



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

## The Maine Voter

Volume 28, Number 1

February 2011

### Contents

|                             | Page |
|-----------------------------|------|
| President's Letter          | 1    |
| Clean Elections Celebration | 2    |
| Instant Runoff Voting       | 2    |
| LWVME Consensus             | 2    |
| Majority v. Plurality       | 3    |
| The Spoiler Effect          | 3    |
| Lobby Corps                 | 4    |
| Maine Women's Lobby         | 4    |
| Day on the Hill             | 5    |
| Coalition for Maine Women   | 5    |
| Freedom of Access Act       | 6    |
| Join the League             | 7    |
| Thank You!                  | 7    |
| Calendar of Events          | 8    |

### LWVME Officers

#### President:

**Barbara McDade** Bangor

#### Vice President:

**Sarah Walton** Augusta

#### Secretary:

**Colleen Tucker** Portland

#### Treasurer:

**Ann Luther** Trenton

#### Directors

**Martha Dickinson** Ellsworth

**Polly Ferguson** S. Portland

**Anne Schink** S. Portland

**Michelle Small** Brunswick

**Jill Ward** S. Portland

**Cathie Whittenburg** Portland

\*

Editor: Martha Dickinson

Contributors: Martha Dickinson, Ann Luther, Barbara McDade, Anne Schink, Michelle Small, Sarah Standiford, Cathie Whittenburg,

\*

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.

\*

League of Women Voters of Maine  
P. O. Box 863, Augusta, ME 04332-0863  
[www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org) and [lwvme@gwi.net](mailto:lwvme@gwi.net)

Dear League Members,

The year 2011 brings with it a new Congress in Washington and a new administration and legislature in Maine. Despite a number of major changes in the political landscape, the League's voice, as ever, is heard and respected. Our voter services are appreciated, our nonpartisan studies are valued, and our grassroots positions are heard.

Our **Lobby Corps** is gearing up for the new legislative session. In February and March, we will hold educational and consensus meetings on **Instant Runoff Voting**, also known as Ranked Choice Voting. (See articles in this issue.)

I hope you will attend the **Day on the Hill** in April. This year, we are working with the Coalition for Maine Women instead of holding our own Keys to the Capitol. There may be those in the coalition who haven't thought about the work of the League recently, and working together on this event may refresh memories and acquaint us with new faces.

This is the first call to **LWV Maine's Convention**, to be held on Friday and Saturday, **June 3 and 4**, in Portland. On Friday evening, members are invited to dine informally and then join for a dessert reception with a guest speaker. Saturday will be a full day, starting at 10:30 AM and ending by 4 PM, at the University of Southern Maine's Glickman Library. The committee is finding first-rate speakers, there will be a board to elect, programs for the coming two years to select, and great fellowship with thoughtful, forward-looking League members from around the state. Our website, [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org), will contain updated information and registration information. All members in Maine are invited to attend and vote. Please feel free to invite a friend and/or prospective member to come along.

For the past several springs we have had **leadership development workshops** with our neighboring states' Leagues. We called it Quad States. This year those workshops will be held in the fall, and we will be enlarging from 4 states to 6, as members from the Leagues in Massachusetts and Connecticut will join us. Learn more about the Quad States Plus Two Workshops as fall approaches.

Thank you for your dedication. Because of you, the Maine League continues to do what we do best — encourage informed and active participation in government.

- Barbara McDade, LWVME President

## Maine Celebrates Clean Elections

On November 18<sup>th</sup>, Maine Citizens for Clean Elections celebrated 10 years of Clean Elections in Maine, and it was quite a party! Thank you to LWVME for sponsoring and supporting this great event. It was terrific to see so many Clean Elections friends from over the years. Everyone from the League board attended and quite a few other League members as well. It was especially rewarding to see Marion Holshouser in the spotlight. Marion is a past-president of LWVME, and she was instrumental in mobilizing the League's involvement with Clean Elections from the very beginning. LWVME played a key founding role in the coalition that helped pass the Maine Clean Election Act and has provided crucial leadership at every stage since, from collecting signatures to chairing the coalition to serving as fiscal agent for MCCE through its Education Fund. We wouldn't be here without the League, and the League wouldn't be here without Marion.

MCCE is awed at what our founders accomplished, we are resolved to continue the fight against big money in politics, and we are grateful for friends like the League of Women Voters who have made Clean Elections' first decade so successful and who stand by our side to face the future.

There is no question that the future holds significant challenges. Now that we've swept up the confetti from our celebratory year, we are sobered by the enormity of the task ahead. The 125<sup>th</sup> Legislature will be dealing with a complex policy agenda and a sluggish economy. There are three adverse lawsuits moving through the federal court system. And the November election brought unprecedented independent spending into Maine races, drawing into question the adequacy of our enforcement tools and our disclosure laws.

Money in politics is the issue of our time. We will not have government of, by and for the people if wealthy special interests dominate our elections. Bill Moyers, a longtime fan of Clean Elections, said recently, "The only way to defeat organized money is with organized people." It is more important than ever that we defend Clean Elections and move reform forward.

That's why we still need the League of Women Voters: we count on League members to help us remind Maine people about the tremendous value of Clean Elections to the state and the nation. The League to this day provides critical leadership in

the MCCE coalition. We rely on League members to respond to action alerts, contact their legislators, write letters and attend events.

And since it's that time of year, here's a special reminder: don't forget to **Check YES on Line 1 of your Maine Income Tax form!** Marion Holshouser lobbied hard for the check-off as part of the MCEA funding mechanism because it is inclusive and broad-based. She was right! Checking YES does not add to your tax bill or reduce your refund. It directs three dollars into the Maine Clean Election Fund, and it sends a strong message of support for the Clean Election system.

It works! **Check YES for Clean Elections.**

*Ann Luther, Co-president, MCCE*  
[www.mainecelelections.org](http://www.mainecelelections.org)

## LWVME Seeks Consensus on IRV

The Board of the League of Women Voters of Maine has been studying Instant Runoff Voting for several years and is now ready to turn to the membership for study and decision. The question is: shall LWVME endorse Instant Runoff Voting, also known as Ranked Choice Voting, for single seat elections in Maine? Whether we decide to endorse IRV or not, we will continue to support the current system of plurality voting as well. Our endorsement means that we could educate and advocate for particular legislation related to IRV. Our position on any particular bill would be subject to our own analysis, and we would not automatically endorse every bill on IRV. In November, the City of Portland adopted IRV for the election of its mayor. We as a League could not advocate for or against that adoption because we did not yet have a position.

Consensus meetings on IRV/RCV are being scheduled for February and early March in Portland, Brunswick, and Ellsworth. (See the Calendar at the end of this newsletter and check online at [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org) for any changes to that Calendar.) A document on Instant Runoff Voting will be mailed to the membership before the first consensus meeting. The Downeast League has planned two consensus meetings – the first one to discuss the document and other material that illuminate the pros and cons of IRV – the second meeting to wind up the discussion, go over the

consensus questions, and seek consensus on whether or not to endorse IRV in Maine. The Portland Area League and the Brunswick Area League will each hold one consensus meeting to discuss and decide whether or not to endorse IRV in Maine.

Before we begin our consensus meetings, we will hold meetings to educate the public and ourselves on IRV. Terry Bouricius, member of the Vermont League of Women Voters and national expert on Instant Runoff Voting, will be our featured speaker. These public meetings are planned for Portland on Feb. 4 at 4:30 pm, in Brunswick on Feb. 5 at 9:30 am and in Ellsworth on Feb. 5 at 2:00 pm. See the Calendar for location details.

Below are two articles emphasizing two different aspects of the debate on Instant Runoff Voting. The first is meant to clarify the difference between a plurality and a majority. The second explains the “Spoiler Effect.” Since we assume our readers understand the current system of plurality winners, we use our space here to explain a few details of IRV. Much more information from us will soon be available in a 15 to 20 page document that will be mailed to our membership.

### **Majority or Plurality?**

Elections in Maine and in many places around the country are decided by a plurality of votes, which often means that the winner is chosen by a minority of voters. A plurality winner gets more votes than any other candidate but may garner only 34%, more or less, of the total votes cast when there are more than two candidates. A majority means 50% +1 of votes. If you believe that winners of elections should be decided by a majority of voters, then some kind of runoff election is necessary.

Some places hold a runoff election a few weeks or months after the first election, if that first election did not result in a majority winner. Such a runoff is between the top two vote getters in the first election. Because delayed runoffs can be quite expensive and have other problems, Instant Runoff Voting, also known as Ranked Choice Voting, has developed as a viable alternative. In November, Oakland, California elected a new mayor using it, and North Carolina elected a judge. It has been used for years in various cities and towns around the country. Several state Leagues have endorsed it, and now the League of Women Voters of Maine is considering it. There are pros

and cons of IRV that need to be considered before deciding whether or not to endorse it.

- *Martha Dickinson, LWVME, Ellsworth*

### **The Spoiler Effect**

What would you do if you went into the voting booth afraid that voting for the candidate you liked best would mean the candidate you most disliked would get elected? Would you worry about wasting your vote on a candidate who has only a slim chance of winning? Instead of voting for your preferred candidate, would you vote for the candidate you thought had a better chance of defeating the candidate you oppose most strongly?

When three or more candidates run for the same office, it is possible to find two or more candidates who appeal to the same base of voters. This can result in the so-called “spoiler effect,” where one candidate draws votes from a similar candidate, causing a candidate with contrasting views to win, even though the majority opposes that candidate.

For example, let’s say John Smith, a conservative candidate, is running for office against Jane Doe, a liberal candidate. When the results are in, Smith receives 58% of the vote to Doe’s 42%. Smith is the winner. But what if Joe Adams, another conservative candidate, enters the same race? Smith and Adams split the conservative vote. When the results are in, Smith receives 39% of the vote, Adams 19% and Doe 42%. Even though we know a majority of the voters preferred a conservative candidate, Jane Doe is now declared the winner.

In response to the “spoiler effect,” the idea of Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) has gained some traction. This method is also called Ranked Choice Voting (RCV). IRV/RCV acts like a series of runoff elections by allowing voters to express their 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> choice candidates using the initial ballot. It counts the votes in order of preference to find a majority winner. Voters are able to vote for their true first choice, while indicating second and third choice candidates.

If one candidate has the majority – over 50% -- of first-choice votes, that candidate wins. If not, the last place candidate is eliminated and, as with a runoff election, the ballots are counted again.

Those voters whose first-choice candidate was eliminated now have their votes cast for their second choice candidate. The other ballots remain the same. This process of eliminating the last place candidate and recounting the ballots continues until one candidate receives a majority of the vote.

So, in the race between Smith, Adams, and Doe, voters are now given the option of ranking candidates in order of preference. Since no candidate received an initial majority of votes, under IRV, an instant runoff would take place using the ballots that have already been cast. As the bottom vote getter, Adams would be eliminated. Those who voted for Adams as their first choice would now have their votes go to their second choice, most likely Smith. The ballots are recounted, and this time Smith receives the majority of the vote, 58%, and is declared the winner.

Under IRV, supporters argue that voters end up electing someone who most closely matches their preferences, and no one has to worry about the spoiler effect.

Many places already use IRV. Australia uses IRV to elect its House of Representatives; Ireland uses it to elect its president; London uses it to elect its mayor; and this year, for the first time, North Carolina used IRV in a statewide judicial election.

Opponents of IRV point out that it will be more expensive to administer than the current system of winner-take-all voting – that ballot tabulating machines will require reprogramming and that manual vote counting will be more time-consuming. Voters will need information and education about the new voting method.

*- Cathie Whittenburg, LWVME, Portland*

## **Join the League Lobby Corps**

The first regular session of the 125th Maine State Legislature convened on Wednesday, December 1, 2010. Statutory adjournment is Wednesday, June 15, 2011. Over these short 28 weeks of the first session, the Legislature will deal with hundreds of bills, many of them in the League's priority areas. Cloture was at 4:00 on January 7 – the deadline by which legislators must submit bills for consideration. The new majority is already setting new priorities. It's time to ramp up the efforts of the League Lobby Corps.

## **Priorities**

At its December meeting, the LWVME state board adopted the following advocacy priorities for this session. These five areas will be the focus of the League Lobby Corps activities and testimony:

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

We are especially alert for activity regarding the Maine Clean Election Act, student voting rights, voter ID requirements, same-day registration, and voting rights for incarcerated citizens.

The board put the following issues on the back-burner, to be taken up if a special opportunity presents itself: Civil Liberties, Civil Rights, Gun Control, Health Care, Energy & the Environment, Reproductive Choice, Women & Families, Fair Trade, Citizenship Education, United Nations, and Repeal of Term Limits.

## **Activities**

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. These activities are coordinated by the League's Advocacy Committee: Anne Schink, Sarah Walton, Polly Ferguson, Cathie Whittenburg, and Ann Luther.

## **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 or you can spare each 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](mailto:ann.m.luther@gmail.com).

*- Ann Luther, LWVME*

## Maine Women's Lobby

Women's voices, long a driver of Maine public policy, have become even more important in civic life this year. That's because on subjects of equal opportunity, reproductive privacy, and the role of government—the position of many of our newly elected officials are far outside the mainstream. Voters concerned about women's issues must take every opportunity to make their opinions known this session.

The number one stated goal of the new administration and the 125<sup>th</sup> Legislature is to make Maine more business-friendly. The first piece of legislation, L.D. 1, will be an effort to streamline regulation and roll back "red tape." What that looks like remains to be seen. Our hope is that legislators will propose common sense initiatives to streamline small business growth and NOT take an ideological approach such as cutting wholesale into environmental and employment regulations that have contributed so much to Maine's quality of life.

We have cause for concern. For example, I was startled to read in the *Portland Press Herald* about members of a business roundtable urging elimination of "well-intended but burdensome" regulations such as child labor, public health, and civil rights laws. Maine's workforce is our most important economic resource—and the laws that the Maine Women's Lobby has struggled to enact over 32 years enable women to contribute to Maine's economic future. So, we will work to block attempts to reverse well-established and effective policies. Already on our agenda: stop potential roll backs to human rights act protections, prevent enactment of "right to work" legislation (which weakens the union contract and particularly harms women's wages), maintain access to public assistance, and protect reproductive health services, including contraception and abortion.

I've been asked frequently how the Maine Women's Lobby expects to advance policy solutions in this new environment. How do we craft smart economic solutions in a climate where any government intervention is perceived as anti-business—regardless of the fact that policies such as unemployment insurance expansion, Dirigo health, and paid family medical leave actually increase job security by keeping people employed?

The answer is that we defend against the most egregious rollbacks. And then we create consensus solutions where possible—as the Maine Women's Lobby has always done. Now more than ever, our success will depend on grassroots muscle and powerful collaborations. That's why we look forward to working with the League of Women Voters and other members of the Coalition for Maine Women in shaping Maine's future as a positive one for women and girls.

- Sarah Standiford, Executive Director, Maine Women's Lobby  
[www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org)

## Day on the Hill Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup>

In past years the League of Women Voters has celebrated our commitment to legislative advocacy by sponsoring Keys to the Capitol in mid-winter. This year we will collaborate with the Coalition for Maine Women in holding a Day on the Hill on Wednesday, April 27<sup>th</sup>. A new legislative session with major transitions in both legislative and executive branches of government should provide interesting opportunities to see for ourselves how those changes will affect the way business is done in Augusta.

As in past years, our event will include the Hall of Flags, the Welcome Center, workshops and opportunities to visit legislators and legislative chambers. Other traditional elements are in the early planning stages.

So mark your calendars! Wednesday April 27<sup>th</sup> is the Day on the Hill in Augusta.

- Anne Schink, S. Portland, LWVME

## Coalition for Maine Women

The Coalition for Maine Women (CMW) promotes policies that benefit Maine women and girls. The Coalition is comprised of more than 30 groups that serve more than 40,000 women and girls! The group exists to ensure that the perspectives and needs of Maine's women and girls are heard at the Maine State House. See their website at [www.mainewomen.org](http://www.mainewomen.org).

The League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME) is a coalition partner to CMW, and Anne Schink, of South Portland, represents the LWVME in this coalition. CMW is a large and active group. At its most recent meeting the group identified, discussed, and selected issues that warrant top priority on its legislative agenda. LWVME proposed adding Clean Elections to the agenda. League member Ann Luther provided a very persuasive argument in favor of including it, and the group was very receptive. A lively discussion of Clean Elections produced an understanding that women have been major beneficiaries of Clean Election funds, and women legislators are much more likely to support the Coalition's agenda. The League will continue to provide updates to the CMW.

The group generally agreed that this year will be a very difficult legislative climate for the issues that affect women and children. The Coalition reached consensus on the following five priorities.

- Protect TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) (formerly AFDC).
- Support a fair state budget.
- Defend reproductive choice.
- Promote the Bisphenol A (BPA) rule (Kids Safe Products Law implementation); a first step is to ban BPA from reusable beverage containers.
- Defend Social Security at the federal level.

*- Anne Schink, S. Portland, LWVME*

## **Freedom of Access Act**

Each year, LWVUS is a national co-sponsor of Sunshine Week, a seven-day celebration of the importance of transparency in government and freedom of information. The event is always held during the week of James Madison's birthday (March 16). Among the milestones celebrated are the federal Freedom of Information Act and the 50 separate state acts.

In Maine, the act is called the Freedom of Access Act, 13 M.R.S.A. § 401 et seq. It requires that public notice must be given for all public meetings; that all public proceedings must be open to the public; and that public documents must be available for inspection and copying. Government bodies that violate the Act are subject to fines of up to \$500. A plaintiff who prevails in a lawsuit against a government body that violates the Act may be awarded attorney's fees and costs.

There are some exceptions to the Freedom of Access Act. Under 13 M.R.S.A. § 405, portions of public meetings may be held in executive session. That means that government bodies may privately discuss matters such as personnel issues, student suspensions, real estate transactions and labor negotiations. Under 13 M.R.S.A. § 402, there are certain documents that are not available to the public. For example, documents related to labor negotiations, medical records, juvenile records, documents describing security plans and Social Security numbers in the possession of the Department of Inland Fisheries and Wildlife are kept private. Every two years, the Legislature must review exceptions and determine if they are still necessary.

Because of its commitment to open government, the League of Women Voters of Maine is an organizational member of the Maine Freedom of Information Coalition. It believes that government best serves the public when it operates in the most open manner possible. Its members, who include media organizations, lawyers, academicians, public-policy groups and like-minded individuals, strive to inform the public to the fullest extent possible about government actions. Government in the sunshine, it believes, is the best guarantor of a strong democracy.

*- Michelle Small, LWVME, Brunswick*

## ***Check Yes for Clean Elections on your Maine Income Tax Form!***

**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 [lwvme@gwi.net](mailto:lwvme@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**. Thank you very much!

Please make the check out to: League of Women Voters of Maine. *Dues are not tax deductible.*

## Thank You!

---

### Donations to the League and the Ed. Fund Approach a Combined \$5,000

---

Thanks to the friends and members of the League who contributed to our annual fund drive. Donations ranged in amount from \$10 to \$500. Every single contribution, no matter how large or small, supports the work of the League and is greatly appreciated. It's not too late to give! Help us top the \$5,000 mark.

---

Contributions to the **League of Women Voters of Maine** general fund near \$2,500.

---

|                               |                            |                          |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------|--------------------------|
| Sarah & Jim Birkett           | Roger & Elizabeth Gilmore  | Constance Opie           |
| Suzanne & Don Carmichael      | Betsey Holtzmann           | Barbara Perkins          |
| Beverly & Charles Cunningham  | Kristin Hutchins           | Joy Rubin                |
| Mary Dethier                  | Jane & William Inderstrodt | Tobi Schneider           |
| Martha Dickinson              | Judy Kimball               | Alice & Wickham Skinner  |
| Eva Dimond                    | Gloria & Lincoln Ladd      | Michelle Small           |
| Elisabeth Doble               | Jana Lapoint               | Colleen Tucker           |
| Mary Dunn                     | Ann Luther & Alan Vlach    | Sarah Walton             |
| Polly Ferguson                | Nancy Masterton            | Jill Ward                |
| Sally Fernald                 | Barbara McDade             | Karla Wight              |
| Jane Freeman & Darrell Wilson | Ruth Moss                  | Betty & George Willhoite |
| Sue Furth                     | Melissa Hanley Murphy      | Elise & David Wilson     |
| Beverly Prosser Gelwick       | Barbara Nichols            |                          |

---

Contributions to the **League of Women Voters of Maine Education Fund** approach \$2,300.

---

|                              |                         |                            |
|------------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Suzanne Crawford             | Judy Kimball            | Colleen Sanders            |
| Beverly & Charles Cunningham | Elizabeth Knowles       | Trudi & Jack Schneider     |
| Joanne D'Arcangelo           | Lois Lamdin             | Richard Stevens            |
| Mary Dethier                 | Jana Lapoint            | Julia Stevens              |
| Martha Dickinson             | Ann Luther & Alan Vlach | Richard Tappan             |
| Elisabeth Doble              | Nancy Masterton         | Nancy Thompson             |
| Mary Dunn                    | Barbara McDade          | Colleen Tucker             |
| Peter Enggass                | Nancy Miles             | Sarah Walton               |
| Polly Ferguson               | Melissa Murphy          | Jill Ward                  |
| Margery Forbes               | Carolyn Murray          | Jane Weagle                |
| Sue Furth                    | Carol O'Donnell         | Robert & Susan Weiss       |
| Beverly Gelwick              | Barbara Rappaport       | Mary Welch                 |
| Roger & Elizabeth Gilmore    | Eileen Robert           | Kira Wigoda & Daniel Sobel |
| Jane & William Inderstrodt   |                         | Betty & George Willhoite   |

League of Women Voters of Maine  
P.O. Box 863  
Augusta, ME 04332-0863

**ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED**

Non-Profit  
U.S. Postage Paid  
Portland, Maine  
Permit 117

### **Calendar for 2011**

LWV – Downeast Brown Bag lunch and book discussion on  
alternative economic systems, Trenton

Wed, Jan 19, 12 – 2 pm

IRV Informational Meetings with Terry Bouricius, LWV-VT  
Portland City Hall, Portland  
Brunswick  
UU Church, Ellsworth

Fri, Feb 4, 4:30 – 6 pm  
Sat, Feb 5, 9:30- 11 am  
Sat, Feb 5, 2 – 3:30 pm

LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta

Thu, Feb 17, 10am - 2pm

IRV Consensus Meeting 1 of 2, Jaspers, Ellsworth

Sat, Feb 26, noon- 2pm

IRV Consensus Meeting 2 of 2, Jaspers, Ellsworth

Sat, Mar 5, noon – 2 pm

LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta

Thu, Apr 14, 10am - 2pm

Day on the Hill, Augusta

Wed, Apr 27, 10 am – 2 pm

LWVME Convention, Portland

Fri, June 3 – Sat, June 4