



A LETTER FROM ANNA

Executive Director,
League of Women
Voters of Maine

They call it an off-year, but we know better: there are no unimportant elections.

This November, Mainers will vote on three statewide ballot questions, Augusta voters have a special State Representative election, and communities around the state will hold municipal elections. It's in these local elections where each vote has the greatest power, and where so many decisions that impact our daily lives are made. And yet, those elections tend to get the least attention from voters and the media.

We're proud that this year, thanks to a dedicated core of volunteers and the coordination of our local Leagues, **Vote411.org** is covering over 300 races in more than 25 municipalities. In 2022, we have the big goal of covering every community in the state — and we'll need a lot more folks helping us to do it.

In this newsletter, you'll find updates on redistricting, the Understanding Dawnland Today series, links to our 2021 legislative scorecard, and lots more. While we deal with the anxieties and exhaustion of life under an ongoing pandemic, I am so inspired by the myriad of ways the League community is learning, connecting, and advocating for change. Thank you for your persistence, your creativity, and your care for one another and our democracy!

Anna Kellar

THREE HEADS ARE BETTER THAN ONE

Welcoming Maine Students Vote to the Democracy Maine family

By Evan Murray

This fall, after a year of collaboration as part of our Voter Engagement Team, we're incredibly pleased to announce that Maine Students Vote (MSV) has joined Democracy Maine as our third partner organization. Maine Students Vote, founded in 2014, works to engage college students in democracy both directly and by supporting institutional change. Campus fellowships, voting challenges, and support for faculty with a passion for voting initiatives — MSV takes a multifaceted approach to student engagement.

This pairs well with the League's increasing focus on youth engagement, and by combining the Maine Students Vote approach with League of Women Voters expertise, we could develop a comprehensive suite of services to offer to both colleges and high schools. If schools want a guest speaker, voter registration table, packaged curriculum, or support creating civic engagement programming, they can come to us. Our longtime Youth Engagement Project volunteers are coordinating outreach to schools across the state at this very moment.

By expanding the mission of Maine Students Vote to include high school students as well as college, we're creating an opportunity to support young people's democratic engagement seamlessly as they enter adulthood. We know that the earlier people vote, the better for their lifelong engagement, and that more chances to touch people's lives gives us more opportunities to inspire them to participate in our democracy. We can work toward a future in which every young person in Maine is actively encouraged not only to vote, but to become an engaged and empowered citizen. Visit: lwwme.org/YoungVoters

INSIDE:

The 411 on Elections	pg. 2	Legislative Session Recap	pg. 5
Who's Collecting Signatures?	pg. 3	Volunteer Spotlight	pg. 6
Charter Commission Update	pg. 4	Local Leagues + Updates	pg. 7
Redistricting Update	pg. 5	Understanding Dawnland Today	pg. 7



ELECTIONS 2021

THE 411 ON NOVEMBER'S ELECTION

When you go to vote — if you wait to vote in person on Election Day instead of voting absentee by mail, dropbox, or in person — you might see a League observer. We'll be checking up on polling locations across the state. As far as your ballot, you'll definitely see three statewide initiatives.

Question One would ban the construction of high-impact transmission lines in upper Kennebec and require a two-thirds vote of the legislature to approve similar projects in the future. This issue is highly contentious, and both supporters and opponents have poured money into advertising.

Question Two, by contrast, is a straightforward transportation infrastructure bond, asking voters to approve a \$100,000,000 bond issue to be matched by an estimated \$253,000,000 in federal funds. And **Question Three** asks voters to approve a constitutional amendment asserting that all people have the right to produce and harvest food for their own nourishment and sustenance.

As for what else might be on your ballot — dozens of dedicated League volunteers have been unearthing local election information to publish at **Vote411.org**. As a result, we don't just know about Westbrook's Ranked Choice Voting amendment and Lewiston's mayoral race, we know that Rockland is possibly changing how they elect public officials, Bangor is trying to provide accessible absentee ballots, Bar Harbor is debating whether to regulate short-term rentals, and Dover-Foxcroft is considering allowing recreational cannabis establishments. House District 86 has a special election to fill their vacant House seat, and Franklin county is voting on restructuring their county commission.

Wherever you are, there's a good chance your personalized ballot at **Vote411.org** will show you what you'll be voting on this year. We've covered more towns than ever before, and there's a lot going on around Maine!

RANKED CHOICE VOTING COULD BECOME A REALITY IN WESTBROOK

By Heather Kenyon

On November 2, residents of the City of Westbrook will see a referendum question on their local ballot asking if they want to amend the City Charter in order to implement Ranked Choice Voting (RCV) for Mayoral, City Council, and School Committee races. The ballot measure comes after a Westbrook citizen contacted her City Councilor in early 2020 and asked why RCV wasn't being used at the local level, especially after it had passed at the state level. She then organized a petition drive by setting up a table at the polls during the presidential primary, where more than 700 signatures were collected from supportive voters. Afterwards, she mobilized a small group of people in the community, including some League members, to write and call their city councilors and to show up at council meetings to speak in support of RCV. Westbrook's City

Clerk Angela Holmes had conducted thorough research and consulted with a number of people in preparation for council meetings and offered valuable insight into the process. Among the concerns of some city councilors were cost and confusion, but ultimately the council voted 5-0 to put the proposed charter amendment on the November 2 ballot.

Holmes anticipates that the transition to RCV at the municipal level would occur fairly effortlessly, given that it is used already for state level primary elections and federal general elections. If the measure passes, Westbrook will be the second city in Maine to use RCV for local elections, after Portland. When it comes to defending democracy, implementing RCV in Westbrook would be a step in the right direction.

We're the experts on elections. And we're here to help.

Helpful links:

lwvme.org/Elections
lwvme.org/VoteInMaine
lwvme.org/RCVhelp

Information is also available in these languages:

عربي | español | français | português | soomaali

WHO'S COLLECTING SIGNATURES?

If you vote in person at your polling place this November, you are likely to see one or more groups collecting signatures for citizen initiatives and informal petitions. Signing a petition, or choosing not to sign, is another important decision for citizens in our democracy. Here are some of the issues you might encounter:

[1] Citizen Initiative: "Resolve, Directing the Development of Legislation Establishing a Publicly Funded System of Health Care Coverage for All Maine Residents."

This directs (non-binding) the legislature to create a bill that ensures comprehensive, publicly funded, and privately delivered healthcare coverage for every Maine citizen. Learn more at: MaineHealthCareAction.org.

[2] Citizen Initiative To Eliminate Foreign Government Influence in Maine Elections.

This initiative will prohibit donations and disbursements by foreign governments, foreign government-owned entities, and foreign government-influenced entities in ballot measures and candidate campaigns. This evolved from a bill that we supported, which narrowly failed to override the Governor's veto last spring. It also includes a resolve directing our elected leaders to support a federal Constitutional Amendment that would reign in money in politics. Learn more at: www.facebook.com/ProtectMaineElections.

[3] Citizen Initiative: "An Act to Create the Pine Tree Power Company, A Non Profit Utility, to Deliver Lower Rates, Reliability and Local Control for Maine Energy Independence."

This initiative, based on a bill that was vetoed by the Governor last spring, would create a not-for-profit electric utility (Pine Tree Power) for those parts of Maine now served by Central Maine Power and Versant. Learn more at: OurPowerMaine.org.

[4] Citizen Initiative to Curtail Borrowing.

The referendum by opponents of Pine Tree Power would require voter approval for any quasi-government entity, including a consumer-owned utility, to take on \$1 billion or more in debt.

[5] Citizen Initiative: "An Act To Limit the Governor's Emergency Authority and Require Approval by a Two-thirds Vote of the Legislature To Extend a State of Emergency."

This bill limits the Governor's emergency authority to compel action from private citizens after the filing of an emergency proclamation. Learn more at: FreeMainePac.com.

[6] Citizen Initiative: "An Act To Create a Voter Identification System."

This initiative is based on legislation that was defeated (and opposed by LWVME) during the last legislative session. Maine's elections are secure, and voter ID requirements create a barrier for eligible voters.

[7] Affidavit.

You might see people promoting versions of the "Big Lie" that the 2020 election was not fairly conducted. Do not sign any petitions misusing terms like "forensic audit." Election security is important, but there's a difference between real election security and the sham ballot reviews being promoted by some partisan factions to discredit legitimate election results.

CHARTER COMMISSION + PUBLIC FUNDING

What's happening in Portland?

By John Brautigam

The Portland Charter Commission is over three months into its term and continues to study a variety of issues, including small donor campaign financing for Portland mayoral, city council, and school board races.

Over the summer, the Charter Commission established ad hoc committees on Education, Governance, Elections, Departments and Procedures. Each committee meets periodically, typically twice per month.

The Elections Committee is where much of the action has taken place in the first phase of the Commission's existence. The Committee, consisting of Catherine Buxton, Marpheen Chann, and Patricia Washburn, elected Chann to be Chair. It held a public hearing on July 28, where several members of the public urged the Committee to support a strong public funding recommendation for consideration by the voters.

In September, the ad hoc Committee held a detailed briefing providing information on municipal public funding programs around the country. Experts described the "small-donor match" system that has operated in New York City for several election cycles, as well as the new "voucher" program implemented for the City of Seattle in the most recent election. Anna Kellar presented on behalf of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections, describing Maine's 20-year old model of public financing. Fair Elections Portland also delivered a webinar with extensive background information for the benefit of the Committee members and the general public.

The Committee has also heard detailed presentations from the Commission on Governmental Ethics and Election Practices, the agency charged with administering the Maine Clean Election Act public funding system for state legislative and gubernatorial candidates.

It is not yet clear which model the ad hoc Elections Committee will recommend, but it does appear that the members are likely to suggest a specific approach to the full Commission by the January deadline applied to the ad hoc Committees. The recommendation could include one of the systems described above, or a hybrid using elements of more than one of these models.



ABOVE | New residents registering to vote ahead of the June 8, 2021 election, when Portlanders voted in the slate of new commissioners.

The consideration of small donor financing options will likely be coordinated with other issues coming before the Charter Commission. For example, on October 5, 2021 the ad hoc Elections Committee held a workshop on Ranked Choice Voting options. Also, the full Charter Commission may undertake to restructure the elected positions of mayor and city council member, which may have implications for the type of small donor financing system most appropriate for the city and the cost of that system.

The ad hoc Committee continues to gather information, and public comment is welcomed both at the Committee and at the level of the Charter Commission itself. Notice of public comment opportunities will be provided to the public, and LWVME will alert our members.

The ad hoc Elections Committee meets the first and third Tuesday monthly, at 7:00 PM.

The Portland Area is working to keep Portland residents informed about the progress and decisions of the Charter Commission. Follow for key updates: lwwme.org/CharterCommission

NEW REDISTRICTING MAPS SIGNED INTO LAW

By Will Hayward

In a fast and furious scramble, Maine's redistricting process has already come and gone. Following the release of the U.S. Census data on August 12, Maine's bipartisan Apportionment Commission worked for six weeks to draw new maps to complete Maine's once per decade redistricting process. Redistricting ensures that Mainers will have more equitable representation in elected offices for the next decade by shifting district lines to reflect new population changes.

On September 27, new district maps for the U.S. Congress, State Senate, State House, and County Commissions were passed almost unanimously by the Maine Legislature and signed into law by the Governor. With their passage, Maine became the second state in the nation to complete its redistricting process.

There are pieces to celebrate in Maine's redistricting process. By agreeing to a bipartisan compromise map, Maine's Apportionment Commission guaranteed that Maine will not be gerrymandered and that elections will produce results that generally reflect the political balance of the state.

However, the League also observed several things to improve about Maine's redistricting process. Opportunities for public input were very limited. The public had less than 72 hours to comment on the proposed State House map and had no chance to comment on the proposed bipartisan State Senate map. This meant that communities had little chance to weigh in on the final maps and suggest changes. Also, because Maine's process is a bipartisan (not nonpartisan) process, one of the priorities appeared to be protecting incumbent elected officials from competitive elections. While this can be necessary for a bipartisan deal, it is not a priority that serves the public interest. The League will continue to advocate for more public access and map drawing that serves the public for future redistricting cycles.

Mainers should be proud that our redistricting process does not result in gerrymandering, we but should also ask how the process can better serve the public interest.

Learn more: lwwme.org/Redistricting.

2021 LEGISLATIVE SESSION RECAP

It's been a successful year, and we're already gearing up for the second half (2022) of the 130th session. Here are the results of our priority bills:

- ✓ **Corporate contribution ban (LD 1417):** Signed into law! Prohibits corporations from donating to campaigns, leadership PACs, and caucus PACs.
- ⊗ **National Popular Vote (LDs 1330 and 1384):** Officially dead. Over the past few years, we've had countless conversations with supportive lawmakers and Mainers all over the state who want to ensure that every vote is equal. We'll continue to build momentum around NPV.
- ✓ **Online voter registration (LD 1126):** Signed into law! OVR will allow residents to securely and conveniently register to vote, and update their personal information, over the internet.
- ✓ **Audits and election transparency (LD 1155):** Carried over into the second session and on track to be passed and funded in 2022.

2021 LEGISLATIVE SCORECARD

See how your legislators rank among our priority issues.

*The information on this scorecard does not constitute endorsement of any individual legislator.

lwwme.org/Scorecard2021



- ✓ **Semi-open primaries (LD 231):** Carried over into the second session and expected to be funded and enacted in 2022.
- ✓ **The Secretary of State's housekeeping bill (LD 1363):** Signed into law! This includes expanding drop boxes and mandating absentee ballot cure procedures.



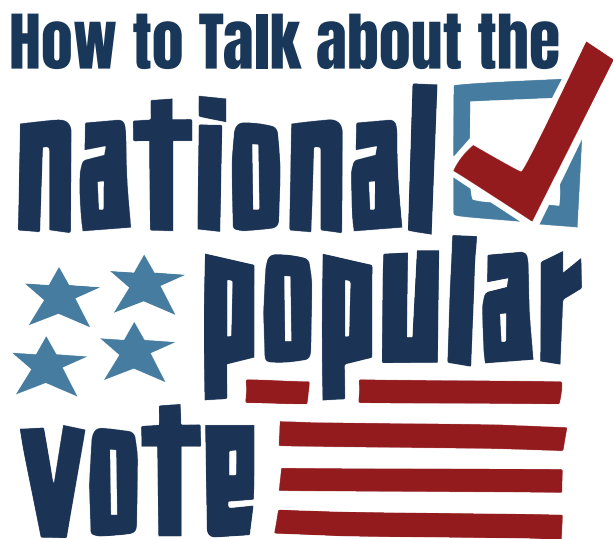
MEMBER SPOTLIGHT: MATT

LWVME Member and volunteer Matthew Schaefer is a resident of Portland and practicing attorney. Increasingly uncomfortable with the disturbing political trends of the past several years, Matthew began volunteering with the League during the 2020 election cycle. He participates on the LWVME Advocacy Committee and several other committees focused on voting rights and election issues.

As a practicing lawyer for more than 25 years, Matthew has represented clients in tax, business, and appellate matters in Maine and across the country. He is a nationally recognized practitioner of state and local tax law who has appeared before courts and administrative agencies throughout the United States. Matthew has authored 10 briefs submitted to the Supreme Court of the United States and twice appeared as co-counsel in cases coming before the high court in recent years.

Outside of his law practice and volunteer activities, Matthew enjoys traveling with wonderful wife, Sarah Compton, exploring Portland's amazing restaurant scene, and spending time with friends and family. Between them, Sarah and Matthew have four fantastic sons in their late teens and early twenties who are variously pursuing life and education in Maine and on the west coast.

Before moving to Maine in 2000, Matthew worked at a large law firm in Boston. He graduated from Swarthmore College in 1991 and obtained his law degree from Cornell Law School in 1994. Portland is now unquestionably home and the place where Matthew plans to devote his modest skills and energy to work toward a just and welcoming community.



Passionate about the National Popular Vote and looking for ways to explain it to others? Join an informative training that walks through the case for the National Popular Vote and addresses some common misconceptions on the topic.

Volunteers who attend the training are welcome to be a part of our Speakers' Bureau, which offers presentations on the National Popular Vote to community organizations as requested. Or you can opt to use what you learn to talk with friends and family about this issue!

To succeed in getting Maine to join the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, we will need to educate both our personal networks and our larger communities.

UPCOMING SESSIONS:

Thursday, November 18
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

Wednesday, December 15
5:30 PM – 7:00 PM

To register and learn more about NPV, visit: lwvme.org/NPV



YOUR LOCAL LEAGUE

BANGOR | lwwme.org/Bangor

The Bangor League recently hosted a candidate forum for the City Council and School Committee Candidate races. This chapter also regularly hosts trash pick-up days and a monthly book club.

CAPITAL AREA | lwwme.org/Augusta

The Capital Area League hosted a candidate forum for Mayor, City Councilors, and Board of Education Candidate races. Book groups are also hosted on a monthly basis.

DOWNEAST | lwwme.org/Downeast

The Downeast League hosts a monthly award winning show called the Democracy Forum. Topics dive into Maine's participatory democracy, encouraging citizens to take an active role in government and politics. Book groups are also hosted on a monthly basis.

MIDCOAST | lwwme.org/Midcoast

The Midcoast chapter meets once a month to discuss upcoming projects, volunteer opportunities, and advocacy efforts.

PISCATAQUIS | lwwme.org/Piscataquis

The Dover-Foxcroft area hosted a candidate forum for the Selectman, Assessor, and Overseer of the Poor races.

PORTLAND AREA | lwwme.org/Portland

The Portland Area league hosts a monthly meeting for new and current members. This chapter is also working to promote Ranked Choice Voting in Westbrook for the upcoming November referendum election. They're also following along and providing informative updates on the Portland Charter Commission.



BECOME A MEMBER

The League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization that has fought since 1920 to improve our government and engage our communities in the decisions that impact our lives. Become a member and pay as you can. No one will be denied if the cost of dues is a barrier to membership.

lwwme.org/member

UPCOMING EVENTS:

An Introduction to the Sovereignty Act + Discussion

Wednesday, November 17 at 6:00 PM

*Featuring the Wabanaki Alliance, with
Ambassadors Maulian Dana and Cory Hinton.*

Panel Presentation with Wabanaki Chiefs

Thursday, December 16 at 6:00 PM

*Featuring Chief Sabatis of the Houlton
Band of Maliseets, Chief Maggie Dana of the
Passamaquoddy Tribe, and Chief Kirk Francis
of the Penobscot Nation.*

To register and/or see past events,
visit: **lwwme.org/Wabanaki**

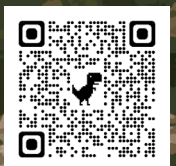
UNDERSTANDING DAWNLAND TODAY

The Wabanaki and the State of Maine

**The League of Women Voters of
Maine presents a series to promote a
better understanding of the past and
present of the Wabanaki indigenous
people.**

Our four-part series dive into difficult truths about the colonization of Maine and how understanding Dawnland today can help us become better allies of the Wabanaki tribes.

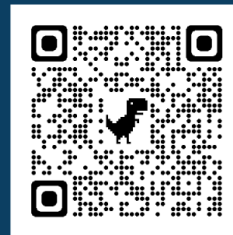
The League is a community partner of the Wabanaki Alliance, which works to support the sovereignty of the Tribes in Maine. Learn more at: **WabanakiAlliance.com**.





ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED **VOTE 411**

SCAN ME TO VISIT
VOTE411.ORG



Towns across Maine will have municipal and referendum elections on **Tuesday, November 2**. If you want to feel informed and confident when you vote, check out your personalized voting information on **Vote411.org**. It's quick and easy!

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

- + See what's on your ballot
- + Check your voter registration
- + Find your polling place
- + See where candidates stand on the issues
- + And much more!

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> **INSIDE:**

The 411 on the Nov. Election
Ranked Choice Voting in Westbrook
Redistricting + Maps Update

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