

THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley

June 2009

CVLWV Board, 2009 - 2010

President	Marge Gaskins	879-0003
Vice President	Irene Wrenner (Voter Editor)	879-0011
Treasurer	Amy Bond	879-0628
Secretary	Jean Norton	879-0872
Director	Mabel Buttolph	863-3990
Director	Sue Golden	985-9524
Director	Jean Hopkins	863-5359
Director	Susan Marks (Membership)	288-9702
Director	Keri Toksu (Website)	658-0962

Calendar of Events

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

Date	Time	Place	Description
August 6	10:30 am	Brownell Library, EJ	CVLWV Board of Directors Monthly Meeting
September	TBD	Burlington	Panel Discussion on Instant Run-off Voting

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - Marge Gaskins

We had a great meeting on May 14 to end our fiscal year for the Champlain Valley League. We met in Shelburne at Wake Robin, home to several of our members. Claire Anderson - a former Vermont League president and very active member - chaired this year's nominating committee and made all arrangements for the annual dinner-meeting. Irene Wrenner helped to handle reservations. I enjoyed seeing all, both former members and many current ones. I know others did, too.

The board is taking a brief hiatus, but the membership committee met earlier this month to begin planning for next year. Should we continue meeting sometimes at noon, and sometimes evening? Should we meet on Wednesdays or on Thursdays? Should our programs focus on League advocacy in our Vermont legislative session, or local action? Or should we look to new direction in state or national proposals? Your input will help us decide!

The board has been approached about improving coordination or consolidating our newsletters and website with those of the VT LWV - not just for efficiency and saving money, but to keep us closer together and more powerful. We all know numbers count, and perhaps one larger number will be more noticed than 4 or 5 smaller groups. I hope we don't also forget that the interest and power that are present in the Champlain Valley are often different than those in Brattleboro or Upper Valley which we share with New Hampshire. It will be interesting to see how the state League board reacts to this proposal.

Updates on our members....

Jean Hopkins served as a state representative to national Council this year. As Jean reports below, for the first time, Council used technology in a "virtual meeting" to save both time and money for delegates from 44 states, plus the District of Columbia and the Virgin Islands. Our League is proud to have one of Vermont's two voting members.

Irene Wrenner, who has edited our newsletter since Oct. '06, wishes to devote more time to her Selectboard duties in Essex, as the recently-elected Chair. Therefore, we expect to have another editor soon.

If anyone would like to help with program planning ideas, or to train to become an officer (President, Vice President, Secretary or Treasurer), please let me know. To sustain the leadership of this active, challenging and wonderful organization, we need folks like you to take part.

Have a great Vermont summer!

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE UPDATE - Susan Marks

The membership committee will be meeting this month to discuss plans for upcoming meetings this fall/winter/spring. The CVLWV Board continues to discuss sustainability of the League and is looking for input from the membership. Therefore, a "working" membership meeting will be held in the fall (date to be announced) to discuss league sustainability.

The CVLWV is in need of Board members, members to help with planning of meetings/programs, members to help with the transportation study being undertaken by the LWVVT, members to help register voters and to help with various other tasks. Our committee is also welcoming new members.

If you believe that the League is a worthwhile organization and want to see the Champlain Valley League continue to exist (and thrive), please plan on attending this working meeting and bring your thinking caps! Also, if you can give some thought this summer to the extent you are willing to personally be involved in the League, it will be very helpful to the discussion. We look forward to seeing you in the fall.

NATIONAL COUNCIL MEETS ONLINE THIS YEAR - Jean Hopkins

The LWVUS Council and LWVUS Convention are held in alternate years. Council is much smaller than Convention, with only two voting delegates per League. Its primary business is adopting a budget for the following fiscal year. Historically, delegates meet in Washington DC for Council; different state Leagues around the country host Convention.

This year, as an economy measure, instead of delegates traveling from each state to Washington, the Council was held via computers and phones in 43 participating states, located in League members' homes, public libraries, and other meeting places where more observers could see the virtual Council online.

While the electronic venue denied attendees the stimulation and personal exchanges that an in-person conference provides, it was completely egalitarian, with members from as far away as Alaska and Hawaii participating without excess expense. It also allowed more non-voting members an opportunity to attend the meeting and observe.

Here in Vermont Kate Rader voted as a delegate from her home in Montpelier. Jean Hopkins voted as a delegate from Vee Gordon's home in Essex, where Vee was an observer.

Prior to the June 13th Council meeting day, Jean and Vee participated in two training sessions, one to learn the procedure for logging on, speaking, voting, etc., and another to look at the proposed budget and ask questions about it in advance.

All documents related to the business meeting were available online for downloading and printing, including the 60+ page budget or a short summary thereof. If you wish to see the complete budget or just the pie charts of the income and expenses, Vee would be glad to share them.

During the Council meeting, LWWUS President Mary Wilson, and paid League Washington lobbyist, Lloyd Leonard spoke via pre-recorded videos. Also shown: an interview with North Carolina Senator Kay Hagan.

Most of the meeting's audio was transmitted over the phone, but for the videotaped presentations, the sound came through our computers. Forgetting to turn our computer speakers back down when the meeting resumed, we were later startled at break time when loud Santana music came blaring out of our computer speakers. After the initial surprise, we had a chance to stand up, dance and move around - a nice break in what would be, in the end, a 3½-hour meeting.

This virtual Council was an interesting exercise, and we expect this interactive technology to be used by the LWW on future occasions. Each computer screen had a large center "box" which contained the current center of attention: still pictures, the text of motions, the taped presentations. There was a space for written queries or motions, and a list of attendees was on the left of the screen. To speak, an attendee could click on the icon indicating a raised hand, and her phone would be taken off mute so everyone could hear her comments. Voting was made easy by simply clicking on the 'yes', 'no' or 'no vote' buttons and the total vote would be shown on the screen. The budget was approved by 99% of the delegates.

Concerns expressed by the delegates include the cost of direct-mail fundraising and the fact that the LWWUS has not actively advocated for a single-payer national health insurance system. The Council ended with "Directions to the Board" from attendees, and a pitch for attending Convention in Atlanta in 2010.

WANTED: HISTORICAL DATA FROM THE CVLWV AND ITS PREDECESSORS

Over the years, a number of local leagues in Chittenden County became part of the CVLWV. We would like to compile a list of the issues studied and positions taken over time. If you have files that might be of help - or a keen memory - would you please contact Marge at mgaskins@comcast.net or 879-0003? Thank you.

CAN CVLWV GO "TREE FREE"?

As of this month, our statewide newsletter has gone digital, and our local league is following close behind. Many of you already receive this newsletter via e-mail. If you have been receiving a paper copy, this will be your last, unless you inform us of extenuating circumstances, such as not having an e-mail account.

We wish to communicate with every member, and we are hoping to minimize the time, effort and money spent on duplicate mailings. Again, if you require a paper copy, please don't hesitate to contact Irene at imwren@aol.com or 879-0011.

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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.