



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

The Maine Voter

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Dear League Members and Friends,

We are so proud that the ACLU of Maine awarded its Roger Baldwin Award to Ann Luther for her work to ensure voting rights, clean elections and ethics in government. Ann is no stranger to anyone familiar with the League of Women Voters of Maine. She is a past president, current treasurer and the chair of our Advocacy Committee. In 2011, she co-lead the lobbying efforts to prevent the requirement that citizens present an official photo ID before they could vote. (Voters must already provide documents to prove their identity when they register to vote; voter fraud is already a felony.) Ann also served as a campaign spokesperson and organizer in the successful statewide campaign to restore same-day voter registration. She is a knowledgeable, forthright spokesperson, and we are proud that others in the state recognize her good work.

Are you thinking about getting more active with the League? There is no better time than now. We are engaged in a national study on agriculture that may lead to a new consensus and then to advocacy. Now is the time to learn the facts, speak with others and form a grassroots consensus that will help us advocate for change. To access the study documents go to the national League website (www.lwv.org) and log in with your personal e-mail address and password, and then select "Forums" on the left side of the page. You may also attend local League meetings, which feature speakers, films and discussions on the topic. See our website or read more about the programs in this newsletter.

At our Board Meeting in September, we set the direction for the Maine League's advocacy for the coming year. Our priorities for 2013 - 2014 are: Voting Rights, Clean Elections & Campaign Finance Reform, Election Administration, and Ethics & Disclosure. We are especially alert for activity regarding student voting rights, the Maine Clean Election Act, voter ID requirements, ranked choice voting, and early voting.

Our work in Voter Service continues. There were several Voter Registration drives throughout the state on National Registration Day, September 24. Our Voter Service Committee will provide an on-line Voters Guide for the bond issue questions on the November Ballot, and our volunteers from the Bangor and Portland areas continue to attend Naturalization Ceremonies to welcome new citizens and give them information on registering and voting.

We could use your help. This is an organization where you can make a difference. Local Leagues meet regularly in Portland, Ellsworth, and Bangor. The Maine League of Women Voters is a group of dedicated, motivated and intelligent people who care about our state and our country. I hope you can work with us.

Thank you,

- Barbara McDade, Bangor
President of LWVME

Ann Luther Accepts Baldwin Award

The League of Women Voters of Maine was elated that the ACLU of Maine, at their annual meeting on October 10, especially honored League leader and activist Ann Luther. Ann is pictured below receiving the 2013 Baldwin Award for her outstanding commitment to defending and expanding voting rights in Maine. Ann was introduced by Secretary of State Matt Dunlap, a past recipient of the Baldwin Award. Ann gave an outstanding acceptance speech pointing out how too much money in politics is eroding democracy. WERU-FM Community Radio recorded Ann's talk for future broadcast. Look for the text of Ann's speech at www.lwvme.org.



Ranked Choice Voting

During the last legislative session, the League of Women Voters of Maine supported two bills to create the Ranked Choice Voting method for determining winners in elections for state offices in which more than two candidates compete. These bills were not enacted by the Legislature.

The state League conducted a three-year study of voting methods between 2008 and 2011, with local Leagues reviewing options and holding consensus meetings. The Maine League reached concurrence in favor of Ranked Choice Voting in March of 2011.

Ranked Choice Voting 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. First choices are then tabulated, and if only two candidates receive votes, the candidate with the most votes wins. Otherwise, the last-place candidate is eliminated. Voters who chose the now-eliminated candidate have their ballots added to the totals of their second-ranked candidate. For all

other voters, their first choice still counts. All ballots are then retabulated, with each ballot counting as one vote for each voter's highest ranked candidate who has not been eliminated. This process is repeated until only two candidates remain. The weakest candidates are successively eliminated, and their voters' ballots are added to the totals of their next choice until two candidates remain. At that point, the candidate with the most votes is elected.

Ranked Choice Voting was the method used in the recent (2011) Portland mayoral election. The Portland Charter Commission recommended this method for the popular election of the newly defined position of Mayor of the City, and the voters of Portland adopted it in 2010.

Ranked Choice Voting has a number of key benefits:

- Upholds the value of majority rule
- Helps voter turnout by giving voters more choice and avoiding run-offs
- Promotes more positive, issue-based campaigns because candidates will reach out to more voters to be a back-up choice
- Avoids 'vote-splitting' problems – voters can rank their favorite candidate and still defeat their least favorite candidate
- Avoids the added taxpayer costs and campaign demands of run-off elections

Following defeat of the Ranked Choice Voter bills in the 2013 Legislature, the League's Advocacy Committee decided to convene a working group of Ranked Choice Voting advocates to develop strategies to successfully adopt the Ranked Choice Voting method in Maine. The working group consists of legislators who proposed Ranked Choice Voting bills, League members, attorneys, other interested parties and representatives of Fair Vote: The Center for Voting and Democracy located in Tacoma Park, Maryland. This working group has met every month since July. Members of the working group have also met on several occasions with the Secretary of State's Office to identify barriers that Office perceives to implementation and to discuss possible ways to overcome them. The working group has laid out a strategy and timeline for achieving implementation of Ranked Choice Voting. The group continues to test the strategy and timeline to ensure that the process selected is the most effective for bringing about this change in election procedures. Additionally, the group has been exploring different public outreach/education approaches to explain and seek support from the people of Maine. If you are interested in helping out or want to follow our activities more closely, email us at lwvme.org with RCV in the subject line.

This effort is very much a 'work-in-progress,' but the recent history of Maine's state-wide elections, with 8 out of the last 10 gubernatorial elections being won by candidates with support of much less than a majority of the voters, suggests that the change to Ranked Choice Voting would give voters a stronger voice in the election of state officials.

- Polly Ward

*League of Women Voters Portland Area
With thanks to FairVote: The Center for Voting and
Democracy*

Election Day is November 5

Most voters will find local issues and candidates on their ballots for the November 5th election. In addition, there will be five bond questions on the statewide ballot. These statewide bond questions were referred to the voters by a special legislative session held at the end of August. The Maine Secretary of State's Office announced the order of the statewide ballot questions as follows:

Question 1: Bond Issue

Do you favor a \$14,000,000 bond issue to provide funds for the State's share of maintenance, repair, capital improvement, modernization and energy efficiency projects for **Maine Army National Guard** readiness centers and support facilities and the purchase of land for training and to draw down federal matching funds?

Question 2: Bond Issue

Do you favor a \$15,500,000 bond issue to enhance educational and employment opportunities for Maine citizens and students by updating and improving existing laboratory and classroom facilities of the **University of Maine System** statewide?

Question 3: Bond Issue

Do you favor a \$100,000,000 bond issue for reconstruction and rehabilitation of **highways and bridges** and for facilities or equipment related to **ports, harbors, marine transportation, freight and passenger railroads, aviation and transit**, to be used to match an estimated \$154,000,000 in federal and other funds?

Question 4: Bond Issue

Do you favor a \$4,500,000 bond issue to provide funds for a public-private partnership for a building project for a new science facility at the **Maine Maritime Academy** to be matched by other funds?

Question 5: Bond Issue

Do you favor a \$15,500,000 bond issue to upgrade buildings, classrooms and laboratories on the 7 campuses of the **Maine Community College System** in order to increase capacity to serve more students through expanded programs in health care, precision machining, information technology, criminal justice and other key programs?

See www.maine.gov/sos/cec/elec/upcoming.html for more information on the statewide ballot, including the Treasurer's report. See your local town or city office for information on local issues and candidates.

- Martha Dickinson, Ellsworth

Voter Guide 2013

Since 2008, the League has published a nonpartisan Voter Guide that has been accessible to all citizens of Maine, regardless of their reading abilities. In the past this Voter Guide has been both online and printed as hard copy. It has been distributed as hard copy to adult education offices, schools, businesses, and libraries, as well as to non-profit and religious organizations across Maine.

Since the only issues on the November statewide ballot are the five bond issues given above, this year's Voter Guide will be an online publication only, available on our website at www.lwvme.org. In easy-to-read language, the Guide features general information about voting in Maine as well as a plain-language restating of each Bond Issue and explanations of what a "yes" and a "no" vote mean.

Call to Convention 2014

LWVUS President Elisabeth G. MacNamara has issued the "First Call" to Convention 2014 to be held in Dallas, Texas, on June 6-10, 2014. The League of Women Voters holds a nationwide convention every other year. Please plan to join

national, state and local League leaders from around the country for this lively event. During this five-day gathering, you will hear nationally known speakers, learn more about the issues important to the organization and the nation, participate in training sessions, and join in the discussion and networking that make the League a strong and vital force in our democracy. For more, see www.lwv.org/member-resources/convention-2014.

National Voter Registration Day

The League of Women Voters joined with others in celebration of National Voter Registration Day on September 24. According to the LWVUS, nearly one in four Americans is not registered to vote. In 2008, six million Americans didn't vote because they either didn't know how to register or missed their state's registration deadline.

National Voter Registration Day began in 2012 with one simple idea: make voting more accessible to as many eligible voters as possible. According to the LWVUS, over 300,000 new voters were registered on National Registration Day in 2012. (www.nationalvoterregistrationday.org/)

At the state and local levels, the Bangor League held three separate registration drives. The Portland Area League held six separate registration drives. The League of Women Voters nationwide reported that nearly 300 Leagues joined over 800 other groups to help register new voters. Over 280 Leagues from 43 states hosted National Voter Registration Day events.

In 2012 and 2013, thousands of National Voter Registration Day registration drives were held nationally to improve voter turnout. League President Elisabeth MacNamara said, "We come from all walks of life, and we vote for lots of different reasons... we all deserve the chance to take part in deciding the direction our country is headed, and we all have a role to play in standing up for what we believe in."

One of the League's priorities is ensuring equal access to voting for all Americans. National Voter Registration Day is one of many events and volunteer efforts the League of Women Voters of Maine supports. New volunteers are always welcome.

- Kim McCollister, Westbrook

Money in Race for Governor

Earlier this fall, Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) released a report that showed almost half of the one million dollars already raised in the 2014 gubernatorial race came from maxed-out donors (Donors can give up to \$3,000 to party enrolled candidates and up to \$1,500 to un-enrolled candidates.)

"First Look at 2014 Gubernatorial Fundraising: Private Money From Wealthy Contributors Dominates the Campaign" is the 10th in a series of reports published by MCCE's Money and Politics Project.

With 14 months to go until the 2014 election, it is clear that large, private contributions will play a much more significant role than in recent elections. For the first time since 2002, there is no gubernatorial Clean Election program. With triple the contribution limit that voters enacted in 1996, wealthy donors will be tapped as never before. Our report revealed that some 275 donors have already given the maximum contribution allowed under Maine law.

The report is based on information provided by the campaigns through regular public disclosures. The report shows that while Republican Governor Paul LePage got a head start with his reelection fundraising, he has already been surpassed in total funds by independent Eliot Cutler, with Democrat Mike Michaud not far behind. Each of the candidates has gone to multiple sources for funding, with Cutler receiving the highest percent from both out-of-state and maxed-out donors, LePage getting more than others from corporate contributors, and Michaud receiving the most from both lobbyists and donors giving \$50 or less.

The 2014 campaign for governor is shaping up to be not only the most expensive in Maine's history, but the least democratically funded. Anyone who cares about the health of our democratic systems should be very concerned.

The full report can be found at www.maineclipselections.org/money-10

-BJ McCollister
Program Director
Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

LWV Downeast

The League of Women Voters Downeast continues its focus on **agriculture policy** in line with the national League study. On September 11, LWV-DE offered a free public screening of the award-winning documentary film, "**Betting The Farm,**" at the Ellsworth Public Library. Produced by Maine-based filmmakers, Cecily Pingree and Jason Mann, *Betting The Farm* tells the story of a group of Maine dairy farmers who, dropped by their national milk company in 2009, were suddenly confronted with the real possibility of losing their farms. Some of these farmers banded together to launch a new, local milk company, Maine's Own Organic Milk Co., or MOO Milk. MOO Milk is owned by the farmers themselves. If it succeeds, it could prove a model for sustainable, small-scale farming and local agriculture. Dairy farmers Aaron Bell and Carly DelSignore of Tide Mill Farm joined us for a discussion after the film and brought us up to date on MOO Milk and how they overcame several obstacles. Their future looks better than ever.

Downeast League members shared readings on agriculture policy at their October 9 meeting at a local restaurant. Our next meeting on agriculture policy is November 13 at 5:30 pm. We are working on a plan to screen "**Inequality for All**", a film by Jacob Kornbluth and featuring Robert Reich. The screening would include a panel discussion and be held at a large theatre in Ellsworth. Topics for future meetings are being planned. We always welcome new members and ideas.

- Martha Dickinson, Ellsworth

Portland Area League

Our modest Voter Registration Drive held September 24 and 25 was successful in terms of new connections with school staff and visibility for students about the League. We focused on high schools, both private and public, and on Portland Adult Education. We are considering an effort before the June primary to pick up more new or soon-to-be 18 year olds. We see this as a way to increase involvement of our less active members.

Our October 16 "Hot Topic" is **Whose Rights? Free Speech vs. Free Access** and will include City Councilor Ed Suslovic, Chair of the Council's Public Health and Human Services Committee; Mike Fink, business man who started protesting the protesters; John Branson, attorney, Branson Law Office; and Judy Kahrl, founder of Grandmothers for Reproductive Rights. The moderator will be Anne Schink, long-time League leader and currently member of the board, LWVUS. The meeting is co-sponsored by the Portland Public Library, which has provided a meeting room.

On November 13 a discussion of **Maine Charter Schools** with speakers representing the Charter School Commission, academic community, and the legislature is still being worked out. We will return to our regular meeting place at One City Center in the Burton Fisher Community Room.

December 11 is the date of a return to our Know Your Community series with a look at **County Government**. Cumberland County Manager, Peter Crichton will join us in addition to Neil Allen of the Greater Portland Council of Governments.

We have been really working hard to make up for having taken a 'sabbatical' over July and August. Our goal for January 15 is to have a **Round Table** of interested parties to discuss collaboration to create a practical civics course for new Americans. We are developing a list of names and agency representatives to invite to our regular general meeting.

We have initiated a trial in which we include Membership Leadership Development (MLD) discussions in our Leadership Team Meetings rather than through the conference calls. At monthly Leadership Team Meetings, we continue to firm up our calendar through 2014. Other than that, we endeavor to share the work fairly among just a few of us, as we try to broaden participation among our members and eventually return to the typical League structure with officers, by-laws, annual meetings, etc.

- Karla Wight, Lorraine Glowczak, Polly Ferguson,
Polly Ward, Tammy Wing, Kim McCollister,
Barbara Kaufman

LWVPORTLAND@MAINE.RR.COM
OR KARLA AT 207-210-6572

Independent Voters

Independent voters now outnumber members of any political party both in Maine and in the United States. To explore this issue, on September 30, at Husson University, LWV of Bangor co-sponsored a panel discussion entitled, **Truly Independent? Independent Voters and Independent Candidates—Who Are They and Why Aren't They Part of the Parties?**

Panelists included Eliot Cutler, independent candidate for Governor in 2010; Jill Goldthwait, four-time independent state senator from Bar Harbor; Toby McGrath, deputy chief of staff for Senator Angus King; Jackie Salit, President, Independent Voting.org and author of *Independents Rising*; and Ben Sprague, Independent Bangor City Councilor. Mark Kelley, Director of Journalism, New England School of Communications was the moderator.

Some of the issues addressed included the question of why the number of un-enrolled or independent voters is increasing and how a person who runs as an independent becomes an office holder and serves in the current government structure. Panelists differed about money in politics and the roll of parties. You may view this interesting discussion at the Independent Voter Session at www.nescom.tv.

The Bangor League is sponsoring a follow up panel on October 28 at 3 pm at the Bangor Public Library with Ben Grant, Chairman of the Democratic Party of Maine; Jason Savage, the Executive Director of the Republican Party; and Asher Platts of the Green Independent Party. Mark Kelley will again be the moderator.

- Barbara McDade, Bangor

Voting and Election Reform Forum

On September 10, over 30 Midcoast residents participated in a panel discussion about current Maine voting and election reform proposals. This public event, held at Watts Hall in Thomaston, was jointly sponsored by the Coastal Senior College and the League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME).

“I can't remember a program I've been to in a long time that was so well planned and facilitated. If more important public issues were as well addressed as you all did last night, we would have a better government,” Carmen Lavertu, Coastal Senior College member who organized the event, stated in a thank you email.

The panelists were Ann Luther, Chair of the League's Advocacy Committee, who presented the League's position on majority elections and ranked choice voting; Shenna Bellows, former Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, who spoke about Maine's unique leadership on voting rights both in the past and currently as Maine debates Early Voting (as opposed to Absentee Voting); and Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of the Maine Citizens for Clean Elections who discussed: the growing role of money in elections and government; Maine's efforts to reduce the role of money in politics via the Maine Clean Election Act; and future efforts to keep large private political contributions a thing of the past, particularly in Maine. Barbara Kaufman, from the LWVME's Voter Services Committee, facilitated the evening program.

If you are interested in organizing a similar community forum, please contact the LWVME at (207) 622-0256 or lwvme@gwi.net.

- Barbara Kaufman, S. Freeport

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 lwvme@gwi.net.

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

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 \$55 for one membership, or \$82.50 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 \$ _____

(\$55 for one member or \$82.50 for two from the 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):

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P.O. Box 863
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Calendar for 2013

LWVPA Forum on Whose Rights? Free Speech vs Free Access Portland Public Library, Room #5	5:30 pm, Wed, Oct 16
Betting The Farm, the movie Bangor Public Library	2 pm Sat, Oct 23
Truly Independent, Part II Bangor Public Library	3 pm, Mon, Oct 28
Election Day in Maine	Tues, Nov 5
LWVPA Program on Charter Schools Burton Fisher Room, Once City Center, Portland	5:30 pm Wed, Nov 13
LWVDE Program on Agriculture Ellsworth Public Library	5:30 pm Wed, Nov 13
LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta	10 am Sat, Nov 23
LWVPA on Know Your Government	5:30 pm Wed, Dec 11