



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

The Maine Voter

Volume 29, Number 2

Spring 2012

Contents	Page
President's Letter	1
Clean Elections Weakened	2
Lobby Corps	2
Disclose Act 2012	3
Oxfam Urges Farm Bill Reform	3
Hazel Sinclair and Kittery League	4
News from the Portland League	4
News from Downeast	5
ALEC and Gun Law in Maine	5
Coalition for Maine Women	5
Mainers United for Marriage	6
Convention 2012	6
Join the League	7
Calendar	8

LWVME Officers	
President: Barbara McDade	Bangor
Vice President: Jill Ward	S. Portland
Secretary: Colleen Tucker	Portland
Treasurer: Ann Luther	Trenton
Directors	
Martha Dickinson Polly Ferguson Anne Schink Sarah Walton Cathie Whittenburg	Ellsworth S. Portland S. Portland Augusta Portland

Editor: Martha Dickinson

Contributors: Margery Forbes, Ann Luther, Pam Person, Anne Schink, Ali Vander Zanden, Jill Ward, 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

Dear League Members,

On June 8 – 12, the League of Women Voters will hold its 50th National Convention in Washington DC. This year's focus will be on *The Power of the Vote*. Eleanor Clift, political reporter and author, will be on a panel that will focus on what the League, in partnership with others in our communities, can do to unite people and advance solutions. There will also be a showing of the film, *Patriocracy*, an exploration of the manipulation of voters and the resulting extreme polarization that hogs meaningful solutions to serious issues. It is heartening to see the League continue its work to fight voter suppression and to seek solutions to the divisiveness of today's political climate. Over the last two years, the League has seen a move toward voter suppression, attacks on environmental protections, and underfunding of needed government programs. These efforts are well funded and organized. But we are organized, too. Our voice, whether raised against bad bills in the state house or raised to educate and inform voters, is being heard. We need your continuing support.

We congratulate LWVME Board Member Anne Schink on her nomination to the 2012-2104 LWVUS Board. Her long League experience and relevant professional skills will make her an excellent addition to the national board. We are only sorry that her election at Convention 2012 in June will mean that she will have to step down from the state board. We will miss her on the LWVME Board but expect to see her remain active in local and state League activities, even as she fulfills her new obligations. Kudos to Anne!

I am happy to announce that two of our LWVME Board Members, Jill Ward and Ann Luther, have been selected to join the LWVUS Campaign Finance Task Force. This group will research the various proposals now in the Congress calling for constitutional amendments in response to the 2010 *Citizen's United v. Federal Election Commission* decision and to produce background information for League members. I'm very proud that our two able League members were chosen for the nine-member Task Force.

As a member of the League, you know that we study issues and come to a consensus before advocating for a position. Currently our Local Leagues are working to see if we have a consensus on Privatization. Privatization of government assets, services and functions has been occurring for decades at all levels of government. The consequences of privatizing a government service or function may enhance the function or service, or it may reduce or alter them. Government revenues may be reduced or lost and jobs may be cut, but this may have a detrimental effect on the common good. The purpose of the study is to identify policies and parameters that should be considered when any governmental entity is planning to undertake some type of privatization process. Leagues in Downeast and in Portland have been meeting to study Privatization and answer the consensus questions that will be sent on to LWVUS.

Finally, everyone is invited to the Maine League's Council Meeting on Thursday, May 31, in Augusta. There will be a state board meeting that day, and we invite all our members to join us for lunch at noon to talk about the future of our League—what you see as our direction for the coming year and how you think the League can help in areas of voter service, voter education, advocacy and civil discourse. Please keep an eye on your email to learn where this meeting will be, and make plans to join us.

- Barbara McDade, Bangor, President, LWVME

Legislature Weakens Clean Election Law

The 125th Maine Legislature voted to eliminate the matching funds portion of Maine's Clean Election Act and rejected a proposal that would have replaced matching funds with an alternative to keep the system whole. Last June, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled that triggered matching funds like those in the Maine Clean Election Act are unconstitutional. Although the elimination of the matching funds language brought Maine law into compliance with that ruling, the legislature failed to enact new legislation that would protect Clean Elections. This failure was a victory for opponents of campaign finance reform and publicly funded elections. It will weaken Clean Elections and allow more big-money and corporate influence in Maine elections.

This outcome, combined with the doubling of the contribution limits for governor, makes the 125th Legislature the first to substantially weaken our citizen-initiated public financing program.

In 1996, voters overwhelmingly approved the Maine Clean Election Act so that community-supported candidates could compete against wealthy opponents and those with close ties to special interests. The original law included a system of supplemental funds that allowed candidates to fight back in expensive, hotly contested races or when publicly financed candidates are faced with high-spending, privately financed opponents.

In September of 2011, after a Supreme Court ruling in June and following several months of review and public comment, the nonpartisan Ethics Commission proposed a "re-qualifying option" that would comply with the court decision and keep Clean Elections viable for candidates in all types of races. Sensitive to the tough budget times facing Maine, the Commission found a budget-neutral solution that addressed the court decision while remaining true to the original program.

The proposal they put forward, known as the "re-qualifying option," would allow participating candidates to receive supplemental funding after successfully completing one or two additional rounds of collecting Qualifying Contributions – the \$5 donations that local voters make to help a candidate qualify for public funding. Without access to additional resources, candidates in competitive races may opt to privately finance their campaigns, and participating candidates will be more vulnerable to outside spending. Possible consequences include:

- Reduced candidate participation in the Clean Elections program
- Reduction in the competitiveness of MCEA candidates when facing privately-financed opponents
- Increased reliance on PAC spending in Clean Election races, with caucus PACs making up

through independent expenditures what candidates would otherwise have received directly to their campaign

- A rise in uncontested races
- An increase in the power of incumbency, with fewer challengers competing successfully against incumbents

MCCE will be watching developments in the 2012 election to see whether that election displays any of these adverse outcomes. In the meantime, MCCE is investigating alternative routes for the next round of campaign finance reform.

- Ann Luther, Trenton, LWV and MCCE

Clean Elections in the 125th Legislature

- ↑ Repeal of Clean Elections: Failed
- ↑ Repeal of Clean Election in Gubernatorial Races: Failed
- ↓ Doubled Contribution Limits to Privately-funded Candidates for Governor: Passed
- ↓ Replace Requalifying Option to Matching Funds: Failed
- ↓ 5% Cut to Candidate Distributions: Passed

The League Lobby Corps Update

The Second Regular Session of the 125th Maine Legislature convened on Wednesday, January 4, 2012. Statutory Adjournment for the Second Regular Session is the 3rd Wednesday in April: April 18th. Adjournment can be extended twice, in increments of 5 days each, through the passage of a Joint Order. At this writing the Legislature is in recess and will reconvene on May 15, 2012.

The Lobby Corps acts for the Board in developing testimony and monitoring legislation in those areas where we can make a significant impact. In addition to the Clean Elections bills summarized above, here are some of the bills we followed in the Second Session.

Photo ID for Voters

The right of every citizen to vote has been a basic principle of the League since its founding in 1920. The League believes that "voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed." Requiring a photo ID to vote could disenfranchise a significant percentage of Maine voters, including many elderly, disabled, and poor.

LD 199 would have required voters to have a Photo ID every time they vote. Studies indicate that approximately 11% of the population does not have a qualified ID. The League opposed LD 199, which was narrowly defeated during the first regular session and carried over for another try in the second session. It was reintroduced in the second session as a Resolve to study voter participation, voter registration, and the conduct of elections, with the results to be presented to the 126th legislature in February 2013. The Resolve passed and was signed by the Governor on March 20.

Ethics and Disclosure

There were several bills this session dealing with ethics, disclosure, and the public's right to know.

LD 1150 allows the Ethics Commission to investigate violations of legislative ethics on its own volition or by using information other than the filing of a formal complaint. This bill was carried over from the first session. The League supported this bill, which did pass and was signed into law on February 10.

LD 1465 was another carry-over bill. Among other measures, this Freedom of Access bill includes funding for the long-sought Public Access Ombudsman in the Office of the Attorney General. The League supports this measure. As of this writing, LD 1465 passed the House and awaits action in the Senate.

LD 1805 was a new bill for the second session. It would have created a public records exception for working papers of the Governor and the Governor's office. Under the proposed legislation, reports and working papers would not become public records until they were publicly distributed or until the adjournment of the legislative session for which they were prepared. The League opposed this bill, which died between chambers.

LD 1806 was also a new bill for the second session. Following reports that organizations run by government officials or their spouses had received substantial state contracts between 2003 and 2010, this bill requires disclosure of state contracts with legislators, executive branch officials, or their immediate family members. The League supported this bill, which passed the legislature and was signed into law on April 13.

Primaries and Caucuses

LD 1882 would once again permit the parties to decide in a presidential election year whether to hold a primary election or to express presidential preference through caucuses. The bill was replaced by a Resolve that directs the Joint Standing Committee on Veterans and Legal Affairs to develop legislation for the 126th Legislature that establishes a presidential primary. The League was neither for

nor against LD 1882. That Resolve has passed in the House and awaits final passage in the Senate.

For more information on these issues or on how to volunteer for the Lobby Corps, visit our website at www.lwvme.org.

- Ann Luther, Trenton, LWV

DISCLOSE Act 2012

On February 9, Representative Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) introduced HR 4010, the *Disclosure of Information on Spending on Campaigns Leads to Open and Secure Elections Act of 2012* or the **DISCLOSE 2012 Act**, to address the influence that unlimited, secret corporate and union money has on our elections and our elected officials. And, on March 21, Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) introduced its companion, S 2219, in the Senate. In the wake of the 2010 Supreme Court decision in *Citizens United*, the bills would close loopholes in current campaign finance law by calling for new disclosure requirements to cover contributions being spent in federal elections by nonprofit groups and other entities. The bills would create robust reporting requirements for Super PACs, corporations, unions and nonprofit organizations that make campaign expenditures. They would also require reporting of transfers by those groups to others making such expenditures in order to expose the source of huge campaign contributions.

When similar legislation came up for votes in the House of Representatives in 2010, Maine Representatives Michaud and Pingree supported the measure, which passed 219-206. Unfortunately, Senators Snowe and Collins voted against moving it to the floor for debate and amendments, effectively killing its chance for passage in the 111th Congress. Senators cited the bill's exemptions for certain organizations as an objection to the bill.

Unlike the DISCLOSE Act of 2010, the new proposals focus solely on disclosure requirements. They do not contain any of the nondisclosure provisions that were in the 2010 legislation, such as restrictions on expenditures by government contractors. And unlike the 2010 legislation, the bills do not contain any special exceptions for any group.

With the new legislation, Congress has the opportunity to call for election laws that provide citizens with basic information about who is funding our elections or to support the status quo and allow secret money to continue to influence our elections.

- Jill Ward, S. Portland, LWV and MCCE

Oxfam Urges Farm Bill Reform

In early March, I was privileged to represent the LWVME at an International Women's Day Conference in Washington, DC. This conference was sponsored by Oxfam America's *Sisters on the Planet* project.

The emphasis this year, in light of the pending reauthorization of the Farm Bill, was to promote changes in international food aid programs. As before, the emphasis was on helping women, who do a majority of family farming in many countries. With climate change affecting all aspects of food and water supplies, agricultural aid and technical support are more important than ever.

Pilot programs that help empower countries to develop their own agricultural policies are working. We need to continue these small investments that will save money, ensure the countries' ability to gain self-sufficiency, save lives, and build positive relationships with the United States. As three military veterans with us said, "better seeds than bullets" to build international support for the United States.

I met with staff from the offices of Representative Pingree, Senator Collins and Senator Snowe to discuss Oxfam's proposed changes in the Farm Bill. Hearings are being scheduled now. Thank you, LWVME, for allowing me to represent you at this event.

- Pam Person, E. Orland, LWV-Downeast

From oxfamamerica.org

First, reforms must allow food aid to be purchased locally and regionally within developing countries. The 2008 Farm Bill created a small pilot program for local and regional purchase of food to prove that it can be done. Rigorous evaluation of this program has demonstrated that it can. Local and regional purchasing is a cost-efficient and effective model to save lives and enable communities to build pathways out of poverty. The current pilot should become a regular program and receive funding as part of the core food aid program.

In addition, Congress must provide organizations delivering food aid with adequate funding so that they can deliver lifesaving programs without having to use food as a fundraising tool. Some organizations that deliver food aid sell it to raise cash to fund their programs. It's perfectly legal, but totally inappropriate. This process is extremely inefficient and can damage local markets, hurting farmers and undermining food security. Food aid must be used to save lives, not as an inefficient and wasteful way to generate funds for organizations providing food assistance.

Hazel Sinclair and the Kittery League

Thumbing through last August's Downeast magazine, a name jumped out at me from a very interesting article about a guest house run by Hazel and Clayton Sinclair, an African American couple, in Kittery Point, Maine. Their Rock Rest Inn operated during the summer months from 1948 to 1976, when very few places catered to blacks who wanted to vacation in Maine. In the late 1950's, I was a young married woman who had just moved to Maine and knew nothing about Maine or politics so I joined the League of Women Voters as a charter member of the Kittery League, which started out under the umbrella of the Portsmouth, New Hampshire League. Our early projects included the publication and distribution of a *Know Your Town* booklet, which explained the workings of local government. We studied the town manager/selectmen form of local government and held candidates nights. We sometimes met in the home of a black woman named Hazel Sinclair. She and her husband had come to Maine as maid and chauffeur, bought property and stayed. They were both civic minded and hard working, and their guesthouse was very popular. Clayton and Hazel also helped establish a branch of the NAACP.

- The August 2011 Downeast Magazine article is at <http://downeast.com/magazine/2011/august/safe-haven>
- UNH has a collection of Hazel Sinclair's writings and effects. See <http://www.library.unh.edu/special/index.php/rock-rest>

- Margery Forbes, Blue Hill, LWV-Downeast

News from the Portland Area

The LWV Portland Area has conducted two meetings on the national privatization study in preparation for the concurrence meeting on April 24. The members have enjoyed getting involved in issues that affect all the states and the federal government. Please join us for the consensus meeting on April 24th at 5:30 at the Burton Fisher Community Room at One City Center in Portland. Your voice matters!

The annual meeting, scheduled for May 22 at 5:30 at the Burton Fisher Community Room at One City Center in Portland, will feature Portland Mayor, Michael Brennan, speaking on his views about the new role of an elected mayor. All are welcome!

A small leadership team is gearing up to focus on "power the vote" for the fall election season. Anyone interested in joining this group to plan for Fall 2012 should contact Anne Schink at 799-3112 or abschink@zwi.net.

- Anne Schink, S. Portland, LWV

News from Downeast

The Downeast League continues to produce the outstanding radio program, **Democracy Forum**, with host Ann Luther. These programs air the 2nd Monday of each month. Our May 14th show will be on the role of corporations in politics and public policy, their role in financing political campaigns, lobbying, and possible alternatives to the current system. Robert AG Monks and Lisa Graves from the Center for Media and Democracy are our invited guests. Tune in from 10 to 11 am, Monday, May 14, to WERU at 89.9 FM Downeast or 99.9 FM in the Bangor area or go to live streaming at weru.org. Previous programs can be heard anytime by going to the WERU public affairs archive at archives.weru.org/category/democracy-forum.

The Downeast League has met several times to discuss the League papers on privatization and will meet Saturday, April 28, for a consensus meeting. The League papers can be found online at lwv.org/member-resources/privatization. Anyone interested in attending our meetings can phone Martha at 667-5863.

ALEC and Gun Law in Maine

The tragic shooting death of Trayvon Martin in Florida has brought to light the role that ALEC (American Legislative Exchange Council) and the NRA (National Rifle Association) play in writing state laws. In 2005, the NRA pushed the controversial Shoot First, or Stand Your Ground, law in Florida. It then teamed up with ALEC to help pass similar legislation in 24 states.

ALEC, a conservative lobbying group backed by the Koch brothers, drafts "model" legislation that is then taken by state legislators and introduced, often word for word, into state houses across the country. One of ALEC's gun bills came to Maine this year. *An Act to Protect Firearm Ownership During Times of Emergency* was submitted after deadline by Rep. Michael Shaw (D-Standish). The bill removes the ability of local or state law enforcement officials from prohibiting or restricting the "possession, use, carrying, transfer (sale), transportation, storage or display" of guns during a declared state of emergency. It removes the power of the Governor to suspend or limit the sale of firearms during a state of emergency. And it holds a law enforcement official or public employee civilly liable for any violation of the law.

The bill grew out of the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina. At the urging of the NRA, language was inserted in a federal appropriations bill that prohibited gun confiscation during emergencies. The NRA then worked with ALEC, adding "use,

carrying, transfer (sale), transportation, storage and display" to the language, and pushed the bill out to the states. This year alone the bill was introduced in five states, including Maine.

The bill was rushed through Maine's Criminal Justice Committee. It was referred to committee on a Tuesday, had a public hearing the next day, and a work session the day after that. How much review did the committee give this bill? Did they really consider the full range of scenarios possible under a state of emergency before opening the door to chaos, vigilantism, and an every-man-for-himself mentality? The bill quickly passed in both the Senate and the House and is now law.

When this bill was introduced in Colorado this year, and given ample time for a public hearing, both the Colorado Chiefs of Police and League of Women Voters testified against the bill. That bill died in committee.

Intense pressure from progressive organizations has led a number of corporations, including Coke, Pepsi, and Kraft, to withdraw their sponsorship of ALEC. And, in return, ALEC has announced it has eliminated their Public Safety task force that dealt with the controversial gun bills. They have also eliminated the task force that pushed voter suppression legislation across the country. That is very good news indeed.

- Cathie Whittenburg, Portland, LWV

Coalition for Maine Women

The LWVME is a member of the Coalition for Maine Women, which meets monthly in Augusta. This coalition gives us a wonderful opportunity to connect with other women from organizations that support the same issues we do. This legislative session saw across the board attacks on issues that affect women and children. Proposed cuts to TANF (Temporary Assistance for Needy Families) have required vigilance at every stage of the regulatory and legislative process. The coalition fills an important role in coalescing advocacy groups in a determined unity against these all-out attacks on women and children.

The League also participated in the **Girl's Day on the Hill** event on March 15th with over 100 girls participating. It was a pleasure to see girls from across the state gain in confidence as the day progressed, culminating with a session of their own from the seats of the House chamber.

The **Choice Coalition** is a sub-set of the Coalition for Maine Women, with additional members from the Choice community. This legislative year has been very challenging with successful efforts on all fronts

designed to tighten regulations on access to family planning and abortion at both the state and national levels. A strategic planning retreat provided a platform for each organization to explore the issues of greatest concern to them. Three goals emerged: (1) secure family planning as primary care through the Affordable Care Act; (2) use storytelling to decrease the stigma around abortion; and (3) allow advanced nurse practitioners to provide abortions. The Choice Coalition is planning activities around the 40th anniversary of Roe v. Wade, in January of 2013.

- Anne Schink, S. Portland, LWV

Mainers United For Marriage

The campaign to win the freedom to marry for same-sex couples in Maine, which the League of Women Voters is proud to support as a coalition member, is off and running! Newly named, the campaign is now Mainers United for Marriage, and has a campaign manager, Matt McTighe. Matt has been a longtime advocate for the freedom to marry. He helped defeat the anti-gay *Federal Marriage Amendment* in Congress with the Human Rights Campaign, and served as MassEquality's political director during the Massachusetts marriage campaign. For the last two years, Matt has been GLAD's Maine public education director, leading the efforts to develop a winning message and build support through public education. You can check out the campaign's new website at MainersUnited.org, where there is a great video introducing Matt.

And there's more good news! Recently the Maine People's Resource Center (MPRC) published this year's first poll of likely 2012 voters in Maine. Their results showed support for marriage at 58%. An internal poll in December and a PPP poll released in

March showed support at 54%. These polls show that there is growing support for the freedom to marry in Maine, but there's still much work to be done.

The marriage campaign's No. 1 priority during coming months is having one-on-one conversations with voters, with the ambitious goal of talking to 110,000 Mainers before Election Day on Nov. 6. Volunteers are crucial to achieving this vital goal, and there are many ways for people to help, from data entry to training others on how to talk with voters. There are offices in Portland, Lewiston and Bangor, and satellite teams working in Aroostook, Washington, Hancock, Waldo, Knox, Lincoln, Oxford and York counties. To join the campaign, visit MainersUnited.org for a list of volunteer events around the state, or e-mail Bridget Mancini at bmancini@equalitymaine.org.

Finally, if you work with an organization or group that would like to join the Maine Freedom to Marry Coalition in supporting the work of the campaign, please contact Ali Vander Zanden, coalition director, at avanderzanden@equalitymaine.org.

- Ali Vander Zanden, Equality Maine

LWV CONVENTION 2012

The LWVUS National Convention will be held June 8-12, 2012, at the Washington Hilton Hotel, 1919 Connecticut Avenue, Washington, DC. For the latest information, see www.lwv.org/member-resources/council-and-convention

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@lwi.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 \$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 one member. \$82.50 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
P.O. Box 863
Augusta, ME 04332-0863

ADDRESS SERVICE REQUESTED

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

Calendar for 2012

Privatization Consensus Meetings

Burton Fisher Community Room, One City Center, Portland

Ann Luther's Home, Trenton

Democracy Forum, WERU, 89.9 FM and 99.9 FM

Portland Area League Annual Meeting, Burton Fisher C. R.

LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta

LWVME Council, Augusta

LWV Convention 2012, Washington, DC

Primary Elections in Maine

Tues, April 24, 5:30 pm

Sat, April 28, noon

Mon, May 14, 10 – 11 am

Tues, May 22, 5:30 pm

Thurs, May 31, 10 am – 2 pm

Thurs, May 31, noon

June 8 – 12

Tues, June 12