



Green Mountain CITIZEN

Winter 2020

A Note from the Secretary of State's Office

Hello Friends at the League,

On behalf of Secretary Condos and the entire elections team, I want to say thank you for your partnership with us and your support during the most challenging election any of us have ever experienced.

By all measures I think we can declare this election a resounding success. We had record turnout with 372,366 voters, in the middle of a pandemic! That was way beyond our previous record of 326,822 set in 2008. That means 73.5% of registered voters voted, which is extra impressive because we have such high registration rates due to automatic voter registration.

Vermonters also voted early, almost exclusively by mail, in record numbers, too. 280,455 were cast early/absentee, meaning 75% of all ballots cast were cast early or by mail, keeping our polling places manageable and safe.

Last, we had very few defective ballots. Although these numbers from the clerks will change a little as they do their participation reports, it looks like we had about 1400 defective ballots, which is just 0.3%. Even though every defective ballot is a tragedy, it is great news that there were so “few.”

I mention all of the above in order to say that we think you should share in the credit – *your advocacy for voting rights and your voter outreach, in particular those FPF ads*, were a fantastic addition that reached so many Vermonters and helped to educate them about how to vote this election season, encouraging early voting, and providing tips on how not to end up with a defective ballot.

Thank you again for being advocates for voting rights and for Vermont voters. We appreciate you!
Take care all, we hope to see you in person before too long.

Sincerely,
Chris
Christopher D. Winters
Deputy Secretary of State

Message from the Board

Winter 2020

Reflecting on 2020

Before we head into a fresh decade and new year, let me add some self-reflection to your New Year's resolutions!

2020 was a year that everyone will remember for the coronavirus pandemic and its effect on all aspects of our lives, and the presidential election -- an election year unlike any other.

The pandemic changed the way we voted and influenced the aftermath of the election. Although record numbers of citizens cast their votes, we will remember the ongoing attempts to delegitimize the election and the consequences of eroded voter trust and damage to our democracy.

However, the bedrock of our democratic process triumphed and the voice of the people prevailed. Vermont saw the expansion of voting access, increased use of absentee and mail-in voting, and record-breaking early voting numbers. We commend the Town Clerks, election workers, and administrators who ran a free and fair election. Voting is our most sacred constitutional right and, despite the pandemic, more Vermonters voted than ever before. This unprecedented turnout is a testament to the determination of voters and the strength of our democratic system.

Elections, primary and general were all-consuming as members worked with the Secretary of State's office, Front Porch Forum, the Department of Corrections and the Youth Voter Project to help voters understand that voting by mail was safe and secure. A grant from the Johnson Family Foundation was instrumental in our educational efforts.

We started 2020 with the League of Women Voters celebrating its centennial anniversary on February 14, with members and friends at the Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier. For 100 years, we have stood strong within our communities, empowering voters with unbiased information and increasing political participation.

After the February party, many of the further plans for the 19th Amendment Centennial

Commemoration had to be put on hold or done virtually. Some may still be held "live" in 2021.

As with the centennial, plans for the Annual Spring Lecture, usually held in March, are once more in abeyance until the Covid-19 picture is clearer.

As we end the year 2020, the League's Board wishes you and your family Happy Holidays and we thank you for your support through the years.

Sue Racanelli

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Kate Rader, Editor

Membership in the League includes a subscription.

If you would like to join the League, go to our website, <https://my.lwv.org/vermont>, e-mail, or write:

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Montpelier, VT 05601-1391

e-mail: League@lwvofvt.org

From Castleton member Maisie Wood:

I received a wonderful letter of appreciation and congrats to the League for all the work the League (statewide) has done. Here's the quote from the note we received:

"Wow and YaHooooooooooooo! You just have heard me outside shouting Yippee to the sky... a neighbor walked by as I was yippy-ing and joined me in loud yippies from the road. It was Splendid.

Your good work pays off -The League of Women Voters must be so pleased...

Marna Jane Grove, Castleton

2020 Election a Great Success

Here are the statistics: 372,266 voters, 73.5% of registered voters; 280,455 cast early/absentee, 75% of ballots; defective ballots, 0.3%

This message, from Chris Winters, Deputy Secretary of State, bears repeating:

I mention all of the above in order to say that we think you should share in the credit—your advocacy for voting rights and your voter outreach, in particular those FPF ads, were a fantastic addition that reached so many Vermonters and helped to educate them about how to vote this election season, encouraging early voting, and proving tips on how not to end up with a defective ballot.

Needless to say, our success was the result of the dedicated efforts by League members. Generous support from The Johnson Family Foundation, and small grants from LWVUS and National Voter Registration Day helped, but money cannot do anything without the people who apply it. The generous donation of free advertising by Front Porch Forum was also key to the success.

The Voter Education Committee members were: Sonja Schuyler, Maddy Motta, Anne Mixer, Lila Richardson, and Bill and Maisie Wood. The Youth Voting Committee, chaired by Anne Mixer, coordinated with the Voter Ed Committee. The ability to obtain the professional marketing services of Andrea Olson, and the work of our student intern, Audrey Grant, were invaluable. We could not have gotten their service without the support from the Johnson Family Foundation. We also thank new member Erika Anderson-Putman, who resurrected our Twitter account. Kate Rader fielded the comments and inquiries that resulted from the Front Porch Forum ads.

Here is a brief recap of our work:

- An Instagram account
- A YouTube channel
- Regular Twitter posts
- Regular Facebook page postings
- National Voter Registration Day contest with prize donated by Cabot Creamery
- Two full-page election ads in *Seven Days*
- Production of videos about online registration and early/absentee voting by Audrey Grant
- Production of inmate registration video and distribution of voter registration materials to the prisons (see p. 5)
- Production of audio election Public Service Announcements by Audrey Grant
- Ads on the WCAX news online app
- Two ads/month on Front Porch Forum from July to Election Day
- Participation in Forum at Vermont Law School
- Participation in interviews on VPR, WDEV, and a New Hampshire station that serves southern Vermont
- E-mail with online voter registration and absentee voting information to all nursing homes and assisted living facilities (special thanks to Ginny Walters who created the spreadsheet and Claire Anderson and Niki Jordon who did the emailing)
- Voter resource guide development and distribution to colleges and Capstone

Perhaps our most unusual was two interviews on Amber Live, and the League of Drag Queen Voters. Thanks to Johnna Ferguson for going on with Amber and a light but serious outreach to an often overlooked group of potential voters.



Vermont League Joins Transportation and Climate Initiative

The LWVVT joined other Leagues, environmental, business, and community groups in signing comments on the Transportation and Climate Initiative Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) being worked out by New England and Mid-Atlantic states. These comments call for an ambitious and equitable transportation climate initiative that in addition to greenhouse gas emission reduction goals, recognizes and prioritizes the needs of underserved communities.

The Transportation and Climate Initiative is a cooperative approach to reducing greenhouse gas emissions from transportation sources by twelve New England and Mid-Atlantic states and the District of Columbia through an MOU that commits the signers to emission reductions from the transportation sector and the development of sustainable transportation systems. A key feature of the proposed MOU is a regional Cap and Invest program to price carbon (the new speak for carbon tax) and use the proceeds to invest in non-polluting forms of transportation and other greenhouse gas reduction technologies. Each state that signs on to the MOU will develop its own program in line with the principles in the MOU. Our state LWV energy consensus recognizes that Vermont needs to be part of a regional program to effectively address greenhouse gas emissions.

The comments state that Cap and Invest alone is not enough. The MOU principles should prioritize underserved communities, set at least 25% as the minimum reduction goal, commit to workforce development to meet the needs of new transportation methods, and provide for transparent assessment of the initiatives undertaken.

The states involved in the MOU development are Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, and Virginia. The District of Columbia is also part of the initiative. If you would like to learn more about the Transportation and Climate

Help Wanted: Legislative Specialists

The LWVVT wants to be more efficient and effective in our advocacy efforts at the State House. We are asking members to step up to observe and track specific bills this session so the Board is in a position to take action.

Each point person would keep us up-to-date on what's happening and recommend action when called for.

This is something we've wanted to do for a while, and are still working to bring it to fruition.

We would like our observers to check the Legislative agenda every week (<https://legislature.vermont.gov/>) – agendas are usually posted on Friday afternoon or Monday morning – to see if testimony is being taken on a bill of interest, and who will be testifying. As the end of the session approaches, the House and Senate Calendars of the day become the focus, for floor votes. All of this is available online, as is witness testimony when it has been submitted electronically.

Observers don't have to observe every meeting of interest, but it is fun and the more you do it the more interesting it is. It also gives a sense of the committee dynamics and the personalities of the Legislators. In past years, this has meant spending time at the State House, which is fun. For this coming session, as was done last year, legislative activity will be virtual, and the public can attend online. No stuffy committee rooms!

You may occasionally be asked to testify or write letters for or against a bill, with the state Board's guidance and help with preparation as needed.

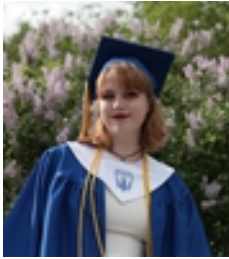
Let Kate Rader (catherine.rader@myfairpoint.net) or Sue Racanelli (lwvovvt@gmail.com) know if you are interested in making this very important contribution to the League.

Initiative, visit the website:

www.transportationandclimate.org/content/ab-out-us.

***Special Recognition for Audrey Grant,
2020 LWVVT Scholarship Recipient***

In March 2020 The Youth Voter Project (YVP) of the League of Women Voters of Vermont pivoted from face to face voter registration to efforts to reach eligible young voters through social media, starting in the Spring 2020. Before launching any formal plans, the YVP team organized and facilitated two focus groups with young Vermont voters to ascertain their views on the best ways to reach this very important age group.



The YVP team met Audrey Grant, a 2020 Winona Smith Scholarship winner, through these focus groups. Audrey, a LWVVT member, actively participated in these sessions and introduced a short video she created explaining how to

register to vote in Vermont. Audrey attended Vermont Girls State and graduated from Hazen Union High School in Hardwick, Vermont with the class of 2020. She is currently in her first year at Simmons University in Boston, while living in Craftsbury, Vermont.

The YVP team is fortunate that Audrey was able to join our ongoing planning efforts which continued throughout the Summer and Fall. With consultation and assistance Audrey went on to create additional videos and public service announcements for use on the League's Facebook, Instagram and YouTube sites making voter information easily accessible to social media users. Assisting with the development of accurate information and visuals for Zoom presentations, specifically designed for 18 to 24-year-olds, Audrey provided technical support and shared important voter information during online college forums.

Her energy and ability to appeal to younger voters has animated the overall efforts of the League throughout this challenging 2020 election. The YVP team would like to give special recognition and appreciation to Audrey Grant for all of her tireless work and support for the project.

***LWVVT Produces Voter Registration
Video for Incarcerated Vermonters***

The League of Women Voters of Vermont, in partnership with the Department of Corrections (DOC), recently produced and distributed an Inmate Voter Registration Instructional video to DOC Volunteer Coordinators at the six Vermont correctional facilities.

The customized video, created by Retro Motion Creative of Burlington, provides line-by-line instructions on how to complete printed Voter Registration and Absentee Ballot Request Forms. The League decided to make this video when efforts to register inmates came to a stop after correctional facilities were closed to visitors as a result of COVID-19 precautions.

Vermont is one of two states where incarcerated individuals can vote. Inmates vote by absentee ballot using their last address in Vermont rather than the address of the prison. Because inmates do not have access to computers and are restricted from using the internet, they are not able to register or request an absentee ballot on their own.

The DVD, "Registering to Vote in Vermont," ensures that those most at risk of being disenfranchised have access to all the information they need to vote. DOC Volunteer Coordinators organize video showings at each facility.

This video was made possible by grant funding from the Johnson Family Foundation, Thomas Phillips and Jane Moore Fund. The League of Women Voters has coordinated inmate voter registration drives with correction departments since 2018.

For more information about the LWVVT Inmate Voter Registration Initiative contact Madeline Motta at lwvofvt@gmail.com.

You can help the LWVVT Education Fund support students like Audrey. Send your gift to LWVVT Education Fund, P.O. Box 1391 Montpelier, VT 05601 or give online at <https://my.lwv.org/vermont/donate>.

The League In The News

The League was well-represented in the media this election season, providing invaluable information to voters in Vermont's historic first ever voting by mail general election.

We were in newspapers across the state, on television, radio, social media, and Front Porch Forum informing voters of the facts about voting by mail.

Press releases Letters to the Editor, and commentaries were issued on Voting at the Polls, Vote411, the League's multi-lingual *Voting In Vermont* brochures, the court decision denying suit against mailing ballots, protecting the postal service, elections inside a prison, voter registration instructional video for incarcerated Vermonters, congratulating voters for strong turnout, expanding mail-in voting and the census. We were published in the *Brattleboro Reformer*, *Bennington Banner*, *Burlington Free Press*, *Caledonian Record*, *Chester Telegraph*, *Manchester Journal*, *News & Citizen*, *Newsbreak*, *Progressive Party*, *Rutland Herald*, *Seven Days*, *The Berkshire Eagle*, *The Commons*, *The Deerfield News*, *The Mountain Times*, *The World*, *Times Argus*, *Vermont Conservation Voters*, *Vermont Digger*, and *Williston Observer*.

Broadcast coverage included a CCTV interview with Lauren-Glenn Davitian, two appearances on *Amber Live*, radio interviews on WDEV's *Dave Gram Show*, VPR's *Vermont Edition*, and WXPB. Our social media posts on Facebook, Instagram and YouTube generated engagement and advocacy. Semi-monthly Front Porch Forum posts resulted in back and forth questions-and-answers from voters. In addition, grant funding from the Johnson Family Foundation allowed the League to place two-full page advertisements in *Seven Days* and four days of native ads and ten days of app Open Ads on WCAX.

Special thanks to Johnna Ferguson, Audrey Grant, Madeline Motta, Andrea Olson, Erica Anderson-Putman, and Sonja Schuyler for their contributions.

Thank You, Front Porch Forum

It was a first for Vermont. The Secretary of State's office, as a cautionary measure during the pandemic, mailed postcards in July and ballots in September to every active registered voter, strongly encouraging them to vote by mail.

As with anything new, The League knew this would create anxiety and confusion. In addition, there was widespread misinformation about mail-in voting and, knowing how important it was to have voter fears and insecurities dispelled, we contacted Front Porch Forum to get our message out. The team at Front Porch Forum was terrific! They allowed us to publish two posts a month from June to November, at no cost, giving us access to 182 neighborhoods and towns.

League members Madeline Motta and Sonja Schuyler coordinated messages for this project and Kate Rader diligently handled all the many queries. We informed voters on how to complete an absentee primary ballot to avoid rejection, how to update registration, when to expect ballots, how to find the VOTE411 nonpartisan guide, deadlines to heed, election security, and voting at the polls. We provided links to educational videos and numbers to call should they encounter problems at the polls.

Thanks to Front Porch Forum, the League of Women Voters of Vermont was able to provide voters with comprehensive information during an unprecedented election. We sincerely thank Front Porch Forum for its exceptional generosity.

Subscribe to Front Porch Forum in your town, and make a contribution at <https://frontporchforum.com/supporting-members>.



League Action on Health Care

The LWVVT Health Care Committee is working with the LWVUS Health Care Reform Network (toolkit at <http://bit.ly/3mglAys>), which is: 1) creating tutorials on increasing voter awareness and understanding of health care reform issues, hopefully starting in January; 2) aiding state and local leagues in developing positions and resolutions (our 2005 LWVVT position and 2019 resolution are being made available as resources); and 3) approaching our new league president, Dr. Deborah Turner, MD, in hopes of increasing league advocacy for single payer at a national level.

The LWVVT signed on to a letter exhorting the state to cancel or let expire its relationship with OneCare, the state's monopoly accountable care organization that diverts health care dollars to administrative bloat. See Press Release at <https://bit.ly/EndOneCarePR> and the Fact Sheet at <https://bit.ly/OneCare11Points>.

"Health Care" wasn't offered as a choice in the LWVUS priority survey this fall, despite a pandemic! Along with other states, the LWVVT added health care to the "other" category, when attention was directed there by the network.

Meanwhile, members are encouraged to collaborate with allied organizations pushing Gov. Scott and

legislators to implement Act 48, to "put us on a path to single payer." Letters to your legislators, letters to the editor, and promoting town resolutions*** are all ways you can raise visibility and advocate for health care reform. ***<https://www.medicare4allresolutions.org/>

For more information or to get involved contact Betty Keller at bjkellermd@gmail.com.

Speak for the League

We often get requests to be on a panel, speak to a reporter (print, radio, television), moderate forums, make a guest appearance, and more.

We are looking for members who would be willing to talk about League issues. Topics might include voting rights, ranked choice voting, vote by mail, money in politics, increasing voter registration, voter suppression, health care reform, and the environment.

If you are interested in being a spokesperson for the League, please email board member Jesse Scarlato, at jessemanysteps@gmail.com. If you are asked to speak on behalf of the League or are contacted by the media, do let Jesse know.

We look forward to hearing from you and please do contact Jesse if you have any questions.

Policing and Mental Health Program Scheduled

The second in the LWV/KHL program series *Policing to Public Safety*, will be offered on Zoom on January 13, 2021 at 7:00 p.m.

This program, "Policing and Mental Health," will address how police interact with people in a mental health crisis, from the perspective of law enforcement, victims, and legal advocacy. Discussion will include police training and other policing reform approaches that can help mitigate overreaction and unnecessary violence.

Moderated by League member Madeline Motta, panelists are:

Brian Peete, Chief of Police, Montpelier
A.J. Ruben, Supervising Attorney at Disability Rights Vermont
Karim Chapman, of Psychiatric Survivors

Register in advance for this meeting:

<https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZcpcO2qrTMvE9BSTp9l7TXtcb8pv7kRG89R>

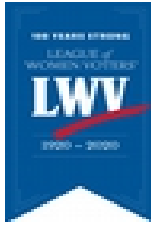
You will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting.

Remaining programs in the series:

Wednesday, February 10, 2021 – Racial Disparity in Policing and Juvenile Justice

Wednesday, March 10, 2021 – The Future of Law Enforcement: from Policing to Public Safety

A recording of the first program, featuring Amit Prakash on the "Militarization of Policing" is available at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=auImxsd2Kso&feature=youtu.be>



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