

Green Mountain CITIZEN

Summer 2021

Deputy Secretary of State Addresses LWVVT Convention



Deputy Secretary of State Chris Winters was the keynote speaker at an abbreviated convention on June 9. Winters filled the League in on the specifics about S.15, the bill that makes the sending of mail-in ballots to all active Vermont voters state lae. The Governor had signed the bill just that week. Vermont is one of very few states that have expended, rather than contracting, voter rights.

As a last nod (we hope) to Covid-19, the 57th* convention of the LWVVT was held online, courtesy of Zoom. Twenty-four members attended, with Sue Racanellii presiding. Johnna Ferguson ably oversaw the technical aspects of the meeting.

The convention adopted a budget and our program for the next two years, amended the bylaws and elected our board of directors. The budget was sent to all our members in the convention Workbook, and details about other action by convention will be found herein.

*LWVVT was founded in 1920, but in the early years the convention was held annually.

Message from the Board Summer 2021

A Message of Appreciation and Gratitude

As we come to the close of our 2020-2021 fiscal year, I want to thank you for being a loyal member and for your commitment and tenacity during a year that tested our resolve.

A grassroots, volunteer organization such as the League does not operate in a silo. We rely on one another to get our message out. In remembering that, I especially wish to thank:

Lyn Blackwell and **Johnna Ferguson** who are retiring from the board. Lyn represented the League on the Vermont Commission on Women and gave many, many hours to researching and speaking about Vermont suffragists as a member of the Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance History & Research Committee. Johnna has been a stalwart, managing the Vote411 database during the elections, being our liaison with LWVUS on gerrymandering, working diligently on our website transfer, and helping with all things tech.

Erika Anderson who posts on Twitter for the League.

Nicolas Anzalone and **Allen Gilbert** for informative presentations to the Board on *H360 Rural Community Broadband*.

Karen Bufka for serving on the Planning Committee of the New England States Leadership Development Conference

Paul Erlbaum, our appointee to the State Ethics Commission, who volunteered with Election Protection to help voters experiencing difficulties registering or accessing the ballot.

Audrey Grant, student member, who so enthusiastically produced videos for Youtube and radio.

David Horton for so graciously taking minutes at almost every Board meeting.

Dr. Betty Keller, who at short notice, participated in a press conference organized by Vermont Public Interest Research Group (VPIRG) on ranked choice voting.

Anne Mixer who leads the LWVVT Youth Voter Registration and her team, for reaching out to 17-24 year old eligible Vermont voters, organizing focus groups and developing interactive presentations.

Madeline Motta for spearheading production and distribution of the *Inmate Voter Registration Instructional Video* to every prison and for securing a grant that allowed us to translate the League's *Voting In Vermont* brochure in Nepali, Somali and Chinese to support registration of new citizens.

Lila Richardson who represented the League on the VPIRG Coalition to make mail-in ballots permanent in Vermont and easier for voters to fix mistakes on their ballots. Lila testified before the Legislature on behalf of the League and made a presentation to the Board.

Jesse Scarlato for taking on the task of coordinating the League's press and speaker requests.

Marguerite Adelman and **Jean Hopkins** for organizing a gathering in Burlington to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, granting women the vote.

Lyn Blackwell, Barbara Magaliff, Jill McKeon, Anne Mixer, Madeleine Mongan, Lila Richardson, and Sonja Schuyler for active involvement in the Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance.

Mary Alice Bisbee, Jean Hopkins, Betty Keller, Ellen Leff, and Kate Rader, LWVVT Health Care Committee, for collaborating to increase voter understanding of health care reform issues, advocating for single payer at a national level, and testifying before the House Committee on Health Care.

Michelle Champoux, Susan Mock, Anne Mixer, Rilla Murray, Debbie Ramsdell, and Lila Richardson for tabling efforts.

Kate Rader, for formulating the Bylaw amendments and **Judith Hinds**, for carefully proofreading the final copy.

Sonja Schuyler, Anne Mixer, Madeline Motta, Lila Richardson, Pat Sharpe, Maisie and Bill Wood who formed the Education Committee responsible for generating a tremendous amount of voter education during the election cycle.

Maisie and Bill Wood, Sue Day, Martha Molnar, and Liz MacKay who compiled and distributed the annual Candidate Questionnaire to every candidate on the Castleton ballot.

Madeline Motta and **Anna Saxman** for moderating the League's annual Kellogg-Hubbard Library Discussion Series, *Policing to Public Safety*.

And most of all, I thank **Kate Rader** and **Sonja Schuyler** who with their wisdom and experience guided me through my first two years as League President, answering questions, giving suggestions, and making me believe I could do it.

Thank you for believing in our mission, *Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.*, and know that you are valued and appreciated.

Sue Racanelli, President

Universal Vote by Mail bill signed by the Governor

(Lila Richardson)

On June 7, the governor signed Act 60 (S.15): An act relating to mailing out ballots, correcting defective ballots, and miscellaneous changes to State election laws. This bill makes significant permanent changes to Vermont's election statutes that will make voting more convenient and accessible for all voters.

The statute as enacted can be found at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/ACTS/ACT060/ACT060%20As%20Enacted.pdf> . A useful summary of the Act is at <https://legislature.vermont.gov/Documents/2022/Docs/ACTS/ACT060/ACT060%20Act%20Summary.pdf>

In 2020, the legislature authorized temporary changes to election procedures designed to make it safer to vote during the pandemic. At the beginning of the 2021 session, the legislature passed Act 1, An act relating to authorizing alternative procedures for 2021 annual municipal meetings, in response to COVID-19 to give greater flexibility for conducting municipal and school elections.

Throughout the session, the League worked with a coalition of organizations called Vermont Voter Choice to advocate for a permanent system with universally mailed ballots. Information about this group is at <https://www.vermontvoterchoice.org/> .

In February, the League presented written testimony to the Senate Government Operations Committee in a statement endorsed by a number of organizations and participated in meetings where the committee reviewed possible election changes. The League also presented testimony to the House Government Operations Committee on S.15/Act 60 in April.

Act 60 includes 22 sections changing different provisions of the election statutes in Title 17. The major changes are those giving greater flexibility for conducting municipal elections and providing

for the mailing of general election ballots to all registered voters by the Secretary of State. An important new feature of the universal vote by mail system is a notice and cure process for ballots that are defective. Act 60 requires town clerks to open ballots that have been returned, notify the voter if a ballot is defective (usually because the voter failed to put the ballot in the certificate envelope provided or failed to sign the certificate envelope) and give the voter an opportunity to "cure" the problem.

Other sections of Act 60 permit towns to install secure ballot drop boxes that can be used to return early ballots and allow town clerks to process returned ballots up to 30 days before election day. There is also a section requiring voters who appear at the polling place without a ballot to sign an affidavit that they have not previously cast their ballot.

The bill also includes a section requiring the Secretary of State to provide recommendations about language access after consulting with municipalities and interested parties on "best practices for increasing access to voting for non-English speaking Vermonters and Vermonters with limited English proficiency." The Secretary will also study and make recommendations about expanding vote by mail for primary and local elections and about possible implementation of a voter verification system.

The bill includes one-time funding for the 2022 elections. The legislature also created a badly-needed new position at the Secretary of State's election division. The Secretary of State's office plans an extensive voter education campaign to make voters aware of the changes in the law, and the League expects to help with this education effort.

As League president Sue Racanelli wrote when the legislature passed Act 60, the bill is "an important step forward in making our democracy more accessible and equitable for all Vermonters."

Program for 2021/22: Health Care Urged as Advocacy Priority

(Betty Keller)

Two years ago our state convention adopted a resolution calling upon our state board to advocate strongly to the LWVUS board to support and actively advocate for federal legislation for a national single-payer health insurance program, and to support state and local leagues in their education and advocacy efforts to explore state, regional and national options.

Although the LWVUS has concentrated on voter rights in the past two years, “Health Care Reform for the U.S.” (HCR4US), a national networking group of Leaguers, successfully applied to have a caucus at the national convention in June 2020. Participation in monthly calls grew dramatically and activity is growing across the country, working on educational materials and making the materials accessible.

We are introducing a new website, and here is the excellent news: LWVUS agreed to let us use LWV in the name of the web address, and there are efforts afoot to get the LWVUS website to point to our new website. Pretty easy to remember: www.lvwhealthcarefrom.org

To further promote grassroots support for health care reform at state and national level, the LWVVT Convention adopted the following resolutions for action in 2021/22.

RESOLUTION #1: SUPPORT FOR A NATIONAL HEALTH PROGRAM

As announced in 1993 and supplemented in 2016, the League of Women Voters of the United States believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents, and favors a national health insurance plan financed through general taxes in place of individual insurance premiums.

Consistent with that national position, the League of Women Voters of Vermont calls upon the LWVUS Board to advocate strongly for bills that legislate for Single Payer, Improved and Expanded Medicare for all, including the Medicare for All Act of 2021 (H.R. 1976). We call on our Congressional delegation to work

toward immediate enactment of the Medicare for All Act of 2021 (H.R. 1976), assuring health care for all residents of the United States. We also call on our Vermont State Legislators to pass a state resolution supporting the Medicare for All Act of 2021 and encouraging our Congressional delegation to work actively toward its enactment.

RESOLUTION #2: STATE-BASED UNIVERSAL HEALTH CARE

The League of Women Voters of Vermont reaffirms its position of 2005, that, until such time as a basic level of quality health care is available to all United States residents at an affordable level of cost, a state program can and should provide such health care to the residents of Vermont. Because of current federal barriers to states developing cost-effective, publicly-funded single payer health care systems, the League of Women Voters of Vermont urges federal legislation to remove those financial and legal barriers to state-based universal health care systems.

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED, that the League of Women Voters of Vermont enthusiastically supports the State-Base Universal Health Care Act (HR 3775), calling on our Congressional delegation to work toward its immediate enactment. We also call on our Vermont State Legislators to pass a state resolution to encourage our Congressional delegation to work actively toward the enactment of the State-Based Universal Health Care Act.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the League of Women Voters of Vermont expresses its continued enthusiastic support for Act 48, the Vermont Health Reform Law of 2011, and calls upon the Governor of Vermont and upon the Green Mountain Care Board to work toward its immediate implementation, including seeking State Innovation Waivers allowed through the Affordable Care Act Section 1332, as well as collaborating with other states if such collaboration would be of benefit to the development and maintenance of a state-based or regional health care system.

Prop. 5 Progresses in the Legislature

(Lyn Blackwell)

Proposal 5 would amend the state constitution to guarantee personal reproductive liberty for all Vermonters. It was approved during the 2019-20 Legislative Session and must be approved again by both the House and the Senate during the 2021-22 session before it goes to the voters in a referendum in November 2022. On April 19, the Senate approved the measure again, and it is currently in the House Human Services Committee awaiting House approval next winter.

The amendment states that personal control over reproduction “is central to the liberty and dignity to determine one’s own life course.” Any infringement on that right must be justified by a “compelling state interest achieved by the least restrictive means.” It includes the right to become pregnant and to carry a child to term; and to choose or refuse abortion, contraception, and/or sterilization. If passed, the amendment will be the first in the nation to fully protect reproductive liberty.

LWVVT supports the amendment, and members will be following the final legislative debate next winter. The House passed the measure easily, 106-38, making it likely to receive approval again. Given the timing of the referendum and the current case from Mississippi pending before the U.S. Supreme Court (*Dobbs v. Jackson*), which bars most abortions after 15 weeks, we anticipate significant national interest in the outcome and much debate before the final vote in November. Depending upon how the court rules, Prop. 5 may be one of the first tests of whether reproductive rights can be sustained at the state level without the current precedents set by *Roe v. Wade*.



Michelle Champoux, Anne Mixer, Rilla Murray and Lila Richardson register voters at the Montpelier Farmers Market (photo: John Snell)

Suffrage. Hard Won. Not Done!

August 14. State House Lawn. 3-5 p.m.

The Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance invites you to a commemoration of the 101st anniversary of the 19th Amendment, granting women the right to vote. The pandemic led to us having to reschedule the 2020 Centennial Parade and SuffrageFest event.



Pulitzer prize-winning author and historian, Annette Gordon-Reed will deliver the keynote presentation and the afternoon will focus on multi-layered messages relating to voting with additional speakers, poets, music, and more. The program, which is currently under development, will be finalized in July.

Gordon-Reed is also scheduled to be at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library in Montpelier earlier that day where she will briefly discuss her book, *On Juneteenth* and sign copies of the book which will be available for purchase. Tentatively planned for 12:30 p.m.

Annette Gordon-Reed is the Carl M. Loeb University Professor at Harvard University. She won sixteen book prizes, including the Pulitzer Prize in History and National Book Award for *The Hemingses of Monticello: An American Family*.

The Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance is a project of the League of Women Voters of Vermont Education Fund.

If you would like more information or are interested in volunteering, email League member Marguerite Adelman, madel51353@gmail.com.

LWVVT Bylaws Amended

The Convention amended the Bylaws of the LWVVT for the fifth time since our founding.

The first amendment, of Article II, added a second policy to bring the bylaws of our League into conformance with those of the LWVUS:

Sec. 3. Diversity Equity & Inclusion Policy. *The LWVVT is fully committed to ensure compliance—in principle and in practice—with the LWVUS' Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy.*

The remaining amendments were made to reflect the move from officially recognized local Leagues to a single statewide League, with all administrative matters handled by the LWVVT board.

In Memoriam

Marge Gaskins, long-time LWVVT leader and founding board member of the Education Fund, died in February. Marge was a strong advocate for citizen participation in politics and served multiple terms as President of the LWVVT.



She believed every citizen, regardless of political affiliation, had a right and responsibility to participate in the political process. She believed strongly in equal rights for women in all areas of society. She served as town

Moderator in Essex. Her political involvement made her friends and foes on both sides of the aisle, but she was respected for her strong voice and independent thought.

Meet the new members of the LWVVT Board of Directors



Marguerite Adelman, a Winooski resident, is a retired administrator who has worked in education, government, and non-profits in Illinois, New York, and Vermont. She was the founding Executive Director of a peer-run mental health agency in New York: National Alliance on Mental Illness of Champlain Valley. As an experienced grant writer, communications director, and administrator, she has won many state and national awards for the programs that she has developed. Besides being a member of the LWV of VT, she is also a member of the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Amnesty International of Champlain Valley, and the VT Military Poisons Coalition. She is an avid reader and loves to paint, travel, and garden in her spare time.



Anne Mixer is from the midwest community of Muskegon Michigan. She attended the University of Michigan receiving undergraduate degrees in Education, Special Education and an MSW in Policy and Planning. Her work in mental health settings, juvenile detention and residential treatment programs and a decades long career as the director of a day treatment program for children and adolescents with behavioral and emotional difficulties all reinforced the importance of understanding laws and policies that impact every aspect of community life.

After retiring to Vermont in 2012, Anne joined the LWV after attending the lecture series at the Kellogg-Hubbard Library on the Constitution. She currently is the Coordinator of the League's Youth Voter Project which has the goal of accessing and registering eligible 17 to 24 year old Vermont voters in public schools, colleges and in community settings to reach marginalized populations.



Susan Kuecker was born and raised on an Iowa farm and is descended from Vermonters who moved to Iowa in the 1850's to find better farmland. She is a graduate of Iowa State University (Carrie Chapman Catt's alma mater!) where she received a degree in early childhood education. After graduating, she taught children and adults with intellectual disabilities for eight years before switching to the museum field due to her love of history. She has moved around the country following her husband's engineering career living in four states in the last dozen years. She has long had an interest in League activities as an aunt was a member of Wisconsin's state board of directors. She became a member of the League following the 2016 election while living in Massachusetts and contacted the Northeast Kingdom chapter after moving to Vermont. She has been a resident of Vermont for the last four years and currently volunteers one day a week at the Fairbanks Museum in St. Johnsbury and is an active member of the Friends of the Cobleigh Library in Lyndonville.



*Don't
Forget!*

IT'S TIME TO RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP TO THE LEAGUE.

Your membership adds strength to our collective voice. It allows us to provide voters with reliable, accurate and nonpartisan information. Your membership is important to us.

Our membership year is based on the fiscal year, so dues for 2021-22 are due July 1, 2021.

Individual Membership: \$50

Household Membership (two persons at the same address): \$75

Student Membership: \$5

You can pay online, <https://my.lwv.org/vermont/join-or-renew>, or by check (payable to LWVVT) and mail to: League of Women Voters, PO Box 1391, Montpelier, VT 05601-1391.

Together we can make democracy work.

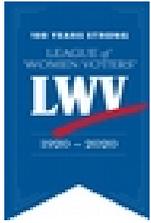
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Kate Rader, Editor

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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