



Green Mountain CITIZEN

Spring 2022

Non-citizen voting: An emerging issue

In Vermont, Winooski and Montpelier have granted legal non-citizen residents the right to vote in local elections. Both cities undertook a complicated and long process to gain that right for their legal non-citizen residents. Currently, lawsuits against non-citizen voting in these two Vermont cities, as well as other cities in the U.S., have been taken up by the national and state GOPs and other conservative groups.

The LWV of Vermont, like all Leagues, is committed to voter education and registration. We have a new population of voters to educate and reach out to in Winooski and Montpelier. What should we be doing to help this new voting group?

We are also wondering if the LWV of Vermont wants to consider a consensus position on non-citizen voting. To this end, we have formed a committee to educate and study the whole question of non-citizen voting. Chaired by Board member Marguerite Adelman, committee members include President Sue Racanelli, and Dian Williams, as well as two members of the LWV of Winchester, MA: Phil Conley and Marilyn Mullane (they are considering a position for their League in MA and have joined our group to research and learn). The committee has developed a *Pros and Cons of Non-Citizen Voting* information sheet, as well as an *Overview of Non-citizen Voting in the United States*. The committee, which has met three times, welcomes new members.

Vermont isn't the only state with non-citizen voting at the local level. The national LWV has not taken a position on this issue; however, a couple of Leagues have studied the question. Currently non-citizens can vote in San Francisco (school board elections), New York City, and eleven cities in Maryland: Barnesville, Cheverly, Chevy Chase, Garrett Park, Glen Echo, Hyattsville, Martin's Additions, Mount Rainier, Riverdale Park, Somerset, and Takoma Park. Other cities considering enacting non-citizen voting at the local level include Washington, DC; Chicago, IL; Portland, ME; San Jose, CA; Worcester, MA; and Syracuse, NY.

Historically, over 40 states or territories, including colonies before the Declaration of Independence, have at some time given at least some "aliens" voting rights in some or all elections. Federal law prohibits non-citizen voting in national elections, but leaves voting at the state and local level up to the states. Five state constitutions now ban non-citizen voting: Arizona, North Dakota, Colorado, Florida, and Alabama. Today, more states are considering a ban.

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Message from the Board

Spring 2022

I want to take this opportunity to share with League members how the League of Women Voters is raising their voice and making a difference in international human rights work through the LWV of the United States, United Nations Observer Program. The LWV UN Observer program is composed of five League members from across the US that were appointed by the CEO of LWV US. It has been my honor to be appointed to the UN Observer Team in October 2021, as this is the first time that a League member from Vermont has joined the UN Observer Team.

The LWVUS UN Observer Program had its start in 1945, at the UN Charter Conference, when the League of Women Voters was invited by President Truman to serve as a consultant to the U.S. delegation. Since that time, the League has continued its presence at the United Nations through its UN Observers. Noteworthy was in July 1997, the League was granted Special Consultative Status with the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), which provides the opportunity to make interventions on issues the League supports. Consultative status allowed the League to make formal oral or written statements to the UN assembly and be consulted by the UN in areas in which the League has expertise. In addition, as a UN certified NGO, the LWV through their Observers have access to UN sessions, conferences, and events. LWV UN Observers are encouraged to join other UN NGOs in advocating and educating the UN community on emergent issues such as climate change, human trafficking, and fair elections to name a few.

My focus as a UN Observer has been on the human rights issue of ending human trafficking and modern slavery. Representing the League, I have joined a coalition of other UN certified NGOs that make up the UN Committee to Stop Trafficking in Persons (CSTIP), a powerful voice against human trafficking. The mission of the CSTIP is to create awareness and to advocate for UN policies that aim to disrupt the commerce of human trafficking. In October 2021, the CSTIP produced a report entitled “Bankrupting the Business of Human Trafficking: Summary and Recommendations” which is available on the CSTIP website at www.ngocstip.org

One recommendation from the report is to expand the international program of mandatory training of hotel and

resort employees on recognizing and reporting human trafficking especially the trafficking and sexual exploitation of children. Presently, Marriott hotels and resorts international is a model for instituting a mandatory new employee and annual training for personnel at all levels.

Advancing the mission of Bankrupting the Business of Human Trafficking, CSTIP is planning a webinar in early April, “What Gets Measured, Gets Done: Measuring Efficacy of Human Trafficking Policies and Programs.” The webinar will focus on improving the current statistical data on the number of victims and the illicit profits made to better evaluate efforts in reducing those two figures. Ultimately, the recommended measure will be integrated into the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNDOC) Global Report on Trafficking in Persons as well as the U.S. State Department’s Trafficking in Persons Report.

I am grateful for the chance to work with a dynamic team of UN Observers, who have diverse backgrounds in international social justice and civil rights work and are dedicated members of the League of Women Voters.

To learn more about the UN LWV US program please contact me at madelinemotta@aol.com

Madeline Motta

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League Joins Action for Choice

(Dotty Ricks)



On Saturday, Feb 5, the League supported a Reproductive Liberty Amendment (Prop. 5) coalition action in Montpelier. This was one of several regional actions on that day in support of the RLA.

We had 11 cars that we decorated and paraded through Montpelier in front of the statehouse. As we approached the statehouse, cars began honking and waving and continued to do so until past the statehouse lawn. Supporters were gathered at the statehouse where we posted about 25 smaller signs and two 10-foot sheet signs in support of Prop 5, Roe v Wade, and reproductive freedom. *Bread and Puppet* showed up and spent much of the day with us. They are eager to join in other actions. I am glad, as they bring such energy to any event. On the second swing through Montpelier, one person spontaneously came out of a downtown store with a sign in support of Roe and reproductive freedom. The honk and wave and statehouse presence was delightful and I think all enjoyed it. I look forward in the future to further League and RLA actions in support of Prop 5.

Sue Racanelli created a great flyer to invite League members to participate in the parade and sent out an email blast encouraging folks to contact their legislators and to donate to the RLA. If Leaguers donate via her email blast, the League will get credit for those donors. If Leaguers use the regular RLA website to donate, we won't know that it was a Leaguer that donated.

The RLA is in a slow season now until about mid April after which they will ramp up with more action until August when they will go into a full out campaign mode. I suggested that they organize a calendar on their website with all activities going on in support of the RLA so anyone can see what events are happening and can join in if they like. They agreed to work on that. Keep watch for further LWV and RLA coalition activities in helping pass Prop 5.

Voting, cont. from p. 1

However, prohibiting non-citizen voting in your state constitution does not necessarily ban voting at the local level if that state allows for "Home Rule," making the issue of non-citizen voting a highly complex one. Because Vermont follows "Dillon's Rule" and not "Home Rule," charter changes at the local level must be approved by the House, Senate, and the Governor. In 2021, Governor Phil Scott vetoed the charter changes, but the House and Senate overrode his veto.

Currently, we are monitoring non-citizen voter registration, procedures, and outreach in Montpelier and Winooski and investigating how many non-citizens voted on March 1st. The committee hopes to provide some educational sessions on this topic to LWVVT members in the near future and to send out a survey/questionnaire to understand where Vermont League members stand on the question of non-citizen voting.

To join the non-citizen voting committee or to request the information we have put together so far, contact Marguerite at madel51353@gmail.com.



Training session for new voters.

State Code of Ethics Passes the Senate (Almost)

In 2017, with the leadership of board member Madeline Motta, the League was instrumental in the establishment of a State Ethics Commission. Motta was its first Chair.

The State Ethics Commission is composed of the following five members: one appointed by the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court; one appointed by the League of Women Voters of Vermont, who is a member of the League; one appointed by the Board of Directors of the Vermont Society of Certified Public Accountants, who is a member of the Society; one appointed by the Board of Managers of the Vermont Bar Association, who is a member of the Association; and one appointed by the Board of Directors of the Vermont Human Resource Association, who is a member of the Association.

Because the state has had no uniform code of ethics from which the Commission can derive advisory opinions (it has no enforcement power), the first Executive Director, Larry Novins, was asked to submit a draft Code of Ethics to the Legislature. Largely because of Covid-19, nothing happened in the 2019-2020 Biennium.

The process began again under the able leadership of the Commission's new Executive Director, Christina Sivret. The Senate Government Operations Committee took up S.171 in January.

The Ethics Commission's proposed code of ethics is the result of collaborative research, drafting, and public comment, and is intended to provide a consistent baseline for ethical conduct by all public servants in state government. In summary: Recusal and disclosure for conflicts of interest; No directing others to act unethically; No participation after recusal due to conflict; Avoiding appearance of unethical conduct; No improper preferential treatment; No using state position for improper financial gain; No using state information for improper financial gain; No using state resources for improper financial gain; Limitations on gifts to public servants; No making

unauthorized commitments on behalf of the state; Limits on other employment; Must comply with all other relevant rules not included in the Code.

There was significant push-back from the Judiciary and attorneys, who argued that because they had their own code of professional ethics, they should be exempted from the state code. [They are not exempted in other states which have a uniform code for all branches of government.] The eventual compromise was that should the state code be in conflict with professional rules/codes of conduct, the professional rules would prevail.

The bill was voted favorably out of committee on March 17, and is awaiting final vote in the Senate, just under the wire for crossover day.

Thank you to our members for your messages of support to the Senate Government Operations Committee.

League Hosts Barre Mayoral Forum

On Feb. 12, Steve Pappas, editor of the *Barre-Montpelier Times Argus* asked the League to host a community forum, sponsored by the *Times Argus*, for the candidates for Mayor of Barre. The candidates, Jake Hemmerick and Rich Morey agreed to hold the event, but asked for a neutral host and a woman be part of the dialog.

League member Susan Clark, Middlesex Town Moderator, agreed to moderate the event. Clark worked with Sue Racanelli; Tony Campos, Barre CVTV; Zoom operator Sarah Henshaw, <https://www.leavesofchangevt.com/>; and the candidates to pull together a successful event in less than two weeks.

The public could see the discussion by Zoom or on Barre's Channel 1070. Audience questions were solicited in advance.

Thank you and congratulations to all involved in this effort.

Broadband Update

(Allen Gilbert)

Communications Union Districts (CUDs) around the state are in different phases of broadband build-out, with some gearing up to begin construction this summer of high-speed fiber-optic networks. The Vermont Community Broadband Board is ready to award substantial construction grants, and towns are being encouraged to allocate some of their American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds to broadband projects through a matching funds incentive. CUDs are collaborating in bulk purchases of hundreds of miles of fiber-optic cable. System designs are being completed, “pole inventories” taken, and “make ready” steps planned to make sure cables can be connected onto poles.

There has been increased discussion among us of not just accessibility to high-speed internet but of affordability as well. A substantial portion of Vermont's rural population lives in poverty. “We're not connected until everyone can afford broadband” is being recognized as key to digital equity.

[League members Allen Gilbert and Nicolas Anzalone are delegates to their local CUD boards.]

Ed Fund Increases Award

The LWVVT Ed Fund is accepting application for the 2022 Winona Smith Scholarships. Three or four are awarded every year to Vermont high school seniors who demonstrate civic participation, community service, school activities, and financial need.

This year, thanks to generous contributions from our members, the LWVVT, and the public, we are able to increase the award to \$1500 per student.

To keep our fundraising success going, we suggest that those of you who have Required Minimum Distribution of your IRA or 401(k) funds considering making a direct, tax-free designation to the LWVVT Education Fund – making a gift with money you never had!

Scholarships will be awarded on May 1. Stay tuned to hear about our outstanding young Vermonters.

Ranked Choice Voting Stalled

On March 15, League members had a virtual meeting with Secretary of State Jim Condos, Deputy Secretary Chris Winters, Elections Officer Will Senning and SoS Chief of Staff Eric Covey, to talk about the potential for Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) in Vermont.

Sec. Condos favors RCV. He told us that new tabulators capable of accommodating RCV will be installed in two weeks. In addition the state has changed vendors for ballot printing, vote by mail, and data processing. Each of these requires a break-in period and training for Town Clerks. A new system takes about 18 months to implement. Condos noted that advocates often do not recognize the complexity of making this change.

First, of the 250 municipalities in Vermont, 100, with populations of less than 1000, count ballots by hand. Under current law, Town Clerks must report election results to the SoS in 48 hours. The Secretary, in turn, must certify those results by the following Thursday. In order to meet those requirements, towns could invest in their own tabulators or the vote count could be centralized by county or state. The latter would require sealing and transporting ballots, raising issues of security and trust.

Since there will not be a Presidential primary until March, 2024, Condos suggested that it would be possible to use RCV for that election, although his office would prefer delaying the switch to the 2026 election. In the meantime, chartered municipalities could use RCV on the local level.

During the pandemic Vermont made a big change, moving permanently to voting by mail. Making another major change – the move to RCV --in this time of widespread distrust, would be both difficult and confusing to voters.

On the brighter side, if only tangentially related, MIT has, for the second time, ranked Vermont first in the nation for election performance. With same day, online, and automatic voter registration, voting by mail, no-excuse absentee voting, and a long early voting period, Vermont is certainly tops for voter access.



June 23-26

Sheraton Downtown, Denver, Colorado

Registration begins Thursday afternoon, first plenary session is on Friday afternoon, and wrap-up by noon on Sunday.

Vermont may have five voting delegates. Members may attend in person* or virtually.

In-person delegate or observer \$475
Virtual delegate or observer \$300

LWVUS has reserved a room block at a discounted rate of \$209/night. Hotel check-in is at 4 p.m. Rooms in this block can only be booked using [this link](#).

Information: <https://convention.lwv.org/home>

*In-person attendees will be required to show proof of COVID-19 vaccination or a negative test taken within 24 hours of checking in at registration. Convention staff is working on a safe and secure way for attendees to share that information. In-person attendees will also be required to follow all safety protocols as established by the City of Denver, the Sheraton, and LWVUS [subject to change].



The Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance commissioned a painting, *The Light of Truth Upon Them*, by Xicana artist Cynthia Cagle of South Burlington, to mark the centennial commemoration of the 19th Amendment, securing women the vote.

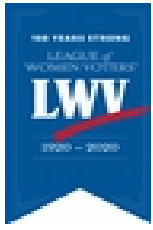
Cagle tells the story of women's struggle — Black, Indigenous, Asian, Latina, and white — to have an equal voice in American democracy. The women on the shores of Lake Champlain, against the background of sunflowers and the Adirondacks, remind us that the story of the fight to vote is both our legacy and our future. Featuring: Zitkala Ša, Mabel Ping-Hua Lee, Stacey Abrams, Ida B. Wells, and Vermonters Lucy J. C. Daniels and Louvenia Dorsey Bright.

The painting, sponsored by Vermont State Curator's Office, will be on display in the Card Room of the State House during Women's History Month from March 8 through 31.

Please make it a point to stop by the State House to see this visually stunning piece of art during business hours.

To learn more about the painting, visit www.vtsuffrage2020.org/the-light-of-truth-upon-them.

The painting will be on loan to the Vermont Historical Society Museum beginning April.



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