

April 2009

PO Box 142
Brunswick, ME 04011

The Voter



Items of Interest

- Quad States Convention in Wells on May 30 and 31
- What's Happening at Home?
- Call for Moratorium on New Coal-Fired Electric Power Plants
- The Case Against Bottled Bottle
- Barriers to Voting Persist

Save the Date!

~League of Women Voters of Maine Convention, Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2, Lancaster Lounge, Moulton Union, Bowdoin College, Brunswick.
~Woolwich Town Meeting, Wednesday, May 6, 6:00 p.m., Woolwich Central School, Nequasset Road.
~Topsham Town Meeting, Wednesday, May 20, 7:00 p.m., Mt. Ararat High School.
~League of Women Voters Quad States Leadership Conference, Saturday and Sunday, May 30 and 31, Hampton Inn and Suites, 900 Post Road, Wells.
~Arrowsic Town Meeting, Thursday, June 11, 6:30 p.m., Georgetown Central School, Baypoint Road.
~Georgetown Town Meeting, Saturday, June 13, 9:00 a.m., Georgetown Central School, Baypoint Road.
~League of Women Voters of the United States "Virtual" Council, Saturday, June 13, 1:00 p.m., Bangor Public Library, 145 Harlow Street.

LWVBA Accepts Marriage Equality Rejects NPV Compact

Brunswick, ME — On Saturday, April 4, the League of Women Voters of Brunswick met at Curtis Memorial Library to reach concurrence with the Maryland position on marriage equality. Colleen Tucker, of Portland, served as the facilitator.

The group discussed the rights that are unavailable to same sex couples under current law and quickly reached consensus on the six questions posed by the League of Women Voters of Maine.

1. Does the League of Women Voters of Maine concur with the position of the League of Women Voters of Maryland on Equality in Marriage? **Yes**
2. Does the League of Women Voters of Maine support legislation to equalize the legal rights and benefits available to same-sex couples with those available to heterosexual couples? **Yes**
3. Does the League of Women Voters support legislation to allow civil union or domestic partnership under Maine law? Why or why not? **Yes**
4. Does the League of Women Voters support legislation to permit same-sex couples to marry? Why or why not? **Yes**
5. Should the legal or civil status of marriage be more clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage? Why or why

not?

Nothing in this concurrence should affect the right of any religious institution to agree to or refuse to sanction any marriage.

6. Should Maine recognize the civil unions and same-sex marriages of other states (such as Vermont, Massachusetts, or New Jersey)? **Yes**

Next, the group revisited its discussion of the National Popular Vote Compact, reaching final consensus and submitting the following responses to the League of Women Voters of the United States.

Amending the Constitution

1. Actions to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.
2. Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the League continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.

Congressional Consent

3. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtain-

ing such consent.

Enforcement

4. The lack of adequate enforcement provisions is sufficient to conclude that the NPV is not a viable plan.

Uniformity

5. The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.

Popular Election of the President

6. It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.

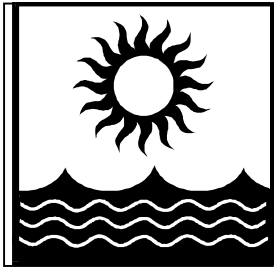
Achievability

- 7a. The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states. **Agree**

- 7b. A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed. **Disagree**

Additional Comments:

We disapprove of the wording of the questions. Once we decided that we wanted to follow the route of a Constitutional Amendment, we did not find the subsequent questions to be relevant. We suspect that the questions were drafted by advocates of the National Popular Vote Compact.



Quad States Conference in Wells on May 30 and 31

Wells, ME - On Saturday and Sunday, May 30 and 31, the Leagues of Maine, New Hampshire, Rhode Island and Vermont will meet at the Hampton Inn and Suites in Wells for their annual Leadership Conference.

Lisa MacCleery, of the Democracy Program at the Brennan Center for Justice at New York

University, has been invited to give the keynote address. The conference will also include three workshops on the topics of organizing a public issue campaign, fundraising and LWVUS advocacy priorities.

To register for the conference, mail your name, address, telephone number, email address and check for \$20 to Jane

Armstrong, LWVNH, 4 Park Street, Concord, NH 03301. The registration fee includes Saturday's lunch and Sunday's breakfast.

To reserve a hotel room with two queen beds at the rate of \$89 plus tax for Saturday night, call 646-0555 and ask for the League rate.



What's Happening at Home?

Bath, ME - On Wednesday, March 25, voters in the **RSU 1** municipalities of **Arrowsic, Bath, Phippsburg, West Bath and Woolwich** went to the polls to vote on the construction of a new elementary school in Woolwich.

The local share of the \$18.9 million price tag is \$566,000. However, the five municipalities must divide that share in proportion to the existing RSU 1 budget allocation, meaning that Bath will pay about 50 percent and Arrowsic only three percent, with Woolwich paying 17 percent.

School construction was approved by voters in all five communities with a cumulative vote total of 948 to 218. The margin was widest in Arrowsic, where the vote was 66 to five, and narrowest in Phippsburg, where the vote was 105 to 65.

RSU 1 and **Georgetown**, which voted not to join the RSU in 2007, continue to negotiate a pact to allow Arrowsic students to attend Georgetown Elementary School. Although the two sides have now agreed on a tuition formula based on \$11,695 for the current year, they have not reached a compromise on the length of the pact.

Georgetown seeks a five-year contract allowing all current and future Arrowsic students to attend the school during the contract term. RSU 1 wants to limit the contract to a three-year term and allow only current Arrowsic students and their siblings to attend the school.

On Wednesday, March 25, the board of **RSU 5**, which consists of **Durham, Freeport and Pownal**, chose a superintendent. By a six to five vote, the board chose current Lisbon and Durham Superintendent Shannon Welsh over

current Pownal and Freeport Superintendent Elaine Tomaszewski.

Ms. Welsh will assist Lisbon in searching for a new superintendent until the end of June. Ms. Tomaszewski's contract does not expire until the end of June 2010, and she will be offered another position if she decides to remain in RSU 5.

The Board of Directors of **SAD 75**, which consists of **Bowdoin, Bowdoinham, Harpswell and Topsham**, is currently considering a reorganization plan to deal with falling enrollment and lower government subsidies.

The plan may involve closing West Harpswell School and transporting all students to Harpswell Islands School, an idea that has met with controversy. It may also involve designating one of Topsham's elementary schools for K to 2 students and the other for 3 to 5 students.

Call for Moratorium on New Coal-Fired Electric Power Plants - LWVUS

Washington, DC - The League of Women Voters of the United States has concluded that a moratorium on new coal-fired electric power plants is imperative to address global warming.

Global warming is happening, and its impacts are already being felt today. Evidence includes disappearing glaciers, increasingly severe heat waves and droughts in some areas, intensifying hurricanes and floods in others, and more wildfires. If left unchecked, the effects could be catastrophic: millions of people displaced as rising sea levels flood coastal areas; many regions devastated by reduced crop yields and shortages of drinking water; human health threatened by the spread of malaria and other vector-borne diseases; many plant and animal species at risk of extinction.

Coal is the single largest source of global warming pollution in the U.S. A thickening "blanket" of carbon dioxide (CO₂) and other greenhouse gases (GHGs) in the atmosphere is trapping solar heat and warming the earth's surface. Most of the CO₂ comes from burning fossil fuels. Coal is the most carbon-intensive fossil fuel, producing more CO₂ per million BTUs of energy than burning oil or gas.

Coal-fired power plants are responsible for 33 percent of CO₂ emissions in the U.S.

Restricting CO₂ emissions from coal-fired power plants is imperative. The League of Women Voters is calling for a ten-year moratorium on the new construction of coal-fired electric power plants. This will allow the coal and power industries more time to test carbon capture and storage (CCS) technologies and to determine whether the long-term storage of CO₂ is feasible and safe. The League will work at all levels to help policy makers and the public understand that investing in climate-friendly energy technologies is essential if we are to avoid irreversible damage to our planet.

We cannot afford to wait any longer to cut greenhouse gas emissions. The global climate is changing faster than was predicted just a few years ago, and what we do in the next two to three years will determine our future. Power plants have a lifespan of 50 years or more. Building new conventional coal-fired plants today will commit us to decades of unnecessary carbon emissions and foreclose the possibility of preventing dangerous global warming.

Energy efficiency and renewable energy can meet our electrical needs.

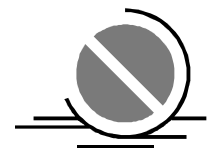
A combination of energy conservation, greater efficiency in the use of electricity, and increased development and use of renewable energy can ensure that there is enough electricity to support continued economic growth without building a new generation of CO₂-emitting power plants. The California experience shows that this strategy works. Through a variety of efficiency initiatives, California has held per capita electrical consumption essentially constant since 1975 while maintaining a robust economy.

The U.S. must lead with strong action. As the world's largest economy and largest per capita emitter of global warming pollution, the U.S. must provide leadership in international efforts to reduce GHG emissions. Aggressive action in this country will help influence China, India and other rapidly developing nations to take steps to control their own emissions. Moreover, by developing and sharing clean-energy technologies, the U.S. can help these developing countries leapfrog over the fossil-fuel-based model of development practiced here and take a more sustainable growth path.



The Case Against Bottled Water

Environmentalists are almost universally critical of the growing consumption of bottled water in the United States and other Western nations. 1) Bottled water is not necessarily healthier than tap water - California found arsenic and the chemical toluene in bottled water and Pennsylvania found coliform bacteria. 2) Moreover, large amounts of energy are required to bottle it and transport it to market from sources as far away as Fiji. 3) Finally, more than 80 percent of the 28 billion water bottles sold in the U.S. each year end up in incinerators, which pump dangerous chemicals from the plastic PETE into the air, or landfills, where they make take thousands of years to disintegrate. For more information, go to sierraclub.org and search for bottled water.





League of Women Voters of the
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Please deliver to:

***The League of Women Voters is where
hands-on work to safeguard democracy
leads to civic improvement.***

Send your email address to lwbva@gwi.net.
The Voter is now available electronically!

Register for Quad States!

Barriers to Voting Persist

Washington, DC - Although the 2008 election may have appeared to function smoothly, a study conducted by the Cooperative Congressional Election Survey in October and November and released in March found that as many as three million eligible voters did not vote because they encountered registration issues or did not receive an absentee ballot; an additional two to four million registered voters were discouraged from voting due to long lines and voter identification requirements; and nine million were not registered due to residency rules or registration deadlines.

The Cooperative Congressional Election Survey is a consortium of 150 university researchers led by the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. It conducted its study based on a survey of 33,000 eligible voters throughout the country.

Harvard Political Science Professor Stephen Ansolabehere, the study's lead author, testified about its findings before the U.S. Senate Rules Committee. "Registration issues were for 2008 what machine problems were for the 2000 election," Ansolabehere concluded.

According to Ansolabehere, the primary factors involved in voter registration problems are a voter's failure to provide photo identification or a registrar's 1) failure to record the voter's name on the rolls at the time of registration, 2) accidental purging of the voter's name from the rolls subsequent to registration, or 3) initial error recording the voter's information so that it does not match actual information.

Four percent of registered non-voters who attempted to vote reported they lacked a required form of identification.

