

The Rhode Island Voter

The newsletter of the
League of Women Voters of Rhode Island
172 Taunton Ave., Suite 8,
East Providence, RI 02914



April 2013

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Come to Convention 2013! Meeting Set for May 18

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island will hold its biennial convention on Saturday, May 18, 2013, at the Portsmouth Public Library in Portsmouth from 10 a.m.-2 p.m. Featured speaker will be Kenneth Block, chairman of Rhode Island's Moderate Party, who will discuss the effort to remove the Master Lever on the ballot.

The meeting is open to all members, but only delegates may vote. In accordance with the bylaws, the delegates will approve the budget and by-laws change, and update and approve positions. The delegates will also choose a new president secretary, first vice president, and three directors, as well as a treasurer to complete the term of Jane Koster. The nominating committee report and other convention material

is found beginning on page 8. The convention will be the last official act of President Derry Riding's term of office.

The annual meeting business and updates on new activities will complete the morning's program, which will be followed by lunch and our guest speaker.

Ken Block is the chairman of Rhode Island's Moderate Party and an unsuccessful candidate for governor in 2010. A graduate of Dartmouth College, he has worked for Gtech and is currently the owner of Cross Alert Systems, Manufacturer of solar powered, motion activated traffic signals for bike path/public road intersections. He recently com-

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League Day at the State House 2013

The State House was busy—a press conference on regulating interest on "Payday" loans was in progress in the lobby—when League members gathered on March 27 for the 2013 League Day. The League's special guest was Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts, who spoke to us about the upcoming changes to healthcare in Rhode Island as a result of the implementation of "Obamacare." Rhode Island began working on setting up health insurance exchanges shortly after the election of Governor Lincoln Chafee. The Governor had assigned Lt. Gov. Roberts the task of organizing the program in the state. She explained that there are two important deadlines coming up: October 1, when enrollment begins and January 1, 2014 when coverage kicks in. She told us that she will be reaching out to more groups to make sure that people fully understand how the new healthcare plan will help them.

League members also heard from the Advocacy Committee members who gave an update on the primary issues we are following this session. (Read more about

them in this issue of the *Voter* and at www.lwvri.org.)

Thanks to Board Member Marian Styles-McClintock, LWV Providence, for organizing the event and to all who attended. If you couldn't make it, you can view a video of the event on our web site. Thank you, too, to Nancy Burroughs, LWV So. Kingston/Narragansett, for filming the event.



Above, Two members of LWV Newport, George Kassis and Representative Linda Finn, at League Day at the State House.



Right, LWV Member-at Large Mary Chace gave members an update on gender issues.

My Farewell as President—Thanks to my Colleagues

by *Derry Riding*

It's hard to believe that my two-year term as president is coming to an end this May. In the midst of the very busy lobbying season at the State House, I wanted to take some time to review what's happened over the past two years and to thank all those who helped me throughout this time.

We just finished a very informative League Day at the State House with Lt. Gov. Elizabeth Roberts who spoke on healthcare and the initiation of the health insurance exchange in Rhode Island. Last year at the event, we heard from Stephanie Chafee, wife of Gov. Lincoln Chafee, who spoke about hunger in Rhode Island. Both years, we also had a opportunity to speak to our members about ongoing legislative priorities. I am so pleased with the efforts of our Advocacy Committee. Susan Escherich, committee chair, has engaged many members in our work. Last year, she led our efforts in following redistricting in Rhode Island. Members attended almost all of the hearings held on redistricting. The redistricting hearings were quite a testament to Susan's efforts to get more members involved in advocacy. This year, LWV member Mary Chace has been working hard on gender issues and reproductive rights and has attended hearings and presented testimony on behalf of the League. Just this week, both Susan and Mary made it official and became registered lobbyists at the capital. This election also was the first year in the implementation of voter ID in Rhode Island. Carolin Goldman, LWV West Bay, stepped up to research the implementation of the new laws and review the court cases on voter fraud in Rhode Island (there were none, she learned). She really did a wonderful job and testified before the legislature on repealing voter ID. All members are welcome to participate in lobbying through the Advocacy Committee. If there is an issue that you are passionate about, bring it to the Advocacy

Committee. We would love to have more members patrolling the halls of the state house.

Over the past two years, we have also strengthened our relationship with other good government groups in the state to press for legislation that we mutually support. The article by John Marion of Common Cause in this issue of the *Voter* is but one example of these working relationships; there have also been collaborative efforts with the ACLU and Planned Parenthood as well as coalitions with Common Cause and the Rhode Island Coalition for Reproductive Justice as well.

There was an election in 2012—one that had campaigns that seemed to last forever. Election season is always busy for the League, but this past year seemed even busier. Although we had a more ambitious plan for our televised debates, in the end

there was only one for the 1st Congressional District. The Voters Service Committee was pleased, however, that it was undertaken with our two broadcast partners, Rhode Island Public Radio and ABC-TV 6. Thanks to the Voter Service Committee—Pam Ancetta, Marie Hennedy, and Jane Koster—who put in many hours of hard work. There were two new aspects to our election efforts in 2012. Most of the East Bay does not come under the purview of a local League, but the members at large in the area did manage to organize candidates events in the primary and the general election in Warren and East Providence. It was an ambitious schedule, but it was much appreciated by the citizens of the area. We also participated (thanks to a grant from the LWVRI Education Fund) in Vote 411, the LWVUS's online voters guide. We did pretty well with this endeavor and learned quite a lot, in fact, enough to make us want to try it again in the midterm elections in 2014. Look for more about that as well. It's a great way to get involved, and we are hoping that more local Leagues will participate.

I retired from my own job last fall, and now I look forward to what comes next for me in League after my "retirement" as League president. I hope to continue with my lobbying and working with Vote 411. I am also very interested in the new LWVUS's update of its agricultural position, I hope some of these items attract your interest as well.

Finally, I would like to extend a large "thank you" to all the board members who served during my presidency. Without their help and hard work, nothing would have happened. A special thank you to Jill Kassis and Jane Koster for all their work as our leadership coaches, Joanne DeVoe and the Education Finance subcommittee, and Patty MacLeish for the *Voter*. I look forward to working with our new League leadership.



LWVRI President Derry Riding introducing Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts at League Day at the State House.

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island

172 Taunton Ave., Suite 8, East Providence, RI 02914
www.LWVRI.org 401-434-6440

Derwent Riding, President

Patty MacLeish, *Voter* Editor Jane Marchi, Copy Reader

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

Membership in the League is open to any citizen of the United States. Non-citizens may become associate members. Annual dues of \$45 include automatic membership in Local, State and National Leagues. Membership forms are available at www.LWVRI.org or call 401-434-6440. Please join us and help promote informed citizen involvement in government.

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Quad State Leadership Development Conference

Please join The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire and Vermont at the seventh annual Quad States conference being held all day Saturday and on Sunday morning, April 27 and 28. The focus of the conference is the update to the LWVUS 1988 agriculture position (see page for more on the new update) and the LWVUS Membership Leadership Development (MLD) Program. There will be traditional workshops combined with aspects of the best practices of MLD.

The event will again be held at the Hampton Inn and Suites in Wells, Maine. (Please book your room before the April 22nd deadline. Call the hotel directly (207)-646-0555 and tell them that you're with the League.) Breakfast is included in the room rate. Please note that the League of Women Voters Education Fund will provide \$50 toward the cost of staying overnight to the first twelve LWVRI League members who register. Saturday lunch is included in the registration fee of \$20. Dinner on Saturday evening will be on your own at area restaurants.

The formal program will start with a keynote by John

What is Quad State?

For the past seven years the Leagues of Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire have gathered together to meet with LWVUS leaders. Quad State is an opportunity for Leaguers from these small states to meet with national Leaders to hone skills and to learn more about national programs. All League members are welcome to attend and there are stipends available to cover the cost.

E. Carroll, Professor of Environmental Conservation at the University of New Hampshire who will speak on food sufficiency and farm stewardship in New England. LWVUS Study Committee member Valerie Kelly will lead the first workshop "National Study Overview," which will include strategies for using the study to attract new members. The second workshop, "Bringing the Study Home," will focus on implementing the study at the State level. The interactive workshop will cover regional and individual state agricultural issues, especially as they are impacted by federal law and regulations. Rhode Island has gone through an extensive process of updating its statewide plans on Agriculture, and Rhode Island materials will be provided for attendees. The last workshop on Saturday, "Advocacy/Visibility" will be led by LWVUS Board member and Maine Leaguer Anne Schink; it will cover the consensus process, developing the position and using the position to advocate and to gain visibility for the League. The Sunday workshop, "Working with Partners" will be led by Peggy Appler (Rhode Island's LWVUS liaison); it will address working with partners and in coalitions. A wrap-up session will close the meeting at noon on Sunday.

To register for the Quad States Leadership Development Conference fill out the registration form below and return with a check for \$20, payable to the LWVME Education Fund. Note "Quad States" in the memo field. Send to LWVME Education Fund, PO Box 863, Augusta, ME 04332. You may also register online using a credit card at www.lwvme.org/donate_form.html. Use the PayPal button in the LWVME Education Fund section. Note "Quad States" in the area for special instructions to the seller.

Quad State Registration Form

Name _____

Address _____

Phone _____ Email _____

_____ I plan to attend just the Saturday workshops.

_____ I plan to attend workshops both days, but I will not be staying at the hotel.

_____ I plan to stay at the hotel Saturday night and attend workshops on Saturday and Sunday.

_____ I plan to stay at the hotel Friday and Saturday nights and attend workshops both days.

_____ I have already booked my room at the Hampton Inn

Make your own hotel reservation at Hampton Inn & Suites, 900 Post Road, Wells, ME (207-646-0555). Be sure to say you are with the League of Women Voters and the room rate will be \$105.93, tax included. Find a roommate to share and the cost will be \$52.95 per person. Our block of rooms will be held until April 22, but the rate will be in effect until the event. For further information contact Jill Kassis, 619-0377, jhkassis@gmail.com.

So How's That Working for You? RI's Education Funding Formula

Most school funding formulae have a method of giving school districts extra funding to assist in the education of children with special needs. Rhode Island's Department of Education (RIDE) refers to this as the "student success factor." States approach this differently. Some give extra funding for every non-English-speaking student or for every student with a learning disability. Many funding formulae also try to account for the affects of poverty and use as an indicator the number of students who receive Free and Reduced Price Lunch (FRPL). Many states use a combination of these factors to determine the additional funding (which is usually referred to as "weights"), but in Rhode Island, only FRPL is used to ascertain how much additional funding a school will receive. The main advantage to this approach is that the school does not control which students belong to the weighted group.

The League supports the use of FRPL with reservations. Although members liked the neutrality of it, there was concern that it would not meet the level of support needed to educate students with special needs and



that schools would not institute procedures to assure that all students who qualify for FRPL are enrolled in the program. The Education Funding Subcommittee feels that sufficient time has passed since the formula has been in place to begin to assess its effectiveness in meeting "the student success factor." Committee members soon will begin interviewing appropriate school officials about how well they think this

element of the formula is meeting their requirements for funding for students with special needs. The committee is looking for local Leagues and League members who would agree to interview their local school superintendents or business managers. The committee will prepare the questions and bring the interviewers up to speed on the issues involved. The questionnaire will be sent to the schools in advance of the interview. Two League members will conduct each interview; "experienced" interviewers will be paired with newcomers. So even if you haven't followed this issue but are willing to participate (and to find out how your school district is doing), contact committee chair Joanne DeVoe (joanned@qis.net; 247-3004).

Money and Politics—Unholy Alliance or Free Speech?

The United States Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United* dramatically transformed the landscape of campaign finance and has sparked an impassioned national debate over money and elections. A rising tide of campaign spending, the emergence of Super PACs, the growth of undisclosed funding. Some observers view these developments as affirming the American tradition of rough and tumble speech and the free market of ideas. Others see looming corruption and a threat to the integrity of our political process.

On April 25 at 7 P.M. the Federal Bench/Bar Committee of the RI Bar Association, the United States District Court for the District of RI, and Johnson & Wales University are sponsoring an examination of the critical issues that have emerged from the sweeping changes wrought by *Citizens United*. The event will be held at Johnson & Wales's Yena Center Admissions Presentation Room, 111 Dorrance St., Providence. Speakers are Anthony Corrado, professor of government at Colby College, and Paul S. Ryan, senior counsel at the Campaign Legal Center in Washington, D.C.

The event will be moderated by Matthew Oliverio founding partner of Oliverio & Marcaccio and Steven M. Richard, a lawyer who practices commercial and civil litigation in the Providence office of Nixon Peabody LLP.

Download this flyer found at (www.rid.uscourts.gov/new/UniversitySymposia_CitizensUnited.pdf) for further information including details about parking for the event or contact Lisa Quartino at Lisa_Quartino@rid.uscourts.gov.

Apply Now for the Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards

The elections may be over, but the League is still looking for candidates. The Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards Committee is currently accepting nominations to honor Rhode Island's innovative teachers and their exceptional work in civic education. An educated electorate is the cornerstone of our democracy and educating students, some of whom are about to vote for the first time, about the importance of their responsibility as citizens and voters is crucial. To encourage teachers engaged in this endeavor and to honor exceptional work in this area, the LWV of South Kingstown and Narragansett is sponsoring the Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Award with funding from the League of Women Voters Rhode Island Education Fund. Any individual educator or team of educators teaching in a Rhode Island school is eligible to apply for this merit award on his/her/the groups own behalf. A Rhode Island resident or group/organization may also apply for this merit award on behalf of an educator or team of educators teaching in a Rhode Island school upon consent of that person or teaching team.

Details are available at www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm. The deadline for applications is April 30.

A Grand Prize of \$800, a Jury Prize of \$500 and an Honorable Mention Prize of \$200 will be awarded to three individual teachers or teams of teachers for work that has already been accomplished and whose impact has already been assessed.

At The State House: Ethics Held Hostage

by John Marion, Common Cause, RI

The League of Women Voters has for the last four years supported a Common Cause initiative to restore the jurisdiction of the Ethics Commission over the Rhode Island General Assembly. There have been several recent, and very interesting, developments in the fight to enact this important change that I would like to update you about.

This issue arose in June 2009 when the Rhode Island Supreme Court ruled in *Irons v. Rhode Island Ethics Commission* that legislators are immune from the Code of Ethics for their “core legislative acts,” including voting and speaking on bills. The Court said that the “speech in debate clause” of the Rhode Island Constitution (Article VI, Section 5) trumps the more recent Ethics Amendment (Article III, Section 8) because the former was not amended to account for the latter. The Court made this ruling despite the fact that the Ethics Amendment reads, “All elected an appointed officials and employees of state and local government, board, commissions and agencies shall be subject to the code of ethics.”

Common Cause authored a resolution providing that a constitutional amendment be placed on the ballot providing for a limited repeal of the speech in debate clause restoring the Ethics Commission’s role to what it was between 1987 (when the Ethics Amendment was implemented) and 2009 (when the Court ruled in *Irons*). The only way to amend the Constitution at this time is for the General Assembly to put a question on the ballot through such a joint resolution.

The League of Women Voters has supported this resolution every year it has been before the Assembly. In its first year, 2010, the House of Representatives passed the resolution on a 68-5 vote and the Senate took no action. Again this year, we had the resolution introduced by Senator Edward O’Neill and Representative Michael Marcello.

On March 12, the House version of the resolution was heard before the House Judiciary Committee. At the beginning of the hearing the resolution was “held for further study” as many bills and resolutions routinely are. Later that evening, after testimony on the resolution concluded, Representative J. Patrick O’Neill made a “motion to reconsider” the resolution, which was passed 7-1, and then moved passage of the resolution, which happened on an 8-0 vote. We were delighted that the resolution made it out of the Committee for the first time in four years.

The next evening, before taking testimony on several other bills of interest to Common Cause and the League of Women Voters (including eliminating the Master Lever), Representative Christopher Blazejewski made a statement that the previous night’s vote to “reconsider” the bill was not allowed under his reading of the rules of the House of Representatives. Judiciary Committee Chairwoman Edith

Ajello concurred and declared the previous night’s vote “null and void.” In media reports of the event, the legal counsel for the House leadership admitted the move was without precedent in Rhode Island history. Lawyers for Common Cause disputed the reading of the rules allowed the nullification.

Common Cause has commemorated the unprecedented move by setting up the website www.ethicsheldhostage.com to bring attention to the issue.

A second development, this time involving the Rhode Island Senate, has raised further alarm about the future of our initiative. At a LWV Newport County event on March 23, League member Jane Koster asked the panel of legislators about the constitutional amendment. Senate President M. Teresa Paiva-Weed grossly misrepresented what the initiative would do in her remarks. Twice, once at the beginning and again at the end of her remarks, the Senate President announced that our constitutional amendment would “eliminate” the “speech in debate” protection in the Rhode Island Constitution. You don’t need to be a lawyer to tell that this is not true. If you look at the House (H 5498) or Senate (S 0337) resolutions authorizing a vote, you can see that our language simply amends the speech in debate clause to restore the Ethics Commission’s power that it exercised from 1987-2009.

At the same March 23 forum, Senator Christopher Otiano, a physician, expressed concerns that if the Ethics Commission’s power was restored, it could prevent him from working on legislation affecting doctors. Senator Otiano, elected subsequent to the *Irons* decision, does not understand that the “class exception” found in the Code of Ethics allows legislators (including at the local level) to participate if they are a member of a “significant and definable class of persons.” In plain English, if a piece of legislation is going to materially benefit a specific individual or their families or business associates, the legislator cannot participate in the legislation. However, if it will impact the larger class that they, their families or business associates are a part of they are free to do so.

I hope this update on the effort to restore ethics oversight of the General Assembly has been useful for League members. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me at our office; (401) 861-2322. And thank you for the support of the League of Women Voters in this fight.

John Marion is executive director of Common Cause Rhode Island. Common Cause is a nonpartisan citizens advocacy group focusing on ethics, campaign finance, elections, judicial selection and open government. John serves as the organization’s chief spokesperson and lobbyist.

The Issue: Gun Control

Background: America faces an epidemic of gun related violence. Approximately 268 people are shot every single day. It's time to stop the violence. Legislation with common sense solutions to gun violence will protect our children, our citizens and help restore our public confidence.

The League first adopted its gun control position in 1990. By 1991, the League was supporting legislation banning semi-automatic assault weapons, the passage of the Brady bill and assault weapons bans. In 1994 the League voted at convention to amend the position based on federal court decisions limiting the meaning of the Second Amendment's "right to keep and bear arms." This section of the position was nullified by the Supreme Court decisions in *District of Columbia v. Heller*, 2008 and *McDonald v. Chicago*, 2010. In 1998 at Convention the League again amended the position with: "The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety." In 2004, the League voiced strong concern over the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act, which would grant special protection for the gun industry by barring city, county or individual lawsuits against gun manufacturers and dismiss pending cases.

The League supported legislation to extend the Assault Weapons Ban, which expired in September 2004. The LWVUS also supported language to close the Gun Show Loophole to require all dealers to run criminal background checks at gun shows.

The League's position: The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semi-automatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety.

The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification.

The League supports a ban on "Saturday night specials" enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers.

To read the full position and background go to www.lwv.org/files/IoI10-12_SocialPolicy.pdf

A National and State Issue: The League addresses gun control as a social policy issue on both the national and state level. At the *Voter* goes to press, the U.S. Senate has avoided a filibuster and will begin to debate a bill that would expand background checks for most gun sales. In the coming weeks, Congress will consider legislation to end the gun violence that is plaguing our nation. Some of the proposed solutions include closing the gun show loophole, increasing penalties for straw

purchases of guns, banning assault weapons, placing limits on high capacity ammunition magazines, and funding research to report on gun violence in America. Curbing gun violence is a critical matter of public safety and public health. No gun control legislation has passed in Washington since 1994, but it's clear that the majority of Americans want Congress to take new strong steps to relieve the epidemic of gun violence across our nation.

The Senate is scheduled to vote on S. 649 the week of April 15. S. 649 will require background checks on all gun purchases and impose stricter penalties for "straw purchases," where one individual buys for another. There will also be amendments from the floor of the Senate that the League strongly supports. These amendments include Senator Feinstein's Assault Weapons Ban and an amendment to limit the size of high capacity ammunition magazines.

In Rhode Island, Governor Lincoln Chafee, Attorney General Peter Kilmartin, Senate President Teresa Paiva-Weed and House Leader Gordon Fox announced on April a package of gun-related legislation. Listed below are descriptions of these bills as outlined in a State House press release.

Gun Control and Safe Firearms Act (H5990 and S0859): This bill bans the manufacture, sale, purchase or possession of semi-automatic assault weapons after July 1, 2013. It also bans high capacity magazines, belts, drums, feed strips or similar devices manufactured on or after July 1. It does not apply if the weapon is an antique, is inoperable, or was manufactured prior to July 1, 1963, and does not apply to an attached tubular device capable of operating only with .22 caliber rimfire ammunition.

Firearms Violations (H5994 and S0864): This bill increases the maximum penalty for carrying a stolen firearm when committing a crime of violence from 10 years to 15 years for a first offense. It makes it unlawful for anyone to possess a stolen firearm, setting a penalty of not less than three years or more than 15 years in prison.

Behavioral Health and Firearms Safety Task Force (H5995 and S863): The bill creates a task force charged with making recommendations and possibly proposing legislation to support full participation in the NICS (National Instant Criminal Background Check System) Index and to act in an advisory capacity to the Relief for Disqualifiers Board. The task force would conduct a review of different states' approaches for compliance with NICS and work with a newly-created Firearms Task Force to make sure that definitions in chapters of state law related to mental health and substance abuse are consistent with those in firearms statutes. The task force is required to report back to the governor and General Assembly before January 1, 2014.

Relief for Disqualifiers Board (Bill S0861): This bill creates a board to which individuals can appeal if they are denied a firearm based on a mental health adjudication or commitment

or on substance abuse backgrounds as reported in the NICS Index. The board will be composed of a psychiatrist, a psychologist, a member of law enforcement, the director of the RI Department of Behavioral Healthcare, Developmental Disabilities and Hospitals, and the Mental Health Advocate. Petitioners to the board will be required to submit medical records and other information and the board will be required to hear the petition within 60 days of it being submitted. If denied by the board, the petitioner will be able to appeal to Superior Court.

Firearms Task Force (Bill H5995 and S0863): The bill creates a task force to review gun laws in Rhode Island, reporting back to the governor and General Assembly by January 1, 2014.

Background Checks and Attorney General Permits (AG Kilmartin's bills S0865 and H5993): These bills would require a person requesting a license or permit to carry a pistol or revolver to undergo national criminal background checks and will make the Attorney General's office the license and/or permitting authority, as requested by local law enforcement officials.

Weapons Laws (AG Kilmartin's bill, H5994 and S0864): This bill will increase penalties for violations of existing weapons statutes and will make straw purchasing of weapons a crime. Among the various changes proposed for existing law are:

- Providing that anyone convicted of a misdemeanor domestic violence offense cannot purchase, own, car-

ry, transport or have in their possession a firearm and increases penalties for violation.

- Increasing penalties for those who steal a firearm.
- Providing that if a firearm is sold, transferred, given or conveyed to a minor and that firearm is used in a crime of violence, the person who provided the firearm to a minor will be subject to an additional penalty.
- Adding a new section to the law to provide that no person, entity or dealer shall sell, loan or transfer a firearm to any person whom they know or have cause to believe is not the actual purchaser (straw purchases).
- Increasing penalties for failing to report a lost or stolen firearm.

Possession of Firearm by Minor: These bills make it illegal for anyone under 18 to possess a firearm unless they are involved in a competition, hunting or are accompanied by a parent or qualified adult over 21 who is licensed to possess and use the firearm, in a ceremony, reserve officer training or in firearms education or going back and forth to a range or camp or are engaged in lawful hunting activity.

Alteration of Firearm Numbers: These bills make it illegal to manufacture, sell, purchase or possess any firearm that has an altered, obliterated or removed mark of identification, including but not limited to the ID of the maker, model or other identifying marker. The bills do not apply to antiques.

Head to the WEB—Learn More/Keep Current

The Rhode Island Legislature's web page has links that provide easy access to the text of these gun control-related bills. You can follow where a particular bill stands along the path to becoming a law. Visit webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/legislation/ to stay on track and connected. The same links also provide direct e-mail to your senator and representative. Put in the bill numbers to read the full text of the bills. You can track other legislation as well. The LWVRI is also trying to keep members as up to date as possible on current legislation. Track what is happening on our web site: www.lwvri.org. Click on "See the League in Action" on the left side of the page.

Legislators from Newport County spoke at a LWV Newport County Legislators coffee in March. To hear their remarks on gun control and other issues including ethics, the master lever, and other topics go to www.jamestownrecord.com/Special.Features/lwvri.3.23.13.htm

Dr. Jonathan Metzl of Vanderbilt University has written extensively on mental health and guns. His article in the *Lancet* is available at www.lancet.com/journals/lancet/article/PIIS0140-6736%2811%2960950-1/fulltext. Dr. Metzl also co-authored an article on the subject with Kenneth



Moderator Patty MacLeish, LWV Newport County (standing at right), and Representatives Peter Martin (left) and Linda Finn (center, seated) at the "Coffee with our Legislators" event sponsored by the LWV Newport county in March. Gun control was among the topics that were addressed. Their remarks on gun control and other issues are available on line. Follow this link: www.jamestownrecord.com/Special.Features/lwvri.3.23.13.htm

MacLeish, PhD, which is also available on line at <http://www2.lse.ac.uk/researchAndExpertise/units/CARR/publications/LSE-CARR-Triggeringthedebate.pdf>.

League to Update Agriculture Position

The League of Women Voters is undertaking an update of its Agriculture Position. While many leaders in Rhode Island have been courting new manufacturing and service businesses to come to the state, farms in Rhode Island have been growing in the past few years. The RI DEM/Agriculture Division notes that between 2002-2007, the number of farms in the state rose 42%, the amount of land farmed increased 11 percent, and the market value of production totaled \$65.292, an increase of 19%. Farm Fresh of Rhode Island and other groups have increased the public's awareness of buy locally, supporting the state's farms.

These increases have coincided with the growing interest in food, how it is produced, and how safe it is to eat. Leagues across the nation believed that because of these trends, it was time to review and update the current League position on agriculture policy.

The Agriculture Update will focus narrowly on: 1) current technology issues in agriculture including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), herbicides, pesticides, agriculture water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock, and accurate food labeling; and 2) current agriculture finance issues including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop subsidies and the federal agricultural regulatory process.

The Committee will be chaired by Norman Turrill, LWV Oregon, and includes representatives from Illinois, Maryland, Oregon, Michigan, North Carolina, Maine, Pennsylvania, and Minnesota. Valerie Kelly of Maine will be at the Quad State Conference in late April to bring members up to date on the study. The study committee is now preparing and selecting study materials, and the leader's guide. There will shortly be links on the League web page (www.lwv.org) to the study's online forum and discussion list. etc. and posts on LWV website. A study forum and a discussion list is also planned.

The League's Statement of Position on Federal Agriculture Policy

The LWVUS believes that federal agriculture policies should promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers, farms that are economically viable, farm practices that are environmentally sound and increased reliance on the free market to determine prices. Federal policy should encourage a system of sustainable, regenerative agricultural production that moves toward an environmentally sound agricultural sector. This includes promoting stewardship to preserve and protect the country's human and natural agricultural resources.

This spring, state and local Leagues will begin to form study committees, examine study materials, and plan for public meetings. After the period of study, consensus meetings will be held in early spring 2014. The results of the consensus will allow Leagues to support or oppose legislation affecting agriculture on a local and state level.

If you are interested in agriculture policy and think that you may like to learn more or if you have expertise in the area and are willing to share it with the League, please contact Derry Riding (derwent.riding@gmail.com; 401-209-5091) or your local League. Future issues of the *Voter* will include more on the study.

The League's History

In 1986, the League undertook a two-year study and member agreement process on the role of the federal government in U.S. agriculture policy, examining elements of federal farm policy, its contemporary setting and policy alternatives.

The resulting 1988 position on agriculture policy supports policies for sustainable agriculture and action to reduce the use of toxic chemicals on the farm. The League also supports targeting research programs and technological assistance to mid-sized farms and to sustainable agriculture. While many of the programs the League supports—farm credit at reasonable terms and conditions and programs to enable farmers to use sustainable agriculture—may benefit family or mid-sized farms, the League supports

these programs for all farms, regardless of size.

In 1989, the League opposed legislation that would have preempted stricter state laws on the regulation of pesticides. In 1990, it urged the House to pass a farm bill that would protect land and water resources, reduce the use of toxic chemicals, and target research and technical assistance to developing environmentally sound agriculture practices. The League called for measures to strengthen conservation provisions, continue the conservation reserve, and permit retention of base payments and deficiency payments when farmers file and implement an approved plan for farming with environmentally beneficial practices. The League also called for national standards of organic production and opposed the export of pesticides that are illegal in the United States. In 1991, the LWVEF worked with "Public Voice for Food and Health Policy" and state and local Leagues on a citizen education project on agricultural issues, including pesticide residues in food and water, sustainable agriculture, and research and technology.

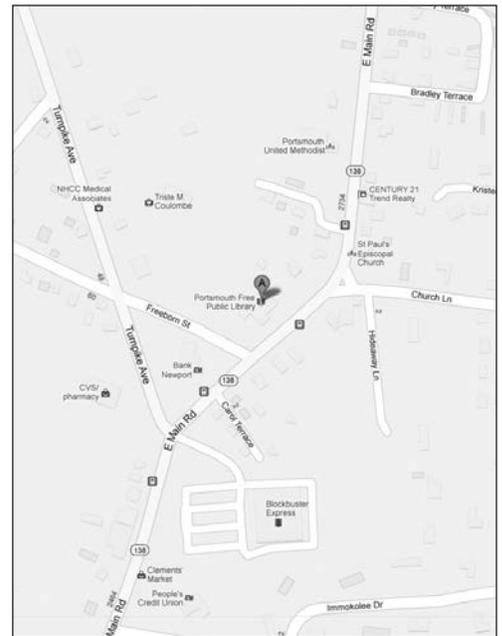


Food for Thought/
Thinking of Food

Convention 2013 May 18, 2013

All members of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island are encouraged to attend the 2013 LWVRI Convention at the Portsmouth Free Public Library, 2658 East Main Rd., Portsmouth, on May 18, 2013. The meeting begins at 10 a.m. with coffee and treats; the \$20 registration includes a lunch of sandwiches, salad, and beverages. Use the registration form found on page 11 or download one at www.lwvri.org. Local Leagues and Members at Large may caucus to choose their delegates at convention or they may gather beforehand to do so. The Board of Directors will notify each League of the number of delegates each local League may send to convention and the number of delegates allowed for Members at Large. All members are encouraged to attend, but only delegates may vote at convention.

Directions: The Portsmouth Free Public Library is at 2658 East Main Rd. (Rte 138 just before the junction with Bristol Ferry Rd.), Portsmouth; the Library's phone number is 683-9457. On this and the following pages you will find all the information you will need about the business part of the meeting—the bylaws changes, the nominating committee report, the updates to the LWVRI voting machine position, and the budget. Delegates will vote to approve or reject these items.



Portsmouth Public Library, 2658, East Main Rd., Portsmouth.

Bylaws Changes

Below are the proposed bylaws changes. The complete bylaws may be found on the LWVRI web site. Sections with amendments suggested by the Board of Directors. Text to be added is in bold, text to be deleted is crossed out.

BYLAWS, THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF RHODE ISLAND, June 2011

ARTICLE VIII Convention Section 8 Representation

Section 4 REPRESENTATION

(a) Members of each local League or provisional League in attendance shall caucus for the purpose of selecting a delegate or delegates eligible to register to vote. Each local League having more than 10 voting members

shall be entitled to one delegate for every 10 members, or a major fraction thereof, belonging to said local League on ~~January 1st~~ **date on which national member count is taken of said year**. The records of the state office of paid voting members as of ~~January 1st~~ **date on which national member count is taken** shall determine the official members count for this purpose.

(b) Members-at-large in attendance shall caucus for the purpose of selecting a delegate or delegates eligible to register to vote. The members-at-large shall be entitled to register one delegate for every 10 members-at-large, or a major fraction thereof, belonging as of ~~February 1st~~ **date on which national member count is taken** of said year.

LWVRI NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE REPORT 2013

The Nominations Committee of LWVRI offers the following **nominations for the Board of Directors** to serve for a two-year term, 2013 through 2015:

President: Jane Koster, LWV Newport County
First Vice President: Jill Kassis, LWV Newport County
Secretary: Susan Escherich, LWV Member at Large
Director: Joanne DeVoe, LWV Member at Large
Director: Patty MacLeish, LWV Newport County
Director: Derry Riding, LWV Bristol County

The following **nomination is made for the Board of Directors** to serve for a one year term, 2013-2014 (completing the term of Jane Koster):

Treasurer: Rosemary Forbes-Woodside, LWV Newport County
The following persons remain on the Board of Directors through 2014:

2nd Vice President: Susan Wells, LWV Newport County

Director: Pam Ancheta, LWV So. Kingston, Narragansett
Director: Marion Styles-McClintock, LWV Providence
Director: Helen Taylor, LWV West Bay

The Nominations Committee of LWVRI offers the following **nominations for the Nominating Committee** of LWVRI to serve for a two-year term, 2013 through 2015:

Chair: Susan Escherich, LWV Member at Large
Members: Marian Styles-McClintock LWV Providence and Rosemary Forbes-Woodside, LWV Newport County
Additional nominations may be made from the floor of the Convention meeting provided that the consent of the nominee has been obtained.

Respectfully Submitted,

The LWVRI Nominations Committee: Joanne DeVoe, Susan Wells, Pam Ancheta, Jane Rankin and Erin Dollard

Update: LWVRI Position on New Voting Machines and a New System for Recording and Counting Votes

Background: The LWVRI adopted a position on voting machines in 1995. That position was amended in 2001. At the LWVRI Council in 2013, the membership agreed to review the various parts of the League's position on voting and elections. As part of that project, delegates will be voting at Convention on suggested updates to the position on voting machines. Below is the LWVRI position and the suggested changes. Those items in bold are additions; those struck through will be deleted.

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island supports the following standards for state acquisition (or lease) and maintenance of voting machines:

It is essential that any equipment, systems, and procedures used for voting in RI guarantee the integrity of the voting process and vote totals. The basic criteria for selection and maintenance of the voting equipment and for procedures on the use of the new voting system must include:

- Security of the vote, including protection against fraud and other data loss. The following should be included:
 - * Audit trails
 - * Procedures that assure that the software programs used in voting machines are identical to those deposited with the appropriate state office.
 - * Mandatory recount of a small percentage of the votes to confirm the computerized results.
 - * Maintenance of in-house expertise:
 - To provide professional systems management of the whole voting system.
 - To assess independently any hardware, software, and support supplied by vendors.
 - * Escrow of source code to protect the state in case of default of the vendor.
- Privacy of the vote.
- Orderliness of voting.
- Accuracy of vote recording and summation. Rhode Island should adopt formalized written procedures for testing, ensuring, and maintaining (as recommended in National Bureau of Standards 500-158) the following:
 - * Logical correctness of the software and the system.
 - * Protection of software and data files from outside influences, such as tampering and viruses.
 - * Accuracy of the voter's recording of his or her votes.
- A new absentee ballot system, integrated with the polling place system.
- A new computerized roll-up of vote totals from polling places (to sum the statewide and local votes).
- Cost analysis, including hardware, software, personnel, ballots, maintenance, etc.

At minimum, Rhode Island should adopt the Federal Election Commission Performance Standards U.S. Election Assistance Commission "Voluntary Voting System Guidelines" for the Purchase of Computerized Vote Tallying Systems.

RI should require regular review of laws and regulations to ensure accuracy, integrity and security in computerized vote tallying.

Links

- ~~Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) Voting Machines and HAVA Implementation LWVUS~~
- **Voting Rights** <<http://www.lwv.org/content/voting-rights>> LWVUS
- **Federal Voluntary Voting System Guidelines, October 6, 2008** <<https://openers.com/document/RS22363/2008-10-06/>> **Congressional Research Service pdf**
- Election Reform and Electronic Voting Systems <<http://www.epic.org/privacy/voting/crsreport.pdf>> Congressional Research Service pdf
- National Institute of Standards and Technology <<http://vote.nist.gov/>>
- National Academies of Sciences Electronic Voting Report <<http://electionupdates.caltech.edu/?p=38>>
- "Federal Efforts to Improve Security and Reliability of Electronic Voting Systems Are Under Way, but Key Activities Need to Be Completed" <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d05956.pdf> U.S. Government Accountability Office pdf
- "Voluntary Voting System Guidelines" <http://www.eac.gov/vvsg> U.S. Election Assistance Commission
- ~~Association of Assistive Technology Act Programs~~
- Equipment Study: State-by-State Equipment Summary <<http://www.electiondataservices.com/>>
- ~~The Machinery of Democracy: Voting System Security, Accessibility, Usability, and Cost - The Brennan Center for Justice - Voting Technology Assessment Project~~

Convention *continued page 1*

pleted a study for Governor Lincoln Chafee on waste and fraud in the state's welfare programs. One of the Moderate Party's issues, and one that Mr. Block has championed for some time, is the elimination of the so-called "master lever." Rhode Island hasn't had voting machines in which voters pulled levers in some time. Unfortunately, the introduction of the "new" voting machines more than ten years ago did not mean the removal of the "master lever" which allows voters to choose all the candidates of a particular party with one pen mark on the ballot. There are numerous reasons why this procedure is a bad idea for voters, and some of those reasons were outlined in an article in the last Voter. Mr. Block will give his take on the master lever and update members on the current outlook for repeal.

The registration form for convention appears on page 11. You may also register on line at www.lwvri.org and make you payment by credit card. To learn about serving as a delegate at convention, contact your local League president.

**League of Women Voters of Rhode Island
2012–13 Financial Report and 2013–14 Proposed Budget**

	Adopted Budget 2012	Proposed Budget 2013		Adopted Budget 2012	Proposed Budget 2013
INCOME			EXPENSES		
Memberships			Building Expenses		
PMP	1,144.00	1,060.00	Rent	4,140.00	4,140.00
MAL dues	900.00	540.00	Electric	85.00	120.00
Rebate: National Members			Telephone/Fax	540.00	600.00
Membership Total	2,044.00	1,600.00	Insurance	548.00	
Ed Fund			Building Total	5,313.00	5,560.00
Rent	2,070.00	2,070.00	Office Expenses		
Other (utilities)	270.00		<i>Voter</i> Publishing/ mailing	1,100.00	900.00
Insurance	274.00		Administrative		
Ed Fund Total	2,614.00	2,680.00	(inc. postage)	225.00	200.00
Fund Raising (inc. local league gifts)			State Council/Convention	200.00	200.00
Letter	2,200.00	2,500.00	LWVUS Council/		
Event(s)	1,500.00	1,500.00	Convention	500.00	0
Local Leagues	1,900.00	200.00	Office Total	2,025.00	1,800.00
State Council/Convention	200.00	320.00	League Functions		
LWV Day/State House	450.00	600.00	Program Support	300.00	300.00
Other			Membership	135.00	50.00
Fund Raising Total	6,250.00	5,120.00	PMP/MAL	344.00	372.00
Miscellaneous			Fund Raising—letter	200.00	200.00
Interest (Bank)	5.00	3.00	Fund Raising— event		
Misc/Sales			League Day		
Poll Running	725.00	-	at the State House	300.00	450.00
Transfer from Prior Years			Web Site	12.00	
Miscellaneous Total	730.00	3,094.00	Miscellaneous/Other	9.00	
Total Income	\$11,638.00	\$12,494.00	League Functions Total	1,300.00	2,134.00
			Advocacy Expenses	3,000.00	3,000.00
			Total Operating		
			Expenses	\$11,638.00	\$12,494.00
			Income less Expenses	0	0

Convention 2013 Registration

To register, use this form or download one from the LWVRI Web site. If you plan to join us for lunch, please enclose a check in the amount of \$20 and return to Jane Koster, LWVRI Treasurer, 449 West Reach Dr., Jamestown, RI 02835. Please print clearly as we will use this for your name tag.

Name _____

League _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

The League of Women Voters of RI
172 Taunton Ave., Suite 8,
East Providence, RI 02914

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Coming Up—League Events

Tuesday, April 30

Deadline for applying for the Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards. Details on page 2. Apply online at www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.btm.

Thursday, April 25, 1 P.M.

Book Group. Thomas Jefferson: The Art of Power by Jon Meachem. All are welcome. To learn more about the Book Group, call Hollie Courage at 401-274-6173 or Linda Jenkins at 401-816-0331.

Monday, May 6, 9:30 A.M.-noon

LWVRI Board meeting. Weaver Memorial Library, East Providence.

Saturday, May 18, 10 A.M.-2 P.M.

LWVRI Convention. Portsmouth Free Public Library



Join Us! Become Part of Making Democracy Work

Membership in the League is \$45. To join please send a check and this form to LWVRI, 172 Taunton Ave, Suite 8, E. Providence, RI 02914 and help Democracy Work! Or, join on line at www.LWVRI.org.

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____