

March 2009

PO Box 142  
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# The Voter



## Items of Interest

- Results of Harpswell Town Meeting
- Ballot Issues on the Horizon
- Things You Can Do for Free to Cut Electricity Usage
- LWV Maryland Position on Same Sex Marriage
- State Convention in Brunswick on May 1 and 2

## Save the Date!

~Sunshine Week , March 15 to 21. *Looking for the Sunshine* is a project to broaden public awareness about the issues involved in, and the threats related to, accountability and transparency in government.

~National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Meeting, Saturday, March 21, 10:00 a.m., Curtis Memorial Library, Brunswick.

~Durham Town Election, April 3, 8:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m., School Gym.

~Durham Town Meeting, April 4, 9:00 a.m., School Gym.

~Same Sex Marriage Concurrence Meeting, Saturday, April 4, 10:00 a.m., Curtis Memorial Library, Brunswick.

~League of Women Voters of Maine Convention, Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2, Lancaster Lounge, Moulton Union, Bowdoin College, Brunswick.



## Same Sex Marriage Concurrence Study

Augusta, ME — On Thursday, January 8, the Board of the League of Women Voters of Maine voted to seek concurrence with the League of Women Voters of Maryland on the issue of Civil or Same Sex Marriage.

A League that wishes to join a sister League in a position may do so by concurrence without redoing the entire study. The League that wishes to concur may use the study materials and consensus questions developed by the original League, disseminate these to its members for discussion, and then take consensus and formulate a position based on the views of its own members

Members of the **League of Women Voters of the Brunswick Area** are encouraged to participate in a local consensus meeting about the LWV Maryland study questions. The meeting will take place at the Curtis Memorial Library in the second floor seminar room on Saturday, **April 4, at 10:00 a.m.** Guests are welcome, but only members may vote.

On Tuesday, January 13, Senator Dennis Damon, of Trenton, introduced a bill, entitled *An Act to End Discrimination in Civil Marriage and Affirm Religious Freedoms*, in the 124th Legislature. Before the bill was introduced, Equality Maine contacted the State League and asked it to join the Maine Freedom to Marry Coalition to support the bill. The State League was unable to join the Coalition because neither the National League nor the State League has a position on this issue.

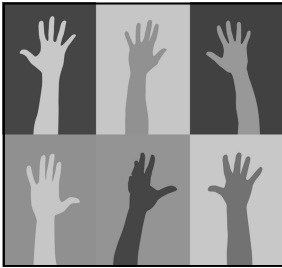
Professor Jennifer Wriggins, of the University of Maine School of Law, and Attorney Michael Levey have prepared a lengthy memorandum about civil and same sex marriage in Maine. It is available on line at <http://www.lwvme.org>.

Maryland's study examined state law, financial security of the partners, laws supporting the relationship between the partners, health care, housing, protections for children, protecting the community from risks arising from marriage, and the laws of other states.

Professor Wriggins and Attorney Levey's memo deals with most, if not all, of these topics.

Maryland's study posed three questions as follows:

1. Should the legal status of marriage be more clearly distinguished from the religious institution of marriage so that it is more consistent with the principle of separation of church and state? If so, how?
2. Should the League of Women Voters support legislation to permit unmarried couples (whether same sex or heterosexual) to choose a status of domestic partnership or civil union that includes legal rights and benefits similar to those now applicable to marriage? Why or why not?
3. Should Maryland recognize the civil unions and same sex marriages of other states (such as Vermont, Massachusetts or Connecticut)?



## Results of Harpswell Town Meeting

Harpswell, ME - The Harpswell Town Meeting took place at the Harpswell Islands School on Saturday, March 14. Elinor Multer prevailed over David I. Chipman in the race for the open seat on the Board of Selectmen. Incumbent Robert E. Venard defeated challenger Frank Martin Baker for the position of Road

Commissioner. Joanne Rogers ran unopposed for a seat on the SAD 75 Board of Directors.

Voters authorized the Board of Selectmen to explore the possibility of resuming a boundary dispute with the Town of Brunswick involving more than 200 acres of shoreland and clam flats at the northern edge of Harpswell Neck.

Since October 2007, the combined enrollment of the Harpswell Islands School and the West Harpswell School has dropped from 208 to 172. SAD 75 is now considering the consolidation of the two schools. A community forum will take place at the Harpswell Islands School on Thursday, March 19, at 6:30 p.m.



## Ballot Issues on the Horizon

Augusta, ME - Although 2009 will be an “off-year” election, there will be no shortage of questions on the November 3 ballot.

On February 23, Secretary of State Matthew Dunlap announced that four of five citizen initiatives submitted by the January 22 deadline had received enough petition signatures to undergo review by the Legislature. Under the Maine Constitution, proponents of an initiative must gather signatures equal to 10 percent of the voter turnout in the most recent gubernatorial election or, in this case, 55,087.

The four initiatives that are now under review by the Legislature are: An Act to Decrease the Automobile Excise Tax and Promote Energy Efficiency, An Act to Establish the Maine Medical Marijuana Act, An Act to Provide Tax Relief and an Act to Repeal the

School Consolidation Laws. By law, the Legislature must either pass the initiatives as written or send them to the voters as referenda. If the Legislature chooses, it may also send competing measures to the voters.

The initiative that was not certified by Secretary Dunlap was An Act to Expand Affordable Health Insurance Choices in Maine, which would have permitted consumers to purchase insurance in other states. Secretary Dunlap found all 63,690 petition signatures invalid because they did not appear on a petition that “was furnished or approved by the Secretary of State.” In addition, he found 9,509 of those signatures invalid for other reasons.

The excise tax initiative would cut municipal taxes on new automobiles in half. Strongly opposed by the Maine Municipal Association, it would shave off \$70 million per year in

excise taxes, according to proponent group Maine Leads.

The tax relief initiative, which is supported by both Maine Leads and TABOR Now, would cap increases in state spending based on growth in population and inflation. A majority of the Legislature and a majority of voters at referendum would need to approve any excess spending.

Governor Baldacci opposes both tax initiatives. He has met with leaders of both parties to urge them to reform the State’s tax structure before the end of this legislative session.

The governor also opposes the initiative to repeal school consolidation, which has been championed by proponent group Maine Coalition to Save Schools. Although the State argues that 80 percent of students are now in consolidated districts, 24 of 46 plans considered by voters have been rejected.

## Things You Can Do for Free to Cut Electricity Usage - Pamela Person, LWVUS

Washington, DC - There are some actions that you can take at home for free to cut your electricity usage while saving money and the planet.

- Turn off lights when you leave a room.
- If there are "instant on" electronics (TVs, VCRs, DVDs, computers, radios) in your home, plug them into a power strip so you can turn them off completely when you are not using them. "Instant on" increases consumer costs 7 percent annually.
- Turn off your computer when you will not be using it for more than four hours or overnight.
- Dry your clothes on a line in warm weather and indoors when it is cold or rainy.
- Turn your hot water heater down to 120 degrees (no lower). If your water heater was made before 2000, use water heater wrap to conserve heat. Any water heater manufactured after 2000 has enough insulation; you will void the warranty if you wrap it.
- When a light bulb burns out, replace it with a compact fluorescent (CFL) one. The new CFLs are brighter and smaller, fit more fixtures, and contain less mercury. Replacing five of your most used incandescent light bulbs with CFLs will save you nearly \$50 annually. They use 75 percent less energy and last up to ten times longer. See [http://www.lwvme.org/files/the\\_voter\\_january\\_2008.pdf](http://www.lwvme.org/files/the_voter_january_2008.pdf) to review information about safely disposing of broken CFLs.
- Turn down the heat at night and when you are not at home so your furnace's electric motor will operate less frequently.
- During hot spells, try using fans instead of, or in addition to, an air conditioner. Wear cool clothes and drink plenty of water.
- When you do use your air conditioner, set it to 82 degrees or higher if you are going to be away for more than 7 hours. When you are at home, have the air conditioner set to the highest temperature that is comfortable. Wear cool clothes. If you are elderly or have babies or young children, then you need to keep your home cooler when it is occupied during very hot spells.
- Most nights in most areas, turn off the air conditioner and open the windows for cool, fresh air.
- On hot and humid days, keep your curtains, shades or blinds closed, as windows let heat into your home.
- Wash your clothes only when you have a full load. Ninety percent of the energy used for washing clothes is for heating the water. So, wash in warm or cold water and use your machine's energy savings features.
- Wash your dishes in the dishwasher only when you have a full load. Sixty to 80 percent of the power used by the dishwasher is for heating the water. If you have a small family, rinse dirty dishes in cold water before putting them into the dishwasher so they can accumulate over several meals. Use the "air dry" feature.
- Make more than one meal at a time, e.g., soups, stews, casseroles, spaghetti sauce. Freeze the other portions in separate containers for future meals. This saves time and effort as well as adds variety to your menus.
- Dry your hair in the air rather than with a dryer.



## LWV Maryland Position on Civil Marriage

**LWVMD takes action** to ensure that Maryland law does not discriminate in its recognition of all marriages/civil unions on the basis of gender or religious definitions of marriage. (2007)

**LWVMD Supports:** State sanctioned, legally recognized unions which convey rights, benefits and obligations to same-sex partners who seek such unions. Recognition of such unions and/or same-sex marriages that have been legally sanctioned in other states.

*With preference for:* In keeping with the principle of separation of church and state, making the basis of state recognition of all marriages/civil unions (same-sex or opposite-sex) a civil proceeding, with the additional step of marriage in accordance with religious traditions a voluntary option.





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**Please deliver to:**

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

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Send your email address to [lwwba@gwi.net](mailto:lwwba@gwi.net).  
*The Voter* is now available electronically!

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## Register for Convention!

### State Convention in Brunswick on May 1 and 2

Brunswick, ME - The biannual Convention of the League of Women Voters of Maine will take place on the campus of Bowdoin College in Brunswick on Friday and Saturday, May 1 and 2. This is a wonderful opportunity for Brunswick Area members who have never attended a State Convention to attend their first.

Registration forms, which are due by April 15, are on line at [www.lwvme.org](http://www.lwvme.org) and will be mailed to members in the upcoming issue of *The State Voter*. The registration fee is \$50, which covers the entire program, plus coffee and des-

sert on Friday evening and breakfast and lunch on Saturday. Members may apply for scholarships by leaving a voicemail message at 622-0256 or sending an email message to [lwvme@gwi.net](mailto:lwvme@gwi.net).

On Friday evening at 7:00 p.m., coffee and dessert will be served in Moulton Union's Lancaster Lounge while State Representative Diane Russell of Portland speaks about alternative voting systems with a focus on instant runoff voting.

Registration begins on Saturday at 9:00 a.m. in Lancaster

Lounge. The morning's Plenary Session will be followed by a presentation by Julie Flynn, Maine's Deputy Secretary of State for Corporations, Elections and Commissions.

Following lunch, the speaker will be Theresa Amato, the author of *The Grand Illusion: The Myth of Voter Choice in a Two-Party Tyranny*, who served as chair of Ralph Nader's presidential campaigns in 2000 and 2004. The afternoon will end by 3:30 p.m. with a second plenary session.

