



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

## The Maine Voter

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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 us: [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org) or

**League of Women Voters of Maine**

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**Augusta, ME 04332-0863**

Dear League Members,

July marks the start of a new year for Maine's League. The Board retreat on June 6 laid out four primary goals for the next year: **Grow Membership; Increase Visibility; Work on Issues; and Build and Strengthen Coalitions.** Growing membership may seem self-serving; although we are a committed, focused and informed group, in Maine, we are few in number. We have taken on a huge job with many facets. Our "issues" include not only advocacy—on three levels—local, state and national—after serious study and consensus, but also voter service and education. We need more active members.

Issues and activities discussed at the retreat included:

- Advocate for LWVUS priorities on the national level in the areas of **Global Climate Change** and **Universal Health Insurance**;
- Finish the **PAC study**, come to consensus and advocate for the results;
- Keep abreast of **election laws** and advocate for the League position in areas such as Early Voting, Redistricting, Random Audits of Ballots, the state's Optical Scan RFP, Centralized Voter Registration in Maine and Real ID;
- Reach concurrence on and advocate for **IRV** (Instant Run-off Voting);
- Produce another **Easy-to-Read Voters Guide** in cooperation with Literacy Volunteers of Maine;
- Provide opportunities for **voter education**, including sponsorship of the Maine Humanities Council's play, "*As Maine Grows*" and "Forums in a Box" developed by the State League to help local Leagues and Members-at-Large present educational forums about questions on the November ballot.
- Continue to provide information on **how to register** and the mechanics of voting;
- Continue to **welcome new citizens** at Naturalization Ceremonies in Portland, South Portland and Bangor;
- Keep a visible **Lobby Corps** presence at the State House;
- Reestablish the **Keys to the Capitol** advocacy day in February in the Hall of Flags at the State Capitol.

We need your help to carry out our ambitious plans. We would welcome your help. If you see an area where you could and would like to help, please contact me or a member of the Board. If a forum or meeting is going on near you, please attend and bring a friend or two. As a League member, you know that all of this is exciting— but more than that, it is important. Please join with us to make a difference.

- Barbara McDade, President  
Bangor, Maine

## Ballot Measures for November 2009

The November 3 ballot may include two people's veto questions; and it will include four initiated measures and one bond issue.

On May 19, the Secretary of State completed work on the master **petition for citizens wishing to reject the law to legalize same-sex unions**. LD 1020, *An Act to Promote Marriage Equality and Affirm Religious Freedom*, which the League of Women Voters of Maine endorsed, was passed by the Legislature and signed by the Governor on May 6, 2009, and is scheduled to take effect on September 12, 2009. Citizens wishing to reject the law have until September 12 to submit petitions containing 55,087 valid signatures to the Secretary of State. If the petitions with sufficient signatures are submitted, then the law will be stayed until a statewide vote on the people's veto. To ensure placement of the people's veto on the November ballot, the petitions must be submitted to the Secretary of State by mid-August. Otherwise, the question will appear on the June 2010 ballot. As of June 1, nearly 5,000 petitions had been distributed to volunteers, who are now gathering signatures in churches, homes and public places. The proposed ballot question appears on the petition as the following: "Do you want to reject the new law that lets same-sex couples marry and allows individuals and religious groups to refuse to perform these marriages?"

On June 19, the Maine Republican Party filed an application for a **people's veto of LD 1495, An Act To Implement Tax Relief and Tax Reform**, passed by the Legislature on June 11 and signed by the Governor on June 12. The Secretary of State has a deadline of July 3 to complete work on the master petition for citizens wishing to reject the law, which increases the meals and lodging tax from 7 to 8.5 percent, lowers the tax rate on the first \$250,000 of income from 8.5 to 6.5 percent, and expands the sales tax to a wide variety of services. To ensure placement of the people's veto on the November ballot, citizens wishing to reject this law must also submit petitions to the Secretary of State by mid-August, leaving them approximately 45 days to collect 55,087 signatures. If the petitions with sufficient signatures are submitted between mid-August and September 12, then the question will appear on the June 2010 ballot.

The four initiated measures that will appear on the November ballot are: An Act to Decrease the Automobile Excise Tax and Promote Energy Efficiency; An Act to Establish the Maine Medical Marijuana Act; An Act to Provide Tax Relief; and an Act to Repeal the School Consolidation Laws. Descriptions of these ballot measures are in the March 2009 issue of *The Maine Voter*, available at [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org). These questions are open for public comment through the close of business on July 27, 2009. To view the proposed ballot questions, and for information on submitting public comments, visit the Secretary of State's webpage and look for [Proposed Ballot Questions/ Public Comment](#).

The **bond issue** that will appear on the November ballot involves \$71.3 million in funding for transportation projects, including highway construction and rail improvement. If approved by the voters, the bond would trigger \$133.2 million in federal matching funds.

By statute, Maine's Secretary of State is required to list ballot questions in the following order: carry-over measures from a previous election; people's veto questions; initiated measures; bond issues; constitutional amendments; and other legislatively proposed referenda. When there is more than one question in a category, the Secretary of State conducts a public drawing of numbers to place them in random order. All questions on the ballot are then numbered sequentially.

Updates to information on ballot measures is available on the Secretary of State's website at [maine.gov/sos/](http://maine.gov/sos/).

- Michelle Small, Brunswick

## League Lobby Corps Session Summary

The 124<sup>th</sup> Maine State Legislature convened for the first regular session on December 3, 2008, and adjourned on June 13, 2009. Regular Bills and Resolves passed during the first regular session become effective 90 days after adjournment, September 12, 2009. The second regular session of the Legislature convenes on Wednesday, January 6, 2010, the first Wednesday after the first Tuesday of January.

Through our volunteer Lobby Corps, the League monitored over 70 bills this session. A selection of the important bills we tracked is listed below. No League position regarding any bill is implied by its inclusion in this list. Complete information on each bill is available at the Maine Legislature's web site at [www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/](http://www.mainelegislature.org/legis/bills/). To see a more complete list of the bills we followed, visit us online at [www.lwvme.org/lobby.html](http://www.lwvme.org/lobby.html). To see a list of bills where LWVME offered testimony, go to [www.lwvme.org/about\\_action.html](http://www.lwvme.org/about_action.html).

## Campaign Finance

**LD 583 An Act Relating to Political Action Committees**, sponsored by Rep. Trinward. This bill would have established contribution limits to political action committees that participate in candidate elections. It got a unanimous Ought Not To Pass report in committee.

**LD 921 An Act to Eliminate Maine Clean Election Act Funding for Gubernatorial Candidates**, sponsored by Sen. G. Davis. In the very difficult budget climate that the Legislature faced this term, there was some interest in looking at Clean Elections to develop budget savings. There was another bill that proposed eliminating the program altogether. The gubernatorial part of the program was particularly vulnerable. This bill got a divided committee report along party lines, then died in concurrence.

**LD 1197 An Act to Improve the Maine Clean Election Act**, sponsored by Sen. Goodall. This was an important Clean Elections bill that included several key provisions, including a 30% increase in the number of qualifying contributions required from legislative candidates seeking to run with public funding; an increase in the contribution limits for publicly funded candidates to \$350 for legislative candidates (was \$250) and to \$750 for gubernatorial candidates (was \$500); and a change in the definition of a qualifying contribution to allow it to be \$5 or more. Passed and signed into law.

**LD 1380 An Act to Amend the Maine Clean Election Laws Governing Gubernatorial Candidates**, sponsored by Speaker Pingree. Given that the gubernatorial portion of the Clean Elections program was particularly vulnerable in the current budget climate, this was perhaps the most important Clean Elections bill this session. It included several important changes to the gubernatorial part of the system. The bill strove to make sure that the hurdle for gubernatorial candidates was quite high so that

only the most viable candidates could qualify, and then it sought to make sure that those who did qualify got sufficient resources to be competitive. Key provisions include: raising the qualifying hurdle for gubernatorial candidates by requiring \$40,000 in seed money raised from Maine voters; raising the cap on seed money from \$50,000 to \$200,000; and raising the initial distribution of MCEA funds to gubernatorial candidates in contested primary elections to \$400,000, with an additional \$200,000 available in matching funds. Passed as amended and signed into law. Emergency, effective immediately.

## Civil Rights

**LD 1020 An Act to End Discrimination in Civil Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedom**, Sponsored by Sen. Damon. This bill repealed the provision that limits marriage to one man and one woman and replaced it with the authorization for marriage between any two persons that meet the other requirements of Maine law. It specifies that a valid marriage between two people of the same sex in another state is valid and must be recognized in Maine. It clarifies that the authorization of marriage between two people of the same sex does not compel any religious institution to solemnize same-sex marriage in conflict with its doctrine. Passed as amended and signed into law; citizen's veto attempt pending.

## Conduct of Elections

**LD 129 Resolve, Directing the Secretary of State to Conduct a Pilot Program for Early Voting for the November 2009 Elections**, sponsored by Senate President Mitchell. This resolve allows selected municipalities that wish to participate to conduct early voting at polling places up to 10 days prior to the November 3, 2009 election day. The resolution was adopted.

**LD 350 Resolution, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine Regarding Early Voting**, sponsored by Senate President Mitchell. This resolution would have called for a constitutional amendment to allow the Legislature to authorize early voting at polling places in or outside their election districts during the 10-day period immediately preceding an election. Failed final passage.

**LD 1170 An Act to Ensure the Accuracy of Maine Election Results**, sponsored by Rep. Trinward. This bill began as a way of using election recounts to begin

to develop a process for election audits given that true random audits would be too costly to be considered in the current climate. The bill was amended into a Resolve which directs the Secretary of State to submit a report to the Joint Standing Committee on Legal and Veterans Affairs by February 15, 2010, including recommendations for a formal system of examining election recount results to provide information on the accuracy of elections in the State. Adopted as amended.

## Election Methods

**LD 56 An Act to Join the Interstate Compact on the National Popular Vote**, sponsored by Rep. Martin. This bill proposes that Maine adopt the interstate compact by which participating states agree to elect the President of the United States by national popular vote. Under the compact and the bill, the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia will win the presidency. The bill got a majority Ought Not To Pass report out of committee. It was eventually carried over into the next special or regular session of the Legislature.

**LD 1344 Resolve, To Authorize a Pilot Project on Ranked Choice Voting**, sponsored by Rep. Russell. This resolve would have established a 2-year pilot project overseen by the Secretary of State using ranked choice voting to determine a majority winner in municipal elections with 3 or more candidates. The pilot project would involve up to 10 municipalities selected by the Secretary of State. This bill got a majority Ought Not To Pass Report in committee, was indefinitely postponed, and died.

## Ethics and Disclosure

**LD 310 An Act Regarding Grassroots Lobbying**, sponsored by Rep. Trinward. This bill changes the term "grassroots lobbying" to "indirect lobbying" and specifies that indirect lobbying is communication to members of the general public soliciting them to directly communicate with legislators or members of the executive branch regarding a legislative action. Under this amendment, indirect lobbying expenditures must be reported if they exceed \$15,000 a month. Passed as amended and signed into law.

**LD 1210 An Act Pertaining to Volunteer Lobbyists for Nonprofit Organizations**, sponsored by Rep. Carey. This bill as amended provides that a person is not considered a lobbyist if that person receives only

reimbursement for out-of-pocket expenditures for lobbying-related activities made during the course of lobbying and is not otherwise compensated. Passed as amended and signed into law.

- Ann Luther, Trenton

## League Takes No Position on the National Popular Vote Compact

The League's study of the National Popular Vote Compact is over for now. The analysis of the consensus forms was completed, and the final report was issued in June of 2009. The summary statement from LWVUS reads: "*The LWVUS affirms its support for the direct election of the president and abolition of the Electoral College, but the LWVUS has no position on the National Popular Vote Compact as currently proposed.*" The full report, *Recommendations to LWVUS Board about the National Popular Vote Compact Consensus*, is available at the For Members section of [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). Comments from many Leagues reflected: (1) concerns about bias in the questions (about half the Leagues complained about the questions or bias, primarily bias against the NPV Compact), (2) the misunderstanding that a choice had to be made between advocating for abolition of the electoral college OR supporting the NPV Compact, and (3) statements which seemed to contradict a given League's responses to the questions. It is likely that the issue of the election of the president of the U. S. by national popular vote will be revisited at the next League Convention, which is to be held in June of 2010 in Atlanta.

Dr. Barbara Klein, a member of the LWVUS study committee from Arizona, recently posted her report, "An Analysis of NPVC Study Results" on the For Members section of [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). Barbara noticed that some consensus forms showed answers to the consensus questions that were not consistent with the comments they made. Thus she attempted a holistic approach to the basic question: Do League members support the NPV compact or not? Among the numbers cited by Barbara's holistic approach is that 197 Leagues were Pro, 95 were Con, and 98 had no consensus. She tallied 3349 League members as Pro, 1253 Con, and 1897 had no consensus. Many of the "no consensus" results seemed related to confusion over the meaning of the questions. There were many erroneous statements and comments that indicated misunderstandings of the facts. She pointed out that the size of Leagues reporting varied from one to

hundreds, which may seem at variance with the one person/one vote ideal.

The NPVC continues to gain support across the country with five states – Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, Illinois, New Jersey, and Maryland -- having enacted it into law. The legislation in Maine has been carried over to the next legislative session. To stay informed about the progress of the NPVC around the country, see a proponent's website, [www.nationalpopularvote.com](http://www.nationalpopularvote.com). The League's NPVC email list has been discontinued, and League members are encouraged to use the League Leaders email list for more discussion of the NPVC. League members may also join a yahoo discussion for League members begun by Chris Pearson, a member of the Vermont League and the League's NPVC listserv, at [groups.yahoo.com/group/lwv\\_npv/](http://groups.yahoo.com/group/lwv_npv/).

- Martha Dickinson, Ellsworth

## Quad States Conference Looks at Campaign Finance Reform

The third annual Quad States Leadership Conference was held on May 30 and 31 in Wells, ME. This year, a keynote speaker was added to the program, followed by three workshops. As usual, each workshop was presented twice so all attendees could go to each of them. While the workshops covered traditional topics, the information was presented in the context of the issue of campaign finance reform (CFR).

The **Keynote Address** was given by **Arn Pearson**, Vice-President for Programs for Common Cause, who directs and oversees the national Common Cause program and issues agenda. He has extensive experience working for campaign finance reform at both state and national levels. Arizona, Connecticut, Maine, North Carolina and New Mexico have some campaigns financed with public funds. Connecticut's law went into effect for the 2008 election, and 81% of candidates were elected without money from special interests. In Maine that number was 85% and in Arizona 54%. North Carolina elected 2/3 of its judges with public financing. Public financing legislation is under consideration in more than 30 states. Experience has shown that public financing of campaigns results in more candidates running for office, candidates from more diverse backgrounds, more contested races, and a reduced spending gap between incumbents and challengers. The question

appears to be not how much money is spent on a campaign, but who pays. Many states are now looking at some variation of a hybrid system. In this case, candidates qualify for public funds by raising some donations from individuals only, to demonstrate grassroots support. Having qualified, the candidate would receive a public grant plus a publicly funded match of (say) 4:1 from small donors. Although there would be a cap on the public funding, the candidate may continue to raise small donations beyond that cap. Current federal legislation includes the Fair Elections Now Act, addressing funding for House candidates (H.1826) and Senate (S.752). Information about these bills can be found on the Library of Congress THOMAS Website at <http://thomas.loc.gov/>.

A recent Common Cause poll indicates widespread dissatisfaction with the way electoral campaigns are now financed: 81% said we need to change how we pay for campaigns; 73% believe that large contributions were a factor in the financial collapse; 79% believe that large contributions are an obstacle to change; and 67% support public campaign funding. Members of Congress have to spend up to 20 hours per week raising money for their political parties, and Common Cause found, for example, that members of a health care committee get three times as much money from health industry lobbyists as those who are not on a committee of interest. Public financing as now envisioned can get rid of big contributors to individual candidates, but does not address contributions to political parties. More information about the role of money in politics can be found at <http://www.opensecrets.org/> (The Center for Responsible Politics) and <http://www.cgs.org/> (The Center for Governmental Studies).

## Fundraising from Individuals – a Workshop

**Amy Halstead** led this workshop. She is the Communications and Development Director for Maine People's Alliance, a coalition for social change. Fundraising is more than raffles, bake sales, and direct mail campaigns; serious fundraising involves direct one-on-one requests for large donations, which can mean anything from \$100 to many thousands.

Halstead acknowledged that the hardest part of this kind of fundraising is picking up the phone and asking for an appointment to talk about your project/organization/issue. The group easily came up with a list of reasons why it is so difficult. But there was an equally long list of why it's necessary: people give more when asked in person; the donor is more



invested in your cause; it creates a permanent relationship with the donor; you gain more information about the donor; it gives donors the opportunity to learn more about your cause; creates a more diverse stream of funds; creates a stable base of support; it's unrestricted money. People give because it feels good, they care about the issue, and because *they're asked*. Techniques for approaching this kind of fundraising were provided, and are available to our members. Halstead told the group that it doesn't matter if you hate it, doesn't matter if you're good at it, you just have to do it, because it works.

## Organizing for an Issue – a Workshop

**Cathy Silber**, Coalition Coordinator for the New Hampshire Coalition for Open Democracy, led this workshop. The Coalition is a nonpartisan group of organizations, including LWVNH and individuals working to bring publicly funded elections to New Hampshire. Silber defined power as the ability to achieve a purpose. She told the group that there is a distinction to be made between a problem and an issue; pollution may be the problem, but the issue would be green energy. For change, you have to organize around the issue, not the problem. Strategy is to make someone do what you want – winning should always be focused on the issue. Silber provided a strategy chart to be used as a guide to developing strategy. She worked through the headings on the chart: Goals; Organizational Considerations; Constituents, Allies and Opponents; Targets; Tactics; Research Needs and Ideas; and Message. Organizers must be clear on goals. The primary targets are those with the power to make decisions. Secondary targets are those who have more power over primary targets than you do. And you have more power over them than over the primary target. Secondary targets are sometimes found among allies. Tactics are actions taken toward the targets to reach the goal. Time did not allow thorough discussion of this organizing scheme. However, Silber told us that this analysis was largely drawn from the book *Organizing for Social Change*, available from the Midwest Academy, a training and consulting organization for activist groups. The LWVVT will obtain this book. More information about the Academy can be found at [www.midwestacademy.com/](http://www.midwestacademy.com/).

## LWVUS Priorities in Lean Times

LWVUS Liaison to the Quad States Judy Davis explained that the national board sets its legislative priorities in January. Their choices are determined by

member interest expressed at convention or council; information from our two paid lobbyists about what is most likely to happen in Congress, and where the League can have the most impact; the mood in the country; and input from state and local Leagues, which is new.

Lobbyist Lloyd Leonard concentrates on campaign finance and climate change. Betsy Lawson works on health care reform. LWVUS staffer Christina Vamvas, is in charge of the League's grassroots efforts and answers questions from state and local Leagues about their lobbying activities on the federal level.

This year the League's top two priorities are health care reform and global climate change. DC voting rights and election reform comprise the second tier priorities. The third tier, essentially a watching brief, includes campaign finance reform, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women), civil liberties, ethics and lobby reform and redistricting. CEDAW was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979, and never adopted by the U.S. With the change in administration, Sen. Kerry is chair of the Foreign Relations Committee, and there is now a chance of movement on this convention. The League is seeking funding for education on redistricting.

In response to widespread member concern, Davis explained why the LWVUS is not advocating for a single-payer health insurance plan. We were told that realistically, single payer is simply not going to happen for now. Betsy Lawson is doing well on the Hill, with good relationships with legislators. The League is not supporting any plan now out there because there is still time to influence legislation. [In an interview with Ezra Klein of the *Washington Post*, Sen. Bernie Sanders said essentially the same thing. Though he has filed a bill for single-payer, he will be advocating for a public option in health insurance reform legislation.] Davis said that while the League is not “nimble,” we are still here after nearly ninety years because of our deliberative process and our strong grassroots. We will be receiving guidelines for working with coalitions, which can strengthen our voice.

*Editor's note: This article is excerpted from the Green Mountain Citizen, Summer 2009. GMC is the newsletter of LWV-Vermont.*

## Convention Speakers

LWVME's 2009 convention featured talks by three dynamic women. **State Representative Diane Russell** spoke Friday evening. Rep. Russell is serving her first term in the Legislature and sits on the Legal and Veterans Affairs Committee. She represents the Munjoy Hill section of Portland and works as a clerk in a convenience store, where, she says, she can hear what people in her district are really thinking. She has a bachelor's degree in media studies from the University of Southern Maine. She also is a public relations consultant and has done citizen lobbying, community organizing and public policy work. She is a founding board member of the Opportunity Maine Campaign, a nonprofit organization that used the citizen's initiative process to get legislation passed to make college more affordable for all Mainers, and a former member of Common Cause Maine.

Saturday morning, **Julie Flynn, Deputy Secretary of State**, spoke to us about how the Division of Elections strives to make continuous improvements in election processes and technology and to create an environment of inclusiveness for all voters. She discussed Early Voting versus Absentee Voting and pilot projects for Early Voting, the issue of centralized voter registration in Maine, random audits of election results, the optical scan RFPs, Real ID, and other upcoming changes in how we vote in Maine. Julie began her service as a Maine election official in 1988, serving as an Assistant City Clerk for the City of Portland. She holds a BA in Psychology and a Master of Business Administration, both from the University of Maine at Orono. Julie is a Maine native who lives in Richmond with her husband Bob. They have three grown children and four grandchildren.

Saturday afternoon, **Theresa Amato** addressed the Convention. She is the author of ***Grand Illusion: The Myth of Voter Choice in a Two-Party Tyranny***. Her book makes a powerful case for reforms in the United States' system of ballot access laws, complex regulations, and partisan control of elections. She was the national presidential campaign manager and in-house counsel for Ralph Nader in both 2000 and 2004. A graduate of Harvard University and NYU School of Law, she founded the Citizen Advocacy Center in suburban Chicago and works with many nonprofit organizations. She has been a fellow at Harvard's Institute of Politics at the John F. Kennedy School of Government and a Wasserstein Public Interest Law Fellow at Harvard Law School. A practicing lawyer, Amato lives with her family in Oak Park, Illinois.

- Barbara McDade, Bangor

## Health Care and Climate Change – LWVUS Priorities

The National League has set two priorities for the coming year – Health Care Reform and Climate Change.

Although the League has not backed any particular legislation, it has issued strong statements urging comprehensive health care reform. In a recent letter to members of Congress, League President Mary Wilson said, "As Congress begins to consider health care reform legislation, the League of Women Voters urges you to consider the following issues. First, health care reform legislation must guarantee quality, affordable health care to all U.S. residents. The League of Women Voters believes that it is universal coverage that will determine the humanity of our system. The legislation must include a benefits package that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care, acute care, long-term care, and mental health care. In addition, any health care package must include prescription drug coverage and allow for pre-existing conditions." (See the Health Care Reform section of [lwv.org](http://lwv.org) for the full letter of April 18, 2009.)

On June 23, the LWV-US joined with a few dozen other organizations in urging Congress to pass the **American Clean Energy and Security Act** of 2009 (ACES). This legislation passed the House on June 26, setting new limits on the greenhouse gas pollutants that are causing global climate change. Mary G. Wilson, president of the League of Women Voters, said the legislation, "is truly historic because it represents the first time the U.S. Congress has acted against global warming." Wilson hailed the "closely fought, bi-partisan vote" that passed the legislation by 219 to 212.

Please see the LWVUS website at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) for a wealth of background information and statistics as well as the latest news on the League's work on our issue priorities of Health Care Reform and Climate Change.

- the Editor



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### **Calendar for Summer & Fall 2009**

LWV Portland - Portland Charter Commission O'Natural's Community Room, Exchange Street, Portland	Tuesday, July 7, 3 pm
LWV Downeast – As Maine Grows	Tuesday, Sept 8, 7 pm
LWVME State Board, Augusta	Thursday, Sept 10, 10 am
LWV Brunswick Area – As Maine Grows	Tuesday, Sept 29, 7 pm
LWV Bangor – As Maine Grows	Saturday, Sept 12, 12:30 pm