



Green Mountain CITIZEN

Spring 2023

58th LWVVT Convention

June 24, 2023

You are invited to the LWVVT 2023 Biennial Convention on **June 24, 2023** from 10 a.m. to 3 p.m. in Montpelier! We are excited to be gathering *in-person* at the Vermont History Museum in Montpelier.

Join us as we plan the League's work for the next two years by electing a slate of officers and directors, adopting studies and a budget, and acting on any Bylaw amendments. This is an excellent opportunity to gather and connect with League members across the state after such a long hiatus.

Board Recommended Study

The LWVVT board is recommending adoption of a study of *Privatization of Health Care* proposed by the Health Care Committee. LWVNY is working on this issue with the hope that Vermont and New York can present a position for concurrence at the National convention in 2024.

Board Recommended Concurrence

The LWVVT board is recommending adoption of the Non-US Citizen Voting Concurrence position proposed by the Non-US Citizen Voting Committee and based on the research study conducted by the LWV of Boulder County, Colorado.

LWV Nominating Committee Nominations

The nominations for 2023–25 LWVVY Board and Nominating Committee are.

Officers:

Sue Racanelli, President (East Montpelier)
Marguerite Adelman, First Vice President (Winooski)
Rachel Onuf, Secretary (West Topsham)
Maisie Wood, Treasurer (Castleton)

Directors: Susan Kuecker (Lyndonville), Anne Mixer (East Montpelier), Madeline Motta (Stowe)
Joanne Necrason (South Burlington), Sonja Schuyler (Jericho).

Proposed Bylaws Amendments

Convention delegates will have the opportunity to vote on the proposed amendments to the LWVVT bylaws. Per the bylaws, amendments require a two-thirds vote to pass.

Register Now! See p. 6

*Message from the Board
Spring 2023*



Photo credit: Lloyd Devereux Richards

Over the past two years, your Board has come to more fully appreciate the value of gathering together in person. While there are advantages to technology that allow us to meet without traveling and helps us broaden the audience to our presentations, the cost is high.

It is difficult to make a close connection to an organization and people whom you never really meet and tough to get a real sense of its values and mission.

This is why we are so pleased to have an in-person Convention this year and eagerly look forward to having a really good turnout in June.

A review of projects in the past two years remind us of how much we have accomplished despite losses from Covid: the Youth Voter Project, the series of programs in partnership with Kellogg-Hubbard Library, testifying in the Legislature on Ranked Choice Voting and other election law changes, and granting eight scholarships to promising HS seniors.

After nearly three years, public naturalization ceremonies are back, and we're again registering new citizens to vote. What we lost included the Spring Lecture and the New England Leadership Conference in Maine.

Now it's time to look ahead, and plan for 2023-25.

The business meeting offers several important decisions to make and the accompanying discussion will be a wonderful learning opportunity about how the League works and what gives us credibility when we speak on issues.

Also at Convention, we will be losing some retiring Board members and welcoming new ones.

Additional important information about our agenda and process will be in the Convention Workbook, which will be sent to you in about four weeks.

Please join us in making important decisions and becoming reacquainted with your fellow Leaguers.

In League,

2021-23 LWVVT Board

*Marguerite Adelman
David Horton
Susan Kuecker
Ann Mixer
Madeline Motta
Sue Racanelli
Debbie Ramsdell*

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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://lwvofvt.org/>, or write:

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P.O. Box 1391
Montpelier, VT 05601-1391
e-mail, League@lwvofvt.org

Non-US Citizen Voting on the LWVVT Convention Agenda

It takes one vote to make a difference: What difference can non-citizen voting make?

Pelin Kohn, Ph.D. Montpelier City Councilor



Pelin Kohn

On a sunny, bright, warm July day in 2017, I arrived at my new home in Montpelier, Vermont. My books, clothes, and photo albums were all packed up to move to Montpelier. I found comfort in them as I attempted to re-create my life in the US. What about all the things I wasn't able

to pack for my journey to Montpelier? All my achievements, my professional network, my family, and my identity as a hardworking woman.

I have always wanted to be part of my community since the day I moved here. Throughout the years, I have volunteered in different community programs, tried to be an active member of my community, and engaged in all the issues that my community is trying to address.

As a former non-US citizen Montpelier resident, I knew that Montpelier had again set a pioneering example by allowing non-US citizen residents to vote. A democracy cannot function without the right to vote. The non-US citizen population contributes to the local economy and pays taxes, but their voices are not heard in the local election process. Having your voice excluded in the voting process also excludes your interests, concerns, and values. Eventually, you become invisible as a non-US citizen resident in your local community.

Additionally, non-US citizen voting allows non-US citizens to participate in decision-making through political engagement, which in turn helps to strengthen local communities. The result would be greater political engagement and participation among non-US citizens as they would feel more invested in the outcome of the election.

Last but not least, when non-US citizens vote, elected officials need to pay more attention to their concerns. The result will be a more inclusive

community and more equitable decisions made by the community.

To create a more diverse, equal, and inclusive community, all voices should be heard and represented in local politics. And yes, indeed! It only takes one vote to make a difference in terms of inclusivity and belonging.

Proposed Concurrence Statement on Non-US Citizen Voting

At our Annual Conference on Saturday, June 24th, membership will be asked to vote on the Concurrence Statement on Non-US Citizen Voting. The Non-US Citizen Voting Committee has been working on this issue for over a year and has proposed the following position statement for the LWVVT, based on the study conducted by the LWV of Boulder County, Colorado.

The League of Women Voters of Vermont (LWVVT) supports the inclusion of non-US citizens residing in Vermont municipalities, in some of our local democratic processes, at municipal, school district, and special district level (i.e., solid waste, water, etc.)

The Non-US Citizen Voting Committee gave two community presentations on this topic, in Burlington and Montpelier. The 35-minute video of the Burlington presentation can be found at <https://www.cctv.org/watch-tv/programs/vermont-league-voters-vermont-what-non-citizen-voting>. [Ed. Note: the program is well worth watching.] Included in the video are lists of the arguments for and against non-US citizen voting. The lists are also shown on p. 5, below, and will be presented Convention.

For more of the research and other information collected by the committee, please don't hesitate to contact Marguerite Adelman at madel51353@gmail.com

LWVVT Advocates for RCV

Betty Keller

The League of Women Voters of Vermont is excited to see the bill on Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for Presidential Primaries so far along in the process. Even though RCV has been used for over one hundred years in Australia, and in several other countries for a variety of jurisdictions since then, the benefits of RCV are still being discovered in the US. Candidates are reporting that they are talking to voters they would not normally spend time on, if they knew they were supporting someone else. This helps the candidate build support to be listed as a second or third choice, but also helps the voter by being able to communicate with a wider range of candidates and share their concerns, and could help our culture in general by reducing divisiveness.

Ranked Choice Voting is also increasing the number of candidates running for office. This gives voters more choices, and helps us build a democracy more representative of us. Some opponents of RCV say that our current system “works fine” and doesn’t need “fixing.” But our current election process promotes a “two-party” system, which is not in our constitution, and discourages more people from running for office. With plurality contests, whoever gets the most votes wins, even if it is only a small fraction of the votes cast. That creates the “spoiler effect,” which reduces a person’s capacity to run. A party may discourage you from running, out of concern that you may “split the vote” and throw the race to another party. But worse, any time a third candidate considers running, they are automatically splitting the vote of the candidate they would vote for if they did not run themselves. So this discourages people from running, which reduces our choices as voters.

Our state constitution says that every citizen has the right not only to vote, but also to run for office. We would like to see fewer barriers to this right, by using RCV for at least some of our elections. And presidential primaries are a great place to start, so that our votes can count even if our first choice candidate withdraws from the race.

Please let your State Representatives know of your support for this much-needed election reform, and ask them to vote in support of S.32.

To learn more about RCV, to participate in a mock election, and to register for the May 8 online update on what is happening with the bill, go to our [events calendar](#). To help plan events and teach about RCV, please contact bkeller@lwvofvt.org.

H.429 and the Trouble with Online Voting.

H.429 is a miscellaneous election laws bill. We've recently asked you to keep the Ethics Commission involved in new filing deadline penalties for candidates. However, today I want to write about the bill's problematic section legalizing online voting.

It is easy to understand why the Secretary of State has asked the legislature to allow visually disabled Vermonters and Vermonters overseas or serving in the military to be able to not only download and mark an absentee ballot online (currently allowed), but also to save them the step of printing their marked ballot and mailing it in, by allowing them to submit that marked ballot through an online portal. This would make it easier for overseas voters to return their ballot on time by Election Day. This would allow Vermonters with visual impairments not only to use the screen reading devices they are already familiar with, but to eliminate the need to ask a sighted person to assist them in printing a ballot and mailing it.

As a League, we want voters to be able to vote with ease, dignity and privacy. And yet we are against online ballot return. It is too much a risk to the integrity of the election.

Online ballot return, while safer than email or fax, is vulnerable to attack, hacking, and manipulation. NIST, the National Institute of Standards and Technology of the US Department of Commerce, considers online ballot return to be "High Risk" to voted ballot integrity, loss of ballot privacy, and allowing unauthorized individuals in the voting channel. Also, these risks are at scale: not just an individual ballot here and there changed, but the entire set of online

votes altered or expanded. CISA, the Cyber Infrastructure section of the Department of Homeland Security, also evaluated these risks as high and at-scale.

The American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and Association for Computing Machinery (ACM) cautions that all internet voting, including returning a marked ballot by web-based portal "is not a secure solution for voting in Vermont or elsewhere any more, nor will it be in the foreseeable future." Their letter to the Vermont Senate regarding these

risks in H.429 was additionally signed by six Vermonters in the field.

Advocates for online voting claim an online portal for disabled or ill Vermonters, and for military and overseas Vermonters, would be a small enough population to further mitigate risk. However, we currently receive 2000 ballots from military voters, and the CDC estimates that 110,000 Vermonters are living with a disability. As is right in disability accommodations, individual Vermonters are the ones to decide if they should be taking advantage of an online ballot return option. That's not a small risk.

Non-Citizen Voting: Pros and Cons

Pro:

- Non-US citizens own property, pay taxes, contribute to our local economy, and should have a voice in local gov't.
- Non-US citizens are affected by policies and actions of municipal and county governments, the same as citizens.
- Non-US citizen school children are affected by policies and actions of the school districts.
- The citizenship process is costly, takes many years, and has an application backlog of over 15 months.
- Our local economies depend on immigrant and refugee labor; workers should have a say, regardless of citizenship.
- Non-US citizen participation benefits all community members.
- Non-US citizen voting was common at the local, state, and even federal levels in the US's first 150 years.
- In some countries, residency, not citizenship, is seen as the measure of being a legitimate stakeholder in a community.
- Voting rights are part of the social contract; a just government rests on the consent of the governed.
- The vote helps guard against discrimination and bias, often a consequence of political exclusion.
- The majority of VT's immigrants are educated and speak English.
- Voting participation is correlated to the voting rate of one's parents. Since obtaining citizenship takes many years, the sooner parents are allowed to vote, the more likely their children will later become voting adults.

Con:

- Non-US citizens will have to self-identify which could put them at risk for immigration action.
- The county clerk becomes a keeper of immigration info which could make it difficult if the Federal Government were to ask for the info and that resulted in deportations.
- Citizenship is a privilege, and it comes with the opportunities of voting which shouldn't be given to non-US citizens.
- Voting is a right for citizens and many non-US citizens eligible for citizenship are motivated to apply for citizenship in order to vote.
- Issues faced by non-US citizens are different from those of citizens and are more appropriately addressed by citizens.
- Non-US citizen voting might encourage those who are here illegally to register as a legal, non-US citizen resident and vote.
- Non-US citizen residents who may not speak English or be able to read could have their votes easily manipulated by others.
- Large numbers of non-US citizen residents voting could change the outcome of an election.
- Non-US citizens may move to communities that allow non-US citizen voting, changing the culture and nature of that community.
- Procedures for non-US citizen voting cost the community money, including lawsuits, translations, interpreters, processing separate voter registration forms, reconfiguring webpages, and more.

LWVVT 58th State Convention

**Saturday, June 24, 2023
Vermont History Museum
109 State Street, Montpelier**



Registration

Fill out the form below and return with a check for \$40 payable to LWVVT

Return to Debbie Ramsdell, Treasurer
 7986 Plank Road, Unit 10
 Bristol, VT 05443

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

The U.S. Senate Fails to Add Equal Rights to the Constitution

On April 27, the Senate failed to pass legislation addressing the Equal Rights Amendment (ERA).

"It is shameful that despite the significant advances made in recent history, Americans continue to face discrimination on the basis of sex," stated LWV CEO Virginia Kase Solomón. "[W]e must not continue to be a nation that harmfully excludes and marginalizes women."

The ERA will return to the Senate at a future date, meaning you can take action to support it:
<https://www.lwv.org/take-action/tell-congress-equality-belongs-constitution>



Debbie Ramsdell, Winona Smith Scholarship Winner Hussein Amuri, Sonja Schuyler at commemoration of 19th Amendment, August 2021



Redistricting exercise, led by Johnna Ferguson



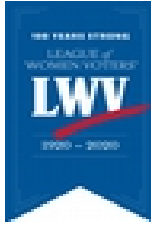
Independence Day Parade, Montpelier, 2022



New Citizen voter registration, Barre, December 2022



Sec. of State Candidate Forum, St. Johnsbury, September 2022



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