

# The Rhode Island Voter

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



February 2010

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## Education Commissioner Deborah Gist to Speak at League Day at the State House March 10

Deborah Gist, R.I. Commissioner of Elementary and Secondary Education, will be the featured speaker at the LWVRI's League Day at the State House on Wednesday, March 10, at 5 P.M. in the Governor's Reception Room. League Day at the State House is an annual event, open

to the public. Each year's speaker addresses an issue of critical importance to Rhode Islanders. Ms. Gist's talk is timely in light of the League's current study of education financing in Rhode Island. Commissioner Gist recently released a new financing education plan, which was a collaboration between the Department of Education and Brown University. Her talk, "The View from the Commissioner's Office," will be followed by a question and answer session.



Deborah Gist

League Day begins at 3 p.m. with tours of the State House. Commissioner Gist will

### League Day at the State House Program

- 3 to 5 P.M. Tours of State House by reservation only
- 4:30 P.M. Registration. (Dinner reservations and payment must be received by Friday, March 5.)
- 5 P.M. Address by RI Education Commissioner Deborah Gist, "The View from the Commissioner's Office." Audience questions to follow. This talk is free and registration is not required.
- 6:30 P.M. Dinner, by reservation only. See form on page 7.

**League Day continues on page 7**

## Education Funding Formula Basics

*by Patty MacLeish, Education Funding Committee Member*

Schools in the United States are primarily funded by state and local governments, and to a much lesser extent the federal government. How the state and local governments share the responsibility for educating their children (that is how the burden is split between the two government entities) and how they determine what level of funding should be given to each district (that is what factors about a school population should be considered when providing funding) varies from state to state. Every state in the union except Rhode Island uses a formula to determine how the cost of educating a student should be shared between the state and local government and what each district should receive.<sup>1</sup>

Any discussion of education funding usually includes the issue of formulas. Simply put, formulas determine how much funding each district will receive from the state. A formula should describe this process of distribution of funds to school districts by state government in a manner that is transparent and based on known factors. By their nature, formulas

are meant to be unaffected by political considerations.

When states design a funding formulas they attempt to make it fair and equitable. Usually the process begins by determining the cost of educating a student. Simply put, the state will mandate that a certain dollar amount will be spent by the state and localities for each student. The dollar amount is usually referred to as a "foundation grant" or a "flat grant." A very basic formula would consist of a dollar allocation (the foundation grant) multiplied by the number of students in a district. Such a formula would look like this:

$$\text{foundation grant} \times \text{enrollment} = \text{amount a school receives}$$

This example is a formula that is easily understood and transparent.

Funding formulas are not that simple, however, since other factors affect the allocation. First, with few exceptions, states share the responsibility of funding education with localities,

**Funding Formula Basics continues on page 6**

## President's Message

### *Join Us for League Day, Lobbying, and Voters' Service*

Hello, LWVRI members,

I hope this message finds you well in this brisk winter weather. The 2010 legislative session is under way, with dire predictions about the cuts in state funding that will have to be made unless taxes are raised.

The LWVRI annual League Day at the State House is scheduled for Wednesday, March 10, 2010. This year our lobbyist Greta Abbott will be conducting two brief tours in the afternoon, then at 5 p.m., Deborah Gist, RI's new Commissioner of Education will speak and answer questions about the condition of our schools. Our Financing Education Committee, which is studying the state's education finance system, will be paying particular attention to her comments about the plan that she is sponsoring for a state funding formula for education. After her speech, there will be plenty of time for the audience to ask questions. At 6:30 p.m., there will be a turkey dinner. For more information, see the notice on page 1 and the registration form on page 7.

Greta Abbott, our lobbyist has begun her work in the 2010 session by scanning the bills that are introduced to see which ones to recommend to the Advocacy Committee for study and possible testimony. The Advocacy Committee is responsible for setting priorities about which issues should be followed.

Our annual fund-raising campaign, organized by Linda Jenkins, has been very successful thus far; the amount raised is \$2,600.60. The names of those who have donated to date are listed on page 4. If you don't see your name there, cheer up. You can still give—it is never too late. The more we can raise, the better able we will be to pay our bills, which include those for a small office and for our part-time lobbyist.

As of February 14, 2010, the League of Women Voters is ninety years old! The LWV of Providence was one of the original Leagues formed in 1920, just after the right of women to vote was recognized in our country. We are planning a League 90<sup>th</sup> year celebration—stay tuned!

We are organizing a Voter Service Committee in anticipa-

tion of the 2010 election season. Chaired by Marie Hennedy, this committee will explore possibilities for sponsoring debates for the offices of U.S. Representative in both Congressional Districts, as well as Governor, and Attorney General. The committee will also consider the other kinds of information that the League can provide citizens about registering and voting. Its first meeting will be held on Thursday, March 4, 11 A.M., at Marie's home in East Greenwich, phone 884-3976.

The state League also is organizing a discussion group, which will meet once a month at the home of Jane Rankin in Warwick, (884-0669). Members will take turns being leader; the leader will give out a short article to be read in preparation for the next meeting. The subjects will be related to timely issues, and chosen by each leader. We hope it will be small enough so that each person has lots of time to express their opinion.

Our Web site ([www.lwvri.org](http://www.lwvri.org)) is up and running with lots of information. Check it out and let us know what you think of it.

Regards,  
Joanne DeVoe

### **Theater Party Fund-raiser**



The LWVRI fund-raiser in November at 2nd Story Theater in Warren was a success on two levels—the production of “To Kill a Mockingbird” was enjoyed by all (see above) and the event raised \$360 for the League. Thanks to LWVRI Board Member Marie Hennedy for organizing the event.

#### **The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island**

172 Taunton Ave., Suite 8, East Providence, RI 02914  
[www.LWVRI.org](http://www.LWVRI.org) 401-434-6440

Joanne DeVoe, President

Patty MacLeish, *Voter* Editor

Jane Marchi, Copy Editing.

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 \$42.20 include automatic membership in Local, State and National Leagues. Membership forms are available at [www.LWVRI.org](http://www.LWVRI.org) or call 401-434-6440. Please join us and help promote informed citizen involvement in government.

The Rhode Island *Voter* is published four times a year: August, October, January and April. Periodic postage paid at Providence, R.I. and additional mailing offices.

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### **Get a Green Voter**

We know you love to see the *Voter* when it arrives in your mailbox, but wouldn't it look just as good in your e-mailbox? If you would like to receive your *Voter* via e-mail, please notify editor Patty MacLeish at [pmacleish@verizon.net](mailto:pmacleish@verizon.net). When you send that e-mail, also send along the names of people that you think would like to receive our *Voter*. We'll put them on our mailing list and introduce them to the League.

# LWV South Kingstown/Narragansett Seeks Applicants for the Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Award

**D**o you know a teacher who promotes civic education? The League believes that an educated electorate is the cornerstone of our democracy and educating students about the importance of their responsibility as citizens and voters is crucial. The League of Women Voters of South Kingstown and Narragansett is seeking nominations for the Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Award, which recognizes individuals engaged in teaching civics and honors exceptional work in this area.

The Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Award honors three individual teachers or teams of teachers (grades 6 -12) who have: enriched their students' understanding of civic rights and responsibilities, encouraged students' civic participation, brought context and relevance to crucial events affecting the United States, or promoted understanding and appreciation of individuals who have played pivotal roles in such events. Any school educator or team of educators teaching in a Rhode Island school in grades 6 – 12 is eligible for

a grand prize of \$800, a jury prize of \$500 and an honorable mention prize of \$200. The prizes will be awarded for work that has already been accomplished and whose impact has already been assessed. A panel of three judges will review all applications and determine the winners. An educator or team may apply on his or her own behalf or, with prior consent, any Rhode Island resident or organization may apply on behalf of an educator or team.

Application details and information are available on the League of Women Voters Rhode Island Web site ([www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm](http://www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm)). Questions may also be directed to [sknarr@lwvri.org](mailto:sknarr@lwvri.org). Please include a phone number in your e-mail. The submission deadline is April 30, 2010, and the award will be announced in mid-May.

Susan B. Wilson, a founding member of the League of Women Voters South Kingstown/Narragansett, was a passionate proponent of education and civic engagement. In naming this award in her honor, the League of Women Voters of South Kingstown/Narragansett acknowledges the importance of her work for the League and for the values of voter education and civic engagement, which she espoused. The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island Education Fund provides the funding for this award.

## LWVSK-N Honored for Video

**L**ast fall, LWV South Kingstown/Narragansett members Nancy Burroughs and Pam Ancheta (pictured below) attended the 2009 PEG Awards held at the Hasbro, Inc. facilities in Pawtucket. The PEG (Public, Educational and Governmental programming) Awards are given annually to honor best non-professional, non-commercial, public access programming in the state. The LWV SK/N was nominated for its production, "The Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Award Ceremony" videotaped in June 2009 at the Statehouse in Providence.



## We're on Air!

**T**he League of Women Voters of Rhode Island Education Fund has made a substantial grant to the LWV of Rhode Island to promote health care and education reporting on WRNI, Rhode Island's public radio station (102.7 FM and 1290 AM.)

"I'm involved in the education study," said Patty MacLeish, who wrote the grant, "and during a recent fund drive on WRNI as I was listening to education reporter Elisabeth Harrison, I thought how lucky for the League to finally have public radio reporting on Rhode Island issues. It struck me that we should be helping to support this endeavor. I approached the League board, and with its approval, wrote up the grant."

WRNI will acknowledge the League's support of health care and education reporting during morning and evening commute times the week of February 15 and in mid-April. The announcements will refer to the League's Web site and will also note the 90th anniversary of the League's founding. There will be an additional round of underwriting during the fall election season.

"It's a win-win for us," says Patty. "We're all about citizen education, and public radio is known for its in-depth reporting. Supporting WRNI helps make that happen, and the radio station helps get the League name out to its listeners."

If you hear the announcement, or if your friends or neighbors mention it, please let us know by e-mailing [state@lwvri.org](mailto:state@lwvri.org) or calling 434-6441.

## Voter Service Committee Forms

**A**re you interested in becoming involved in the upcoming election? The LWVRI Voters Service Committee will hold an organization meeting on March 4 at 11 a.m. The League will be exploring whether to hold candidates' nights for the U.S. Congressional districts, for Governor and for Attorney General. The committee will also be considering what voter education materials will be published. The meeting will be held at Marie's home in East Greenwich. Please call 884-3976 for more information and to let her know if you plan to attend.

## Thank You to Our Donors

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island cannot survive without the support of its members and friends. This year our fund-raising letter brought in \$2,600 from forty-one members representing every League in the state and from friends of the League. These funds will be used to keep the State office running and pay our lobbyist. The list includes all gifts received as of February 8, 2010. There's still time to give! Send your contribution to LWVRI, 172 Taunton Ave., Suite 8, East Providence, RI 02914.

If you feel your name should be here and it is not, please contact our treasurer, Joan Arnold at 401-847-2890.

Elizabeth Argo, LWV Bristol  
Vincent and Joan Arnold, LWV Newport County  
Janatha Gail Bailey-Bruch, Tiverton  
Geoffrey Berg, Warren, Member at Large  
Jennifer Boone, LWV Providence  
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Roberta Thompson, Barrington, Member at Large  
C. Norman Turrill, Providence, LWVUS Board Member  
Camilla Weiner, LWV South Kingstown/Narragansett  
Susan Wells, LWV Newport County

## Congress Must Act Following Citizens United Decision

LWVUS President Mary G. Wilson testified on February 13, 2010, before the Committee on House Administration in a hearing entitled "Defining the Future of Campaign Finance in an Age of Supreme Court Activism." She told committee members that they must quickly pass legislation governing corporate and union spending, in order for it to take effect for the 2010 elections.

"The Court's majority decision in *Citizens United v. FEC* was fundamentally wrong and a tragic mistake. But this is the decision of the Court," said Wilson. "Congress needs to respond now, recognizing its own authority and responsibility to uphold the Constitution. Fair and clean elections, determined by the votes of American citizens, should be at the center of our democracy.

"The Court's decision in *Citizens United* upends basic campaign finance law that has been in place for a century. It changes the foundation on which decades of congressional enactments on money in elections are built. Such a fundamental change requires a strong response from Congress and the Executive."

The League supports numerous concepts moving forward in this post-*Citizens United* context; however, Wilson stressed the urgency in doing something now. "After *Citizens United*,

we urgently need enhanced disclosure. This is the most basic step toward protecting the role of the voter in making decisions in elections," stated Wilson. "It is now possible for corporations to secretly provide funds that another corporation uses to intervene in an election through independent expenditures. This is not acceptable. The League of Women Voters supports strong disclosure requirements for both those who receive election funds and those who provide such funds.

"The next most important step for Congress is to do no further harm. A decision as far-reaching in its implications as *Citizens United* will provoke a number of proposals that, we believe, could make our election system and government processes even worse," Wilson argued. "We need fair elections, not greater involvement of big money in elections and government."

Wilson pointed to a number of other proposals—from new controls on foreign corporations to public financing—that Congress should consider in seeking to block corruption of American democracy.

To learn more about the League's stand on campaign finance reform, visit [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org). At the League's Web page, you can also sign up to receive Action Alerts on this and other important issues.

# What Can You Find on LWVRI.com?

by Susan Escherich

The LWVRI Web site ([www.LWVRI.org](http://www.LWVRI.org)) is not only full of information from the LWVUS, LWV of Rhode Island, and local Leagues, but it also contains useful links to the Rhode Island government sites. You can find out how to register to vote, and how to contact state offices and officials, and information on how to evaluate candidates and policies for yourself.

The Web site also contains an overview of League policies and positions with links to relevant studies and documents. For example, the link to Web page devoted to “Civil Liberties and Homeland Security,” includes background on the history of the Middle East, a paper on terrorism past and present, a paper on strategies for overcoming terrorism, and a materials to help local Leagues evaluate how Homeland Security is working today. There is also information on the League’s position on Civil Liberties, specifically on needed modifications to Patriot Act, and the need to stop warrantless collection of information on what people read. Discussion of other League positions on conflict of interest, education, the environment, and housing maybe found there as well.

Because the League supports open meetings and open records, there are links to RI laws and policies on these subjects, as well as

to various departments and agencies of RI government.

The LWVRI Advocacy Committee helps establish positions on which the League will lobby. Positions taken by the LWVRI throughout the current year can be found via a link to the RI Secretary of State’s site. There is also a section on the history of redistricting in Rhode Island and the League’s position on this subject, as well as information on voting systems and processes, with links . Finally, there is an Internet Guide to the Government with links to state and federal Web sites such as the White House.

The LWVRI Web site contains announcements of meetings and activities both for members and the public, including regular board meetings and committee meetings. Committees currently active are Advocacy and Education Funding, whose research materials will be posted on the Web site this spring.

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island Education Fund provides grants for public education. The Web site explains what the Education Fund is, what it funds, and when it meets. It discusses ongoing projects and gives examples of completed projects. A grant application may also be found on the Web site.

## Highlights of LWVRI Legislative Activities in 2009

by Greta Abbott, LWVRI Lobbyist

On behalf of the LWVRI, I lobbied on approximately 37 bills during the 2009 legislative session with mixed results

Although there were a handful of Separation of Powers (SOP)/Conflict of Interest bills remaining, none came near passage. During the final weeks of the 2009 session, the House introduced a bill creating a Coastal Resource Department, which required further study by the League.

Other bills relating to SOP would have established another branch of government by creating an elected RI Board of Regents for Elementary and Secondary Education. Another bill would have transferred the powers of the RI Board of Governors for Higher Education to the General Assembly. The League opposes both bills as they entail encroachment on the executive branch of government. All SOP bills failed to get out of Committee.

There were numerous bills on Public Records and Open Meetings relating to the abolishment of school committee meeting notices in the newspapers. The League continues to push for viable (and cheaper) alternatives to the use of newspapers should that option be no longer mandated. Another perennial issue, access to police records and length of time for getting police reports, passed last year, but was vetoed by the Governor; this year’s bill passed only one chamber. A bill that would have required the Joint Committee on Legislative Services—the body that controls all legislative

activity relating to finances—to publish all contracts that it enters into, went nowhere.

As usual the election-related bills made up the largest group of bills. They deal with issues ranging from election minutiae to system-wide reform. The League was most active in the Make Every Vote Count coalition effort to remove the straight party voting option from the ballot, The coalition succeeded in getting 23 city/town councils to sign on as well as the RI Board of Elections, but the bill went nowhere in the legislature. A bill that has divided support is the bill to require voter identification whenever voting, which the League opposes. A third bill that has been in the legislative hopper for several years is Fair Elections. It would allow public funding of elections campaigns for candidates who volunteer to abide by the restrictions spelled out in the bill. The League has supported this issue for many years, but its time has not yet come in Rhode Island.

Lastly, the League continues to support the inclusion of magistrates in the merit selection process for selecting judges. Since passage of the amendment to the Rhode Island Constitution in 1994, the number of magistrates has increased from one to twenty-one. Magistrates are being appointed without public review of credentials and with no opportunity for those outside the inner circle of government to apply for these positions.

Let’s hope that the 2010 legislative session will be more responsive to our efforts at the State House.

**Funding Formula Basics *continued from page 1***

so a formula will also reflect what percentage of the foundation grant the state will supply and what must be supplied by the locality. If a state decided that it will provide 25% of a foundation grant, then a funding formula would look like this:

$$0.25(\text{foundation grant}) \times \text{enrollment} = \text{amount school receives from state}$$

The difference between what the state provides and the foundation grant is made up by the locality. If the foundation grant in this example is \$10,000 then the state would provide \$2,500 (25% of \$10,000) for each student and the locality will provide \$7,500. Taxing policies are never this simple, however, and other factors are taken into consideration.

In general, although there may be other sources, localities raise revenue through property taxes. In any given state, the value of property varies by locality, and sometimes those variations are disparate. Because communities differ, the burden of meeting the foundation level is not the same for all localities. If a state sets a foundation level and requires that each district support a certain percentage of that amount for each student, then a locality whose property values were low would have to tax its citizens at a higher rate than a wealthier community in order to meet its share of the funding.

Using the example above of a \$10,000 foundation grant, Community A with a total property value of \$10 million would receive the same amount of money from the state as Community B with a total property value of \$1 million. Because the wealth of communities varies, most formulas will also include a method of equalizing wealth. Some formulas consider only total property value; some consider total property value and rate of taxation and revenue raised; and some also consider the average income of the localities' citizens.

With this additional factor—wealth of a locality—a formula may still be transparent, but it will be more complicated. Rather than the state providing a simple percentage of aid, it determines the localities “per pupil wealth” and factors that into the formula. When per pupil wealth is considered, a wealthy community may be required to provide 95% of the foundation grant and a poor community 10%.

Per pupil wealth is not the only factor to consider in building a fair formula. Students with disabilities, students who are not English speakers, and students who live in poverty may all require additional education services. Modern funding formulas usually take these factors into consideration by assigning “weights” to certain populations. Students who live in poverty may be assigned a weight of .5; non-English speaking students a .25; and students with disabilities a .5. A school may have an enrollment of 500 students, but for funding purposes the school’s enrollment will be “weighted” to reflect these special populations. Table I illustrates a school with an actual enrollment of 500. The school in the example would receive funding as if there were

**TABLE I**

	No. of students in category	Weighted Value	Enrollment after weighting	Enrollment 500
Poor students	125	.5	62.50	
Non English speakers	50	.25	12.50	
Special Needs	10	.5	5	
Total weighted Students				80
<b>Weighted Enrollment</b>				<b>580</b>

580 students attending the school since some of the students require additional support and are “weighted” when counting the enrollment.

Another important factor in determining enrollment is the definition of an “enrolled” student. Some states use attendance as the basis of enrollment. Others use the number of students who are registered at the beginning of the year. Districts may use either a combination of the two or an average over a period of time. All of these methods pose difficulties. Attendance can be affected by illness in a school population (consider how a district would have been affected by a major swine flu outbreak). Absentee rates may be higher in school populations with an enrollment that is heavily weighted. Using enrollment at a point in time (e.g. the first day of school) as a basis is also problematical. Should a student with severe disabilities move into a district after that point, the addition of a full time aide that was not budgeted could wreck financial havoc on the budget of a small district.

Finally, the development of education formulas is almost always affected by political realities. When a formula is written to replace an existing funding method, some communities will gain additional funding and others will have funding reduced. In order for a new formula to gain legislative acceptance, they are often adjusted so that no community will be harmed by the new method of distributing support. This adjustment is referred to as “hold harmless” or “save harmless.” These provisions are usually made with a time limit to allow a locality to adjust to the new funding formula.<sup>2</sup>

**Notes**

- 1 According to the Hoover Institute, “In 2004-5, the funding distribution among federal, state, and local sources was 9 percent, 48 percent, and 43 percent, respectively. However, the distribution fluctuates greatly among states; in 2004-5, local funding of public schools ranged from 85 percent in the District of Columbia to 6 percent in Vermont (and even lower in Hawaii, where there is only one school district\*). Likewise, state funding ranged from 86 percent in Vermont to 30 percent in Illinois; federal funding also ranged from slightly more than 16 percent in South Dakota to less than 3 percent in New Jersey. (\*In Hawaii, local and state funding are virtually indistinguishable.)” “Facts on Policy: School Funding Shift,” Hoover Institute at Stanford University (<http://www.hoover.org/research/facts/onpolicy/facts/4249156.html>)
2. For one discussion of how a funding formula could apply in Rhode Island, read the 2007 report, “Funding Our Future,” (available on line at [www.rilin.state.ri.us/Documents/EFF.doc](http://www.rilin.state.ri.us/Documents/EFF.doc)) prepared by Rhode Island Public Expenditure Council, the Rhode Island Association of School Committees, the Rhode Island Federation of Teachers and Health Professionals, the National Education Association of Rhode Island, the Rhode Island League of Cities and Towns, and the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association.

**League Day at the State House—March 10, 2010**  
**Dinner Reservation—Register Now—RSVP for dinner by March 5**  
**Cost: \$30; Students: \$20**

**Come early and see the Legislature in action!**

Please send form below with payment if you want to attend the turkey dinner with all the fixings—dressing, gravy, whipped potatoes, butternut squash, peas and pearl onions, cranberry sauce, rolls, and apple crisp.

There is no charge for the tour and the program, but you must sign up to reserve a place on a tour. Please call Greta Abbott at (401) 272-2950 during the morning to reserve a place on one of the two tours.

\_\_\_\_\_ YES! I will join you for dinner on League Day at the State House

Number attending \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$30 per person; Students \$20 each

\_\_\_\_\_ YES! I will be attending the talk, but not the dinner. I have enclosed a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_ I cannot attend, but I have enclosed a donation of \$ \_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

City/State/Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make checks payable to: League of Women Voters of RI and mail to  
LWVRI 172 Taunton Ave. Suite 8, East Providence, RI 02914**

**League Day continues from page 1**

Speak at 5; a turkey dinner will follow at 6:30. Reservations are required for the tour and the dinner. (Deadline is March 5; see form above).

League Day at the State House is the perfect way to introduce a friend, especially a newcomer to Rhode Island, to the League. There will be a timely and interesting speaker, a tour of the State House, and a congenial gathering of members from around the state. League lobbyist Greta Abbott will conduct two half-hour tours, which will follow the path of the legislative process. The groups will start at the place where a bill begins and follow its path through the State House until it becomes law. Tours are free and limited to five people each. Call Greta at (401) 272-2950 during the morning to reserve a place on one of the two tours. If there is greater interest, further tours may be scheduled at a future time.

Commissioner Gist came to Rhode Island in July 2009, from Washington, D.C., where she had served as the District's State Superintendent of Education. She was responsible for putting into effect the accountability systems of the Federal No Child Left Behind education law. Ms. Gist created educator-certification policies for teachers and school administrators, and she enacted new standards for teacher-preparation programs to improve quality, expand opportunity, and encourage innovation. In addition to spending ten years serving directly in schools, where she was named "Teacher of the Year" in two different school systems, Gist was a se-

nior policy analyst at the U.S. Department of Education. She earned a master's degree in public administration from the Harvard University Kennedy School of Government.

If you have any questions about League Day at the State House, please call (401) 434-6440 or e-mail [state@lwwri.org](mailto:state@lwwri.org)

We hope to see you there.

**Join the League for Monthly Discussions of Timely Issues**

The LWVRI has formed a "Discussion" Group devoted to the exploration of public policy issues. The group shares the responsibility for picking a topic and for leadership of the meetings. In March, the topic will be, "Compassion and Choices, End of Life Options and Legislative Implications"; Joanne DeVoe will be the discussion leader for this session.

The March meeting will be Thursday March 18 at 1:00 p.m. at Jane Rankin's house, 192 Spencer Avenue, Warwick. In preparation for the discussion, Jane suggests reading "Compassion and Choices" magazine, a Special Resource Issue. She has some extra copies, but the article can also be accessed at [www.compassionandchoices.org](http://www.compassionandchoices.org) For more information call Jane at (401) 884 0669.

The League of Women Voters of RI  
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## Coming Up—League Events

### February 18

*LWV Providence presents “Are Providence Schools Racing to the Top or Sinking to the Bottom?” A conversation with Mary Beth Fafard, Senior Policy Director, The Education Alliance, Brown University. 7:30 P.M. to 9:00 p.m. 133 Dexterdale Road, Providence. For more information or to suggest future conversations, please contact Joan.retsinas@gmail.com or 401-272-0422.*

### February 22

*LWV West Bay Hot Topics Hot Topic Supper, “Quo vadis, Quonset?” 5 to 6:30 p.m. at the Sonoma Grille on Post Road; cost is \$20. Contact LWV West Bay President Marie Hennedy at 884-3976.*

### February 25

*LWVRI Book Group. A Short History of Women by Kate Walbert, in Barrington at Mary Alyce Gasbarro’s house. For more information contact Linda Jenkins, 816-0331.*

### March 4

*Voters Service Committee organizing meeting. 11 a.m., at Marie’s home in East Greenwich, phone 884-3976.*

### March 8

*LWVRI Board meeting, 10-noon, LWVRI office, 172 Taunton Ave., E. Providence. Contact Joanne DeVoe, 247-3004 or joanned@qis.net.*

### March 10

*League Day at the State House, 3 to 6:30 p.m. Guest speaker RI Education Commissioner Deborah Gist at 5 p.m. See story on page 1.*

### March 15

*Education Financing Committee, 10 a.m., at Mary Chace’s, Riverside. Contact Mickie Bonneau (Mchbonneau@aol.com or 946-9245).*

### March 25

*LWVRI Book Group. When Everything Changed by Gail Collins, in Barrington at Mary Alyce Gasbarro’s house. For more information contact Linda Jenkins, 816-0331*

### April 13

*LWVRI Board meeting, 10-noon, LWVRI office, 172 Taunton Ave., E. Providence. Contact Joanne DeVoe, 247-3004 or joanned@qis.net.*

### April 22

*LWVRI Book Group. The Fruits of Victory: How the Women’s Land Army Fed America by Elaine Weiss, in Barrington at Mary Alyce Gasbarro’s house. For more information contact Linda Jenkins, 816-0331.*

### May 10

*LWVRI Board meeting, 10-noon, LWVRI office, 172 Taunton Ave., E. Providence. Contact Joanne DeVoe, 247-3004 or joanned@qis.net*

### May 22-23

*Quad-State Conference with the LWV of Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. Contact Derry Riding, committee chair at 253-8145 (home) or 222-3949 (work).*

### June 11-15

*LWVUS Convention Atlanta, Georgia.*