



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MAINE

THE MAINE VOTER

SPRING 2015 ~ VOLUME 32, NUMBER 1

Dear League Members and Friends,

Ninety-five years and counting! The League of Women Voters turned 95 on Valentine’s Day this year. Our founders understood that a full, fair discussion of the issues was in the best interest of our nation. We continue to fight against unnecessary incursions on a citizen’s right to vote –and those that allow silent money to dominate the public debate.

Our group of dedicated volunteers is known throughout our state for influencing a wide range of issues in the last 95 years. During the last two years, the Maine League’s priorities were Voting Rights, Clean Elections, Campaign Finance Reform, Election Administration, and Ethics and Disclosure. We have been working with Maine Citizens for Clean Elections to gather the 85,185 signatures submitted to qualify the Clean Elections Initiative for the ballot. We continue to explain how Ranked Choice Voting works, and our Advocacy Committee is preparing to testify on other issues, mostly in the areas of elections and voting.

As we march towards our 100th anniversary, the League will continue to fight voter discrimination and work to get secret money out of our election campaigns so that our elections are fair, free, and accessible. We work toward civil discourse to help arrive at sensible solutions to our state and country’s problems.

Along with our advocacy, the State League is preparing for our state convention on May 1 and 2 in Brunswick and the annual Quad States education and training session we hold with other Leagues in New England on May 16 & 17 in Wells, Maine. If you are member, please think about attending one or both of these events; they are always fun and informative, and you meet some very intelligent, dedicated people. If you are not a member, we could use your help. Please join us.

Barbara McDade
President, LWVME

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EDITED BY MARTHA DICKINSON

Clean Elections Initiative Heading to Ballot in 2015

On January 21, 2015, the 5th anniversary of the disastrous Citizens United decision, Maine citizens stood up for the voices of ordinary voters in our democracy. At a rally in the State House, more than 200 people marked the anniversary with a spirited celebration followed by delivery of 85,185 signatures on Clean Elections Initiative petitions to the Secretary of State. This puts the LWVME-endorsed Clean Elections Initiative on track for the November 2015 ballot.

“This is an effort of, by and for Maine people,” Andrew Bossie, Executive Director of Maine Citizens for Clean Elections (MCCE), told the crowd. “We’re here today because we want a government that works for everyday voters, not one bought and paid for by wealthy special interests. We’re here today because when our democracy is threatened, we, the people, will fight to keep it strong.”

The Clean Elections Initiative will restore Maine’s first in-the-nation Clean Elections system, disclose dark money, and close loopholes in Maine’s campaign finance laws.

Voters passed the Maine Clean Election Act at the polls in 1996. The system has proved popular with both candidates and voters, allowing people from all walks of life to run for office and giving voters confidence that their representatives are not beholden to special interests or wealthy donors. Candidates have to listen to their constituents and work hard at grassroots organizing. Clean Elections has contributed to making Maine’s the most blue-collar legislature in the country.

However, damaging court decisions, legislative inaction, gubernatorial vetoes, and repeated budget raids have damaged Clean Elections. Most detrimental was a ruling that overturned the matching funds system – a provision that allowed participating candidates to stay competitive in the most hotly contested races. In addition, the flood of outside money unleashed by Citizens United means that more and more campaign advertisements are paid for by SuperPACs and other dark money groups, lessening both transparency and accountability.

That’s why it’s so important that Maine people are taking the lead. The Clean Elections Initiative provides a constitutional replacement for matching funds to make sure the system is viable in all races. The Initiative empowers voters through enhanced disclosure measures. Outside groups would be required to list the names of the top three funders directly on ads, shining a light on dark money. Transition funds raised by the Governor-elect between Election Day and Inauguration would be disclosed and regulated for the first time. Fines and penalties for violations of campaign finance rules would be increased so that breaking the law isn’t thought of as merely the cost of doing business.

The Clean Elections Initiative also eliminates wasteful corporate tax giveaways. The Initiative directs the legislature to work with the Office of Program Evaluation and Government Accountability to identify ‘high risk’ tax loopholes with little or no proven value to Maine taxpayers, and close one or more to fund a strong Clean Elections system.

MCCE began the petition drive in May, mobilizing hundreds of Maine voters, including many League members, to collect signatures at the polls on Primary Day and at local gatherings throughout the summer. This effort culminated with signature collection at 205 polling stations on Election Day. The 85,185 signatures submitted include voters from every county and 264 towns. This effort is truly of, by, and for Maine people, and the League of Women Voters is proud to be a part of it. For more information, see www.mainecelelections.org

The next step for the Clean Elections campaign is a Volunteer Summit, to be held at Thomas College in Waterville on Saturday March 7th. The summit will include trainings in how to increase support for Clean Elections in your community, empowering Maine people to be advocates for a stronger democracy. For more information about the summit, please contact info@mainecelelections.org.

- Ann Luther, Trenton

RANKED CHOICE VOTING

There has been significant activity advancing the effort to bring about Ranked Choice Voting for state and federal elections in Maine since the last update in the Spring 2014 issue of *The Maine Voter*.

The League of Women Voter of Maine adopted a position in favor of Ranked Choice Voting in 2011 after a three-year study. We support RCV because it ensures a majority winner and is most likely to elect a candidate with broad appeal. It minimizes “strategic” voting, allowing voters to express their sincere preferences among candidates. It eliminates the spoiler effect. It does not require a separate run-off election. It promotes civility in campaigns, and it may improve voter participation

In the summer of 2013, the League convened a working group to advance RCV for Maine. In late summer 2014, that working group spun off a petition drive to begin the process of gathering signatures for a citizen initiative. The petition language was submitted to the Secretary of State’s Office in mid-September and approved about 10 days prior to Election Day, 2014. The petitioners deployed signature-gatherers to polling places throughout the State. This effort was highly successful, gathering more signatures than had been anticipated by even the most optimistic petitioner. The petitioners then recruited volunteers to gather signatures on the weekends during the December holidays. In addition, petitions were promulgated to interested volunteers who would gather signatures in their communities. As of this writing, most of the signatures gathered have been validated by town and municipal clerks. The number of signatures gathered thus far is approximately the number that will be needed to put the petition on the ballot.

In January, the Committee for Ranked Choice Voting decided to put the question on the ballot in 2016 instead of 2015. This will allow supporters to continue the signature gathering effort throughout the spring and summer of 2015 and ensure that the effort demonstrates broad and deep support in all parts of the State. It will also enable the campaign to

engage in an active education and outreach effort to inform voters statewide regarding the advantages of Ranked Choice Voting and to identify a large volunteer cadre that will help garner support for passage of the initiative. Toward this end, campaign leaders including members of the League of Women Voters have been meeting with a number of key policy influencers and supporters over the past several months, including state and local election officials to gather information that will improve the proposed change to election practices. We intend to submit the petitions to the Secretary of State’s Office in the fall of 2015 for presentation to the Legislature in the session beginning in January 2016.

I hope you saw the League’s op-ed on ranked choice voting in the *Kennebec Journal*; you may read it at www.centralmaine.com/2015/02/17/ranked-choice-voting-would-work-well-in-maine/. If you would like to join this effort, please contact Polly Ward at polly.ward@gmail.com for more information. Information regarding this effort is also available on the web site at www.rcvmaine.com and on the League of Women Voters of Maine web site at www.lwvme.org.

- Polly Ward, *Freeport*

Celebration!

The League of Women Voters of the Portland Area (LWVPA) has a lot to celebrate this year!

First, the LWVPA held a festive gathering to observe the 95th birthday of the League of Women Voters, which was officially established as an organization on February 14, 1920, by Carrie Chapman Catt. The LWVPA commemorated this event on February 21st at the University of New England’s Women Writers Collection in Portland. They viewed an exhibit of suffrage memorabilia of the National Women’s Party. The morning began with a light breakfast and conversation that led into a group discussion. Anne Gass, author of newly published *Voting Down the Rose*, shared the journey of her great grandmother (Florence Brooks Whitehouse), who was an early active suffragist in Portland. She noted the division between the National American Woman’s Suffrage Association

and the National Women's Party, both of which worked tirelessly for woman suffrage, but each focusing on a different strategy: the newly formed League of Women Voters focusing on a state by state effort to enfranchise women and the National Women's Party on passing a federal constitutional suffrage amendment. Anne Schink, national board member of LWVUS, noted the parallel with the attempts to pass an Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s. The event concluded with a special tribute to three women for their 50 years of service to the League: Marlee Turner from Raymond, Louise Dennett from Kittery, and Betty Wilhoite from Falmouth.

The LWVPA would like to give special thanks to Anne Gass and the staff at UNE's Women's Writers Collection for their help in creating a successful celebratory event.

Secondly, the LWVPA will be celebrating in May their one-year anniversary as a newly re-established and active organization. It's been a busy first year that included events such as the completion of the LWVUS Agriculture Study with an event at Bayside Bowl featuring Melissa Coleman, author of *This Life is in Your Hands*; leading candidate debates in the fall; a Wine and Whine Election Debriefing Party in November with Cynthia Dill and Meredith Burgess at MJ's Wine Bar; successful Voter Registrations at area High Schools; weekly Naturalization Ceremonies; as well as a collaboration with the Portland Public Library's Choose Civility Initiative. The event, "How to Communicate Effectively with Your Legislator", a conversation led by advocacy consultant, Joanne D'Arcangelo, was cancelled in January due to the weather.

Prior to the LWVPA's celebration and Annual meeting in mid-May, we will be hosting and participating in other events. Please mark your calendars and join us for the following:

**SATURDAY, MARCH 7
OPEN BOARD AND LEADERSHIP TEAM
MEETING**

10:30 am -12:30 pm in Freeport

**THURSDAY, MARCH 26
BOOK GROUP DISCUSSION: A CALL TO
ACTION BY JIMMY CARTER**

4:00 - 6:00 pm
Portland Public Library, Meeting Room #5 (co-

sponsored by the Portland Public Library's Choose Civility Initiative)

-Lorraine Glowczak, Vice President
LWV of the Portland Area

League Lobby Corps

The first regular session of the 127th Legislature convened on Wednesday, December 3, 2014, at 10:00 a.m. Statutory adjournment is Wednesday, July 17, 2015. Over these short 28 weeks of the first session, the Legislature will deal with hundreds of bills, many of them in the League's priority areas.

Priorities

Earlier this fall, the LWVME State board adopted the following advocacy priorities for this session. These four areas will be the focus of the League Lobby Corps activities and testimony:

- o Voting Rights
- o Clean Elections & Campaign Finance Reform
- o Election Administration
- o Ethics & Disclosure

As of this writing, only a small fraction of the bills have been printed with final language, but we have seen titles affecting term limits, executive branch ethics, access to absentee ballots, ranked choice voting, top-two primary, voter registration, requiring a photo ID to vote, and money-in-politics, the Maine Clean Election Act and related campaign finance law.

Activities

The League Lobby Corps consists of Polly Ward, Stephanie Philbrick, Helen Hanlon, Gina Coppens, and Ann Luther. These League members from around the state analyze relevant bills and regulations, help choose those where the League can make a real difference, apply established League positions to the issue, write testimony, attend committee and agency hearings and work sessions, review and comment upon relevant proposed administrative agency regulations, contact legislators and help publicize our work.

We have already delivered testimony on our first bill: we supported LD 6 Resolve, To Implement Recommendations of the Government Oversight Committee To Strengthen the Ethics Practices and Procedures for Executive Branch Employees

(Support). We are now preparing testimony on two others: LD 182 An Act To Eliminate Term Limits for Legislators (Support) and LD 197 An Act To Strengthen Maine's Election Laws by Requiring Photographic Identification for the Purpose of Voting (Opposed).

Volunteer Opportunities

You can join us! The League Lobby Corps is an all-volunteer effort, so the larger our Lobby Corps team, the greater difference we can make in Augusta! Even if you have only an hour or two you can spare a month you can be a valuable member of our team! Most of this work can be done from your home or office, but we especially need people who can attend public hearings and work sessions in Augusta. If you are interested in helping out in this vital endeavor, let us know! Contact Ann Luther at ann.m.luther@gmail.com.

- Ann Luther, Trenton

Voter Services

The Voter Services Committee, comprised of a member from each of our local chapters and many other committed volunteers, implements the Maine League's voter engagement agenda and gathers data and activities from our local chapters. Voter Services include products and activities that help educate voters on current issues, expand the voter base, and facilitate the process of voting, e.g., publishing voter guides, facilitating candidate and election forums, voter registration drives, and new citizenship activities. While seemingly long ago (pre-snow and cold), last fall Maine faced a big election year. Sarah Robinson, our amazing editor in chief of the League of Women Voters Easy-to-Read Voter Guide, gathered non-partisan information about statewide candidates for Governor and US Congress, as well as all of the Bond issues and the Citizen Initiative. Our 7th Annual Edition brought increasing attention to and praise for Maine's League and its nonpartisan mission to educate and engage voters:

"If you were only going to read one thing before you went to the polls on Nov. 4, we would have to defer to the League of Women Voters of Maine's 'Easy-to

Read Voter Guide.'" (From the Penobscot Bay Press, October 21, 2014.)

Local chapters organized voter drives and planned, facilitated and/or encouraged debates and forums. All chapters went above and beyond National Registration Day efforts on September 23. For example, between August and October, the Brunswick chapter registered 67 new voters at 20 local sites, creating strong collaborations. Thanks to Michelle Small for her tireless efforts which also included work on three Brunswick area candidate forums.

Bangor, Downeast, and Portland Area groups have a time-honored presence at US Citizenship and Immigration Service's Naturalization Ceremonies. At those ceremonies, League volunteers warmly welcome new citizens with voter registration cards and offer help in filling them out. It is very special to be able to tell a concerned new citizen that he or she is free to vote with a secret ballot and no one will come after them. Even after the November election, the Portland Area League registered 34 new citizens in November and December 2014. Peg Balano leads the Portland Area's Naturalization Ceremony volunteer crew.

The Downeast Chapter not only held multiple registration drives, but trained others to register new voters at Mt Dessert's YMCA. They held candidate forums in Blue Hill, Bar Harbor and Ellsworth.

As the LWVME grows, so does its capacity to provide Voter Services – an integral part of the League's mission.

- Barbara Kaufman, Freeport

Nomination of Board Members and Officers

It's an odd-numbered year. Our state League is heading into its biennial convention May 1-3, and delegates there will be electing new officers and a new Board of Directors. The Nominating Committee is already at work, looking for the future leaders of the League.

Want to join the board? Know someone who would be great? Let us know!

Here's what Lorraine said:

"I'm learning so much from some pretty sassy, intelligent, and fun women (and MEN TOO) about being an active participant on important civic issues."

Sassy? Smart? Fun? ... You bet!

Team-oriented? Consensus driven? Hands-on? ... That, too.

The board meets about six times per year in Augusta. These are not-quite-all-day meetings. Beyond that, Board members contribute an average of 6-12 hours per month, but it could be 3-4 hours in any given week. Interesting work? ... Oh, yes.

Nominate your best friend, or put yourself forward. You won't regret it.

The members of the Nominating Committee are:

- Ann Luther, Trenton (Board member, convener)
- Barbara McDade, Bangor (Board member)
- Beth Edmonds, Freeport (Off-board member)
- Lauralee Raymond, Portland (Off-board member)
- Sue Hawes, Bangor (Off-board member)

You know the League is doing so much important work: voting rights, Clean Elections, Ranked Choice Voting, citizen engagement, voter education.

If you or someone you know would be a great addition to our team, let us know.

Contact: Ann Luther at ann.m.luther@gmail.com or Barbara McDade at bmcdade@bpl.lib.me.us.

MLK Day at Bates College

As part of honoring the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr. at Bates College, Anne Schink participated in a workshop for students about the Voting Rights Act on January 19th.

Professor Mark Owens introduced the program by establishing the framework of the original Voting Rights Act of 1965. Student Josh Manson presented his honors thesis that documents racial disenfranchisement during reconstruction and prior to the enactment of the Voting Rights Act.

Anne distributed the LWVME Voter Participation Fact Sheet to summarize the ways that states have attempted to restrict voting rights in recent years.

The lively conversation that followed provided insight into the ways in which the best intentions of voting rights advocates have been stalled and diverted when race, disability, poverty, and age are the characteristics of those who suffer when voting rights are restricted. This was a good opportunity for the League of Women Voters to engage with students and faculty about issues of real importance to us as an organization.

- Anne Schink, South Portland

Quad States 2015

Everyone is invited to attend the New England Regional Leadership Development Conference (Quad States) May 15 (optional), 16 & 17 at the Hampton Inn in Wells, Maine. This is always an invigorating and informative weekend for those interested in the League in New England. This year's theme is **Election Law**. Tied in with what we will be learning about Redistricting, Money in Politics, and Open Primaries will be training in the League of Women Voters process. The Sunday session will be devoted to discussion of a possible "Resource Bureau," for experts and resources on political topics in New England. The wrap-up presentation on Sunday will be about women in public life whose background in the LWV helped launch their careers.

More information and registration forms will be available shortly. This is a good weekend to spend with veteran League members, new members, or those that are interested in becoming active in the League.

LWVME and the Coalition of Maine Women

For many years the LWVME has been part of the Coalition of Maine Women and the Maine Choice Coalition. On January 20, 2015, the League participated in Maine Women's Day at the State House sponsored by these strong Coalitions. This annual event highlights the importance of issues that affect women and families at the start of the legislative session and provides a showcase for Coalition partners. Regina Coppens of Belgrade and

Barbara Kaufman of Freeport staffed the Leagues exhibit table in the Hall of Flags.

- *Barbara Kaufman, Freeport*

Bangor League Doings

Those interested in the League in Bangor invite everyone to a program entitled "**Does the U.S. Constitution have a Plain Meaning?**" at the Bangor Public Library on Tuesday, March 24 at 6 PM. Scholars and practitioners engaged in constitutional debate frequently deride their opponents for ignoring the meaning and requirements of the document. The question, though, is whether single, plain, or obvious meanings of constitutional provisions exist. The speakers will be Timothy Cole, Ph.D., University of Washington, Associate Professor of Political Science at University of Maine and Solomon Goldman, JD, George Washington Law School, Adjunct Professor of Political Science at University of Maine.

League members in the Bangor area have been meeting for monthly book discussions this year. If you wish to read something before this program, a good suggestion is **Garrett Epps' book, *American Epic: Reading the U.S. Constitution***. It does a great job of just going through the words of the Constitution and asking what those words might mean.

Anyone interested is invited to attend. There is no charge.

Photo ID for Voting Opposed

For more than 90 years, Leagues here in Maine and across the country have worked to educate and register voters, eliminate obstacles to voting, and make government at all levels more accessible and responsive to citizens. The League supports full voter participation by all eligible American citizens, and we oppose efforts to create new barriers that block citizens' constitutional right to vote.

On February 25, Ann Luther of LWVME Lobby Corps testified in opposition to LD 197 An Act To

Strengthen Maine's Election Laws by Requiring Photograph Identification for the Purpose of Voting Her eloquent testimony is available online at http://lwvme.org/about_action.html

LWVME was joined in our opposition by the office of the Secretary of State, the ACLU of Maine, Equality Maine, the Maine Women's Lobby, the Maine Municipal Association, the Disability Rights Center, Preble Street, Homeless Voices for Justice, MaineTransNet, and the Maine chapter of NASW. Leagues all over the country are rising to the challenge of opposing Photo ID for Voting.

Defeat of Voter ID Bills in Nebraska and Colorado

Fortunately, Leagues across the country are fighting voter ID bills – and succeeding! In late February, both the League of Women Voters of Nebraska (LWVNE) and the League of Women Voters of Colorado (LWVCO) helped defeat voter ID bills in their states.

Along with voting rights coalition partners, the League of Women Voters of Nebraska helped defeat a bill to require voters to provide a state-issued voter photo ID when voting in-person at the polls. A bipartisan vote by 12 Republicans, 12 Democrats and one Independent left the discriminatory voter photo ID bill dead for this legislative session.

Even though government-issued voter photo IDs are meant to be free, the fees associated with acquiring them create a heavy tax on the potential voter and inhibit voting access. According to LWVNE, the Nebraska voter ID bill would have impacted an estimated 300,000 registered voters who do not have a current driver's license or other state-issued ID, including many over-65, low-income, minority and disabled citizens.

Also this past week in Colorado, the League of Women Voters of Colorado helped defeat two proposals to require voter photo ID for voters registering on Election Day or on the days immediately prior. LWVCO testified at the bill's hearing and sent letters of opposition to the committee. The defeat of the two bills, which would have prevented some Colorado voters from

participating in the political process, is a clear win for voters and our democracy.

The League believes that access to the vote is about equality, not politics. The vote in Nebraska proved that protecting the rights of voters is a bipartisan issue. All voters – rich or poor, young or old, black, white, or Latino – deserve a path to the voting booth that is free, fair and accessible. The League is committed to working at the local, state and national levels to protect voting rights and ensure equal access to the polls.

(Taken from the writings of Ann Luther, LWVME, at http://lwvme.org/about_action.html, and Renee Davidson, LWVUS, at <http://lww.org/blog/leagues-help-defeat-voter-id-bills-nebraska-and-colorado>)

CALENDAR

3/7/15	MCCE Summit, Thomas College, Waterville
3/7/15	LWVPA Open Board & Leadership Team, Freeport, 10:30 a.m. – 12:30 pm
3/24/15	Program on the Constitution, Bangor Public Library, 6 pm.
3/26/15	Book group, Jimmy Carter's <i>A Call To Action</i> , Portland Public Library
5/1-2/ 15	LWVME State Convention, Brunswick
5/16-18/15	Quad States Training, Wells
11/04/14	General Election

Donors and Supporters

Thank you to our members and donors who help support the work of the League of Women Voters of Maine (LWVME) and the League of Women Voters of Maine Education Fund (LWVME Ed Fund).
We could not do it without you!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MAINE

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Check out our website at <http://www.lwvme.org>, "Like" us on Facebook or
follow us on Twitter @LWVME.

Contact us at lwvme@gwi.net or 622-0256.

Join the League!

Join your local or state League and be part of the solution! Your community needs leaders like you to be a strong, safe and vibrant place to live. Become a member and make a positive impact on your community.

Sign up on line at www.lwvme.org and pay by credit card or PayPal, or mail this form and a check made payable to **LWVME to PO Box 863, Augusta, ME 04332-0863**. *Dues are not tax deductible.*

Member name(s): _____

Address: _____

City/town: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Telephone (home): _____ Telephone (cell): _____

Email: _____ Check amount: _____

While dues are not tax deductible, contributions made payable to LWVME Education Fund are deductible and always appreciated.

- Introductory Member (First Year) - \$25 Student Member - \$25 Single Member - \$55
- Two-person household - \$85 Mentor (Supports First-Year Membership Program) - \$100



League of Women Voters of Maine
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