LWVVT testified in support of this bill and joined VPIRG, AARP, Demos and Brennan Center in a letter to the Senate, and to the House with the addition of Campaign for Vermont and Project for Voting Rights and Democracy. The bill passed in both houses and Kate Rader represented the League at the Governor's Bill Signing ceremony on June 1.

PR.2: Constitution amendment calling for a majority vote for Gov., Lt. Gov., and Treasurer, followed by a run-off if necessary. [Support, plus support for IRV]

The LWVVT testified in favor of this amendment in the Senate Gov. Ops. Committee.

This and similar proposals PR.3 and PR.5 remain in the Senate Government Operations Committee.

H.40: An act relating to establishing a renewable energy standard and energy transformation program.

Passed by both houses and signed by the Governor on June 15.



**SPOTLIGHT**

**ON ISSUES**



May: Sonja Schuyler interviews Sec. of Transportation Sue Minter, <http://vp.telvue.com/preview?id=T01221&video=237178>.

June: Atty Gen. William Sorrell addresses the LWVVT Convention.

June: Lindy Biggs Interviews Sen. Ann Cummings on education bill (tentative)

# *Come to the Parade!!!*



2013

*Don't just come to it – be in it!*

*We're signed up to be in Montpelier's Independence Day parade on Friday, July 3*

*You get to hear the roar and applause of the crowd  
(one of our very best visibility opportunities)  
a respond with the royal wave.*

*March with us – it will be the most fun you'll have all year.*



2007



We're looking for a truck to decorate (with our class "Democracy is not a Spectator Sport' banners). Can anyone help us out with locating one? The parade starts around 6:00, we meet at the starting point about 5:00. E-mail Kate, [catherine.rader@myfairpoint.net](mailto:catherine.rader@myfairpoint.net), if you can march (in a League T-shirt), find/drive a truck, help decorate same. If we can't find a truck, we'll march with the banners anyway.

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