

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 2014

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League Day at the State House 2014 Set for March 26

Leaders Bring New Hope and Energy to RI's Troubled Cities

Hope is Rhode Island's motto, and the LWVRI has announced the topic for this year's League Day at the State House—"New Hope for Rhode Island's Cities: A Conversation with James Diossa and Lisa Baldelli-Hunt." James Diossa, mayor of Central Falls, and Lisa Baldelli-Hunt, mayor of Woonsocket, will speak briefly on their finan-

cially troubled cities and their successes and challenges in post-recession Rhode Island and how they are managing their new roles. Following their talks, LWVRI President Jane Koster will lead an informal conversation with the two mayors related to their agendas and the League's goals.

League Day will be held in the Governor's Reception room at 3:30 with light refreshments and socializing. At 4 o'clock, there will be an optional forty-minute tour of the State House. The formal program begins at 5, with our guest speakers followed by a report from the Advocacy Committee.

"When first I joined the League a decade ago," says LWVRI President Jane Koster, "I attended the annual League Day at the State House. The event was invaluable to me in understanding the scope and



Mayors James Diossa (left) and Lisa Baldelli-Hunt

depth of the work that the League does. I hope many members will attend this year and share in this wonderful experience."

Mayor Diossa, a 27-year-old native of Central Falls, is the first Latino mayor of

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League Day Schedule

- 3:30 Registration and social time
 - 4 40-minute tour of the State House. You must register for the tour in advance.
 - 5 "New Hope for Rhode Island's Cities: A Conversation with James Diossa and Lisa Baldelli-Hunt."
 - 6 Advocacy Update
- Registration deadline is March 21.

A Constitutional Convention for Rhode Island?

The Hassenfeld Institute for Public Leadership at Bryant University, the Roger Williams University School of Law, Common Cause Rhode Island, and the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island invite League members to attend "A Constitutional Convention for Rhode Island?" at Bryant University on Saturday, March 29, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., with registration beginning at 8:30. The program will focus on the upcoming vote to authorize a constitutional convention, and if passed, the selection of delegates, and the mechanics of a convention and subsequent referenda. National experts will discuss the design and legal status of state constitutions, and focus on the process of state constitutional reform across the states. Another group will discuss whether Rhode Island should have a constitutional convention and, if

so, what areas of the Rhode Island constitution may be in need of amendment.

Diana Hassel, Professor of Law and Associate Dean for Academic Affairs, Roger Williams University School of Law, will lead the discussion. The program opens with an "Introduction to the Rhode Island Constitutional Convention Process" by John Marion, Executive Director, Common Cause Rhode Island. Following a lunch break there will be a Q & A with all the speakers.

For further details contact the Hassenfeld Institute at hipl@bryant.edu or call (401)232-6193. Please register by Wednesday, March 9, at <https://www.eventbrite.com/e/a-constitutional-convention-for-rhode-island-tickets-10676185759>. There is no charge, but participants must register.

Agriculture Consensus on the Horizon

The Agriculture Position Update Study Committee has set the final plans for consensus. In preparation for consensus, there will be a review meeting on March 31 at 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. at the Jamestown Philomenian Library. Study chair Susan Wells suggests that members bring a bag lunch and beverages will be provided. As the *Voter* goes to press, two Leagues, Newport County and Providence, have agreed to hold consensus meetings. MALs and members from other Leagues are invited to attend either of those meetings; local Leagues may also schedule meetings of their own. Consensus is due on April 18, so all consensus meetings should be scheduled between April 1 and 17 to give the recorder time to fill out the consensus form.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We're Off! The League Moves on its Agenda

by Jane W. Koster, LWVRI President

In the last issue of *The Voter*, I ended my column with a message of hope, writing that if League members and friends of League direct our energy to important issues together, our League can be a strong voice in making Rhode Island a leader in good government practices. I invited you all to come and be a part of developing what our League will look like in 2014. League Connect 2013, held in late October, was a success. How wonderful that so many Leaguers turned out from all over the state, representing the state board, local Leagues, and the LWVRI Education Fund Board. In addition there were leaders from the National Organization of Women and members representing other good government partner organizations. We shared our ideas, our successes, and our challenges as we discussed strategies for advocacy priorities, 2014 election forums and debates, VOTE411, our participation in the LWVUS Agriculture study, 2014 LWVRI Education Fund grants, and future events. League Connect served as our starting point, and as you'll see from our calendar on page 8, we are off and running.

Advocacy workshops held over the past few months have offered training in tracking legislative bills and tracking dates and times of committee meetings on Smith Hill. I think that it is just fantastic that so many of our members have volunteered to participate in our advocacy efforts. Advocacy workshops will continue throughout the legislative season.

The LWVRI hopes to help voters get a handle on the 2014 elections as we move closer to the September 9 primaries and the November general election. We are planning a number of candidate forums and debates and will offer VOTE411—our online Voter Guide—again this election year.

Our annual LWVRI League Day at the State House will be held Wednesday, March 26, from 3:30 to 6:30. Our guest speakers this year will be Woonsocket Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt and Central Falls Mayor James Diossa. This is always an informative and exciting day. Please join us this year. Please see page 1 for more details.

The Quad State Leadership Development Conference will be held May 3-4 in Wells, Maine. This annual conference is attended by League of Women Voters members from Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, and Rhode Island—the geographically smaller states in New England. I have been participating in conference calls with the League presidents of these states to plan the meeting. The proposed issues and themes are advocacy, energy, event planning, and the 100th Anniversary of the League in 2020. The two larger New England states—Massachusetts and Connecticut—have been invited to join us and may attend as well.

Sunshine Week, March 16-22, is an annual national discussion emphasizing the importance of access to public information and what it means to each of you and your communities. I hope you all will join us in educating your friends and fellow citizens on this issue. Read the story on page 3 and check out www.lwvri.org for more information on events in Rhode Island. I'd like to thank Linda Levin for writing an article about ACCESSRI. The LWVRI works with

ACCESSRI to help insure that our government's meetings and records are open to citizens.

What does our League look like in 2014? What will it look like in 2020? Carolin Goldman, LWVRI past president and member of the LWV West Bay, came to the LWVRI Board in 2013 and asked us to consider these questions. We organized a subcommittee, chaired by Joanne DeVoe, to explore this query. The committee has proposed a survey be sent to all LWVRI members to take part in this discussion. Read more below.

We are the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island. Be with us In League. We need you.



It's in the Mail —Your Chance to Speak Up about the League

The LWVRI Board of Directors has approved the request of the League's Future Vision Committee to send a questionnaire to all League members. Joanne DeVoe, chair of the committee explained that from time to time organizations like the League need to poll members about the organization's effectiveness and future direction. The committee felt that a questionnaire was the best way to do this and has come up with ten or so questions that address these issues. The questionnaire will be mailed shortly to each member.

"I hope all our members will take a few minutes to answer this short questionnaire," says LWVRI President Jane Koster. "I am so pleased to be leading the Rhode Island League, but knowing if our members feel that we are accomplishing our goals would be a great help to me and to the whole board. We look forward to hearing from everyone."



The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island

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Jane W. Koster, President

Patty MacLeish, Voter Editor

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 \$50 include automatic membership in local, state and national Leagues; join at www.LWVRI.org, call 401-434-6440, or e-mail state@lwvri.org and help promote informed citizen involvement in government.

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ACCESSRI Works to Let the Sun Shine On Government!

Late in 1996, members of the Rhode Island Press Association lamented that it was becoming more and more difficult for reporters to gather information from what were supposed to be public documents. This discussion soon led to the formation of an organization of other groups in the state that believed that not just journalists but all citizens in the state should be able to easily access information from public records.

The group included representatives from the press association, Rhode Island Common Cause, the Rhode Island ACLU, the state's League of Women Voters, the Rhode Island Library Association, a First Amendment attorney, a television journalist, and faculty from the University of Rhode Island and Brown University. Tom Heslin, the managing editor of the Providence Journal, was elected president.

The name of this new organization would be ACCESSRI. Sadly, 18 years later, no one can recall what this acronym stood for other than that the first three letters represented All Citizens Concerned. While members were holding public meetings around the state, mostly at libraries, to introduce the new organization and its mission, the board applied for and was granted 501 (c) (3) status. It then applied for a grant from the National Freedom of Information Coalition (NFOIC) to hold a half-dozen forums on topics related to specific open-government issues, including access to police records, collective bargaining and open records, and balancing personal privacy and the public interest.

During this time, students in a journalism class at the University of Rhode Island and in a public policy class at Brown University joined to conduct an audit of open records in all 39 cities and towns in the state. The results, published in a 78-page booklet, showed that police officials, in particular, were less apt to allow the students access to public records, including the day's police log. The study garnered widespread publicity and forced police departments and some municipal departments to change the way they dealt with requests for public records.

Sunshine Week, March 16-20

Sunshine Week, held the week of James Madison's birthday (March 16), is a nationwide effort to open up dialogue on the importance of transparency in government and freedom of information. Madison, called the "grandfather of open government," wrote, "Knowledge will forever govern ignorance; and a people who mean to be their own governors must arm themselves with the power which knowledge gives." During this week, the League of Women Voters and other members of the Sunshine Week coalition encourage citizens to play an active role in promoting open government at all levels. Journalists, civic groups, libraries, and others interested in the public's right to know will band together during Sunshine Week to help promote this nonpartisan effort to empower individuals to play an active role in government at all levels, making their lives better and their communities stronger.

The League will be working with ACCESSRI to promote this event. (As *The Voter* goes to press these activities are still pending.) Check the LWVRI Web site for scheduled Sunshine Week events.

by Linda Lotridge Levin, ACCESSRI

The students and their professors' work received an award from Rhode Island Common Cause and the prestigious Sunshine Award from the national Society of Professional Journalists.

In 2002 ACCESSRI received another NFOIC grant and published a booklet, *It's Your Right to Know: 12 Essays on the Importance of Access to Government Meetings and Records in Rhode Island*, with many of the essays written by ACCESS board members along with national experts on open government.

Over the years, ACCESSRI has worked with state legislators sympathetic to open government to strengthen the state's Access to Public Records Law. Today, its board members continue their work to ensure that the records of local and state agencies are accessible to members of the public.

Linda Lotridge Levin is professor emerita, journalism, University of Rhode Island and is a member of the board of ACCESSRI.



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

The Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards Committee is accepting nominations for the 2014 award which honor Rhode Island's innovative teachers and their exceptional work in civic education. Thanks to the generosity of the LWVRI Education Fund, the seventh Annual Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards will increase the Grand Prize award to \$1,000. The Jury Prize remains \$500 and the Honorable Mention Prize is now \$250. The Wilson Awards committee is currently accepting nominations for the award. Get details and apply online at <http://www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm>. The deadline for applications is April 30.

Since 2007, this annual award has been given 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 any Rhode Island school (preK – 12th grade) or forward the website link to colleagues and friends.

LWV Newport County Set to "Meet our Legislators"

The LWV Newport County has scheduled a "Meet Your Legislators" coffee for Saturday, March 22, from 9:30-11. The legislators representing the six towns in Newport County have been invited to the coffee, to be held at the Newport Public Library at 300 Spring St.

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 event is open to the public.

Initiative: Power to the People—A Good Idea or Not?

by Maureen Romans

In January a group of state senators introduced an “initiative and referendum” proposal for Rhode Island. Political scientists usually call this type of device an “initiative,” whereas some states, like California and Massachusetts, prefer to use the term “proposition.” Pioneered by South Dakota in 1898, the initiative was one of the Progressive Era reforms along with primaries, the direct election of U.S. Senators, recall, and referendum that advocates hoped would cleanse American politics of what they saw as the corrupting influence of special interests and party bosses. Although the initiative was widely adopted by Midwestern and Western states before World War I, Rhode Island, whose politics at the time were dominated by conservative Republicans, did not. The initiative permits citizens of a state to pass laws and add amendments to the state constitution without involving the state legislature or governor. In other words, voters can simply bypass the entire legislative process to achieve a desired goal.

Here is how the initiative would work in Rhode Island. First, citizens would need to sign a petition with the proposed change. Under the RI proposal 5% of the number of voters in the last gubernatorial election would have to sign the petition in support of putting a new law on the ballot; 10% would be needed for a constitutional amendment. To ensure a wide sampling of opinion, the proposal insists that the signatures come from 50% of Rhode Island’s towns and cities and that at least four cities must be included in this total. Supporters have one year to gather the required signatures. If they succeed, then the legislation or constitutional amendment is placed on the ballot at the next election. Voters can then either vote for or against the proposal. If a simple majority opts for the change, the new law or constitutional amendment is enacted without hearings, action by the state legislature, or the governor’s signature.

Why should Rhode Island adopt the initiative? The initiative, like New England’s town meetings, is a form of direct democracy where citizens can directly participate in government and make decisions for themselves without middlemen—public officials and pressure groups—possibly distorting the public will. Today, as was the case a century ago, many observers believe that money and special interests exert too much influence on American politics. Consider the sway the National Rifle Association has on gun policy in this country. Even after the horror of Sandy Hook and Columbine, the United States still has not enacted strict gun control laws. Even though public opinion polls indicate that most American want change, the NRA has been able to side track good intentions with money distributed to favored candidates and the clout of an active and vocal membership. In this political climate, the initiative appears to some reformers to be an attractive remedy for overcoming obstructionist interests and gridlocked legislatures.

A couple of examples illustrate how Rhode Islanders might use the initiative to their advantage. The *Providence Journal* reported that the Rhode Island Foundation in its recent report, “Economic Intersections of Rhode Island” was making “a ‘call to

action’ on the troubled economy that ...will push political, government, and civic leaders to answer.” According to the paper Neil Steinberg, chief executive officer of the foundation, “[Steinberg noted that ‘My pet passion is 48,000 people unemployed. I don’t see the urgency [of state officials in finding them jobs.]’”

If Rhode Island voters could use the initiative process, they could supply that urgency and bring creative ideas for solving Rhode Island’s economic woes to a vote.

The League of Women Voters Rhode Island has joined a coalition to amend the state constitution to guarantee all public school students an adequate education. This amendment could be put before the electorate for a straight up or down vote independent of legislative approval (see Joanne DeVoe’s report on page 6 for more details).

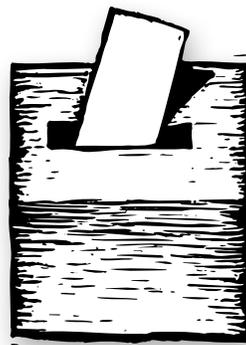
If the General Assembly failed to act on other important issues of concern to voters, like raising the minimum wage or banning assault weapons, citizens could take action on their own.

If Rhode Island were, however, to adopt the initiative, what problems should citizens anticipate? One of the ironies of the initiative is that a tool designed to circumvent the outsized reach of pressure groups and the wealthy has fallen victim to these very interests. It takes a lot of money and manpower to run a successful initiative drive. Corporations, labor unions, and individuals with deep pockets can spend millions of dollars for television ads, billboards, bumper stickers, and all the other paraphernalia necessary to win an election. Grassroots groups and citizen organizations like the League of Women Voters or Common Cause cannot match these sums of money to publicize the pros and cons of a proposal nor can they pay workers to go door-to-door to collect signatures.

Sometimes bias or prejudice can shape the outcome of an emotionally charged issue. In California, voters have used the initiative to end affirmative action in state college admissions and employment, ban same-sex marriages (which has been declared unconstitutional), and deny undocumented residents the opportunity to go to public school or use state health services (this vote was stayed by federal authorities). At this time, signatures are being collected in California for a 2014 initiative that would extend due process protection to fertilized human eggs.

To prevent these types of pitfalls, the Rhode Island initiative proposal forbids any initiative that attempts “to abridge the civil rights or liberties” or “preclude the expansion of civil rights” of any individual or group.

Another difficulty is that voters don’t always consider the long term consequences of their actions. In Massachusetts by limiting annual property tax increases to 2.5 percent, Proposition 2½ made it hard for local leaders to raise adequate revenue for public services. As a result, libraries and fire stations closed, teachers and police were laid off,



Should voters use the ballot box to bypass the legislature?

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Initiative and Referendum—The League's Position

This position was based on a 1978 position and revised and adopted at State Council, April 25, 1998. This is an edited version. The full position appears on the LWVRI website—www.lwvri.org.

The League believes in order to guarantee the people of Rhode Island a direct voice in their government, it is necessary to grant them the power to amend their constitution and initiate legislation they feel will be beneficial to their way of life. It is equally essential for the citizenry to have the power of referendum to approve or reject laws passed by their legislature, which are not in the best interest of the people. Therefore, the League supports direct [and] indirect initiative and referendum.

The direct initiative is a process whereby after a specified number of signatures are gathered; a question posed by the people will be placed on the ballot for their approval or reflection. If there is not sufficient time allotted for public debate, discussion and understanding of the issue before an election, the League favors the indirect initiative method, which requires the question to be presented to the legislature for action. If the legislature fails to act within a set time. The question is then placed on the ballot.

The League supports referendum, a process that allows the people to accept or reject a statute passed by the legislature

The League believes any measure dealing with an individual person, town, city, or corporation should be excluded from the initiative process, as should any question, which conflicts with the United States Constitution (such as: religion, religious practices, or religious institutions).

Further, any "emergency" measure for the immediate preservation of the people's peace, health, and safety passed by the legislature should take effect promptly and not delayed by the referendum process provided "emergency" labeling was acquired by

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and school enrichment programs like foreign languages were eliminated. Middle-class towns were hardest hit as the poorest communities received additional state aid, and the richest overrode the tax cap. The Rhode Island proposal does not specifically address this consequence, but it does try to prevent a successful initiative from becoming a burden on state resources. For instance, the bill outlaws expenditures requiring more than \$500,000 in state funds unless the initiative explicitly provides for "a commensurate increase in revenues."

The LWV California warns "Beware—know the sponsor." Groups can adopt innocuous sounding names to hide behind or disguise their real intentions. The California initiative to prevent illegal immigrants from having access to an education or health care was named "Save our State" or "SOS," which really doesn't begin to capture the aim or extent of the proposition. Misleading names not only confuse the voters and pervert public dialogue, but their lack of transparency also makes it harder to follow the paper trail to see who is truly behind the initiative and who expects to benefit.

Thus, there are many arguments both pro and con on whether Rhode Island should adopt the initiative. The initiative does give citizens a chance to participate more fully in politics and to act in the face of a complacent, indifferent, or deadlocked legislature, but just as there is no guarantee that the General Assembly will always adopt good laws and work in the best interests of all Rhode Islanders,

a two-thirds vote of each legislative house.

Initiative legislation pertaining to a constitutional amendment should require the greatest number of signatures. Fewer signatures should be required for initiatives regulating statutes. A referendum should require the least number of signatures because of the limited time available for this procedure. A 90-day period is usually allotted by the General Assembly for the gathering of signatures in states with referendum.

No geographic distribution of signatures should be required to place a question on the ballot.

No one collecting signatures for a petition should be paid per signature. The circulator of the petition should be a registered Rhode Island voter. In order for the voter to understand the cost of the legislation involved, all measures requiring funding should have a fiscal note attached. [There should be] full and timely disclosure of amounts and sources of contributions and expenditures in ballot campaigns.

Only after a law has been in effect for at least two years may a legislature have the power to amend or repeal, by two-thirds vote of each house, an initiative referendum. Require a waiting period before a failed proposition can be reintroduced.

The governor shall not have the power to veto legislation passed by the initiative or referendum process.

Initiative and referendum questions should not be placed on the ballot during special elections, only on the ballot of a General Election.

there is also no guarantee that the voters will favor only fair and just reforms. In the end, the issue comes down to one of trust: who will exercise power more wisely - elected officials or rank and file voters? If you are wary of politicians, you might want to support the initiative as another one of our checks and balances. On the other hand, if you worry about the quality of the electorate, then you might want to leave responsibility in the hands of the elected leaders.

Notes

The referendum and Initiative bills that have been introduced in the Senate are Senate 2039 (<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/billtext14/senatetext14/s2039.pdf>) and Senate 2042 (<http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/billtext14/senatetext14/s2042.pdf>). Visit <http://webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/Legislation/> for more details.

The material on California comes from Wikipedia and California studies by the state and local Leagues;

The Massachusetts data is from a revised 2010 Center on Budget and Policy Priorities article entitled "Hidden Consequences: Lessons from Massachusetts for States Considering a Property Tax Cap" by Phil Oliff and Iris J. Lav;

Neil Steinberg's comments are from the Providence Journal, Sunday, January 26, 2014, page A 2;

League Member Maureen Romans is a political scientist and "a descendant of a committed Wisconsin Progressive family."

What is Happening with the LWVRI Education Finance Subcommittee?

In 2011, the LWVRI completed a study of the funding of public education in Rhode Island, and came to consensus (the complete position is available www.lwvri.org). Since then, a subcommittee of the LWVRI Advocacy Committee has been organized to monitor the effects of the new foundation formula enacted by the state in 2010 to finance the costs of education; the formula is meant to be fair for both the children and the taxpayers. Currently, the subcommittee is conducting a survey of the local school districts about the formula. Also, the LWVRI is participating in a coalition formed to promote a change in the education article of the RI Constitution.

The School Survey

The subcommittee developed several questions about the funding formula for the survey and has conducted interviews with school officials in Barrington, East Providence, Johnston, and Pawtucket. The committee intends to write a survey report which includes the views expressed; these views, however, will not be attributed any specific school district. If we do decide that we would like to quote someone by name, we will only do so if the respondent has given his or her permission to do so in advance. We intend to publish this report on the state League website, and to notify beforehand those who have contributed to it. We hope to include as many and as diverse local school districts as possible.

Currently, there are eleven members of our subcommittee. We conduct our survey interviews with two members, one who arranges and conducts the interview, the other who takes notes. When trying to schedule the interviews, it became clear that it was quite difficult to gain the attention of a superintendent (superintendents are very busy people), but once reached, all have been very cooperative.

We contacted the Rhode Island School Superintendents Association (RISSA) for help to spread the word among the superintendents about our survey. Tim Ryan, the RISSA director and lobbyist, has been very responsive. We shared with him a preliminary report which summarized the points raised in the first four survey

by Joanne DeVoe, Chair Financing Education Subcommittee
interviews. He agreed that superintendents would welcome the opportunity to give feedback about the formula and the needs of their schools. At a recent RISSA Legislative Committee meeting, seven superintendents agreed to participate in the survey. We have drafted a letter urging the remaining superintendents to contact us if they would like to participate in the survey. Tim Ryan has offered to forward this letter to them.

The Right to an Education Coalition

The LWVRI Board of Directors has voted to join a coalition that has formed to promote the changing of the Education Article XII of the Rhode Island Constitution. The initial effort of the coalition will be to get a bill passed in the 2014 General Assembly session to have a referendum on the proposed Article to the Constitution next fall. The groups belonging to this coalition currently are the Association of RI School Committees, RISSA, RICAN (the Rhode Island branch of the Campaign for Achievement Now), the Latino Policy Institute, and LWVRI.

The proposed Constitution language was drafted by a group of lawyers who consulted the history of court challenges to the education funding systems in other states. The language in current Rhode Island Constitution was invoked by the Rhode Island court in 2012 when it dismissed without hearing the suit filed by Pawtucket and Woonsocket challenging the education funding formula. The court opinion said that education was a matter for the General Assembly to determine and that it was not the business of the court. The proposed Constitution language states:

Judicial Enforcement. – This article shall be judicially enforceable. Any person or entity injured or threatened with any injury because of any non-compliance with its provisions shall be entitled to bring an action in Superior Court to enforce these provisions.

If you are interested in how the schools are funded in Rhode Island, please join our subcommittee. Questions? Call or e-mail Joanne DeVoe, 247-3004, joanned@qis.net.

Join Us! Become Part of Making Democracy Work

I want to help Democracy Work! Enclosed is \$50 for my membership in the LWVRI. I have enclosed a check in the amount of \$ _____ payable to the LWVRI. Or, join on line at WWW.LWVRI.org

I would like to join the LWV of Bristol Newport Co. Providence So. Kingston/Narragansett
 West Bay Member-at-Large

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____ Phone _____

I do not wish to join at this time, but I would like to make a donation to the LWVRI.

I have enclosed a check in the amount of \$ _____ payable to the LWVRI.

I do not wish to join at this time, but please add my name to your mailing list.

Tell us your interest: OBSERVER CORPS RI SCHOOL FUNDING VOTERS SERVICE
 ADVOCACY EDUCATION VOTER ID MEMBERSHIP

Join on line or send a check payable to LWVRI and mail form to LWVRI, 172 Taunton Ave, Suite 8, E. Providence, RI 02914.

League Day at the State House

“Hope for RI’s Cities: A Conversation with Mayor James Diossa and Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt”

March 26, 2014—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

Sign me up for the State House Tour at 4 p.m.

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 Rosemary Forbes Woodside, LWVRI Treasurer, 23 Skysail Ct., Jamestown, RI 02835.

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

League Day continued from page 1

Central Falls. He came into office through a special election in December 2012, when he was elected to complete the term of Mayor Charles Moreau, who had been convicted of corruption. In November of 2013, Diossa ran unopposed in the regular election. Mayor Baldelli-Hunt, who was the representative to the State House from District 49, was elected in November 2013 beating incumbent Leo Fontaine. Woonsocket is also facing bankruptcy and its finances are controlled by a five-member state-appointed commission. Both mayors share a belief in a bright future for their cities, which were once the backbone of the state’s economy.

The tour of the State House will feature some new sites. The building, which was designed by McKim, Mead and White and is on National Register of Historic Places, has the world’s fourth largest self-supported marble dome. The dome is decorated with Scituate artist James Allen King’s magnificently designed mural 100 feet above the rotunda floor, “The Four Freedoms” and Giorgio’s Contanzo’s Carrera marble statues commemorating the servicemen of World War II. There are two new additions to the usual State House tour of special interest to League members—a bronze statue of Thomas Wilson Dorr, a Rhode Island state legislator and an “outlaw Governor who fought for the liberalization of the state’s suffrage laws” in the 1830s, and the State House’s new Museum and Visitors Center where the 1663 Royal Charter is housed. The forty-minute tour will accommodate only 20 people, so register early, if you would like to participate.

The program will end with our Advocacy committee’s report including legislative bills and committee hearings being monitored and committee action on lobbying. Strategies for lobbying our local legislators on League issues and positions will also be reviewed.

League Day is held in the Governor’s Reception Room. Parking is available on the street outside the State House or at the

nearby Providence Place Mall garage. Registration for the event is \$20. The deadline for registration is March 22. Register online at www.lwvri.org or mail in the registration form above.

Please join us and bring friends who also are interested in good government.

Agriculture Study continued from page 1

The study covers economic health, animal management, research and development, food labeling and food safety. Members interested in the participating consensus are encouraged to read the article that appeared in the Voter last spring. It’s available on the LWVRI web page (www.lwvri.org), the LWVRI Facebook page the LWVRI blog. It’s a good place to start to learn more about the study and the League’s position. There is also material available on the LWVUS Web site (www.lwv.org/content/agriculture-update-suggested-summer-reading).

On March 12, the LWV Newport County will host a meeting at the Community Room at the Middletown Police Station (132 Valley Road) featuring Chuck Allott, executive director of the Aquidneck Land Trust. Mr. Allott will speak about the importance of preserving farmland and water resources.

Other items of interest for further research include an article from the New York Times by Mark Bittman, “How to Feed the World” (www.nytimes.com/2013/10/15/opinion/how-to-feed-the-world.html?ref=markbittman) and NPR’s blog page “The Salt,” which includes two broadcasts about chicken farming and “integrated” farming (www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2014/02/19/276981085/is-tyson-foods-chicken-empire-a-meat-racket and www.npr.org/blogs/thesalt/2014/02/20/279040721/the-system-that-supplies-our-chickens-pits-farmer-against-farmer).



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Coming Up—League Events

Thursday, March 6, 1 P.M.

Book Group. *An Uncommon Man, The Life & Times of Senator Claiborne Pell*, by G. Wayne Miller. 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, March 10, 10 A.M.-NOON

LWVRI Board meeting. Jamestown Philomenian Library, Jamestown.

Thursday, March 12, 5:45 P.M.

LWV Newport County Meeting with Chuck Allott, executive director of the Aquidneck Land Trust at the Community Room, at the Middletown Police Station, on the importance of preserving farmland and water resources. LWV Newport meeting at 5:45; speaker at 6.

Saturday, March 22, 9:45 A.M.

LWV Newport County's Meet your Legislators Forum. Newport Public Library. See story on page 3.

Wednesday, March 26, 3:30 – 6:30 P.M.

League Day at the State House with guests Mayor James Diossa and Mayor Lisa Baldelli-Hunt. See page 1 for details.

Saturday, March 29, 9 A.M.–1 P.M.

"A Constitutional Convention for Rhode Island?" at Bryant University. Details page 1.

Monday, March 31, 10 A.M.–1 P.M.

Agriculture Study Research presentation. Jamestown Library. See details on page 1.

Thursday, April 3, 1 P.M.

Book Group. *Bunker Hill* by Daniel Philbrick. 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, April 14, 10 A.M.-NOON

LWVRI Board meeting. Weaver Memorial Library, East Providence.

Thursday, May 1, 1 P.M.

Book Group. *Dark Tide, The Great Boston Molasses Flood of 1919* by Stephen Puleo. All are welcome. To learn more about the Book Group, call Hollie Courage at 401-274-6173 or Linda Jenkins at 401-816-0331.

Saturday-Sunday, May 3-4, 10 A.M.-NOON

Quad State Wells, Maine.

Saturday, May 10

LWVRI Council. Check www.lwvri.org and future *Voters* for updates and details.