



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

## The Maine Voter

Volume 30, Number 3

Summer 2013

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Dear League Members and Friends,

There never seems to be a slow time for the League. Since the last Voter, we have had Quad States, the LWVME State Convention, and the Board Retreat. Now we have had time to take a deep breath and are ready for the work before us.

This fall we will be working with Maine Citizens for **Clean Elections** on a citizen initiative to restore Maine's Clean Election system, strengthen disclosure laws and close loopholes in campaign finance system. By September, petitions will begin circulating. We need 70,000 voter signatures to place this question on the ballot. Ann Luther, Treasurer of our state League, serves as President of the MCCE Board and was the lead petitioner for the filing on July 19. Campaign finance reform has been a lead issue for LWVME since the mid-1990s.

Work has begun on the LWVUS **Agriculture Study**. Local Leagues in Maine have also begun work in this area, and it's not too late for you to join in the study if you haven't already.

At the retreat we talked about producing "**Know Your Community**" booklets for areas that have local Leagues. Even with the Internet, it is often hard to get local information.

On-going programs will include producing an Easy to Read **Voters Guide**; greeting new citizens at **Naturalization Ceremonies** in Portland and Bangor, which includes giving them information on registering and voting; staffing the **lobby corps** for our work in Augusta; local **candidate forums**; and registration drives and information sessions. We can use your help.

I'd like to welcome the new members to the Board – Lorraine Glowczak, Leslie Harlow, Barbara Kaufman, Kim McCollister, Polly Ward, Karla Wight, and Tammy Wing—and thank all the returning Board members. It will be an exciting and busy year.

No statewide referenda will appear on the November ballot, but there will be local elections as usual. The League will be involved in educating the public on some of these.

We, as League members, are continuing the fight for fair elections and helping voters get the information needed to make informed decisions. Whatever help you can give is greatly appreciated.

- Barbara, McDade, Bangor  
President of LWVME

## Dirigo -- Maine Citizens Lead

The First Regular Session of the 126th Maine Legislature finally came to a close and with it a disappointing lack of action to strengthen and restore our landmark Clean Election Act and to improve disclosure laws. But MCCE is proud of gains made to add Maine's voice to the states calling for a U.S. Constitutional Amendment on campaign finance.

We are committed to the fight for a robust, fully funded Clean Election program for all qualified legislative candidates, just as voters intended. The current suspension of gubernatorial Clean Elections, the failure to move forward on a supplemental funding program, and a continuation of what has become chronic under-funding leaves us frustrated and eager to pursue another path to our goal.

We are happy to announce that we have submitted the necessary paperwork to begin the process to put a **citizen-initiated bill** on the ballot. The legislation aims to **strengthen Clean Elections**, increase transparency, and close loopholes in Maine's campaign finance laws. We all want a government that is truly of, by, and for, the people, not one accountable to wealthy special interests. This initiative will bring us a long way toward that goal.

Ann Luther, President of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections and LWVME Board Member, submitted the application at the Office of the Secretary of State on July 19. She was joined by five more Maine voters, as required by Maine law. "Today, Maine people are taking the lead. The Clean Election system, successful for more than a decade, has been compromised by court rulings, legislative inaction, budget raids, gubernatorial vetoes, and more," said Luther. "I am proud to stand with fellow citizens who are committed to reducing the influence of special interest money in our elections and in our government."

Most of the provisions in this initiative have been presented to the legislature by bipartisan cosponsors several times. In some cases they failed to pass. In other cases, the legislature passed the bill and the governor vetoed or the bill was not funded.

Now is the time for citizens to lead, and we are doing just that. We know that we can count on strong allies, such as LWVME, to make this happen. This is the opportunity for Maine people to strengthen democracy by restoring Clean Elections and improving other areas of campaign finance law.

It will be a lot of work to collect the necessary signatures to put this initiative on the ballot, but we know that Maine people take their responsibilities seriously when it comes to elections and government.

By September, we expect to have petitions that we can begin circulating to collect the requisite 70,000 voter signatures to place a question on the ballot in 2014 or

2015. We are certain that the only way to restore our landmark Clean Election law is via the ballot. We will qualify for the ballot and win with Maine voters' help. With the help of our volunteers, allies, supporters and Maine people, we will push forward with efforts to reduce the role of money in our elections and government.

This is a culmination of much work done, and there is a lot more yet to come. For more information on the initiative and to sign up to help, please visit our website: [www.mainecelelections.org](http://www.mainecelelections.org)

Thanks for all that you do!

*BJ McCollister*  
Program Director  
Maine Citizens for Clean Elections

## The League Lobby Corps Update

The first regular session of the 126th Maine State Legislature convened on December 5, 2012. Statutory Adjournment was June 19, 2013, but the Legislature did not finally adjourn until July 10, 2013. The general effective date for legislation enacted this session – 90 days after adjournment – will be October 9, 2013. This applies to all bills that are not designated emergency legislation. The Second Regular Session of the 126th Maine Legislature will convene on Wednesday, January 8, 2014, at 10:00 a.m.

Here is a recap of action on the League's priority bills this session.

### Clean Elections

**LD 1309 An Act To Strengthen the Maine Clean Election Act.** This bill would have replaced the Maine Clean Election Act matching funds system – invalidated by the courts in 2011 – with a system of optional supplemental funding for participating Maine Clean Election Act candidates who collect additional qualifying contributions. It provided sufficient resources for publicly funded legislative and gubernatorial candidates in competitive races. LWVME supported this bill.

The bill passed both chambers and was placed on the Special Appropriations table for funding, which was not forthcoming. Instead, LD 1309 was referred back to the Veterans and Legal Affairs Committee for reconsideration in the 2<sup>nd</sup> session. The compromise biennial budget that did pass over the governor's veto eliminated funding for the gubernatorial Clean Elections program altogether

and left legislative candidates in competitive races with grossly insufficient resources.

**LD 1271 An Act To Increase Transparency in Reporting of Party Committees, Political Action Committees and Ballot Question Committees.**

This bill was a comprehensive transparency package that, among other things, would have required disclosure of “dark money” sources, “bundlers,” and contributions to gubernatorial inaugural and transition committees. It also increased the penalties for reporting violations close to an election. LWVME supported this bill through our partners at Maine Citizens for Clean Elections.

The bill was unpopular with leadership and other stakeholders, and the most impactful provisions were stripped before the bill got out of committee. The bill that went to a vote on the floor preserved only the increased penalties. That stripped-down bill did pass both chambers to be enacted, but it was vetoed by the governor, and the legislature sustained the veto.

**LD 1023 An Act To Provide Transparency in Fund-raising by and Lobbying of a Governor-elect.** This bill would have required a Governor-elect to establish a committee for the purpose of soliciting and accepting donations to finance inaugural activities or the Governor-elect's transition to office. Donations to the committee were required to be disclosed, and the Governor-elect was prohibited from personally soliciting or accepting donations to the committee. Communicating with a Governor-elect or the Governor-elect's staff to influence legislation would constitute lobbying and would fall under existing lobbying registration and disclosure laws. LWVME supported this bill through our partners at Maine Citizens for Clean Elections.

This bill passed both chambers to be enacted but was vetoed by the governor. The veto was sustained.

**Early Voting**

**LD 156 RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine Concerning Early Voting and Voting by Absentee Ballot.** This resolution as amended proposed a constitutional amendment to allow early voting, not require it. The resolution required a two-thirds majority in both chambers to pass. It would then appear on the ballot to be ratified by the voters. If the Constitutional amendment passed, there would be further legislation to establish the

particulars of how it will actually work in Maine. LWVME supported this bill.

The resolution achieved a two-thirds vote in the Senate, supported by a handful of moderate Republicans. It faced united opposition from Republicans in the House, with only two Republican House members voting in favor – Reps. Beaulieu and Kinney, both members of the VLA Committee. Although it failed to pass this session, it was referred back to committee for reconsideration in the second session.

**In Other Voting Matters ....**

**LD 511 An Act To Implement the National Popular Vote for President.** This bill proposes to adopt the interstate compact among the states to elect the President of the United States by national popular vote. Under the compact, the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia will win the presidency. Under this bill, all of Maine's electoral votes would be awarded to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes nationwide. This compact would take effect only when enacted by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes, that is, enough electoral votes to elect a President, which is 270 of 538. LWVME supports this bill.

This bill was not worked in committee this session. It had its public hearing and was carried over for action in the second session.

**LD 518 An Act To Establish Ranked-choice Voting in the State.** This bill creates the ranked-choice voting method of determining winners in elections for United States Senator, United States Representative to Congress, Governor, State Senator and State Representative. LWVME supported this bill.

There were numerous concerns expressed in committee hearings about cost and constitutionality. The bill got a divided report out of committee and was defeated on the floor of both chambers.

**LD 573 RESOLUTION, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution of Maine To Restrict the Voting Privileges of Persons Incarcerated for Murder or Class A Crimes.** This resolution proposed an amendment to the Constitution of Maine that would have revoked the right to vote of an incarcerated person if that person was convicted of a crime punishable by more than 10 years imprisonment, which currently includes

murder and Class A crimes. LWVME opposed this bill.

As a constitutional amendment, this resolution required a two-thirds majority in both chambers to pass. It would then appear on the ballot to be ratified by the voters. It was defeated by narrow majorities in both chambers.

## Ethics and Disclosure

**LD 69 An Act To Strengthen Financial Disclosure Laws for the Legislative and Executive Branches of State Government.** This bill called for a 12-month prohibition on senior-level executive branch employees from going to work as executives for, or under a contract to, any firm that was regulated by their state agency when they worked for the State of Maine. LWVME supported this bill.

The bill was roughly drafted and poorly supported by its sponsor. It did not get out of committee and died under the hammer.

**LD 184 An Act To Enhance Transparency in Government by Implementing a Waiting Period for Legislators before They May Register as Lobbyists.** This bill prohibits a person who served as a Legislator from lobbying until one year after that person's term as a Legislator ends. It applies to a Legislator who serves in the 127th Legislature or in a later legislature. LWVME supported this bill.

It was passed to be enacted and signed into law.

**LD 859 An Act To Improve Laws Governing Financial Disclosure by Legislators and Certain Public Employees and Public Access to Information Disclosed.** This bill proposed to close the revolving door between lobbyists and executive branch employment. It originally prohibited lobbyists from going to work in senior executive branch positions. It was ultimately amended to prohibit a person from lobbying for 12 months after leaving a senior position in the executive branch, effective January 2015. The League was neither for nor against this bill as originally proposed, but we supported the amended provisions.

This bill was passed to be enacted and signed into law.

**LD 1001 An Act To Improve Laws Governing Financial Disclosure by Legislators and Certain Public Employees and Public Access to Information Disclosed.** This bill amends financial disclosure laws applicable to Legislators and certain

executive branch employees. Annual income received of \$2,000 or more must include a description as to the nature of the income. Ownership interests of 5% or more in business entities must be reported. Involvement as a responsible officer of a political party or political committee by the Legislator or executive employee, or by a member of that person's immediate family, must be reported. LWVME supported this bill.

This bill had strong bipartisan support, including support from the governor's office. It passed to be enacted and was signed into law.

**LD 1222 Resolve, To Create a Task Force on Maine's Ethics and Transparency Laws.** This resolve established a Task Force To Study Maine's Governmental Ethics and Transparency Laws. LWVME supported this bill.

This bill had strong bipartisan support and passed both chambers, but because it had a fiscal note, it was placed on the Special Appropriations table, where it died for lack of funding.

## Gun Control

**LD 1240 An Act To Promote the Safe Use and Sale of Firearms.** As finally amended, this bill created a civil crime for the sale of a firearm to a prohibited person unless the seller requested a federally licensed firearm dealer to conduct a computerized background check. It also increased the fine for giving a false name to a firearms dealer and made the fine mandatory. Finally, it created a study group to be convened by the Chief of the State Police to review and make recommendations regarding the so-called blue paper process as it relates to persons admitted to a psychiatric hospital on an emergency basis who are temporarily prohibited from possessing firearms. LWVME supported stronger background checks.

This bill was passed to be enacted, but it was vetoed by the governor, and the veto was sustained.

*- Ann Luther, Trenton  
Chair, LWVME Advocacy Committee*

## Health Care Reform Issues

The Affordable Care Act (ACA) was the most significant national advance in health care system reform since the passage of Medicare in 1965. Despite passage of this hard-won reform, the state of our health care system remains a serious

concern, and Maine is particularly hard hit with an aging population and some of the highest health care and health insurance costs in the nation. While commendable for its underlying principle that people should have access to health care and for the additional access to coverage it will provide, the ACA falls short of fully solving the problem of the uninsured, as acknowledged by Congressional Budget Office studies last March, which estimated that 27 million Americans will be left uninsured after full implementation of the law in 2016.

Being uninsured can be fatal, as federal law requires only that hospital emergency rooms “screen and stabilize” presenting patients. An ER visitor screened and diagnosed with a malignant tumor cannot expect to be invited back for a free course of the standard-of-care treatment an insured patient would receive. This is but one example underlying the premature deaths of more than 3,000 uninsured people each month.

Furthermore, age-rated high-deductible limited-benefit coverage will remain the norm under the ACA for many Americans in the for-profit health insurance market. And for many, the ACA’s premium subsidies fall short of addressing affordability. Premium subsidies are capped at the level of “modified adjusted gross income” (“MAGI”) representing 400% of the Federal Poverty Level (“FPL”). At present, MAGI is essentially the IRS definition of adjusted gross income with some add-ons like non-taxable social security, although the ultimate definition of MAGI and the benefit design for health plans eligible for premium subsidies remain a work in progress.

The Henry J. Kaiser Family Foundation has a Health Reform Subsidy Calculator on its excellent website, and the results can be grim. No premium subsidies are available for a 52 year old individual with MAGI of \$46,136, which Kaiser estimates to represent 401% of FPL in 2014, the year premium subsidies go into effect. Without a subsidy, that 52-year-old in a high cost state like Maine faces a projected premium of \$750 per month for a health plan with a \$3,000 deductible plus an additional \$3,000 in coinsurance after the deductible is met. Premiums rise dramatically at age 60. Those numbers help explain why catastrophic medical expense drives 60% of American bankruptcies despite most of those so affected having been insured. Assuming Maine’s bankruptcies track the national experience, some 10,663 Maine people were driven to bankruptcy by catastrophic medical expense between 2008 and 2012.

There are rational alternatives to our profit-driven healthcare system that address cost, equity and quality -- all measures under which the American healthcare system fares poorly under the scrutiny of international comparison. Chief among them is a single payer “Medicare for All” system as embraced after careful study by Taiwan, the most recent

entrant into the global community of countries with universal healthcare systems.

We’ve made progress, but our work is not done. There are initiatives under way in many states seeking solutions that arrive at truly universal health care. Canadian single payer health care began as a provincial initiative in Saskatchewan and was later expanded nationwide.

Vermont continues to move forward under legislation enacted in 2011 to implement a single payer, publicly financed, universal health care system. Here in Maine, Maine AllCare is working to educate policymakers and the public on the merits of a statewide single payer system and has developed an impressive website at [www.maineallcare.org](http://www.maineallcare.org). Additionally, the Maine People’s Alliance is partnering with the Maine AFL-CIO and the Maine State Nurses Association to launch Maine’s Health Care is a Human Right campaign. See [www.mainepeoplesalliance.org/humanright](http://www.mainepeoplesalliance.org/humanright).

*- Alice Knapp, Richmond  
Maine AllCare Board Member*

## **Climate Change Action**

LWVUS is asking us all to call for federal action on climate change. League President MacNamara, in her weekly message of July 26, asks us to thank President Obama for his recent speech calling for reduction in carbon pollution from power plants and to urge our Senators to enact legislation that supports President Obama’s call.

President MacNamara said: “Power plants are the largest source of dangerous carbon pollution in the United States and carbon pollution is the leading cause of climate change. Despite this, there are currently no federal limits on the carbon pollution power plants can release. But finally, the Obama Administration has promised to issue regulations controlling carbon pollution from new and existing power plants within the next two years. With support from grassroots activists like you, those regulations can become a reality.

Ensuring these regulations move forward is not just the President’s job; it must be done in partnership with the U.S. Senate because the Senate can block the President’s actions. Tell your Senators to put people before polluters.”

Now is the time to contact the President and your Senators on this issue. Links to contact all of your political representatives can be found at [lwvme.org/Links.html](http://lwvme.org/Links.html) or by Googling.

### Thank You, Polly Ferguson



Polly Ferguson, of South Portland, recently retired from service on the board of LWVME. Polly joined the League of Women Voters in 1991, about a year before she retired from her position as a

social worker in a residential treatment center for children and families. She joined the Buffalo/Niagara League and was on the board there for several years. She worked on many issues including alternatives to incarceration, land use planning, sprawl, local government and waterfront development. When she moved to Maine in 2007, she transferred to the Portland League and joined the state study on Political Action Committees. Shortly after becoming active in Maine, she was recruited to serve on the LWVME State Board.

Polly can always be counted on to volunteer her time and energy wherever it is needed. Polly became the point person for telephone correspondence to the State League, and she was always willing to call through our list for any reason. Her graciousness and warmth made her an ideal representative for the League. She traveled diligently to Augusta as a member of our Lobby Corps – often every week – bearing witness at Committee hearings and work sessions. When we needed someone to carry forward with organizing the League’s participation at Naturalization Ceremonies in Portland and South Portland, Polly took over the job. She will be greatly missed on the State Board. She continues her work with the League, serving on the Portland Leadership Team. Aside from the League, she is involved in teaching ESL classes at a community center and, through her involvement with My Sister's Keeper, is a mentor to women coming out of prison.

Thank you, Polly, for your dedication!

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR SUMMER STUDY OF AGRICULTURAL ISSUES

Since March, the LWV Agricultural Update Committee (AUC) has been posting suggestions for activities that local and state Leagues could use in preparation for the discussions of the officially prepared AUC materials that will be circulated this fall. The best way to follow our work is through the [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org) website and the forum associated with the Ag Study. To access all of the League material, you must first register and login with a password. Once you have logged in, you can join the Agriculture Group.

On June 11<sup>th</sup>, the AUC posted a list of “summer readings” on the Forum that the committee recommends for those who want to improve their understanding of agricultural issues in preparation for the fall discussions. Some of the highlights are below:

Three specific background documents that provide a broad and relatively neutral overview of the complex set of issues addressed by U.S. agricultural policy include:

1. **Challenges and Opportunities in U.S. Agriculture** (Chapter 8 of the Economic Report of the President- 2013). Although the content of this 28-page report goes beyond the specific topics in the Update Scope, the Committee considers it an excellent introductory document offering background on such topics as the role of agriculture in the U.S. economy, structural changes that have taken place since the 1920s, the development of new markets (e.g., organic, local), the contribution of research and development to productivity growth, agriculture in world trade, and the challenges of agricultural risk management. See [www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/ERP-2013/ERP-2013-chapter8/content-detail.html](http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/ERP-2013/ERP-2013-chapter8/content-detail.html)
2. **The Healthy Farm: A Vision for U.S. Agriculture**. This is an 8-page position statement by the Union of Concerned Scientists and is, therefore, not entirely neutral. It looks at farming from a variety of perspectives (production, economics, and environment) and a variety of farming systems (industrial, conventional, organic, etc.), offering examples of technologies and management practices able to contribute to the UCS vision of a healthy farm. The report contains many useful references and links. [www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food\\_and\\_agriculture/The-Healthy-Farm-A-Vision-for-US-Agriculture.pdf](http://www.ucsusa.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/The-Healthy-Farm-A-Vision-for-US-Agriculture.pdf)
3. **Will Organic Fail to Feed the World?** The article presents a summary of a recent analysis of 66 studies comparing conventional and organic methods for 34

different crop species. There are numerous links available through the Scientific American article at:  
[www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=organic-farming-yields-and-feeding-the-world-under-climate-change&page=2](http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=organic-farming-yields-and-feeding-the-world-under-climate-change&page=2)

Three websites that provide useful information on agricultural issues include:

1. **Know Your Farmer** is a site supported by the USDA in their effort to inform the public about local food systems. A good place to enter this website is the "tools and resources" page, from which you can navigate to other parts of the website:  
[www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF\\_RESOURCES](http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usdahome?navid=KYF_RESOURCES)
2. **The National Sustainable Agriculture Council.** Although the materials on their website do support their mission, we find that their articles are well documented and do a good job of following Farm Bill legislative efforts that would help or hinder the sustainable agriculture movement. We suggest that you enter their website via the page that defines sustainable agriculture.  
[sustainableagriculture.net/about-us/what-is-sustainable-ag/](http://sustainableagriculture.net/about-us/what-is-sustainable-ag/)
3. The **"Food Dialogues"** website is a creation of the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance and brings together thoughtful leaders and practitioners from all points of view for moderated, civil webinar discussions. Starting at the home page of this website gives you an opportunity to link to some of the recent topics discussed on their FaceBook page: [www.fooddialogues.com/](http://www.fooddialogues.com/).

The Committee would like to point out that although we have done our best to identify neutral background resources, each of the documents and websites is presenting information that is consistent with the mission of the authors and/or sponsoring organization, so League members must be willing to read widely to get a balanced understanding of the agricultural policy challenges facing the U.S. in particular and the world in general.

(If you need help accessing these online sources, Valerie Kelly, at [kelly@msu.edu](mailto:kelly@msu.edu), has offered to email them to you. If you lack email, ask someone in your local League to print you a copy if you are involved with the study.)

- Valerie Kelly, Peaks Island, Maine  
LWV Agriculture Update Committee

## The Portland Area LWV

In addition to monthly general meetings offering topics related to League program, the Leadership Team meets every 6-8 weeks to plan, problem-solve, and divide the work. At the end of June we held our first Leadership Retreat, led by the amazing Anne Schink, a member of the Portland League, a former State Board member, and presently a member of the LWVUS Board of Directors. A League retreat is an enhanced regular meeting in a different setting, not quite so rushed, where we get to know each other better, set goals for the year, plan programs, and discuss new areas to tackle. It is all very energizing and stimulating. Tammy Wing and Kim McCollister, members from Windham and Westbrook respectively, have joined our Leadership Team. We are fortunate to have them.

This year members of the Portland Leadership Team sit on new State Board Committees such as Voter Education, Service, Membership, Special Events, Communications, and Finance. We facilitate communication and collaboration with other organizations and share resources to build and broaden our effective, growing League at all levels.

Our Portland Area League goals include: completion of the Agriculture Study by March and coming to consensus after considering prepared reading material, presentations and thorough discussion; continued membership growth; assistance with revitalizing the Brunswick League; sponsorship of local and school candidate forums; work on a Portland Area/Civics 101 Course with other organizations; and continued monthly meetings of interest to members and friends including "hot topics".

The Portland area Leadership Team welcomes ideas, questions, and comments. Email us at [LWVPortland@maine.rr.com](mailto:LWVPortland@maine.rr.com) or telephone Karla at 207-210-6572.

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

## News from Downeast

The Downeast League of Women Voters is moving forward with activities that will not only appeal to our current members but will also attract new members in the Downeast area. Over the course of the next 6 months, we will introduce the public to the LWV Ag Study with events that revolve around the Ag Study.

Our first event was held July 10 in Ellsworth where the LWV Downeast kicked off the yearlong study of public policy on agriculture with dinner and a program on beekeeping, with Tim McCormick of Ellsworth as the guest speaker. Tim tends a number of hives here in Hancock County and is actively involved with a

number of local beekeeper organizations. His lively discussion about bee keeping was informative and led to an informal conversation and questions about bee keeping; the current plight of bees; and bees, agriculture and the environment.

The Downeast League will continue to organize other such events to inform our members and members of our community as we update the League's position on agricultural policy. Our next event is scheduled for September 11 at the Ellsworth Public Library, where we will host the screening of the film, *Betting The Farm*. We hope that some of the farmers featured in the film will be in attendance. A panel discussion will follow. October will be another Ag Study Meeting and Discussion where we plan to host an expert guest.

LWV Downeast is well known for acting on its policy positions by advocating for change locally, as well on the state and national level. We are excited to offer these information sessions to the public and anticipate picking up new LWV members through efforts like these.

- Leslie Harlow, Ellsworth

### LWVME Convention 2013

LWVME's annual convention ran from May 31 through June 1 this year. Speakers on a wide variety of subjects shared their knowledge on topics of interest to the League, and a business meeting was held. Convention opened with an inspirational presentation from Posie Cowan, whose great-grandmother was active in the women's suffrage movement of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Cowan, of Blue Hill, discovered original banners used by her great grandmother Sophie Meredith in demonstrations held in Virginia and in Washington DC. Sophie Meredith marched alongside Alice Paul and was arrested at least four times. We got to see some of her original banners at the Convention. The League members and supporters in attendance began the convention by getting back to our roots in the women's suffrage movement.

Saturday brought presenters B. J. McCollister of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections, Political Science Professor Amy Fried, and Secretary of State Matt Dunlap.

McCollister spoke on campaign finance reform and money in politics. Convention attendees furthered their knowledge of the extent of money in politics, and how big money can even influence races here in Maine.

Professor Fried educated Leaguers on everything from the history of our democracy to the shocking income disparity that exists in our society. Fried is a professor at the University of Maine and is a regular columnist for the Bangor Daily News.

Secretary of State Matt Dunlap led a discussion on early voting and on ranked choice voting. Dunlap

provided attendees with new and different analyses and statistics on voting rights and advocacy for voters.

The business meeting was held just prior to the end of convention on Saturday. The budget was presented and passed, and the program for the coming year was discussed. All officers retained their current positions, with Barbara McDade continuing her presidency, Jill Ward her vice presidency, Ann Luther her position as treasurer and Colleen Tucker as secretary. The 2013-2015 Board of Directors consists of: Martha Dickinson, Lorraine Glowczack, Leslie Harlow, Barbara Kaufman, Val Marsh, Kim McCollister, Polly Ward, Cathie Whittenberg, Tammy Wing, and Karla Wight.

- Kim McCollister, Westbrook

### Quad States 2013



#### LWVME at Quad States 2013

The focus of this year's Quad States meeting was the LWVUS study on agriculture that will begin in earnest this fall. Although you may not think of New England as a hot bed of agriculture, it is an area whose citizens are greatly interested in the strength of their local food systems. The top five states for locavorism, according to the 2013 index done by the Strolling of the Heifers organization, are Vermont, Maine, New Hampshire, North Dakota and Iowa. Quad States is a meeting of the members of Leagues from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont and Rhode Island. This year it was held April 27 and 28 in Wells, Maine.

The keynote speaker was John E. Carroll. Dr Carroll is professor of environmental conservation in the Department of Natural Resources at UNH. His recent books include *Sustainability and Spirituality*, and *The Wisdom of Small Farms and Local Food*. His latest work is *The Real Dirt: Toward Food Sufficiency and Farm Sustainability in New England*. He is seeing a grassroots revolution against the agrarian practices of the past 50 years. He stated that 90% of the food we eat comes from unsustainable agriculture which includes factory farming, industrial agriculture (including GMO agriculture); agriculture based on 'cheap' food which guarantees the destruction of soils and the loss of human health; agriculture that requires food to be transported over 1500 miles from farm to plate; and agriculture based on non-renewable fossil fuels. He maintains that, "Sustainable



agriculture at the regional level balances all five farm types (meat, dairy, vegetables, fruit, grains) and operates within a local or regional food hub which includes food production, storage, distribution (both wholesale and retail marketing) and return of surplus to the land through composting and through animals. There is no such thing as waste. Everything is a resource.”

Dr. Carroll’s talk was followed by a report from Valerie Kelly, an agriculture economist who lives on Peaks Island. Valerie is on LWVUS’s Agriculture Update Committee. The Agriculture Update will focus narrowly on: 1) current technology issues in agriculture including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), herbicides, pesticides, agriculture water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock, and accurate food labeling; and 2) current agriculture finance issues including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop subsidies and the federal agricultural regulatory process.

LWVUS has a list of recommended reading for this summer. See them at this link: [www.lwv.org/content/agriculture-update-suggested-summer-readings](http://www.lwv.org/content/agriculture-update-suggested-summer-readings). (You must be logged in to access this page.)

The remainder of Quad States was devoted to “Bringing the Study Home”, as Anne Schink’s workshop was labeled. This workshop time with members from our neighboring states is always invigorating and enlightening.

- Barbara McDade, Bangor  
President, LWVME

## LWVME at National Council 2013



In June, Kim McCollister and Lorraine Glowczak (at left in above photo) represented LWVME at the LWVUS Council in Leesberg, Virginia. Maine’s own Anne Schink played a key role in a presentation from the Young People’s Task Force. Local leagues learned about the importance of branding, how to better focus our fundraising efforts, and how to best utilize different social media platforms.

The theme of Council this year was “Power: Our Voices - Our Votes”. Local Leagues learned unique and effective campaign strategies to protect our democracy. Everything from money in politics to news media was discussed. LWVME was given time for our planned speaking tour for Posie Cowan; we are looking forward to working with colleges and

universities across the state to host this lecture series. We also plan to revamp our membership recruitment strategy, host further events, work on a fundraising campaign, and continue our strong lobby corps.

- Kim McCollister, Westbrook

## Keeping Up With the Farm Bill

On June 10<sup>th</sup> the Agriculture Update Committee (AUC) of LWV posted information about the 2013 Farm Bill discussion that includes links to help members monitor progress on the Farm Bill. If you are logged in at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org), you may read that posting at: [forum.lwv.org/group/agriculture-update](http://forum.lwv.org/group/agriculture-update).

To follow House and Senate discussions of Farm Bill amendments and provisions:

- House Ag Committee Farm Bill page: [agriculture.house.gov/markup/consider-2013-farm-bill](http://agriculture.house.gov/markup/consider-2013-farm-bill); the link entitled FARRM Summary is a good place to start.
- Senate Ag Committee Farm Bill page: [www.ag.senate.gov/issues/farm-bill](http://www.ag.senate.gov/issues/farm-bill); the summary is the first link listed.

For a sustainable agriculture view of issues, consider following the National Sustainable Agriculture Coalition website: [sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/fbcampaign/](http://sustainableagriculture.net/our-work/fbcampaign/)

The National Association of State Departments of Agriculture (NASDA) provides a collective view of the Farm Bill activity and links to individual state-level departments of agriculture that cover a variety of state and national issues: [www.nasda.org/9887.aspx](http://www.nasda.org/9887.aspx)

The Farm Bill Primer is supportive of the Farm Bill overall, but is run by two individuals who do a good job of listing the links to the House and Senate bills, amendments from Committee and on the floor, and the status of each amendment: [farmbillprimer.org/](http://farmbillprimer.org/)

Since that June 10<sup>th</sup> posting, both the House and the Senate have passed Farm Bills, with the House bill (for the first time since 1973) not including a section to cover the SNAP nutrition program. A NYT article on July 15<sup>th</sup> provides an overview of the key differences between the

Senate and House bills, which as of July 30 is still in conference.  
[theaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/15/congress-seeks-path-forward-on-farm-bill-as-deadline-approaches/](http://theaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2013/07/15/congress-seeks-path-forward-on-farm-bill-as-deadline-approaches/)

(If you need help accessing these online sources, Valerie Kelly, at [kelly@msu.edu](mailto:kelly@msu.edu), has offered to email them to you. If you lack email, ask someone in your local League to print you a copy if you are involved with the study.)

*- Valerie Kelly, Peaks Island  
Member of the AUC of LWV*

### **Taking the First Step Toward Repairing the Voting Rights Act**

In mid July, both the Senate and House of Representatives held hearings to discuss the future of the Voting Rights Act (VRA). In late June, the U.S. Supreme Court gutted the Voting Rights Act of one of its key enforcement mechanisms, erasing fundamental protections against racial discrimination in voting that have worked to protect our democracy for over 40 years. The Court ruled unconstitutional Section 4 of the landmark law. Section 4 provided the formula that determined the states and jurisdictions where changes in election law required preclearance by a federal court or the Department of Justice due to their past discrimination.

In its decision, the Supreme Court left open a path for Congress to rework and restore this critical piece of civil rights legislation. This week, Congress got to work holding hearings in both chambers and beginning to discuss possible solutions and the path forward. While concrete proposals will not be drafted until later this year, in holding hearings this week, both branches of the legislature showed that the Voting Rights Act could continue to be an integral part in preventing voter discrimination.

In the Senate Judiciary Committee hearing, Congressman Jim Sensenbrenner (R-WI), who led the reauthorization efforts in 1982 and 2006, reaffirmed his commitment to the Voting Rights Act, calling for free, fair and accessible elections for all Americans. Sensenbrenner also recalled President Ronald Reagan calling the right to vote the 'crown jewel of our liberties' as he supported the 1982 reauthorization of the VRA. Congressman John Lewis (D-GA), who as a civil rights activist helped lead the fight for the VRA, told of the injuries he sustained while fighting for voting rights in the South in the 1960s. Later witnesses declared updating the Voting Rights Act to be a non-partisan issue and praised the voter

registration efforts of the League of Women Voters. They also underscored the fact that discrimination in voting continues to occur and that fixing the VRA is critical to continuing to prevent discriminatory laws from taking hold in municipalities and states across the country.

While hearings in the House Judiciary subcommittee on the Constitution and Civil Justice had more witnesses and members of Congress who were skeptical of the need to fix the VRA, the need to prevent discrimination in voting was still acknowledged. Instead of proposing a new enforcement mechanism, some suggested that the VRA would continue to prevent voter discrimination through Section 2. While Section 2 is an important enforcement mechanism in current law, it is by no means a replacement for repairing the damage done by the Supreme Court's decision. Section 2 enforcement comes after a discriminatory law goes into effect, whereas the preclearance process can prevent the implementation of discriminatory laws **before** any voters are discriminated against and their votes suppressed. The preclearance process outlined in Section 5, now effectively halted until Congress acts, has proven to be the least costly, and least damaging, mechanism for preventing racial and language discrimination in voting. If we do not repair this process, voting rights advocates would be battling a variety of attacks not only at the state level, but also in local and county jurisdictions as new election laws pop up. Simply tracking these changes at the local and county level, let alone taking action against harmful changes, would prove a daunting task to advocates and elections officials alike. Preclearance has proven to be essential to stopping discrimination at the polls time and time again; members from both sides of the aisle acknowledged that during the 2006 reauthorization of the VRA when more than 15,000 pages of evidence were amassed showing discriminatory elections practices. Without an operable Section 4 and 5, that could clearly grow exponentially.

It is clear that the forms of discrimination have changed since 1965 when the Voting Rights Act was passed. Discrimination today is more subtle even while it is systemic and institutionalized. An updated VRA will need to take this into account. Yet, it was promising to hear members of Congress on both sides of the aisle agree it remains a problem and discuss ways to combat it. This will surely be a complicated process, yet we are hopeful that it is one where Congress will be able to come together to protect our democracy and the right to vote.

*- from Stephanie Drahan of [lwv.org](http://lwv.org) on 07/19/2013*

**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).

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):

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

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### **Calendar for 2013**

LWVME Board Meeting, Augusta	10 AM, Sat, Aug 24
Betting the Farm, the Movie Ellsworth Public Library, Ellsworth, ME	5:30 PM, Wed, Sep 11
LWVPA Advocacy Report and Legislative Update tba, Portland	5:30 PM, Wed, Sep 18
Why Do Millionaires Run the Country? Bangor Public Library, 145 Harlow St, Bangor, ME 04401	Noon, Wed, Oct 2
LWVPA Forum on Election Procedures and Policy Burton Fisher Room, One City Center, Portland	5:30 PM, Wed, Oct 16
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