

## **LWVME Seeks Concurrence with Sister Leagues on Instant Runoff Voting and on Same-sex Marriage**

The board of the League of Women Voters of Maine has voted to seek concurrence with the Minnesota LWV in its position on Instant Runoff Voting and with the Maryland LWV in its position on Same-sex Marriage. Local Leagues in the Portland Area, Brunswick Area, and Downeast will meet over the next several months on each of these topics to review and discuss the study materials, including the pros and cons of each issue, and then to find consensus among the members.

### **How the League Achieves a Position**

League positions result from studies that are thorough in their pursuit of facts and details and that engage the general membership in a discussion of the pros and cons of the issues. Local, state and/or national Leagues can form study committees to develop original materials for their members to use in discussion. For example, the Maine League is currently doing a study on Political Action Committees, and the LWVUS is leading a study of the National Popular Vote Compact. Study committee members fashion consensus questions that are then addressed by the membership. The consensus of the members is reported to the board of the League conducting the study, and the board formulates a position based on that consensus.

It is the consensus statement -- the statement resulting from the consensus questions -- that becomes a position. Firm action or advocacy can then be taken on the particular issue addressed by the position. Without a position, action/advocacy cannot be taken.

### **Achieving a Position by Concurrence**

Leagues that wish to join with a sister League in a position may do so by concurrence without redoing the entire study from scratch. A League that wishes to concur may use the study materials and consensus questions developed by the original League, disseminate these to its members for discussion, and then take consensus and formulate a position based on the views of its own members. LWVME will use the concurrence process to seek consensus on same-sex marriage and instant runoff voting. Once local Leagues have addressed the consensus questions, the League state board will review the consensus findings, and if there is a consensus among members, the board will formulate positions.

A bill has been introduced into the Maine State Legislature this session by State Senator Dennis Damon (D - District 28) to allow same-sex marriage in Maine. Legislation has been introduced in past sessions in support of instant runoff voting, and similar legislation is expected this session. LWVME will not take a position one way or another on either bill unless there is a consensus among members.

*- Ann Luther, Downeast League*

### **League of Women Voters of Maryland Position on Equality of Opportunity (Civil Marriage)**

**LWVMD takes action** to ensure that Maryland law does not discriminate in its recognition of all marriages/civil unions on the basis of gender or religious definitions of marriage. (2007)

**LWVMD Supports:** State sanctioned, legally recognized unions which convey rights, benefits and obligations to same-sex partners who seek such unions. Recognition of such unions and/or same-sex marriages that have been legally sanctioned in other states.

With preference for: In keeping with the principle of separation of church and state, making the basis of state recognition of all marriages/civil unions (same-sex or opposite-sex) a civil proceeding, with the additional step of marriage in accordance with religious traditions a voluntary option.

### **LWV of Minnesota Position on Alternative Voting Systems**

LWVMN supports the option to use Instant Runoff Voting to elect State or Local Officials in single seat elections. LWVMN also supports the continued use of the plurality voting system in our elections. The LWVMN Board reserves the right to decide the appropriateness of legislation proposing to replace the plurality voting system with the Instant Runoff System at the state level. LWVMN supports the right of local governments and municipalities to choose Instant Runoff Voting for their own local elections. Voters need to understand how votes in an election are tabulated and how a candidate actually wins an election. If a change in elections systems occurs, LWVMN supports adequate voter education. LWVMN does not support Approval, Borda Count, or Condorcet as alternative voting systems. (2005)