



Winter 2009

Voter Highlights

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Upper Valley

Mission

“The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.”

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President’s Note

With the historic 2008 election behind us, it is time to take a deep breath and pause for reflection. We did a lot this fall. At our membership meeting in September, representatives from the Hanover Food CoOp provided us with information about buying local and minimizing the carbon footprint of our food choices. In October, our Voter Services Committee held a spirited “Candidate Forum” for the NH Senate District 5 contest and organized a voter registration drive for Hanover High School students. During the week preceding election day, over 15,000 browsers “hit” our brand new website, confirming our relevance and importance. In November, our Social Policy Committee sponsored a stimulating meeting on our medical system. In December, we met with the presidents of the NH and VT Leagues to discuss issues that need our focus at the state level and legislation that needs to be monitored or changed. Many worked very hard on behalf of the League and the citizens of the Upper Valley to make these things possible. Please join me in heartily thanking them all.

With the New Year and freshly elected officials at both the state and national levels, it is also time to focus on our future. The League’s efforts to help educate and engage citizens in local issues seem to have more importance than ever before. For more than a year, our Regional Growth Management Committee has been working to set the stage for a regional visioning process, an endeavor we call “20-20 Vision for the Valley”. In late January, we will hold a meeting for key decision makers in the Upper Valley to brainstorm issues that need regional solutions and require cooperation beyond town boundaries. Also in late January, our Program Chair is launching a new non-fiction book club as a fun way to learn about and share thoughts about important political issues. In February, our Natural Resources Committee will sponsor a fascinating three-part series on the issues we face with regard to our water. And finally, in March, our Representative Government Committee will join the National League in exploring the advisability of the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact, a method that would guarantee the presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. For more details, read on below.

It is no secret that a vibrant democracy needs its citizens to be actively involved and the League provides a wonderful vehicle for this. A lot is going on, and we’d love your participation. The possibilities are limited only by your interests, talents, and time. Throughout this newsletter, we suggest a few ways that you can become involved. We certainly hope that you do!

Barbara McIlroy

Membership

As reported in our Fall newsletter, the total membership for the LWV-UV is 175, of which 31 are from Vermont. Twenty-four have joined since May. From Hanover are Jean Allen, Ginia Allison, Joan Ashley, Chrysanthi Bien, Maureen Bolton, Richard Cherin, Judi Colla, Estelle Diamond, Sarah Dresser, Mary Fillinger, Mary Kukowski, Chica Maynard, Glen Mayo, Bill Mlacak, Dick Powell, Ellis Rolett, Mel Spiegel, Judy Stern, and Carol Weingeist. From Lebanon are Nicole Cormen, Sylvia Field, Laurie Harding, and Patricia Sorento. From Dublin is Alice Colonna. Welcome all!

Please invite these new members to join you in attending or helping with some of our programs.

Evelyn Spiegel

Development

So far, we raised over \$2,500 through our fall mailing and donations are still arriving, as our fiscal year ends in June. While some of these donations are unrestricted, the majority will be used to support our educational efforts, such as the Vision for the Valley project, Voters Service efforts, outreach and publicity for our many programs and projects.

Ellen Gitomer

Board of Directors 2008 – 09

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Board Meetings

Howe Library
Murray Room
1st Monday of the
Month, 9:15 AM
All Welcome!

Feb 2nd
Mar 2nd
Apr 6th
May 4th
Jun 1st

Voters Service

The Voters Service Committee led several successful efforts this Fall. We developed a section of our new website, called "This Election," that provided information about the general election and candidates as well as answers from some candidates to questions of interest to the League or derived from the ILEAD summer lectures. The week before Nov 4th, this website got more than 15,600 'hits' through Google, the National League's VOTE411 website, and direct access. We consider this proof that our website is a relevant and important source of information!

In addition to efforts on the web, the Voters Service Committee arranged for one-day voter registration drive for nearly all students of legal age at Hanover High and rewarded them with posters, buttons, and bumper stickers. We also arranged a well-publicized, well attended, and well-reported forum for the two candidates for the NH Senate District 5 race. (We tried to set up forums for other contested races but were thwarted. We are already considering different approaches for next time around!)

In the spring, when the legislative agenda is more certain, we plan to hold meetings with legislators from our region, where the public can listen and question. We would love help arranging these meetings. We will also offer candidate forums for any contested local elections. We can use your help in monitoring selected legislation. Let us know if you'd like to help monitor legislation.

Ellen Blumberg

Program

The Regional Growth Management Committee: 20-20 Vision for the Valley

Our League has had an interest in regional issues since 1980. In 1991, it initiated discussions called "2001 and Beyond" that led to the creation of Vital Communities. For more than a year, our Regional Growth Management Committee has been working to set the stage for a regional visioning process, an endeavor we call "20-20 Vision for the Valley". We have used the Lebanon Micropolitan Study (2006) as a starting point to define the region and met with directors of the three regional planning commissions that cover the Upper Valley to learn about their priorities and roles.

On Jan 30th, we are planning an important meeting for key decision makers in the Upper Valley to begin brainstorming issues that need regional solutions and require cooperation beyond town boundaries. Possible issues include transportation, affordable housing, the infrastructure necessary to support viable agriculture industry, opportunities for shared staff and services, and the gap between available jobs and available housing. We have invited the town manager, two members of the select board and two members of the planning board from each of the four core towns identified in the Lebanon Micropolitan Study: Lebanon, Hartford, Norwich and Hanover. In addition, we have invited officials from Enfield, as representative of smaller communities, Directors of our three regional planning commissions, and a few others to stimulate and inform discussion. This meeting is not open to the general public.

We can't predict, but expect that several initiatives will result from this discussion. If attendees agree there are issues worth pursuing further, we will try to engage folks from many more Upper Valley towns. What sort of a place do we want for the next generation living here in 2020 or 2030? Now is certainly the time to pause and take stock. **For our meeting of regional officials on Jan 29th from 5 to 8:30 PM, we need volunteers to prepare food, welcome participants, take notes, lead discussions, and work on logistics.**

Margaret Powell

The Natural Resource Committee: "Whose Water is it, Anyways?"

- Did you know that tap water is more carefully monitored than bottled water?
- Did you know that a large bottling plant wanted to "mine" and sell water from a Vermont aquifer? In response the state has passed legislation designating ground water as a public trust resource and managed in the public interest.
- Did you know that water usage in NH is increasing faster than the population because of irrigated golf courses and lawns as well as agricultural and industrial uses?
- Did you know that Americans send about 38 billion plastic bottles to landfills each year. Less than one quarter of these water bottles are recycled. There is a national effort now to "bring back the tap."
- Do you know how we balance public and private usage?
- Do you know if our water is being polluted?
- Do you know if our water is being drawn down as our usage increases?

The Natural Resource Committee's Environment Series this year focuses on who owns and/or controls the water in our rivers, streams and aquifers. **Please join us at the Howe at noon on Feb 4th, 11th, and 18th.**

Ann Crow and Joyce Noll

**The Representative Government Committee:
The National Popular Vote Compact - Background Information**

Delegates at the 2008 LWVUS National Convention voted to study the advisability of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact as the method for choosing the President. The League has long been in favor of abolishing the Electoral College, but the chances of doing so by amending the constitution are nil.

The NPV Compact would guarantee the presidency to the candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states plus the District of Columbia. Two hundred and seventy electoral votes are necessary to pass this compact. Four states – Hawaii, Illinois, Maryland and New Jersey – as well as twenty-one state legislative chambers have already enacted this bill.

On four occasions, the most recent in 2000, the current system has awarded the presidency to the candidate with the most electoral but not the most popular votes nation wide. Emphasis upon electoral votes encourages candidates to concentrate their efforts in those states with the greatest number of electoral votes. The Constitution gives states exclusive and plenary control over the manner of awarding their electoral votes. The winner-take-all rule is not in the Constitution.

You may find more information about this issue on the LWVUS website So that we can advise the national League, we will review the pros and cons and reach consensus on this topic at a meeting on March 18th. Please join this committee and help present this material to our members.
Joyce Fieldsteel

Non-Fiction Book Discussions: "Global Issues/Local Impact"

In collaboration with the Howe Library, the LWV-UV is sponsoring a series of non-fiction book discussions, called "Global Issues/Local Impact", and will be selecting books that illustrate a contemporary issue of particular importance to the Upper Valley. The first discussion will focus on the issue of global trade and purchasing "locally" as described in the book "A Year Without 'Made in China'" by Sara Bongiorni. The discussion is scheduled for Jan 28th at 5:30 pm in the Mayer Room at the Howe. The books will be available to borrow at the Howe and for purchase at the Dartmouth Bookstore.
Maureen Bolton

Communications

Ongoing Needs for Help

In addition to the suggestions made throughout this newsletter, there is an ongoing need for help with monitoring legislation and or attending hearings (Marilyn Lieto for NH or Ellen Blumberg for VT) and hospitality (Eve Templeton). There is also a continuous need in communications for help with putting out mailings (Charlotte Belser at 603.643.6456); producing newspaper ads, posters, and the newsletter (Judi Colla); and maintaining the website (Bill Mlacak at 603.643.8804/8156).

Food for Thought

In the heart of winter, the chill freezes lakes and rivers; water becomes so solid that it can bear men, beasts, and carts. As the spring approaches, earth and water warm up and thaw. What then remains of the hardness of the ice? Water is soft and fluid, ice hard and sharp, so we cannot say that they are identical; but neither can we say that they are different, because ice is only solidified water, and water is only melted ice.

The same applies to our perception of the world around us. To be attached to the reality of phenomena, to be tormented by attraction and repulsion, by pleasure and pain, gain and loss, fame and obscurity, praise and blame, creates a solidity in the mind. What we have to do, therefore, is to melt the ice of concepts into the living water of freedom within.

Dilgo Khyentse Rinpoche, "The Mind's True Nature," Shambhala, Sun, January 2009

Spring Newsletter
Deadline for Submissions is April 8th, 2009
www.uppervalleyleague.org

Judi Colla

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POSTER ANNOUNCING EXCITING ENVIRONMENTAL SERIES ENCLOSED.
 PLEASE POST, SHARE WITH FRIENDS...and PLAN TO ATTEND.

Program 2008 – 2009 – Winter Events

All events take place at the Howe Library unless noted otherwise. For updated information, please check our website at www.uppervalleyleague.org or the Valley News calendar

January

**Non-fiction Book Discussions:
 "Global Issues/Local Impact"**

"A Year Without 'Made in China'" by Sara Bongiorno

Wed Jan 28th, 5:30 PM

February

**The Natural Resources Committee's
 Environmental Series**

"Whose Water Is It, Anyway?"

Wed Feb 4th, Noon – 1:30 PM

"All About Aquifers"

Wed Feb 11th, Noon – 1:30 PM

"Who Has Rights to Our Water?"

Wed Feb 25th, Noon – 1:30 PM

"Bottled Water: Taking Back the Tap"

March

**The Representative Government Committee
 The National Popular Vote Compact**

"Will Your Vote Count?"

Wed Mar 18th, Noon

April

**The Regional Growth Management Committee
 20-20 Vision for the Valley**

"Regional Planning Issues in the Upper Valley"

Details TBD

"I know of no safe depository of the ultimate powers of the society but the people themselves; and if we think them not enlightened enough to exercise their control with a wholesome discretion, the remedy is not to take it from them, but inform their discretion."

Thomas Jefferson

"As citizens of this democracy, you are the rulers and the ruled, the lawgivers and the law-abiding, the beginning and the end."

Adlai Stevenson