

# 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 2013

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## League Day 2013 set for March 27 Lt. Gov. to Speak at the State House

Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts will be the featured speaker at the LWV Rhode Island's annual League Day at the State House on Wednesday, March 27, 2013. The event is open to League members and their guests and will also feature updates on LWVRI's advocacy efforts for 2013. League Day will begin with registration at 3:30. Lt. Governor Roberts will speak at 4 o'clock. After she speaks, members of the LWVRI's Advocacy Committee will discuss the issues that the League is following this year and encourage members about how they can take effective action on issues at the State House. Following the Advocacy update, there will be a social hour and refreshments.

The Lieutenant Governor will speak about the Rhode Island Health Care Exchange. Governor Lincoln Chafee appointed Lt. Gov. Roberts to head up the group that developed the exchange, which is an integral part of the new federal healthcare plan. She was eminently qualified for the position. A graduate of Brown University, the Lt. Governor also earned an MBA in health care management from Boston University, and health care has been central to her political career. As a State Senator from Cranston, health care was one of Lt. Gov. Roberts's issues of emphasis during her terms. She was elected in 1997 and served until 2007, when she was elected as the 68th Lieutenant Governor of Rhode Island. She has long been an advocate for quality, affordable health care, but has also been a leader in economic growth and

development, clean air and water, and disaster preparedness. In January 2011 Gov. Lincoln Chafee signed an executive order establishing the Rhode Island Healthcare Reform Commission to implement the



Lieutenant Governor Elizabeth H. Roberts

federal healthcare reform and appointed Lt. Gov. Roberts to lead the commission. Because of her leadership, Rhode Island was well prepared for the implementation of President Obama's health care reform act's health care exchanges.

Registration for the event is \$20. The deadline for registration is March 22. Register online at [www.lwvri.org](http://www.lwvri.org) or mail in the registration form on page 7.

## Speak Up! Speak with the League! Our Priorities for 2013

Legislators pay attention to those who elect them, especially in a small state like Rhode Island. Armed with the facts and some background, you can be an effective spokesperson for the League. The LWVRI advocacy priorities in 2013 will be:

1. Passing merit selection for magistrates.
2. Restoring the jurisdiction of the Ethics Committee over the legislature
3. Supporting women's health and reproductive rights.
4. Eliminating the "master lever" (voting for a straight ticket by making one mark).
5. Improving gun control.
6. Counting addresses of prisoners as where they lived when arrested to prevent skewing of populations in redistricting.
7. Establishing early voting in Rhode Island.

The LWVRI will speak up on other important issues if they arise even if they are not on our priority list. Two which may require our attention are Voter ID and Financing Education (see page 7 for more about them.)

On the following pages, we have outlined the League's position on our priority issues, the pertinent facts about each of them, and, where possible, included the bill numbers of relevant legislation and the names of committee members. Armed with this information, you'll be all set to contact your legislators. Their contact information is available at [www.state.ri.us](http://www.state.ri.us) (under "Open Government" click on "General Assembly") and search for your representatives on Smith Hill.

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

# Now is the Time to Act!

Do you want to make a difference in Rhode Island? With this issue of *The Voter* in hand, you can! There are many bills that come before the legislature, but what the League will testify about or call its members to action for must relate to our positions. The League reaches “a position” only after careful study and agreement—called consensus—by all its members. This process of reaching a position occurs at all levels of the League—national, state, and local.

In order not to spread ourselves too thin, the League's Advocacy Committee examines the most important issues that are coming before the General Assembly and assesses which issues relate to our positions and might have the momentum to pass. These issues are our legislative priorities for the legislative session. This year we will focus on seven issues. (See the list on page 1.) Some legislation we will try to defeat; other legislation we will support.

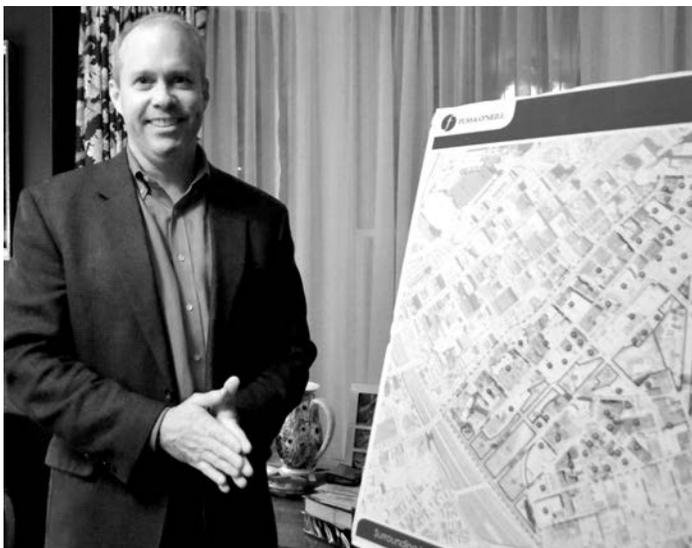
On the following pages, you will find an in-depth description of five of the issues including what the League's position is, the facts of the issue, and the action to be taken.

And that's where you come in.

Rhode Island is a small state, with thirty-eight senators and seventy-five representatives; Delaware has only a slightly smaller population (1,050,292 in Rhode Island versus 917,092 in Delaware), but only twenty-one senators and forty-one representatives. We have almost twice as many legislators. It makes each citizen's voice in our State House much louder. If we as League members speak out on these issues, our voice will be heard.

But you must speak up! The League is a well-respected good

## Providence Conversations



LWV Providence has continued its series of “Conversations” with local leaders on important issues. In December, Colin Kane (pictured above), chair of the I-195 Redevelopment Commission, discussed the process of assembling, clearing and selling parcels of land. In February Keith Oliveira, Chair, Providence School Committee, spoke on “Improving Providence Schools.”

by *Derry Riding LWVRI President*

government group in Rhode Island. When we speak, our state government listens. Read these articles, then pick up your pen or turn on your computer—write a letter or send an e-mail. Or better yet, visit your representative or senator and tell them where you stand.

As the session continues, we will be posting updates on the issues and the bills related to them so you will have the latest facts. Won't it feel good if you can say, “My phone call helped bring an end to the Master Lever”? or “That e-mail I sent one of those that changed my senator's vote on the Ethics Commission.

Remember our responsibility as a citizen doesn't end when we leave the voting booth. Democracy is not a spectator sport. You have to let your representatives on Smith Hill know that you can play this game. They will listen.

Once you have made your phone calls or written your letters, contact Susan Escherich, chair of our Advocacy Committee, to let her know that you want to help. If there is an issue here that is close to your heart, she will show you how you can use your passion or expertise as an agent for change whether by testifying before a committee or preparing research on a topic.

Many thanks to Susan and the Advocacy Committee for all they have done to organize these issues. They will be updating us on our progress at League Day at the State House. Hope to see you there.

## Call for Applications—the Annual Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards

The elections may be over, but the League is looking for candidates. Once again, The Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards Committee is accepting nominations to honor Rhode Island's innovative teachers and their exceptional work in civic education. Get details and apply online at [www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm](http://www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm). The deadline for applications is April 30, 2013. 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. So please consider nominating a worthy teacher currently teaching in a Rhode Island school (K – 12) or forward the website link to colleagues and friends.

### The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island

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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; join at [www.LWVRI.org](http://www.LWVRI.org) or call 401-434-6440 and help promote informed citizen involvement in government.

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# 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 fundraising letter brought in \$2,208 from forty-six members and 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 25, 2013. 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, Jane Koster, (401) 423-1465.

Elizabeth B. Argo, Orleans, Massachusetts, LWV Bristol  
D.K. Abbass, Newport, LWV Newport County  
Pam Ancheta, South Kingstown, LWV So. Kingstown/Narragansett  
Vincent Arnold, Middletown, LWV Newport  
Sara Bradford, Providence, LWV Providence  
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Judith Webb, Newport  
Susan and Roger Wells, Newport, LWV Newport County  
Ellen Winsor, Jamestown, LWV Newport County  
Rosemary Forbes-Woodside, Jamestown, LWV Newport County  
Harriet C. Wrenn, Providence, LWV Providence

## Make a Difference in 2013! Leave Your Legacy to the League!

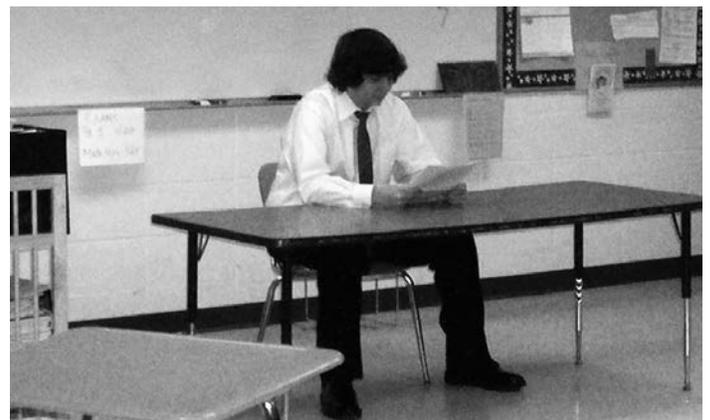
The tax deductible arm of the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island, the Education Fund, is alive and strong, but we can *always be stronger!* Perhaps this is that 10th year when you are redoing your will and wanted to include the League last time but forgot. This is the time, then, to include the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island in your "legacy" for continued support of wonderful League projects that agree with League policies. For further information (and some legal assistance!) contact the League of Women Voters of RI Education Fund and finally do what you have meant to do for years. Thankfully, someone thought of the Ed Fund years ago or there would be no League Education Fund! Elisabeth Head, LWVRI Education Fund president at 351-2269 or [emhead603@hotmail.com](mailto:emhead603@hotmail.com).

## LWV Newport County Set to "Meet our Legislators"

The LWV Newport County has scheduled a "Meet Your Legislators" coffee for Saturday, March 23 from 9:30-11. All of the legislators that represent the six towns in Newport County have been invited to the coffee, which will be held at the Potter League for Animals in Middletown.

State Senators Walter Felag (District 10, Christopher Ottiano (District 11), Louis DiPalma (District 12) and Teresa Paiva Weed (District 13) and Representatives Raymond Gallison (District 69), John Edwards (District 70), Dennis Canario (District 71), Linda Finn (District 72), Marvin Abney (District 73), Deborah Ruggiero (District 74), and Peter F. Martin (District 75) have been invited to this informal gathering. All the legislators present will have an opportunity to speak briefly about their goals for the session and the floor will be open for questions and discussion.

The Potter League is located on Oliphant Avenue in Middletown. The event is open to the public.



The League of Women Voters Education Fund gave Burrillville High School a grant to fund a visit students from Valerie DeMarco's class to the State House. After observing the action in Providence, the students (one of whom is pictured above) staged in-school hearings of their own, considering bills that would ban automatic weapons and require parental consent for teenagers to have abortions.

# The Issue: Eliminating the “Master Lever”

**Background:** The term “Master Lever” harkens back to the days when Rhode Islanders voted on a machine by moving a lever associated with the candidates of their choice. Alternatively, voters could pull the master lever associated with a political party with the result that votes would be cast only for the candidates of that party—all the Republican Party candidates, for example.

The level of confusion over the use of the master lever was illuminated by Moderate Party Ken Block’s study of its usage in Burrillville in 2010 wherein “some 40 percent of the voters clearly did not understand what it does.” (Edward Achorn, *Providence Journal*, Jan 22, 2013.) Block has posted on the web page [www.masterlever.org](http://www.masterlever.org) examples of ballots from Burrillville that were mismarked in the 2010 election. The examples illustrate the level of confusion. Some voters selected the “straight ticket” then went on to vote for all the candidates for each office. The master lever also wreaks havoc on local elections. Marking the “straight ticket” does not register a vote for local offices where voters can vote more than one candidate as is usually the case. Another problem is that voters do not always re-

alize that many municipal and school officials run as non-partisan candidates. When voting the straight ticket, the voter may not realize that non-partisan offices are not included. When that happens, those offices will not receive an votes from that ballot.

Block noted on MasterLever.org that the examination of the Burrillville 2010 ballots showed that:

“34% of Burrillville Master Lever ballots included at least one but less than four Town Council markings. ...The net result is an under vote in that race, when the voter’s intent – based on the master Lever choice – should have been to vote for any party member running in that race.

“28% of Burrillville Master Lever ballots resulted in a non-partisan School Committee under vote. ...This disenfranchises both voters and candidates and is a particularly awful impact of the Master Lever.”

Block also reported that in 2012 many voters marked “Moderate Party” on ballots on which no Moderate Party candidates were running. (PolitiFact noted that the total number of ballots with this problem was actually, not “more than 9,000” as Block originally reported, but actually, 8,653 [*Providence Journal*, February 22, 2013, [www.politifact.com/rhode-island](http://www.politifact.com/rhode-island). PolitiFact rated the story “mostly true, however.”]) All of those voters voted for no one in that election. In order to keep elected officials accountable to their constituents, people need to vote for them individually. No other New England state retains the master lever option on its ballots.

**The League Position:** The League has been opposed to the Master Lever for many years. Our position is based on the statement in our “Principles” (see box on this page), that “every citizen should be protected in the right to vote... and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.” The Master Lever is confusing resulting in ballots being thrown out and, in fact, can rob voters of their right to vote for candidates in non-partisan elections, which clearly violates citizens’ rights.

**Action:** Bills have been introduced in both houses and have been referred to the respective Judiciary Committees. If your representative or senator is on the Judiciary Committee, contact him or her and tell them you support getting rid of the Master Lever. Even if you state senator or representative is not on one of these committees, contact him or her expressing your support for the legislation and ask them to urge the committee members to move the legislation out of committee. To determine the current bills, see “Stay on Track” below.

Finally, if you live in a community that has non-partisan races and/or multiple selection of candidates, contact your municipality to request a vote to support for the elimination of the master lever. MasterLever.org lists the cities and town that have written legislators in support of elimination.

## Stay on Track

It’s easy to keep track of the issues that are nearest and dearest to you. The Rhode Island Legislature’s web page has links that provide easy access to the text of bills and where a particular bill stands along the path to becoming a law. Visit [webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/legislation/to stay on track](http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/legislation/to%20stay%20on%20track) and connected. The same links also provide direct e-mail to your senator and representative.

## LWVUS Principles

The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States. The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.

The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon informed and active participation in government and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen’s right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.

The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.

The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.

The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.

The League of Women Voters believes that cooperation with other nations is essential in the search for solutions to world problems and that development of international organization and international law is imperative in the promotion of world peace.

# The Issue: Restoring the Jurisdiction of the Ethics Committee over the Legislature

**Background:** In 1986, Rhode Island citizens amended the state Constitution to create an Ethics Commission. In 2009, however, The Rhode Island Supreme Court ruled (in *Irons v. Rhode Island*) that members of the General Assembly were immune from prosecution by the Ethics Commission because of the Constitution's "speech-in-debate" clause. In this case, former Senate President William V. Irons had been accused of unethical behavior because, as the court noted, he "participated in legislative acts concerning pharmacies while at the same time maintaining as his private clients companies with strong ties to the pharmaceutical industry." While the RI Constitution says "all elected and appointed officials . . . shall be subject to the code of ethics," the court found that Irons was protected by the "speech-in-debate clause." The League supports a limited repeal of the speech-in-debate clause to allow the Ethics Commission to do what was intended.

**The League's Position: Conflict of Interest, Code of Ethics.** The LWVRI supports a code of ethics law that covers state and municipal elected officials; state and municipal appointed officials; and employees of state and local government, of boards, commissions and agencies, and requires financial disclosure statements from all elected and appointed officials and those employees whose position involves them in significant phases of bid specifications for state contracts. Public officials should not participate in activities that interfere with the ability of the official to carry out his or her public duty objectively and impartially. Officials may not vote on matters that will benefit them personally more than other members of their professions. In votes that may concern officials professionally, they should disclose for the record their professional involvement. Officials may do business with the state, but only where competitive bidding is required. Officials may sit on committees concerned with their professional fields. (Adopted 1976 and updated in 1998; in brief; the full position may be read at [www.lwvri.org/conflictinterest.htm](http://www.lwvri.org/conflictinterest.htm)).

**Action:** The House has submitted two bills that would call for an amendment to the Rhode Island Constitution to remedy this situation. The bill has been referred to the Judiciary Committee. Contact its members (see box on this page), especially if one of your representatives is on the committee. Explain that you support the amendment. Contact

your senator, too, stating your support a strong Ethics Commission and would like the Senate to act. As *Providence Journal* political columnist Ed Fitzpatrick noted "While can see why lawmakers would prefer a toothless watchdog, voters should demand a full set of choppers.

## The Issue: Merit Selection of Magistrates

**Background:** Currently the Rhode Island Constitution requires that judges be selected based on merit through a process that involves a judicial nominating commission. The process is open to public scrutiny. Magistrates, however, are chosen by the governor from a list submitted by the legislature without regard to merit and with no public input. According to Common Cause, when merit selection of judges was established in 1994, there were 5 magistrates; today there are 20. Once appointed, magistrates serve ten-year terms. They preside over cases in Municipal courts, Traffic Tribunals, Family Courts and District courts; Family Court cases involve jury trials, but the others do not. Although they do not go through the same rigorous selection process as judges, magistrates do perform many of the same functions as judges.

**The League's Position:** The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island supports the merit selection of judges based on what is known in the League as "Our Principles" (See box on page 4). Specifically, the current selection of magistrates in Rhode Island does not allow for a well-defined channel for citizen input and review. The League supports the appointment of magistrates in Rhode Island by the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Senate, on the basis of merit from a list submitted by a judicial nominating commission. We expect judges and magistrates to be free of outside influence, including that of the Governor who appointed him/her to the court.

**Action:** Representative Donna Walsh has proposed legislation that would require merit selection of judges. (House Bill no. 5022). This would vest with the governor the sole authority to nominate magistrates on the basis of merit, from a list submitted by the Judicial Nominating Commission with the advice and consent of the Senate. On January 8, 2013, this bill was introduced and referred to House Judiciary.

### House Judiciary Committee

The members, names and contact information.

Edith H. Ajello, Chairperson, [rep-ajello@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-ajello@rilin.state.ri.us)

Joseph S. Almeida, [rep-almeida@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-almeida@rilin.state.ri.us)

Christopher R. Blazejewski, [rep-blazejewski@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-blazejewski@rilin.state.ri.us)

Doreen Marie Costa, [rep-costa@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-costa@rilin.state.ri.us)

Robert E. Craven, Sr., [rep-craven@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-craven@rilin.state.ri.us)

John J. DeSimone, Vice Chairperson, [rep-desimone@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-desimone@rilin.state.ri.us)

Donald J. Lally Jr., [rep-lally@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-lally@rilin.state.ri.us)

Charlene Lima, [rep-lima@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-lima@rilin.state.ri.us)

Michael J. Marcello, [rep-marcello@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-marcello@rilin.state.ri.us)

Peter F. Martin, Secretary, [rep-martin@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-martin@rilin.state.ri.us)

J. Patrick O'Neill, [rep-oneill@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-oneill@rilin.state.ri.us)

K. Joseph Shekarchi, [rep-shekarchi@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-shekarchi@rilin.state.ri.us)

Donna M. Walsh, [rep-walsh@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:rep-walsh@rilin.state.ri.us)

### Senate Judiciary Committee

Members, names and contact information

Stephen R. Archambault, [sen-archambault@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-archambault@rilin.state.ri.us)

William J. Conley, Jr., [sen-conley@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-conley@rilin.state.ri.us)

Dawson Tucker Hodgson, [sen-hodgson@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-hodgson@rilin.state.ri.us)

Paul V. Jabour, vice chairperson [sen-jabour@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-jabour@rilin.state.ri.us)

Frank S. Lombardi, [sen-lombardi@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-lombardi@rilin.state.ri.us)

Erin P. Lynch, secretary [sen-lynch@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-lynch@rilin.state.ri.us)

Michael J. McCaffrey, chair, [sen-mccaffrey@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-mccaffrey@rilin.state.ri.us)

Harold M. Metts, [sen-metts@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-metts@rilin.state.ri.us)

Donna M. Nesselbush, [sen-nesselbush@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-nesselbush@rilin.state.ri.us)

Leonidas P. Raptakis, [sen-raptakis@rilin.state.ri.us](mailto:sen-raptakis@rilin.state.ri.us)

# The Issue: Women's Health and Reproductive Rights

by Mary Chace

**Background:** Two important health care related issues will be considered in the upcoming legislative sessions, both of which are directly related to women's health. The first is related to insurance coverage. Currently in Rhode Island law, insurance companies can charge women more than men for insurance coverage, a practice known as "gender rating." With the implementation of the Affordable Care Act, the Rhode Island legislature may have the momentum to seek the repeal of gender rating.

The other issue is refusal, or "conscience," clauses. Following the Supreme Court's decision in *Roe v. Wade* and *Doe v. Bolton* that legalized abortion nationwide, federal and state governments have enacted laws that allow health care professionals and institutions to refuse to provide services related to reproductive health (abortion, sterilization, contraception) without facing legal, financial or professional consequences. The Guttmacher Institute also reports that forty-six states allow individual health care providers to refuse to participate in an abortion. Forty-three states allow institutions to refuse to perform abortions, sixteen of which limit refusal to private or religious institutions. (To learn more, visit the Guttmacher Institute's Web site [www.guttmacher.org/media/presskits/abortion-US/statsandfacts.html](http://www.guttmacher.org/media/presskits/abortion-US/statsandfacts.html)). In some instances conscience clauses have extended to pharmacies and pharmacists. This could, for example, affect women seeking emergency contraception.

In Rhode Island this issue has come into play with the inclusion of a refusal clause in the licensing process for genetic counselors. Legislation is under consideration that would allow genetic counselors to refuse to give full options to families who may have a genetically problematic pregnancy

**The League's Positions: The Health Care position** is found in the Social Policy section; **Reproductive Rights** is listed under "Citizen's Rights" in the Public Policy section. (Go to [www.lwv.org/content/impact-issues-online-edition](http://www.lwv.org/content/impact-issues-online-edition) to read the full positions.)

**Position on Health Care (in brief).** This position is the basis of our opposition to gender rating. The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that a basic level of quality health care at an affordable cost should be available to all U.S. residents. Other U.S. health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care. Every U.S. resident should have access to a basic level of care.

**Position on Reproductive Choices (January 1983):** The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that public policy in a pluralistic society must affirm the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

**League's history:** The 1982 Convention voted to develop a League position on Public Policy on Reproductive Choices through concurrence. That fall, League members studied the issue and agreed to concur with a statement derived from positions reached by the New Jersey and Massachusetts Leagues. The LWVUS announced the position in January 1983. The League's support of reproductive rights has continued over the past thirty years. In recent years there has

been opposition to legislation that would allow "conscience" clause. In 2008, the League filed official comments with the HHS, voicing concern over "conscience" regulations that would limit reproductive health care options for women by allowing physicians, pharmacists and other providers to sharply limit their services according to their own personal views on reproductive health care. In 2009, the League joined other groups urging rescission of the "conscience" regulations. The HHS subsequently modified the regulations to preserve women's reproductive health care and the doctor-patient relationship.

**Action:** Several bills have been introduced relating to these issues including, House Bill No. 5243 and Senate Bill No. 201 on gender rating and House 5104, "The Fetal Protection Act," and House Bill No. 5334 which would prohibit "partial-birth" abortions regardless of age of fetus.

*Mary Chace represents the LWVRI on the RI Coalition for Reproductive Justice. Contact her at 401-437-2846 or [maryechace@gmail.com](mailto:maryechace@gmail.com).*

## But wait...there's more!

We ran out of room in this issue of the *Voter* to cover all our priority issues, but rest assured, these are on the front burner! We have briefly outlined three other issues below. Look for updates on them in the next issue of the *Voter*, or go to [www.lwvri.org](http://www.lwvri.org) for updates on legislation and calls to action.

**The Issue: Gun Control.** This issue is the subject of legislation on both the state and national level. The LWVUS has written to Vice President Joseph Biden, outlining the League's position and calling for "common sense solutions to the gun violence that is plaguing our nation." We'll be following the proposed laws in Rhode Island. Learn more about action on the national level at [www.lwv.org/search/content/gun%20control](http://www.lwv.org/search/content/gun%20control)

**The Issue: Determining prisoners' addresses.** Currently when the census is taken, prisoners are counted as living at the prison where they are incarcerated. Counting that address rather than the address of where they had lived when arrested skews populations in redistricting. In 2010, prisoners from around the state were counted as living at the Adult Correctional Institute in Cranston, which resulted in an over count in the district where the AIC is located and an under count in the districts where the prisoners had actually resided. This, in turn, affected the counting of the population during redistricting.

**The Issue: Early voting.** The long lines and delays that frustrated voters in last November's election could have been alleviated had voters been able to vote on the Saturday, Sunday and Monday preceding election day. Early voting in person means more opportunities for workers to make it to the polls without having to struggle with work and child care conflicts. It also reduces the chance of fraud that occurs in mail-in ballots. The LWVRI has since 1968 supported investigating the feasibility of having early voting in Rhode Island. Early voting is also supported by the LWVUS position on "Citizen's Right to Vote" — "The LWVUS believes that voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed" and by the League's Principles (see page 4).

# League Day at the State House with Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts March 27, 2013—Reserve Today!

**Register Today—Seating is limited, so please register early; deadline is March 22. Bring a guest!** Cost: \$20; Students: \$5. Please send this form with your payment; the price includes the program and reception with hors d'oeuvres, sweets and beverages.

YES! I will join you for League Day at the State House. Number attending \_\_\_\_\_ @ \$20 per person; Students \$5 each

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

Enclosed please find my check for \$ \_\_\_\_\_ made out to the LWVRI.

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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

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

**Please make checks payable to: LWVRI and mail to Jane Koster, LWVRI Treasurer, 449 West Reach Dr., Jamestown, RI 02835.**

Questions? Call Marian Styles-McClintock, 351-1332; mestel@verizon.net

## Financing Education in Rhode Island

The Advocacy Committee's subcommittee on Financing Education met in February briefly reviewed the LWVRI position and the current funding formula that was approved in 2010. At the time, the state was applying for Federal Race to the Top funds, and that grant would not have been possible without a school funding formula. The legislation passed, and the formula is now in its second year of a 10-year implementation phase-in. The committee discussed the lack of transparency in the new formula—transparency is an important component of the League's position—especially with the use of what is called “the quadratic mean” which affects how the money is distributed. This complexity makes it difficult for the average citizen to evaluate the formula's adequacy in providing equalization of local taxable wealth resources and providing equity in education for citizens throughout the state.

Although the new funding program is still in its early years, legislators are already trying to change the formula. We will keep you posted on the bills that are being introduced.

The committee also discussed the adequacy of using the federal free and reduced price lunch (FRPL) eligibility as the only way of providing additional resources to children who need them. In the past, additional funds were provided for Special Education and English as a Second Language children. Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) says it uses FRPL instead because eligibility is simpler to determine and many of the Special Ed and ESL children also qualify for FRPL. In addition, the determination of eligibility for FRPL is not controlled by the locality or the school district. The committee will begin working to evaluate this criteria. The first step will be to interview local school districts administrators to see what efforts they are making to capture all the students in their districts who qualify for FRPL. We are looking for League members who would be willing to interview business managers and/or superintendents in local school districts. You will be provided with a questionnaire and a partner to complete the interview. Contact Joanne DeVoe at 247-3004 or e-mail joanned@qis.net.

To learn more about the formula, visit the RIDE website, [www.ride.ri.gov](http://www.ride.ri.gov). (Click on “funding formula,” then “Formula Presentation” for an introduction to the formula.)

## Elections—More Work on the Horizon

Voters dealt with a number of changes in the 2012 elections, and each had an impact on both the voters and the process. They contended with redistricting, Voter ID, fewer polling places, and a shorter voting day. Added to the mix was the fact that it was a Presidential election year. It is probably impossible to determine the impact of each, however, the conclusion has to be that change is needed. The League had supported the use of our current voting machines because they have a paper trail; that will be our position in any update of voting machines. On February 7, Derry Riding presented testimony to the House Committee on Oversight, which is studying the 2012 Elections looking for problems and proposed solutions (see *Providence Journal*, February 8, “Groups discuss problems at polls in November election”). The result may be additional bills in this legislative session. Repeal of Voter ID is another item that will be looked at and the LWVRI will be following the bill. We'll keep you posted.

### 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](http://www.LWVRI.org)**

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_



**LWVRI**  
172 Taunton Ave., Suite 8  
E. Providence, RI 02914

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## Coming Up—League Events

Monday, March 11, 9:30 A.M.-noon  
LWVRI Board meeting. Weaver Memorial Library, East Providence.

Saturday, March 23, 9:30 A.M.-11 A.M.  
LWV Newport County presents “Coffee with your Legislators” at the Potter League for Animals conference room, 87 Oliphant Ln., Middletown. Legislators from Newport County meet for coffee and conversation with League members and residents.

Wednesday, March 27, 3:30-6 P.M.  
League Day at the State House with Lt. Governor Elizabeth Roberts. See story on page 1 and reservation form on page 7. Sign up today.

Thursday, March 28, 1 P.M.  
**Book Group. *On a Farther Shore: the Life and Legacy of Rachel Carson.*** All are welcome. To learn more about the Book Group, call Hollie Courage at 401-274-6173 or Linda Jenkins at 401-816-0331. Visit [www.lwvri.org](http://www.lwvri.org) for the full schedule.

Monday, April 8, 9:30 A.M.-noon  
LWVRI Board meeting. Weaver Memorial Library, East Providence.

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.htm](http://www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm).

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 13, 9:30 A.M.-noon  
LWVRI Board meeting. Weaver Memorial Library, East Providence.

Saturday, May 18, 10 A.M.-2 P.M.  
LWVRI Convention. Mark your calendar now!