

THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY VOTER
Newsletter of the League of the Women Voters of the Champlain Valley
January 2008

CVLWV Board
2007 - 2008

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Director - Bonnie Scott (Website), webmaster@cvlwv.org
Director - Keri Toksu (Programs), 658-0962

Calendar of Events

We sponsor meetings and events for the public and League members.

Immigration Consensus

Jan. 9 from Noon - 1 pm

Pickering Room at
Fletcher Free Library
235 College Street
Burlington

Join your fellow League members to discuss and vote on consensus questions (attached as a pdf file) from National LWV on the topic of immigration. The process of study and coming to consensus is a time-honored League process by which we arrive at a position -- soundly based on members' views -- on issues of importance to our democracy. This is your chance to participate in one of the liveliest, most well-informed discussions there is! For more info, see the [Immigration Study Consensus Kit](#) at www.lwv.org.

CVLWV Board of Directors Monthly Meeting

Friday, January 11 at 11 am

Brownell Library
Essex Junction

As always, all are welcome to attend.

Legislative Day

Feb. 6 from 9 am - 1 pm

Vermont State House
Montpelier

An opportunity to greet other LWV members, chat with your legislators, attend committee meetings, and more!

Education Financing

Feb. 13 from 7:00 – 8:30 pm

Speeder and Earl's
412 Pine Street
Burlington

There is no "fun" in education funding -- but it is one of the most important things we do. Come participate in a lively, informative panel discussion of this crucial and controversial issue. The panel will include Mary Peterson of the Ways and Means Committee and a member of the Vermont State School Boards Association.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - Marge Gaskins

Happy New Year!

In just a few days, we will have a consensus meeting on Immigration to establish our position for LWV. This is a national item and will set our policy for years to come. I hope if you were unable to attend our November meeting, when we discussed many issues involved in this study, that you have been following the subject in the National Voter. In that way you can participate in the consensus, even if you cannot attend our meeting Jan 9th. Of course we hope you can attend and share with us your thoughts. Immigration will surely be an important issue in the current elections, and an important one for Vermont as a border state.

Closely following this consensus, we will be working on the issue of redistricting in Vermont. Many of you participated in the state convention in 2006, when we elected to establish a position through consensus for LWVVT on this issue. Back then, Terry Bouricious, chair of the Redistricting Committee, led a meeting about this study, the purpose of which has been to examine impartial ways of drawing legislative boundaries and alternative ways of voting.

Chittenden County, and the Champlain Valley League in particular, will be critical in determining our statewide position. Questions may be found below. Please see www.lwvofvt.org for background.

In February we will discuss education financing and encourage all of you to be informed, and to support us by talking with your legislators about this issue and others in which we are interested.

When you review the issues on which we have positions and the influence of our members in the legislature as well as the 2008 elections, we all will want to participate and influence our legislators.

For those who were at the recent legislative dinner, perhaps you have been thinking about those discussions, and looking forward to the session that will begin next week.

VERMONT PRIMARY TRACKER - Keri Toksu

An Online Discussion about the March 4 Presidential Primary - Join Now!

Check it out! Log on to Vermont Primary Tracker, an online information exchange and resource to keep you up-to-date with the March 4, 2008 Presidential Primary. This new website will engage Vermonters in discussion and interactive exchange about the upcoming election and how it affects our lives.

The website features:

- Candidate information and position papers
- Discussion areas
- Polls
- Live web chats
- Video on Demand
- Updates and reminder e-mails

Log on and load up with information and ideas:

- Share your thoughts as we head toward the March primary
- See what your friends, neighbors and fellow Vermonters are thinking

Stay up-to-date with the most current information. Visit: www.vpt.org

Vermont Primary Tracker is a community outreach project made possible in part by a grant to Vermont Public Television from the Corporation for Public Broadcasting. Coalition members are: AARP Vermont - League of Women Voters of Vermont - The Snelling Center for Government Vermont AAUW (American Association of University Women) - Vermont Maturity - Vermont Area Agency on Aging - Vermont Office of the Secretary of State - Vermont Public Television

IMMIGRATION CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

The detailed questions we will cover at our meeting on January 9th may be found at:

<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Home&TEMPLATE=/CM/ContentDisplay.cfm&CONTENTID=9681>. Those receiving this newsletter electronically will receive a pdf file attachment of the same.

REDISTRICTING STUDY QUESTIONS

The purpose of this study was to examine impartial ways of drawing legislative district boundaries and alternative ways of voting to assure the majority is represented by a majority of seats, but also to allow political minorities to be proportionally represented.

Our constitution mandates that districts be contiguous, compact and respectful of existing political boundaries and communities of interest. However, these criteria still leave the door open to substantial gerrymandering. Vermont's use of multi-seat districts may reduce the impact of gerrymandering, but as long as winner-take-all plurality voting methods are used, the overall makeup of legislative bodies can still veer substantially away from the voting preferences of the electorate.

Go to our website, www.lwvofvt.org, for background information about different voting systems.

Consensus for this study will be determined through mail-in responses to the following questions. Send the completed form by Feb. 15 to Terry Bouricius, Chair, 56 Booth St., Burlington, VT 05401.

Question 1: The dual goals of having districts that are both highly representative of the residents (that is, a substantial majority feel well represented by their legislators), and competitive (that is, elections are close enough that voters feel their vote matters and they can hold an incumbent accountable), are inevitably in conflict in single-seat districts.

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is very important and 5 is not important at all, how important are each of these two goals to you?

Districts are:

Representative (few voters feel un-represented)

1 2 3 4 5

Competitive (elections are usually fairly close, so people feel their vote matters)

1 2 3 4 5

Comments _____

Question 2: To the extent that the two desirable goals of having a representative that:

1) lives geographically near you, or 2) that accurately reflects your policy preferences, may be in conflict, which criterion do you value?

On a scale from 1 to 5, where 1 is very important and 5 is not important at all, how important are each of these two criteria to you?

Geographic proximity (your state representative lives in your town)

1 2 3 4 5

Policy agreement (your state representative agrees with your policy views)

1 2 3 4 5

Comments _____

Question 3: If the only feasible way to promote both competitive elections and more fully representative delegations is to have multi-seat districts using some form of semi-proportional voting method (such as cumulative* voting) or fully proportional representation voting method (such as ranked choice* voting), should that be considered?

a) In special cases where racial or language minorities are geographically diffuse, making single-seat districts an impractical way of achieving representation of these groups? yes___ no___ undecided___

b) In cases where other kinds of substantial minorities, such as political minorities, are poorly represented, or completely unrepresented in legislative bodies? yes___ no___ undecided___

c) In virtually any case, in order to promote elections that are simultaneously competitive and representative? yes___ no___ undecided___

d) Never? yes___ no___ undecided___

Comments _____

*Cumulative Voting is a semi-proportional voting method that has been used to settle a number of voting rights law suits to allow racial minorities to win election to municipal government bodies. In multi-seat districts, voters have as many votes as seats, but can give all of their votes to one candidate, or spread them around as they wish. This allows significant minorities to elect a proportionate minority of seats, as long as they strategically nominate or vote for a limited number of candidates. Ranked-choice Voting in multi seat districts works similarly to the way IRV works for single seat elections, and is fully proportional, in that like-minded voters can elect a number of seats in rough proportion to their numbers among the electorate without the need to strategically limit nominations.

"MAKE NEW FRIENDS, BUT KEEP THE OLD, ONE IS SILVER AND THE OTHER'S GOLD"

... KEEP OUR CHAPTER GOING - AND GROWING!

Remember to tell your friends about what you've learned, thanks to the League, and invite them along to our next meeting. Word-of-mouth is most effective, so please spread the word!

... ARE YOU A LEAGUE VETERAN OF 25 YEARS OR MORE?

If so, we want to commend you and commemorate you for your long-time support of the League! Please help us compile a list of "25 and counting" members by contacting Irene Wrenner at 879-0011 or imwren@aol.com if you fit the bill.

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, 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 men and women citizens of all ages. With more than 86 years of experience and 850 local and state affiliates, the League is one of America's most trusted grassroots organizations.