

THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley
November 2006

CVLWV Board, 2006 - 2007

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Calendar of Events

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

Champlain Valley LWV Monthly Meetings

We alternate between noon and evening meetings on the second Wednesday of each month, September through May.

Wednesday, November 8, 2006 at Noon

Campaign Finance Reform: Can We Level the Playing Field?

Repercussions of the recent Supreme Court decision on Vermont's campaign finance laws are discussed by League members Terry Bouricius and Hardy Machia.

Pickering Room at Fletcher Free Library
235 College Street, Burlington, VT

Wednesday, December 13, 2006 at 7pm

Economic Impact of the Aging Vermont Population

As the population ages, how does that ripple through society and the economy? What changes can we expect in Vermont?

Speeder & Earl's Coffee
412 Pine St., Burlington, VT

Wednesday, January 10, 2007 5 pm - 8 pm

Dinner and Legislative Preview

Please join in our annual dinner meeting with elected officials.
Location TBD -- check next month's VOTER for details.

CIVIC EDUCATION CONFERENCE — Vee Gordon

Sign up now for 2nd annual Conference on Civic Education to be held November 15 at the Statehouse in Montpelier! Free admission. Please call Vee at 878-5650 if interested. She needs an estimate of attendees, in order to provide sufficient food. Below is the tentative schedule.

Registration: 8am - 8:45 am in the Statehouse Lobby

Session 1: 8:45 am - 9:45 am

Session 2: 10 am - 11 am

Keynote Speaker (Terry Pickerel - Dir of the Education Commission of the States): 11: 15 am

Lunch: Noon - 1:00

Session 3: 1:15 pm - 2:15 pm

Session 4: 2:30 pm - 3:30 pm

18 breakout sessions will be offered. They range in scope from: Civic Rights Unit - River Project - Student Government - Mock Legislative Session - Measurable Outcomes of Civic Learning. And more! Many students will be participating along with their teachers.

WE'RE LIVE ON THE WEB!

Many thanks to Bonnie Scott for creating our chapter's new website. Our web pages are attractively designed and hosted on a shared LWV server. Visit us on-line at <http://champlainvalley.vt.lwvnet.org/> for information on meetings, voting and candidates.

CANDIDATE INFO ON-LINE

Get set for Election Day - Tuesday, November 7 - with an overview of who's running in the Champlain Valley in 2006. See how incumbent and aspiring Legislators answered our online survey on important issues for this election (not all have yet responded at press time). Candidates responded to questions about their views on Healthcare, Energy and Education Finance at <http://champlainvalley.vt.lwvnet.org/candidate-info.html>

OCTOBER MEETING WRAPUP

Unresolved Issues in the Legislature: Health Care Costs, Education Funding, and Energy Needs

Dozens of members and guests attended our October 11th monthly meeting, our first to be held at Speeder & Earl's on Pine Street in Burlington.

Dorothy Schnure of Green Mountain Power Corp. discussed available sources and costs of energy for Vermont's future. House Rep. Tim Jerman of Essex Junction offered his perspective on the challenges of education financing. Tim Palmer of Burlington gave a detailed overview and answered questions about the Catamount Health Plan.

Plenty of parking, a brightly-painted, spacious room and delightful coffee aromas made this venue one that we look forward to frequenting for future functions!

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE REVIVED!

Keri Toksu is chairing a new committee to address membership retention, growth and diversity. Other committee members include Gail Feitelberg, Barbara Bowen and Elizabeth Ottinger.

In their first meeting, the committee brainstormed and discussed such issues as the need for more publicity, member involvement in programming, offering guidance to members for involvement in community/legislative affairs, and the need for scholarships.

They also recommended that The Voter be e-mailed to both members and non-members. (Non-members will not receive The Voter by postal mail.)

The Membership Committee planned to meet again on October 25th to plan strategic short-, mid- and long-term objectives. If you have ideas to share, please contact Keri at ktoksu@hotmail.com

FUNDING OUR SCHOOLS - Amy Bond

Why are our school property taxes so high? Because of sharply increasing property values in Vermont the state grand list is increasing very rapidly. Ordinarily the tax rate should decrease when the grand list jumps, but Vermont's school funding law hasn't provided for this event. There is a fixed tax rate instead of a fixed state education fund budget. By rights, if the grand list increases by 50%, the tax rate would decrease by about 37% in order to raise the same amount of tax dollars. In that event, instead of a tax rate of \$1.10 we would have a tax rate of about \$0.73 or so. Also, the non-residential tax rate would be adjusted. (What will happen to all of the extra tax dollars the state has recently collected?)

Why are school costs rising when enrollments are on a slight decline? Depending on the size of the school district, we would have to lose 10 to 15 pupils in a grade level in order to eliminate the cost of one teacher for that grade.

The rapidly rising cost of health insurance is one of the major causes for rising school budgets. One solution might be to eliminate employer-funded health insurance in Vermont and go to a single payer system awarded to the lowest bidder. This would eliminate multiples of administrative costs for all of the different health care agencies and contracts for state and local government employees. School budgets would then be reduced by the amount of the savings to the school districts.

It is a rare school district which hasn't already drastically trimmed its budgets. When the state of Vermont reduces its support to local school districts, each school district must increase its tax rate to meet budget demands.

HEALTH CARE REFORM FOR UNITED STATES Network

Are you a League member interested in creating the momentum to achieve real, positive, health care reform for all residents of the U.S.? If so, please join the new HCR4US network, HEALTH CARE REFORM FOR UNITED STATES to receive regular e-mail updates on Network activities. Also, you may choose to help on short-term or long-term Network projects as they evolve. Participants represent themselves, although each individual will be encouraged to take information back to their local and state League. To join, send your Name, Address, Phone Number, E-Mail address, and League Name to HCR4US@yahoo.com To find out more, contact Jean Hopkins at seaheidi@earthlink.net

VOTER REGISTRATION

Thank you to everyone conducting voter registration drives in recent months, including Sue Gordon and Amy Bond who registered voters at the Lund Center, and Sue and Marge Gaskins who registered voters at Burlington High School.

SAVE A TREE!

Due to the cost of postage and labor, we encourage members to receive this newsletter electronically. Please let the editor know if you can make the switch from paper to pixels. Reach Irene Wrenner at imwren@aol.com. Thank you!

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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.