

February 2011

PO Box 142
Brunswick, ME 04011

The Brunswick Voter



Items of Interest

- What's Happening at Home?
- House Repeals Affordable Care Act
- House Repeals Public Financing
- Congress Repeals "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

Mark the Date!

~Presentation about Instant Runoff Voting, Saturday, February 5, 2011, 9:30 a.m., Curtis Memorial Library, 2nd Floor Seminar Room, 23 Pleasant Street, Brunswick.

~Special Topsham Town Meeting, Wednesday, February 16, 2011, 7:00 p.m., Mt. Ararat High School.

~Consensus Meeting about Instant Runoff Voting, Saturday, February 26, 2011, 10:00 a.m., Curtis Memorial Library, 2nd Floor Seminar Room, 23 Pleasant Street, Brunswick.

~Harpwell Town Meeting, Saturday, March 12, 2011, 10:00 a.m., Harpswell Islands School, Route 24. Polls are open from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Presentation about Instant Runoff Voting

Brunswick, ME - The League of Women Voters of the Brunswick Area is sponsoring a presentation about Instant Runoff Voting by Terry Bouricius of FairVote: The Center for Voting and Democracy on **Saturday, February 5, at 9:30 a.m.** The presentation will take place in the Seminar Room on the 2nd floor of **Curtis Memorial Library** and is open to the public.

Terry Bouricius is a senior policy analyst for FairVote, which is a nonprofit organization that works on election reform issues. He is a former five-term member of the Vermont House of Representa-

tives. Prior to his election to the legislature, he served ten years on the Burlington, Vermont City Council, including one term as Council President. He graduated from Middlebury College with a degree in political science in 1976. He lives in Burlington, VT with his wife and two children.

The League of Women Voters of Maine is in the midst of conducting a study to decide whether or not to endorse Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) as an alternative voting method in statewide and local elections. IRV allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference (i.e., first, second,

third, fourth and so on). Voters have the option to rank as many or as few candidates as they wish, but they can vote without fear that ranking their less favored candidates will harm the chances of their most preferred candidates.

First choices are then tabulated, and if a candidate receives a majority of first choices, he or she is elected. If nobody has a clear majority of votes on the first count, a series of runoffs are conducted, using each voter's preferences indicated on the ballot. The candidate who received the fewest

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New START Treaty Ratified by U.S. and Russia

Washington, DC - On December 22, 2010, during the lame duck session, the Senate ratified the New Strategic Arms Reduction Treaty with Russia by a vote of 71 to 26. Maine Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins voted with the majority. The Constitution requires the votes of two-thirds of Senators present to ratify a treaty.

U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitri

Medvedev signed the New START Treaty in Prague on April 8, 2010. By the Treaty's terms, each nation must reduce its number of deployed strategic warheads from 2,200 to 1,550 on no more than 700 launchers (airplanes, missiles or submarines) by 2017. The Treaty has verification provisions that permit inspectors from each nation to count the number of warheads on each launcher.

Henry A. Kissinger, George P. Schultz, James A. Baker III, Lawrence S. Eagleburger and Colin L. Powell, Secretaries of State for the past five Republican presidents, endorsed the Treaty.

The Russian Federation Council, or the upper house of parliament, unanimously ratified the Treaty on January 26. It will now enter into force during a ceremony in Munich on February 5.

What's Happening at Home?



Bath, ME - **RSU 1** Superintendent William Shuttleworth has announced that he is resigning effective June 30. The School Board is searching for his replacement.

On February 2, the Legislature's Committee on State and Local Government delayed a hearing on a bill, LD 69, to resolve a boundary dispute involving clam flats along Route 123 claimed by the Town of **Harpwell** from the Town of **Brunswick**. The dispute was previously settled by the Towns in 1998.

The hearing will be followed by a workshop at a later date. Two years ago, the Committee voted 10 to 3 not to endorse a similar bill.

On February 1, **Harpwell** voters decided by a margin of 834 to 753 to close the West Harpswell School. If the voters had decided to keep the school open, the Town would have been obligated to pay **SAD 75** in excess of \$190,000 in additional annual operating costs.

The annual **Harpwell** Town Meeting is scheduled to take place on Saturday, March 12, at 10:00 a.m. at the Harpswell Islands School on Route 24. The polls are open from 9:00 a.m. until 5:00 p.m.

Incumbent Mark Wallace has decided not to run for re-election to the Board of Selectmen. Richard Daniel and Alison Hawkes have submitted enough signatures to the Town Clerk to earn places on the ballot.

Incumbent David Johnson has decided not to run for re-election to the **SAD 75** Board of Directors. Debora Levensailor, incumbent Jane Meisenbach and Kay Ogradnik are running for the two positions available.

On January 19, following a public meeting, the **Topsham** Board of Selectmen unanimously upheld the dismissal of Assistant Town Manager Paul Caruso, who was accused of harassing and assaulting a Town employee.

The Board of Selectmen hired Cornell Knight as Town Man-

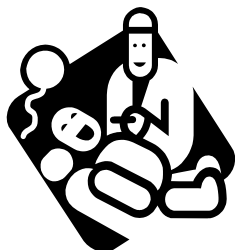
ager beginning on February 1 to replace Jim Ashe, who retired at the end of December. Knight was previously Town Manager in Winthrop.

A special **Topsham** Town Meeting is scheduled to take place on Wednesday, February 16, at 7:00 p.m. at Mt. Ararat High School. On the agenda are ordinances concerning medical marijuana dispensaries and Property Assessed Clean Energy.

The Board of Selectmen decided not to add an agenda item concerning a proposed settlement of a lawsuit between the Town and Mariner Tower. At a January 20 public hearing, attendees made it clear that they were not interested in a settlement involving the erection of a 75-foot cell phone tower camouflaged as a pine tree and a contribution of \$10,000 toward attorney's fees.

SAD 75 Superintendent Michael Wilhelm has announced that he is resigning effective June 30. The School Board is searching for a replacement.

House Repeals Affordable Care Act



Washington, DC - On January 19, the House of Representatives repealed the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act of 2009 by a margin of 245 to 189. A similar effort to repeal the Act in the Senate

failed by a margin of 47 to 51, with all Democrats voting No.

The real reason for concern about the Act is the series of lawsuits challenging the individual insurance mandate.

Federal courts in the Eastern

District of Michigan and the Western District of Virginia have found the Act constitutional while courts in the Eastern District of Virginia and the Northern District of Florida have found it unconstitutional.

House Repeals Public Financing

Washington, DC - On January 26, the House of Representatives voted by a margin of 239 to 160 - mostly on party lines - to repeal public funding for presidential campaigns. Senator Mitch McConnell of Kentucky has introduced a similar bill in the Senate, but it is unlikely to reach the floor anytime soon.

The presidential public financing system was put in place during the 1970s following the Watergate scandal surrounding President Richard Nixon's 1972 re-election campaign. Under the system, candidates of major parties receive grants to cover the entire costs of

their general election campaigns provided they do not raise any private funds.

Since 1976, every Democratic and Republican nominee except one has participated in the system. The one notable exception was then-Senator Barack Obama in 2008. He raised \$745 million in private funds while Senator John McCain financed his campaign with \$84 million in public funds.

Pointing to the lack of hearings or other committee action on the legislation, Elisabeth MacNamara, president of the League of Women Voters of the United States, said, "The

rush to the floor, without following the normal procedures of the House, is deeply disturbing. The American people deserve better than this."

The League also called attention to the relatively small cost of the system for both the primary and general elections for president. "Certainly, the elimination of the system cannot be seen as a meaningful reduction in federal spending or the debt," according to MacNamara.

She stated, "The system has substantially reduced corruption and the appearance of corruption in the executive branch since 1976."



IRV Consensus Meeting on February 26

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first place choices is eliminated.

All ballots are then re-tabulated, with each ballot counting as one vote for each voter's highest ranked candidate who has not been eliminated. Specifically, voters who chose the now-eliminated candidate will now have their ballots counted for their second ranked candidate -- just as if they were voting in a traditional two-round runoff election -- but all other voters get to continue supporting their top candidate. The weakest candidates are successively eliminated and their voters' ballots are redistributed to

next choices until a candidate receives a majority of votes.

In addition to Brunswick, Mr. Bouricius will be speaking in Portland on the afternoon of Friday, February 4, at 4:30 and in Ellsworth on the afternoon of Saturday, February 5, at 2:00. Following Mr. Bouricius's presentations, Leagues in those three communities will be meeting to discuss the relative merits of IRV and to decide whether or not to endorse it.

The IRV consensus meeting in Brunswick will take place on **Saturday, February 26, at 10:00 a.m.** in the Seminar Room on the 2nd Floor of **Curtis Memorial Library.**

The League of Women Voters of Maine has already mailed a written explanation of IRV, including a discussion of its pros and cons, to all members. In addition to the explanation, members received a questionnaire and a ballot.

The ballot asks members three questions as follows: if they support election systems in single seat elections that require the winner to receive a majority of the votes through IRV; if they support the continued use of the plurality voting system in elections where IRV is not used; and if they support the right of local governments to choose IRV for their own single seat elections.





League of Women Voters of Brunswick
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Please deliver to:

*The League of Women Voters is where
hands-on work to safeguard democracy
leads to civic improvement.*

Send your current email address to
lwvba@gwi.net.

Congress Repeals “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell”

Washington, DC - On December 18, 2010, the Senate repealed “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” by a margin of 65 to 31. Eight Republicans joined 55 Democrats and two Independents in allowing gays and lesbians to serve in the military. The bill was co-sponsored by Maine Senator Susan Collins and Connecticut Senator Joe Lieberman.

Three days earlier, the House of Representatives repealed the policy by a margin of 250 to 175. The lame duck session might have been the last opportunity for the House to do so because the Republicans

took control of that body on January 6.

President Obama signed the new law on December 22, 2010. “No longer will tens of thousands of Americans in uniform be asked to live a lie, or look over their shoulder in order to serve the country that they love,” Obama said.

The policy was first adopted as a compromise measure in 1993 during the Clinton Administration. More than 13,000 soldiers have been discharged under the policy.

Before the vote took place, the Pentagon released an exten-

sive study that it had conducted about gays and lesbians in the military. The report found that allowing these troops to serve openly would pose a “low risk” of disruption.

Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates and Admiral Mike Mullen, chair of the Joint Chiefs, endorsed the repeal. Marine Corps Commandant General James Amos testified that marines were against repealing the ban.

The new law did not take effect immediately. A 60-day waiting period is still in place.

