



A LETTER FROM ANNA

Executive Director,
League of Women
Voters of Maine

Voting is an act of hope.

Hope doesn't always come easily to me these days. We are having a national election in the midst of the worst public health crisis of our lifetimes, recession, climate crisis, and increasing political violence. More than ever, we can see how our institutions, by design and by neglect, fail to represent many of us and our fellow citizens.

But, imperfect as our current system is, the vote is powerful. Only we can fix our democracy. Let's embrace hope by turning out in overwhelming numbers. Let's help each other overcome barriers to access. Let's shatter all records. Let's demand that all votes are counted, and that the results are respected.

The next administration and Congress will have the opportunity to tackle long-delayed reforms, from voting rights to the abolition of the Electoral College, from redistricting reform to bringing a system of public funding to federal offices. In Maine, the next legislature could vote to join the National Popular Vote Compact, implement online voter registration, and ban

corporate contributions to candidates and their political action committees. You can learn about all of the races on your ballot — including the local elections where you are much more likely to cast the deciding vote — at **Vote411.org**.

More than ever, I have an appreciation for the thousands of interlocking parts that go into making a national election work. We've been talking to hundreds of Maine town clerks and poll workers, local candidates and campaign staff, and the message is clear: have a plan for how you are going to vote and don't wait until the last minute!

We are lucky in Maine to have some of the best voting laws in the country and dedicated public servants to carry them out. Nonetheless, we must be vigilant against any problem that could turn away a voter or undermine the count. As you'll read in this newsletter, the League is fielding teams of election observers to ensure that no matter who you are or where you vote, your rights are upheld.

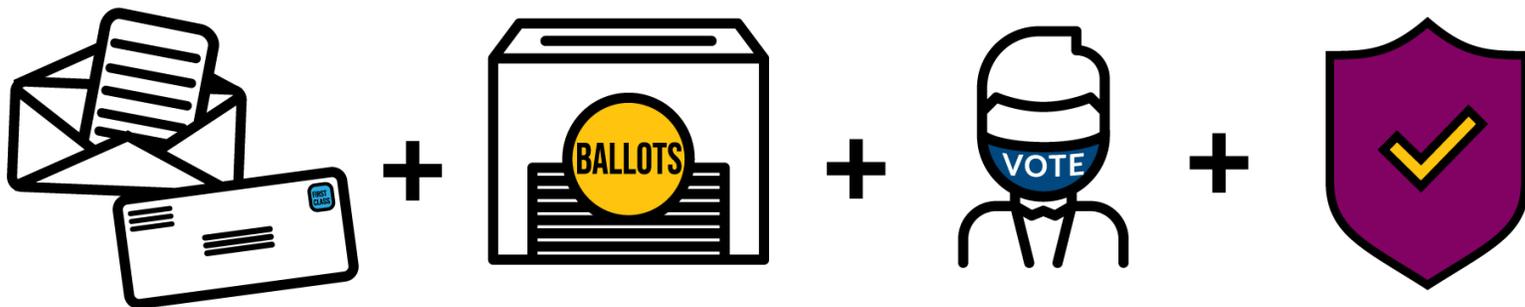
I'll be casting my vote by absentee ballot this year to support public health. I'm voting with hope for the future of our country and state — and with the determination to keep pushing whoever is elected to make our democracy better.

Anna Kellar

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ELECTION PROTECTION

By Sadie Faucher

This year, Democracy Maine, a partnership of the League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME) and Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE), has launched a new program for the upcoming election.

Our robust Election Protection Program covers all aspects of ensuring that every voter in Maine has safe, secure, and accessible access to the ballot. Voting has changed a bit this year because of the pandemic. This program is focusing on two key areas: Election Observation and Poll Worker Recruitment.

Our Election Observation Program is actively working to recruit and train volunteers across the state to help with several facets of our program: Adopt a Town Clerk, Election Observers, and Dropbox Observation.

- Our Adopt a Town Clerk Program is in full swing, reaching out to every town clerk across the state to ensure we help them meet needs for poll workers, compile accurate polling location information (dates and times), and build lasting relationships with our local election officials.
- We will be sending out Election Observers for key municipalities across the state to observe the quality of the Election Day experience for people voting in person.
- Dropbox Observers will be visiting and photographing drop boxes in each municipality to ensure we have accurate information about the location and security of each dropbox.

We are actively recruiting leaders from across the state to become the point person for their county

for the Election Observation Program.

Maine, like many other states, is facing a historic shortage of poll workers in every region because of the ongoing pandemic. This year, we have partnered with Power to the Polls to help recruit people to fill these needs in each municipality. Governor Janet Mills issued an Executive Order on August 27th, 2020, that allows poll workers to work in abutting counties from where they live, if there is a need. In partnership with our Adopt a Town Clerk Program, we are assessing the shortfall in poll workers to ensure that every municipality will have enough staff to safely and securely run our elections.

Sign up to serve as a poll worker in your community or volunteer with the League. This election, it is imperative that we do all we can to ensure that our votes are protected and counted. The one thing that all of us can do is vote early and encourage every person in our lives to register to vote, request their absentee ballot, and vote.

If this program sounds like something you would be interested in, please contact me at sadie@democracymaine.org. We are running trainings for all of these programs. Come and join us.

VOTER HOTLINE

We've launched a new **Voter Hotline** that voters can use to ask questions and receive quick answers. Voters can reach us at:

📞 **207-558-3333**

✉️ **Vote@lwvme.org**

ABSENTEE VOTING Q&A

By Will Hayward

How can I request my absentee ballot?

Go to lwvme.org/absentee to learn how to request your absentee ballot online, review more information about absentee voting, and find other helpful voting-related links. You can request your absentee ballot online, in-person at your town office, by calling your town clerk, or by mailing in a printed form. The mail-in request naturally takes longer.

When will my ballot arrive?

Absentee ballots are being mailed out the first week of October. If you requested yours early and still have not received your ballot by mid-October, contact your clerk to confirm whether your ballot request was processed. Or use the new online ballot tracking tool to see where your request stands. You can check on the status of your ballot here bit.ly/MaineAbsenteeTracker

I've already requested my absentee ballot. Why do I keep getting request forms mailed to me?

Political parties and some other advocacy groups have been mailing unsolicited absentee ballot request forms to voters throughout the state. If you have already submitted a ballot request, you do not need to submit another request.

What if I change my mind and want to vote in-person?

You can request an absentee ballot, but then decide to vote in-person instead. If you do not return the absentee ballot, you can still vote in person. However, once the ballot is received back at the town office, it is considered a cast ballot.

How many stamps do I put on the return envelope once I am ready to mail back my ballot?

One or two ballot pages will require one first-class stamp. More than two ballot pages will require extra postage. The number of pages will vary by town. Generally speaking, two stamps should get the job done.

What if I don't want to send a ballot through the mail?

You can vote absentee in-person at your town clerk's office during business hours until October 30. Alternatively, many towns will provide dropboxes for absentee ballots at the town office where you can return your ballot. Make sure you only return a ballot to your own town's dropbox.

How can I confirm whether my ballot has been received?

The Secretary of State has provided an online ballot tracking system, allowing you to check whether your ballot has been received and accepted by the clerk. Check here: bit.ly/MaineAbsenteeTracker

ABSENTEE VOTING GUIDE

Visit lwvme.org/Absentee for more information.

Step 1:

Request your ballot.



By phone



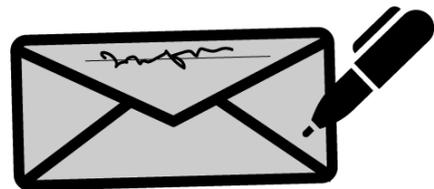
Online



In-person

Step 2:

Complete your ballot. Don't forget to sign the back of the envelope!



By mail



At a dropbox



In-person

Step 3:

Return your ballot.

NEIGHBOR TO NEIGHBOR

By Anita Verna Crofts

On the 16th and 17th of September, I volunteered with the League of Women Voters in Kittery, South Berwick, North Berwick, Wells, Kennebunk, and Biddeford registering residents to vote through the Neighbor to Neighbor initiative. This effort is a partnership with the Immigrant Welcome Center of Greater Portland (IWC) and Avesta Housing, that provided access and encouragement to canvass at their properties to register residents and assist them with absentee ballot requests. All Avesta property residents in these units were sent a letter by management in advance detailing our arrival and expressing support for our work.

We were met the first day in Kittery by LWVME Program Director Lado Ladoka, who outlined clear guidelines for COVID-19 protocols, which included masks with the word VOTE across the front and hand sanitizer for all. Soon we had our clipboards and fanned out on a beautiful autumn day, moving from townhouse to townhouse with purpose.

On the first day I was paired with Ekhlash Ahmed of the IWC, as it was her first time canvassing. She was our good luck charm as we registered new voters at the first two doors we knocked! Both residents were appreciative of our help in stepping them through the process, including

how to fill out and mail in the absentee ballot request form.

Each day our group was accompanied by an Avesta property manager, who led the caravan of cars from property to property, and then oriented us to each new building, making sure we had access if we needed to go indoors (many of the properties were outdoor townhomes), and troubleshooting where needed. Both property managers with whom we worked were deeply appreciative of our time and championed our efforts with their enthusiasm.

While it is easier and perhaps more efficient to use phonebanking during the pandemic, there are members of our community that need in-person support to register to vote. They may have mobility issues, or language barriers, or their compromised immune systems mean they must remain at home. Avesta properties are home to many people who want to vote but need volunteer support to make it possible. Going door-to-door allowed me to play a small — but crucial — role in working toward a more just and inclusive democracy.

Join Neighbor to Neighbor every Wednesday and Thursday from 10-2 PM between now and Nov 3: lwwme.org/Events.



Neighbor to Neighbor volunteers canvassing in September. This project is designed to increase voter engagement and participation in our political process by canvassing neighborhoods with low voter participation.

RANKED CHOICE VOTING IN THE 2020 ELECTION

By John Brautigam

Since its first use in June 2018, Maine voters have grown accustomed to Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) and appreciate how it empowers them to express their choice. But it isn't always easy to keep track of the races where it will be used.

As things currently stand, this fall there will be four races in Maine where Ranked Choice Voting will be used. First, in addition to the two presidential candidates receiving most of the attention, there are three others on the ballot, which means that RCV will be used to decide the outcome. Voters will be able to rank them all if they so choose. There is also the opportunity to write in the name of a candidate, though the state will only tabulate the votes of pre-registered write-in candidates.

Second, the United States Senate race will have four candidates on the ballot, and the ballot will allow voters to rank their preferences instead of just choosing one.

Third, both Congressional races will use

CORPORATE CONTRIBUTIONS

By John Brautigam

Our democracy is founded on the principle of government of the people, by the people, and for the people, and the corollary of "one person, one vote."

Those core values are threatened when too much money from vested interests floods into our political system. Corporations, with their power to accumulate large amounts of money through their business activities, can come between our elected government and the people it serves.

Corporate campaign contributions can create the appearance of obligation on the part of the recipient to the business or organization making the gift. This can erode confidence in our democracy.

The federal government has banned corporate contributions to candidates since the Tillman Act 113 years ago. Approximately 22 states currently ban corporate and labor contributions to candidates in state races. Last year the U.S. Supreme Court had a chance to review the lawfulness of these bans but opted not to

Ranked Choice Voting. In addition to the major party candidates listed on the ballot, write-in candidates have registered for each race, requiring the state to use Ranked Choice Voting.

Note that Ranked Choice Voting is not in use for the 186 legislative general election contests.

Opponents of Ranked Choice Voting attempted to place a people's veto on the ballot to undo the use of RCV in the presidential election, but their effort fell short according to a ruling by the Secretary of State. That ruling is still subject to further court rulings, but since ballots are already being printed, it is unclear whether any additional changes can be implemented in this election cycle. There is still an outside possibility that things could change and that a court could decide that RCV cannot be used in the presidential election. We will let you know if the status of changes.

Learn more about RCV at lwwme.org/RCV.

consider the case and to leave the current state of the law intact.

Corporations often have business with large financial implications before state policymakers. For many, the interest can be very high-stakes: a pharmaceutical company may be unhappy with state regulation of drug prices, a petroleum company may be taking a stand on a climate change measure, or a health insurance interest may contest a bill governing the market for health care. Even in a small state like Maine, millions of dollars of corporate activity and profit may ride on the decisions of Maine policymakers. To protect their shareholders' bottom line, many will go to significant lengths to improve their odds of a favorable outcome. That includes playing in the world of campaign contributions.

The debate over campaign contributions will also serve as a valuable reminder that we the people are in the driver's seat, and that each of us has the privilege and responsibility of making decisions that affect us all. Stay tuned, and join in this important effort.



IT'S TIME FOR THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE

By Lori Calderone

Over 700 proposals to amend the Electoral College have been heard in Congress since 1803, more than any other constitutional provision. All but one failed. The founders intended that the 1st place winner would become president, and the runner up vice president. However, the 12th amendment, ratified in 1804, changed that.

Both political parties have supported changes to the Electoral College over the years when it suited their respective political interests — both parties have adopted pro and con positions, depending upon the proposal. The weight of party politics and the driving force to maintain political power has proved an unmovable boulder when it comes to correcting the undemocratic aspects of our presidential election process.

It's up to the people of the United States to make the change that makes every vote equal, and to ensure that the candidate who wins the most votes across the 50 states and DC wins the presidency. The National Popular Vote (NPV) bill will bring about that change.

NPV will be reintroduced in the next Maine legislative session. It corrects key Electoral College defects without changing the constitution or the Electoral College. NPV goes into effect when states representing a total of 270 Electoral College votes sign on; states with 196 votes already have. NPV is just 74 votes away from

enactment. With NPV:

- Every vote in every state in every presidential election will be equal.
- The candidate who wins the most votes across the 50 states and DC will win the presidency; no more second place winners.
- Candidates will have a reason to campaign for every vote in every state, not just for votes in swing states, as they do now.
- Voter turnout will increase. Battleground state turnout is consistently 9-11% higher than in the 40 or so spectator states. One hundred million Americans didn't vote in 2016. The #1 reason given for not voting is that their vote doesn't matter.

Across Maine this year and next, we'll be educating Mainers on how NPV works, and how the current approach muffles the votes of Mainers and millions of Americans.

We need you. We'll be training member volunteers this year so you'll feel comfortable talking with your legislators, neighbors, and friends; writing letters to the editor or giving NPV presentations to community groups in your area. For more information, and to volunteer, go to lwvme.org/NPV. Let's make sure the people pick the president!

NPV Pop Quiz

Test your knowledge of the National Popular Vote and the Electoral College. Answers on page 7.

1. Big cities, such as Los Angeles, would control a nationwide popular vote for President?
2. Maine, with only 4 electoral votes, would be disadvantaged by the National Popular Vote?

3. National Popular Vote increases turnout?
4. The Electoral College would be abolished by the National Popular Vote compact?



Ava at a Black Lives Matter protest.

Read more about our Centennial here:
100years.lwvme.org.

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: AVA

Jen Lancaster

We first met Ava back in February during the League of Women Voters of Maine’s Advocacy Day. It was a cold day with a foot of snow on the ground. Ava traveled from Camden all the way to Augusta. We had asked her to participate in our voter engagement panel at the Blaine House, where she was joined by other activists, including Carrie LeVan and Pious Ali. Ava’s perspective was unlike anyone else’s on the panel.

Ava is a young Latina woman, fighting on the forefront of major socio-political movements. She is the epitome of Generation Z, born right out of the Great Recession. Generation Z grew up with technology at their fingertips and is more diverse than any generation.

During our Advocacy Day, Ava spoke about the power of a collective voice and the necessity of involving teens and college students in major political decisions and movements. Her generation has a voice, and they choose to use it. But together, with the strength and talent of all of us, of every generation, anything can happen.

Ava is also a member of our freshly launched Youth Council. The council is open to high school students, and we are looking for members to join. Learn more at lwvme.org/GOTV.

LET’S BREAK RECORDS

This year is shaping up to be a critical one for the League of Women Voters of Maine. All year long, we have celebrated the history of the organization, its Centennial birthday, and have lobbied and fought for protective measures in an unusual election season.

Each day League volunteers, members, and staff work to protect the rights of voters. We meet with coalition partners, stay in touch with town clerks, analyze data on absentee voting ballot requests that is posted by the Maine Secretary of State, host weekly webinars on timely and crucial topics, canvass and register voters, host candidate forums, publish and distribute our staple Easy-to-Read Voter Guide, and so much more.

This work gets done through the tireless efforts of our League community. And we are on track to have more members than ever before.

Will you help us break our record? We do not want the cost of dues to be a barrier to membership. Anyone can be a League member, and with the “Pay As You Can” option, you can create the monthly or annual rate that works best for you. New members will receive a 100% cotton, reusable VOTE mask. Learn more here:

lwvme.org/Member.



New members will receive a 100% cotton, reusable mask.



ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED **VOTE 411**

SCAN ME TO VISIT VOTE411.ORG



This is it: the big one. Our next election is **Tuesday, November 3rd**. Residents across Maine are receiving their Absentee Ballots or making plans to vote in-person in November. As usual, we are uploading candidate and ballot information to **Vote411.org**, available in English and Spanish. We encourage you to look up your personalized voter information on Vote411.

On **Vote411.org**, you can:

- + See What's On Your Ballot
- + Check Your Voter Registration
- + Find Your Polling Place
- + Discover Upcoming Debates In Your Area
- + And Much More!

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