



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

The Maine Voter

Volume 27, Number 3

August 2010

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The League of Women Voters of Maine, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major political policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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Join the League Lobby Corps

The next regular session of the Maine State Legislature will convene on December 1, 2010. As we enjoy the many delights of summer in Maine, it's hard to remember how fast December 1st will come upon us. It's time to start planning for efforts of the League Lobby Corps in this next session of the 125th Legislature. The first regular session is always a busy one. Often, more than 1,500 bills are considered. During the first regular session of the 124th Legislature, the League monitored over 70 bills and testified on eleven.

The Legislative Lobby Corps is an LWVME initiative that pursues a full lobbying agenda in Augusta. Begun with the 2007 legislative calendar, the Lobby Corps is an on-going, important part of League activities. The legislative priorities are reviewed and adopted by the State Board in the fall of each year. They currently include:

- o Clean Elections & Campaign Finance Reform
- o Civil Liberties
- o Civil Rights
- o Voting Rights
- o Election Administration & Voting Methods
- o Ethics & Disclosure
- o Freedom of Information

Within these priorities, the Lobby Corps acts for the Board in developing testimony and monitoring legislation in those areas where we can make a significant impact. League members from around the state analyze relevant bills and regulations, help choose those where the League can make a real difference, apply established League positions to the issue, write testimony, attend committee and agency hearings and work sessions, review and comment upon relevant proposed administrative agency regulations, contact legislators and help publicize our work. The League's Advocacy Committee coordinates these activities.

Volunteer Opportunities: This is an all-volunteer effort so the larger our Lobby Corps team, the greater difference we can make in Augusta! Even if you have only an hour or two you can spare a month you can be a valuable member of our team! Most of this work can be done from your home or office, but we especially need people who can attend public hearings and work sessions in Augusta. If you are interested in helping out in this vital endeavor, let us know! Contact Ann Luther at ann.m.luther@gmail.com.

EYEWITNESS REPORT FROM LWVUS CONVENTION

Those of you who have never attended a League national convention may not know that it is set up similarly to a political convention. The reason to be there is to decide what national studies will be done and what issues can be added to the national League's positions; to pass resolutions calling attention to pressing national and international issues; and to address organizational issues such as electing officers and changing bylaws. Parliamentary rules are strictly followed. To carry the vote, advocacy groups need both delegate support and careful procedural maneuvering. Groups are encouraged to hold caucuses on issues, to build winning strategies, and to lobby delegates for their support. It's a fun way to learn some practical politics while meeting passionate and informed people from across the country. This year Ann Luther, Colleen Tucker and I represented Maine at the LWVUS Convention in Atlanta, GA, in June 2010.

Equality in Marriage. On our first evening, we joined with delegates from Maryland and Saratoga County, NY to advocate for concurrence at the Convention with Maryland and Maine's position on Marriage Equality. Colleen was our point person on this issue and explained our position to the assembled delegates. I'm happy to report that, by an overwhelming majority, the Convention concurred with the LWVMD & LWVME position on Marriage Equality, and it is added to the Equality of Opportunity position. The concurrence reads: "The League of Women Voters of the United States supports equal rights for all under state and federal law. LWVUS supports legislation to equalize the legal rights, obligations, and benefits available to same-gender couples with those available to heterosexual couples. LWVUS supports legislation to permit same-gender couples to marry under civil law. The League believes that the civil status of marriage is already clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage and that religious rights will be preserved."

National Popular Vote. Another important concurrence was adopted that added the following words to the third sentence to the LWVUS position on selection of the president: "We support the use of the National Popular Vote Compact as one acceptable way to achieve the goal of the direct popular vote for election of the president until the abolition of the Electoral College is accomplished."

Arms Control. The convention passed a Board Recommended concurrence to amend and update the Arms Control position. Read more about this in the next article in this newsletter, **New LWVUS Arms Control Position**.

New National Studies. The Convention approved two new studies for the next two years. One came recommended by the National Board -- the **Federal Role in Public Education**. This study would focus on the role of the federal government in education policymaking, with possible

consideration of funding, common standards and/or governance relationships among all levels of the government. The second, from the floor of the convention, is a study of **Privatization** -- the policy agenda to transfer government functions, services, and assets to the private sector.

Resolutions. The Convention delegates passed six resolutions:

- **Support safe drilling and mining for energy resources**
See the article that appears later in this Voter for the text of this resolution and more about the issue.
- **Lift the travel ban to Cuba**
- **Limit use of the filibuster**
- **Add the principle of transparency to the SARA resolution passed in 2009**
- **Advocate improved Medicare for all**
- **Response to the BP oil well disaster**
Promote federal efforts to take action and work with the U.S. coastal states and communities most directly affected. Respond creatively, efficiently and effectively to the environmental, health and economic crisis created by the oil flowing from the out of control BP oil well in the Gulf of Mexico.

There is much more to tell. Representative John Lewis addressed the Convention, as did HHS Secretary Kathleen Sibelius. A new **Climate Change Toolkit** was introduced. Check it out at www.lvv.org.

- Barbara McDade, President, LWVME

New LWVUS Arms Control Position

At its 2010 Convention, the League of Women Voters of the United States adopted an updated Arms Control position. Among other things, the updated position endorses test ban and non-proliferation treaties. It also advocates that the United States serve as a leader in negotiating arms control measures.

The LWVUS Arms Control Task Force was formed following the expiration of the SALT II Treaty on December 5, 2009. At that point, the United States and Russia were still negotiating a new agreement. U.S. President Barack Obama and Russian President Dmitri Medvedev signed the New START Treaty in Prague on April 8. 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.

The two nations' arsenals remain large enough to destroy the world many times over. President Obama has stated that the long-term goal of a world without nuclear weapons will "make the United States safer and secure."

Under the Constitution, the Treaty must now be ratified by two-thirds of the U.S. Senate. Previous weapons reduction treaties have received bipartisan support. With independent Senator Joseph Lieberman expressing his opposition, the Treaty will require a total of nine Republican votes for ratification. Maine Senators Olympia Snowe and Susan Collins have not yet publicly stated their positions on the Treaty.

One concern of Republicans is modernization of the U.S. nuclear arsenal. Another is preservation of the option for a missile defense system. The Obama Administration is walking a tightrope between the Russians, who oppose a defense system that could intercept its missiles, and the Republicans, who want a defense system that could intercept the missiles of rogue nations such as Iran or North Korea.

On May 18, the Senate Foreign Relations Committee began hearings on the New START Treaty. In her opening remarks, Secretary of State Hillary Clinton stated as follows: "The choice before us is between this treaty and no treaty governing our nuclear security relationship with Russia, between this treaty and no agreed verification mechanisms on Russia's strategic nuclear forces, between this treaty and no legal obligation for Russia to maintain its strategic nuclear forces below an agreed level."

Former Republican Secretaries of State Henry Kissinger and James Baker have testified before the Committee in favor of the Treaty.

In addition to the New START Treaty, the Obama Administration wants to put the Comprehensive Test Ban Treaty, signed in 1996, back on the Senate's agenda for ratification. The Senate originally voted down the Treaty by a margin of 51 to 48 in 1999. Senator Snowe was among those opposing the Treaty at that time.

- Michelle Small, Brunswick

Toxic Fossil Fuel Extraction and LWVUS Response

A highly interesting and informative caucus was held during the 2010 LWVUS Convention on the subject of fossil fuel extraction. There was a screening of the compelling and disturbing documentary *Split Estate*, which can be purchased, and a trailer of the movie viewed, through the website www.splitestate.com. In particular, the movie

depicted the mechanics and horrendous environmental consequences of extracting natural gas through a method called "hydrofracking," an extraction method being used to reach gas resources buried up to 10,000 feet underground. Gas lying between shale rock is reached by drilling straight down for one to three miles and then horizontally 3000 to 6000 feet and blasting open the shale rock with a pressurized stream of water, sand and chemicals. It is predicted that this method of gas extraction could meet US gas needs for a century or more. As a result, gas producers expect to rapidly ramp up this methodology in over 30 states over the next ten years to meet domestic gas demand. These production facilities require a 2 mile wide platform of gravel, and the wells work all day, every day, for 20 to 30 years.

I was particularly disturbed to hear that natural gas exploration was being pursued in Horton Bluff, which is off the coast of Maine. Further research shows that neighboring New Brunswick's gas exports have rapidly increased, from \$20.3 million in the last quarter of 2009 to \$256 million in the first quarter of 2010!!

Split Estate depicts the experience of several landowners and communities severely and negatively impacted by this activity. Farmers in Arkansas and Pennsylvania who had long since forgotten that they or their ancestors had sold off or otherwise conveyed mineral rights under their farmland were finding gas production facilities popping up in the middle of their fields. Soon after these facilities were up and running, these farmers found their drinking water supply contaminated by gas and the chemicals used in the hydrofracking process. One particularly alarming scene shows these farmers discovering gas bubbling up through streambeds on their properties, illustrating the bubbles' contents by setting them on fire. Soon enough, the diseases following toxic environmental conditions became evident. The chemicals used in "fracking" are linked to endocrine disruptors, carcinogens, lung and developmental abnormalities and other health problems.

Each "fracking" requires 2 to 9 million gallons of water, and a well may be fractured multiple times. The water used in this extraction process is highly toxic (the degree of toxicity cannot be quantified, because the gas producers are exempt from having to collect or disclose this information.) The 20 to 80% of the water recovered is kept in open pits and is subject to spills when it rains.

The similarly devastating environmental and societal effects of mountaintop removal as a method of coal extraction was also addressed at the Convention caucus.

Amazingly, this activity is not yet subject to stringent federal regulation. In fact, since 2005, the gas and mining industries have been the beneficiary of broad **exemptions** from the Clean Air and Clean Water Acts. And at the federal level, the gas and mineral industries have been able to enforce the "taking" of private property to establish gaslines to the national distribution pipeline system through the power of "eminent domain." The FRAC Act (Fracturing Responsibly and Awareness of Chemicals), currently pending in Congress, is meant to impose some degree of control over these industries. Other information on this subject is available through www.lwvtompkins.org.

Access to Justice

As a result of this increased awareness, and the high level of concern it generated, the delegates to the 2010 LWVUS Convention overwhelmingly passed the following resolution: "We...call upon the Board to use the resources of the League to support and lobby for significant strengthening of appropriate regulation, oversight, inspection, and penalties associated with the development of fossil fuel resources. This strengthening should include elimination from national legislation of the exemptions for drilling and mining, as well as additional legislation requiring the federal agencies to regulate drilling and mining in a manner consistent with the preservation of a healthy environment. We also call on the Board to write letters to the President and the Congress putting them on notice that Leagues across the country are very concerned about this issue".

If you would like the Maine League to make arrangements for a local showing of this documentary *Split Estates*, please make your interest known to us at www.lwvme.org.

- Colleen Tucker, Portland

Arizona Clean Elections Challenged

On June 8, the U.S. Supreme Court issued an injunction that prevented Arizona election officials from providing matching funds to publicly financed candidates who are outspent by their privately financed opponents. Arizona's matching funds statute is similar to Maine's law.

In the case of *McComish v. Bennett*, the trial court ruled that the matching funds provision of the Arizona law violated the First Amendment by limiting the privately financed candidate's speech and issued an injunction. The 9th Circuit Court of Appeals overruled the trial court.

While the Court's injunction remains in effect, no matching funds can be distributed to publicly financed candidates. The primary election is scheduled for August 24, and the general election is scheduled for November 2. Incumbent Governor Jan Brewer, who has run a publicly financed campaign, has already been outspent three to one by self-funded primary opponent Buz Mills.

The injunction will remain in effect unless the Court decides not to place the case on this year's calendar. Legal experts believe that the Court will issue a writ of certiorari and that, given the Court's current make-up, the Arizona matching funds statute is at risk.

Advocates of Clean Elections in Maine are keeping a close eye on *McComish v. Bennett*. The current injunction does not apply in Maine. However, a Supreme Court decision would serve as precedent in any lawsuit brought in Maine.

- Michelle Small, Brunswick

Access to Justice is a new program of cooperation among the Court System, the County Bar Associations, the Volunteer Lawyers Project, Pine Tree Legal, and the public libraries in Maine. It will give the public access to legal information through the public libraries. If you were having trouble with someone renting from you, or if you were the renter needing to know your rights, you could go to the Library and get legal information. If you are thinking about getting divorced, or have an employment issue, or a consumer issue, you can start at the Library. Access to Justice deals only with civil law. Libraries are not trying to take business away from lawyers, but want to give the public information to use so they can use attorneys more knowledgably. Librarians will receive training this summer about the resources available in state and on the web, available help for low income and elderly residents, available forms and how to give information and not advice. In the near future we will be working with the Bar Associations to have attorneys in libraries at certain hours to give help to the public. In the past, librarians have been reluctant to give legal information since it seemed too easy to cross the line and give legal advice.

I went to a national conference on this topic last winter. We got a grant to do the training--and we just got word about a Broadband Technology Opportunities Program grant for libraries in Maine that will help public libraries become information commons for their communities, which will include giving legal information to the public. It's a pretty exciting time to be a librarian.

- Barbara McDade, Director of the Bangor Public Library
and LWVME President

Fourth Annual Quad States Leadership Conference

The state Leagues of Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont hosted the fourth annual Quad States Leadership Conference in Wells, ME, on May 23 and 24. This year's theme was "The League in a Changing World."

The Keynote Speaker, Jim Melchior from UME Farmington, showed us with humor, history and insight, that the kind of incivility we are now experiencing in public discourse is neither new nor even the worst this nation has experienced.

Quad States offered three workshops. Terry Bouricius, of the LWV Champlain Valley, VT, and senior analyst for FairVote, a national clearing-house for electoral method reform, led a discussion of Alternative Voting Systems. He emphasized Instant

Runoff and Choice Voting. Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) addresses the common "spoiler" problem by promoting majority winners when more than two candidates are running for a single-seat office. Choice voting is a proportional voting method for legislative bodies, ensuring that they accurately reflect the political spectrum of voters. Information about these and other voting systems can be found at www.fairvote.com.

Judy Davis, the LWVUS board liaison to the Quad States, and Barbara McDade talked about some "out of the box" voter outreach projects that other Leagues may want to try. Barbara talked about the "Easy to Read" Voters Guide and the "Forum in a Box" projects. Judy Davis encouraged Leagues to take advantage of electronic social networking, in particular Facebook, as a way to expand our outreach. Davis also talked about VOTE411, a one-stop shop for election related information. It provides nonpartisan general and state-specific information aspects of the election process. The LWVUS provides free access to state and local Leagues to post their voter guide information on line.

Nancy Lynch, President of the LWV of Central VT and Executive Director of the Peace and Justice Center, went further into the nuts and bolts of social networking. She showed examples of Facebook, blogs, websites, and blogs as websites. She then led attendees through the "how-to's" of setting up a Facebook page.

Quad States were honored to have LWVUS President Mary Wilson at our conference this year, in addition to Judy Davis, national board member Carol Reimers and board nominee Marlene O'Brien. The Workshop ended with the presentation of the Climate Change and Clean Energy Leadership awards given to the Maine congressional delegation and a lunch in honor of Mary Wilson to celebrate the League's 90th anniversary.

- Barbara McDade, President, LWVME

June 8 Election Results

On June 8, the parties selected their candidates for the General Election to be held on Tuesday, November 2, 2010. Approximately 20% of Maine's registered voters went to the polls. For Governor, the Democrats nominated Senate President Elizabeth

"Libby" Mitchell of Vassalboro. The Republicans nominated Waterville Mayor Paul LePage.

There are also three unenrolled candidates in the gubernatorial race. Eliot Cutler of Cape Elizabeth is a former federal official and a retired attorney. Shawn Moody of Gorham is the owner of Moody's Collision Centers. Kevin Scott of Andover is the owner of Recruiting Resources International.

In the 1st District, Representative Chellie Pingree of North Haven was unopposed in the Democratic Primary, and Dean Scontras of York was also unopposed in the Republican Primary. Pingree has been in Congress since 2009. Scontras owns an alternative energy company.

In the 2nd District, Representative Michael Michaud of East Millinocket was unopposed in the Democratic Primary, and Jason Levesque of Auburn was also unopposed in the Republican Primary. Michaud has been in Congress since 2003. Levesque owns Argo Marketing Group.

Question 1 about tax reform was defeated by a margin of 61 to 39 percent. All four of the bond issues were approved.

- Michelle Small, Brunswick

Sisters on the Planet

On May 23, 2010, Oxfam America and the League of Women Voters of Maine hosted the League's Climate and Clean Energy Awards Ceremony. This event honored Senators Snowe and Collins and Representatives Pingree and Michaud for their leadership on issues of energy and the environment. As part of this ceremony, Liz Carty, Senior Advisor for Oxfam America, gave a video presentation on Sisters on the Planet.

Climate change hits poor people hardest—especially poor women, who are disproportionately affected. Oxfam's Sisters on the Planet initiative brings together American women leaders to raise awareness about women and climate change, and to help vulnerable communities adapt to the crisis. Women in developing countries are especially vulnerable since they tend to do the jobs that are most affected by changes in the weather. They are usually the ones who plant and tend the crops, raise the children, gather the fuel and carry the water. They often lack the services that basic technology would provide. Women are less likely to have the educational opportunities and resources necessary to cope with crisis situations. In their

traditional roles as family caretakers they have little time for or access to community discussions, which means that their needs and perspectives are often unheard.

Although men are impacted by climate change, they are more likely than women to be educated and to have developed the skills that make them employable. They are also more apt to have a degree of mobility that will allow them to travel in search of work.

Many women in rich and poor countries are aware of the critical need to protect the environment for future generations. Sisters on the Planet encourages them as citizens and consumers to work collaboratively to develop networks and organizations that will become strong forces for social and political change. A major goal is to call for US legislation that will aid poor people in their struggle to adapt to climate change and will enable them to attack the problem in their own communities.

To learn more about this issue go to www.oxfamamerica.org/sisters

- Polly Ferguson, S. Portland

MCCE Poll Finds Mainers Support Full Disclosure

In testimony before the Maine Ethics Commission in June, Maine Citizens for Clean Elections presented poll findings that show Mainers strongly support transparency and disclosure in campaign finance law. The full poll results can be found at www.maineclanelections.org. The following paragraphs are extracted from the testimony of Allison Smith and Ann Luther, MCCE co-chairs.

While MCCE has long considered disclosure to be a fundamental building block of campaign finance law with a strong public interest component, given its centrality to legal disputes in Maine and around the country, we thought it wise to challenge our own assumptions and find out what the public thinks.

Finding a dearth of existing polling data, we commissioned Critical Insights, a nonpartisan public policy polling firm based in Maine, to conduct a poll to explore public sentiment on campaign finance disclosure. More than 400 telephone interviews were conducted with active Maine voters in April of this year.

The results show very strong support for all dimensions of transparency in Maine's campaign finance law. Even when tested against other values such as confidentiality and privacy, respondents placed a higher value on the public interest. Here are just a few highlights of the poll.

- **Voters believe that the names of political groups and donors should be available to the public.** More than 80% of Maine voters believe that having the names of donors to political organizations available to the public is important

because it keeps the process open and transparent. Broken down by political party, gender, age, education and income, all voter groups strongly support transparency over confidentiality. Whether or not the voter would use the information her/himself, strong majorities favor public disclosure.

- **Voters want to know who pays for campaign ads.** 85% of voters feel it is important to know who paid for the political campaign communications they see or hear. Knowing the name of an organization is not enough; voters want to know who finances and leads the group. About three quarters of those polled said that knowing who pays and who is behind the organization that pays helps them determine the credibility of the advertisement.

- **Voters value the information that disclosure provides.** Huge majorities of voters think it is important to know who gives to political campaigns, whether the contributors stand to gain from the result of the election, whether they are from Maine or from out-of-state, and the size of the contributions. For most voters, this information affects what they think and how they choose to vote.

Since transparency is at the heart of the Ethics Commission's work, we hope you will find this information to be helpful. It's clear that whether political spending is for a candidate or a ballot question, Maine voters value their right to information about the source of funding for advertisements and other communications. We believe the results forcefully underscore the importance of protecting the public interest in campaign finance law.

- Alison Smith and Ann Luther, Co-chairs, MCCE

Day of Climate Action - 10/10/10

At the LWVUS Convention in June, delegates attending the climate change caucus enthusiastically endorsed the idea that Leagues across the country participate in the International Day of Climate Action on October 10, 2010. This campaign is being organized by 350.org, a movement aimed at uniting the world around solutions to the climate crisis. State and local Leagues are encouraged to engage in an activity on 10/10/10 that will build awareness about what people can do to protect the planet. Leagues can coordinate plans and learn what others are doing on the League's climate change email list. To join the discussion, visit the For Members section of the LWVUS website, www.lwv.org, and click on "Get Involved." For project ideas and resources, check out the League's new web-based Toolkit for Climate Action at www.lwv.org as well as 350.org.

- Barbara McDade, LWVME President

Voter Guide Coordinator Needed

The League of Women Voters of Maine will spearhead a project to produce an Easy-to-Read Voter Guide in collaboration with Literacy Volunteers of Maine for the November 2010 election. The guide will be designed, printed and distributed by the League of Women Voters of Maine. Literacy Volunteers of Maine will provide technical assistance determining the readability of the text for the Guide.

The goal of the Easy to Read Voter Guide is to provide a written and electronic format to guide citizens to

understand the election and voting process, identify where to vote, understand the issues included on the fall ballot as referendum and bond questions, and select candidates for elected offices of Governor and Member of U.S. Congress. The Voter Guide Committee needs a Voter Guide Project Coordinator to work with the committee that includes Barbara McDade, Ann Luther, Sarah Robinson, and Anne Schink. A formal position description will soon be available online at lwwme.org.

- Anne Schink, Portland

LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK – SEARCH FOR LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

Stay in Touch with LWVME -- Make sure you receive our timely communications about important action alerts and current issues. If you are not receiving our e-mail messages, make sure we have your current email address. Send a message to us at lwwme@gwi.net.

Join the League!

If you are not yet a member of the League, we need your help now in carrying out our mission of reform. You may become a member of the League of Women Voters of Maine and the United States by mailing us your contact information with a check for \$45 for one membership, or \$67.50 for two members at the same household. Our Mailing Address is: **League of Women Voters of Maine, PO Box 863, Augusta, ME 04332-0863**. Please provide us with the following information. Thank you very much!

Membership Application Form

Name _____

Name(s) of additional member(s) in household _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip Code _____

Phone (home) _____ Phone (work/day) _____

Cell phone (optional) _____ Email address _____

Amount enclosed \$ _____

(\$45 one member. \$67.50 two members same household.)
Please make the check out to: League of Women Voters of Maine.
Dues are not tax deductible.

Comments (e.g. interests, how you heard about the League):

League of Women Voters of Maine
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Calendar for 2010

LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta	Wed, Aug 18, 10am-2pm
LWV-DE Discussion Group, Trenton	Wed, Aug 25, 4:30-6 pm
LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta	Wed, Sep 8, 10am-2pm
LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta	Wed, Oct 13, 10am-2pm
Election Day	Tuesday, Nov 2
LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta	Wed, Dec 8, 10am-2pm