



# LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

## The Maine Voter

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

Dear League Members and Friends,

It certainly is an exciting time to be a member of the League! President Obama, in his State of the Union address, focused on many of the League's priority issues including Money in Politics, Voting Rights, The Affordable Care Act, Reproductive Choice, Immigration and the Environment. The President asked that we make this a year of action, and League members have already rolled up their sleeves to work on these important issues.

In this short session of the State Legislature, our League is advocating for Early Voting, Clean Elections and educating people about Ranked Choice Voting. If you are interested in helping the Advocacy Committee at the statehouse, please contact us.

The League in Maine has introduced **a new membership opportunity** in hopes of involving more people in our work. Read about it in our lead article in this issue.

The League has been involved in many things in Maine. The Portland League and Down East group are working on the Consensus Questions for the national update of the League's position on agriculture. The consensus is due April 18. You can read the study papers and consensus questions at [www.lwv.org/member-resources/agriculture-update](http://www.lwv.org/member-resources/agriculture-update).

The Portland League hosted a full-day session on two practical matters—facilitating meetings and running successful candidate and issue forums. The Downeast League continues with monthly meetings on agriculture policy issues. The Bangor Area group has hosted two movies -- one on hunger in the US and another about farmers in Maine -- and it hosted a very interesting speaker on corporate power in America's statehouses.

Keep your eyes on our website and Facebook page, in your local newspaper, or elsewhere for information about programs in your area. See the article in this issue on the 51st National Convention of the League of Women Voters that will be held in Dallas, June 6–11.

Being a member of the League can make a difference—from the grassroots level to the national. We welcome your participation and support!

- Barbara McDade, Bangor  
President of LWVME

## **New Membership Structure -- Growing our State and Local Leagues**

With the beginning of a new year, your Maine State League has developed new plans for encouraging the growth of our state and local Leagues. We have devised new levels of membership in the hope that this will encourage others to join.

So please help us spread the word, and help us grow as an organization; let your friends and colleagues know that first-time membership is being offered at a more accessible level than ever before.

In addition to our single and household memberships, The League of Women Voters Maine is offering three new levels of membership: Introductory Membership, Student Membership, and Mentor Membership.

Those who are brand new to the League may now join the League for their first year for just \$25. This will provide our newest members with a taste of what it's like to be in the League. They will be full voting members. They will receive the *Maine Voter*, attend meetings if they wish, and receive updates from the national, state and local levels. After their first year is up, we hope they will join us at the regular or mentor level.

We are also offering full- and part-time students the ability to pay a reduced membership rate. At \$25 per year, they will also have full membership to the national, state, and local Leagues. We hope that this will remove financial barriers to students whose resources may be tied up in tuition and their costs of living.

In order to sustain these membership levels with reduced dues, we are encouraging others to join us at the Mentor level. This level of membership, at \$100, will help underwrite our introductory and student membership levels. We also encourage new, renewing, and current members to give memberships to their friends and colleagues who may be interested in the League's work.

Of course, the traditional membership levels are still available: \$55 for a single member, \$85 for a two-member household.

In order to extend our reach, increase our visibility, and empower our organization, we aspire to increase our membership base. We hope that by offering a diversified membership plan, we will make membership more accessible to all and allow us to do more of our important work.

*- Kim McCollister, Westbrook  
Membership Committee of LWVME*



Women's suffragists demonstrate in February 1913. The triangular pennants read "VOTES FOR WOMEN". Rose Sanderson holds the trumpet.

## **Why the League Supports Early Voting**

Voting is a fundamental right of citizenship, and the League of Women Voters has been working for more than ninety years to defend and protect that right. But we also support measures that provide for the smooth conduct of elections, improve the professional administration of the election process, and insure that our elections in Maine are free from operational errors.

That is why the League is a strong supporter of giving municipalities in Maine the option to implement true early voting.

According to the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU Law School, **the five primary benefits from effective early voting programs include:**

- Reduced stress on the voting system on Election Day;
- Shorter lines on Election Day;
- Improved poll worker performance;
- Early identification and correction of registration errors and voting system glitches; and
- Greater access to voting and increased voter satisfaction.

Today in Maine, what is often called "early voting" is actually in-person absentee voting. The voter appears in person before an election official at the town office or polling place and is given an absentee ballot without having to complete a written application. The voter fills out the ballot then and there, seals it into an absentee ballot envelope, signs the envelope, and turns it in to the election official. The ballot is not actually cast (opened and scanned/recorded) by election officials until Election Day or (more recently) the day before. With true early voting, the voter completes a ballot and puts it into the ballot box or scanning machine directly on the day they vote early.

Because Maine has such a rich history of civic engagement and voter participation, in some municipalities, absentee ballots constitute up to 60% of all ballots cast. And, because these require special handling by election officials, they are extremely labor intensive. The high volume of absentee voting is one of the biggest issues facing our local election officials in managing the smooth operation of our elections.

In recognition of this growing trend, early voting pilot programs were tried out in a handful of jurisdictions across the State in 2007 and 2009, including Bangor and Cumberland, and were well received. The Secretary of State's final report on the program found that, "Early Voting was shown to provide convenience and ease of access to voters, while at the same time alleviating some of the demands on municipal election officials as they contend with processing increasing numbers of absentee ballots."

Additionally, a follow-up survey of voters who participated in the pilots found that an overwhelming 98% of voters (virtually 100% of those responding to this question) answered "YES," they would like this option in future elections. While most of these voters cited convenience to their schedules and a desire to avoid long lines at the polls as the most common reasons they liked early

voting, it is worth noting that disabilities and other mobility issues were also cited in support of the practice. This is consistent with other studies that have found that with the early voting option, "ballot counting is more accurate, it can save administrative costs and headaches, and voters express a high level of satisfaction with the system."

Establishing true early voting in Maine was also one of the unanimous recommendations of the 2012 Elections Commission appointed by then-Secretary of State Charlie Summers and chaired by Judge John Atwood. After months of public hearings and meetings with key stakeholders, the Commission cited public support, voter convenience, and alleviating administrative burdens associated with processing the growing number of absentee ballots as reasons for supporting the early voting option. In addition to the non-partisan Commission, the proposal was supported by the Disability Rights Center, the Maine Municipal Association, the American Civil Liberties Union of Maine, the Maine Women's Lobby, the League of Young Voters, Speaking Up for Us, Equality Maine, Maine People's Alliance, and numerous clerks from across the state. And, the legislation to put the question to voters was supported by Republicans, Democrats, and independents alike.

Because true early voting requires amending the Maine state constitution, a two-thirds vote is required in both chambers to put the issue on the ballot. Given the broad range of support, we were both surprised and disappointed when the state legislature failed to reach the two-thirds majority needed on LD 156 to put the question of early voting before voters last year. The Senate met the threshold, but the House failed by just six votes.

LD 156 was carried over into the second session, and the League and its allies have been working to take advantage of this second chance. The bill is making its way through floor votes in the House and Senate even as we go to press. Although the bill garnered a majority vote in the House and passed to be engrossed, it failed to get a 2/3 vote in that chamber on this preliminary vote. It appears unlikely that the vote tally will improve on the final round of voting in the House.

We will be back next year in the new legislature. Voting is a right, not a privilege; and as a matter of public policy, we must do all that we can to encourage every eligible citizen to vote. It is also good public policy to give our election officials the

tools they need to improve the administration of elections when possible. We hope the legislature will reconsider its position on this important voting option that will help alleviate clerks' administrative burdens and promote voter participation. Let the voters decide.

- Jill Ward, S. Portland

## LWV National Convention June 2014 *Power: Our Voices, Our Votes*

The 51st National Convention of the League of Women Voters will be held June 6 – 11, 2014, in Dallas, Texas, at the Omni Dallas Downtown Hotel. Please plan to join hundreds of national, state, and local League leaders from around the country for this lively event - to hear powerful and informative speakers, learn more about the issues important to the organization and the nation, participate in training sessions, and join in the discussion and networking that make the League a strong and vital force in our democracy. The 2014 Convention theme is *Power: Our Voices, Our Votes*.

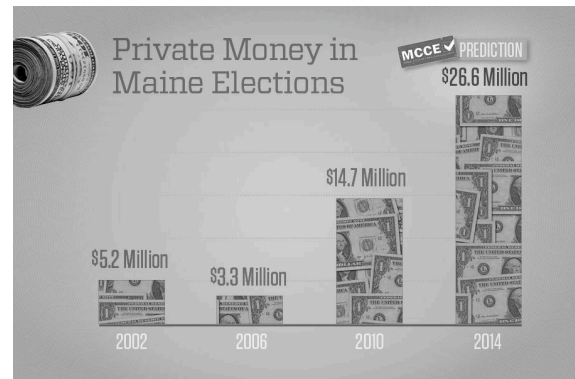
For more information and to register, see [lwv.org/content/your-guide-lwvus-convention-2014](http://lwv.org/content/your-guide-lwvus-convention-2014) or contact your nearest League.

## Fourth Anniversary of *Citizens United* Case

January 21, 2014 marked the fourth anniversary of the *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling that allows unlimited political spending by corporations in elections. Since the ruling was issued, spending in elections by outside groups has increased dramatically.

Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE) gathered a group at the state house in Augusta to mark the anniversary of the ruling. At this event, MCCE predicted that \$26.6 million in private money would be spent in Maine's 2014 elections. In contrast, the 2010 election (the most recent gubernatorial race) saw \$14.7 million in private money. This 80% increase is likely to come in the form of what MCCE's

executive director, Andrew Bossie, called "dark money, where voters on the ground will never know who is spending all this cash to sway Maine elections".



At the Augusta event, MCCE did share some good news. Andrew Bossie said, "...the good news is that citizens are mobilizing to make sure that Maine voices are heard in our elections and in our government."

After the Augusta event, gatherings were held in homes across the state for virtual updates from MCCE and a national teach-in featuring Congressman John Sarbanes (D-MD), The Sierra Club, Demos, and Moveon.org.

- Kim McCollister, Westbrook

## LWV Portland Area

On February 8, the Portland Area LWV cosponsored, with the Portland Public Library's *Choose Civility Initiative*, two training workshops led by Anne Schink. The workshops, "*Never Another Useless Meeting*" and "*The Balancing Act of Candidate and Issue Forums*", were held at the library with an optional brown bag lunch between sessions.

The LWV Portland Area Leadership Team continues to function well in fulfilling our goals. We now have a set of revised by-laws and a nominating committee, and we will soon be working on budget and program for our May 21 Annual Meeting, a first in many years.

Our first meeting on the LWVUS Agriculture Study Update went well thanks to thoughtful preparation by the Portland Area Study Committee. Valerie Kelly, a Portland member and one of the national study committee members, was of tremendous help to us. We are preparing for our second meeting on February 19 at the newly available Preti-Flaherty firm's conference room, on the top floor at One City Center. We are working with Brunswick area members to bring an Agriculture discussion to them.

Our goal to develop a Civics 101 series for New Americans comes a little closer as we plan with our co-sponsor, the Portland Public Library's *Choose Civility Initiative*, for a March 19 round table discussion. Representatives from various organizations and agencies are being invited to help identify the kinds of information the people they work with need in order to become a part of the civic life of the community -- something beyond what is required to become a citizen. This will take place in Room 5 at the library.

A look at the Affordable Care Act as it evolves here in Maine will be the subject of our meeting on April 19<sup>th</sup>, back at the Burton Fisher Meeting Room at One City center.

Our second voter registration effort focusing on youth and new Americans will be in April prior to spring vacation.

A group of us continues to meet with the LWVUS Membership and Leadership Development coaches via telephone, and this has been supportive and very helpful in locating and linking us to important resources as we steer through the shoals of our revitalized local League voyage.

For the Leadership Team: Karla Wight, Lorraine Glowczak, Polly Ferguson, Polly Ward, Tammy Wing, Kim McCollister, and Barbara Kaufman –

- Karla Wight, Portland  
[LWVPortland@maine.rr](mailto:LWVPortland@maine.rr)

## **KEYSTONE XL REPORT DEEPLY DISAPPOINTING, MISGUIDED**

On January 31, Elisabeth MacNamara, President of the League of Women Voters, issued the following statement: "We are deeply disappointed by the Environmental Impact Statement report released today by the U.S. State Department on the Keystone XL (KXL) Pipeline project. We strongly believe that if this project is approved it will have a negative impact on the delicate ecosystem of America's breadbasket, contribute harmful greenhouse gasses that contribute to climate change, and increase America's dependence on foreign oil."

"By assuming that Canada will exploit its dirty tar sands no matter what, the report reaches the misguided conclusion that the pipeline will not have a terrible effect on the climate. We need international action on climate change, not irresponsible action by Canada, spurred on by the U.S."

"The League urges Secretary Kerry and President Obama to put the health and safety of Americans, and of the world, ahead of blind reliance on fossil fuels and support for development of Canada's tar sands. "

"Granting a permit for the pipeline would be inconsistent with meaningful action on climate change, one of the most serious threats to the environment of our nation and our world. The life cycle of greenhouse gas emissions from gasoline produced by Canadian tar sands are significantly greater than those of gasoline produced by conventional sources.

"We also hope that the State Department and President Obama will consider the safety of our drinking water and groundwater resources. These resources could affect thousands of Americans in the heartland and threaten the safety of our food supply.

"We urge President Obama to protect people, not polluters, as he makes the final decision on this dangerous pipeline project."

The report referred to by MacNamara is available on the State Department's website at [www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov](http://www.keystonepipeline-xl.state.gov). Until March

7, the public is encouraged to submit comments on the national interest to [www.regulations.gov](http://www.regulations.gov). Comments will be made public.

Please add your voice to MacNamara's call for an end to the XL pipeline. Register your comment at the website above or contact the State Department at 202-647-4000. Contact President Obama at [www.whitehouse.gov](http://www.whitehouse.gov) or 202-456-1111. Organizations like 350.org have current information on the status of the Keystone XL, as well as other climate change affairs.

- Martha Dickinson, Ellsworth

## Climate and Energy News

In recent months, several significant reports were released having to do with our current state of knowledge about climate change and energy.

First, "Climate Change 2013: The Physical Science Basis" from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change, states that "Warming of the climate system is unequivocal... The atmospheric concentrations of carbon dioxide, methane and nitrous oxide have increased to levels unprecedented in at least the last 800,000 years."

Second, the State Department issued its Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (SEIS) on the Keystone XL Pipeline Project that would pipe Canadian tar sands oil from Alberta to Texas. The SEIS states that tar sands oil emits "17% more greenhouse gases on a lifecycle basis than the average barrel of crude oil."

Third, the National Academies of Science released a report showing two to three orders of magnitude higher levels of polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAH) at the tar sands fields than previously reported when they added the results of air tests near huge wastewater ponds.

Fourth, Exxon Mobil released their report, "2014 -The Outlook for Energy: a View to 2040." One of their conclusions was that energy related CO2 emissions will plateau and gradually decline by 2040. "Although climate policies remain uncertain today, for purposes of the *Outlook to 2040*, we assume that governments will continue to gradually adopt a wide variety of more stringent policies to help stem GHG emissions... In most OECD countries, we assume an implied cost of CO2 emissions that will reach about \$80 per tonne in 2040."

I urge everyone to contact President Obama, and let him know that we:

- Support The President's 2013 Climate Action Plan to Cut Carbon Pollution.
- Do not support the Keystone XL Pipeline.
- Support other measures to curb pollution from green house gases and put a cost on carbon.

- Pam W. Person, Orland  
Member of LWV Climate Change Task Force

## Help Wanted!

We are looking for a League volunteer to represent LWVME on the **Maine Freedom of Information Coalition (MFOIC)** board. MFOIC meetings are monthly by phone. The person who represents the League at MFOIC would be asked to join the League board, as well. League board meetings are every two months in Augusta on Saturdays, 10 am – 3 pm. You can learn more about MFOIC at [www.mfoic.org](http://www.mfoic.org).

We are also looking for a League volunteer to join the **Ranked Choice Voting** working group to work with our partners at FairVote in helping develop and maintain a web site on Ranked Choice Voting in Maine. The working group meets monthly in Augusta, although participants often join the meeting by phone.

Contact us at [lwvme@gwi.net](mailto:lwvme@gwi.net).

## Check the Box for Clean Elections!

It's that time of year when many of us file income tax returns, and the good news is that Line 1 of your Maine return is the Clean Election Check-off. Check the box for Clean Elections, and \$3 goes into the Maine Clean Election Fund. It won't raise your tax bill or reduce your refund, but it will help keep Maine elections clean. [www.maineclanelections.org/check-it-off](http://www.maineclanelections.org/check-it-off).

The image is a composite graphic for a tax form. On the left, a large graphic says "CHECK IT OUT! AT TAX TIME — CHECK IT OFF FOR CLEAN ELECTIONS. IT DOESN'T ADD TO YOUR TAX BILL OR REDUCE YOUR REFUND." On the right, a portion of a tax form is visible, showing fields for "Spouse's First Name", "Spouse's Last Name", "Mailing Address (PO Box, number, street and apt. no)", and "City". Below these fields is a section titled "1 Maine Clean Election Fund. Maine Residents Only." with a checked box and the text "Check here if you, or your spouse, if filing jointly, want \$3 to go to this fund." Below that is a section titled "FILING STATUS (Check one)" with options: "3 Single" and "4 Married filing joint return (Even if only one had income)". On the far right, another graphic says "CHECK IT OFF!" with a checkmark icon.

**LOOK FOR US ON FACEBOOK – SEARCH FOR LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE**  
**Follow us on Twitter at @LWVME**

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!

Help us grow - Join the League! We need your help in carrying out our mission, promoting political equality, and safeguarding the right to vote. If you are not yet a member of the League, need to renew your membership, or would like to make a gift of membership to someone you know, now is the perfect time.

Membership is \$25 for the first year for first-time members; \$25 for students; \$55 for a single membership; \$85 for a two-person household; and \$100 for a mentor-level membership to help us sustain new members joining at reduced rates.

You may become a member of the League of Women Voters by mailing us your contact information with a check for your membership, or signing up online at [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org).

Our mailing address is: **League of Women Voters of Maine, PO Box 863, Augusta, ME 04332-0863.**

Thank you very much!

Member Name(s): \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ Zip Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone (home): \_\_\_\_\_ Cell phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email address: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Check one:

- Introductory Member: \$25.00
- Student Member: \$25.00
- Single Member: \$55.00
- Two-person Household \$85.00
- Mentor \$100

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 2014**

Coffee and Conversation – Informational Meeting about LWVME Orono Public Library	7:30 – 9:30 am, Wed Feb 19
LWV Portland Ag Study Consensus Meeting 2	5:45 – 7:30 pm, Wed Feb 19
LWV Downeast Ag Study Meeting	5:30 – 7:30 pm, Wed Feb 19
Corporate Power in America’s Statehouses Bangor Public Library,	7 pm, Thurs, Feb 20