

THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley

November 2008

CVLWV Board, 2008 - 2009

President	Marge Gaskins	879-0003
Vice President	Irene Wrenner (Voter Editor)	879-0011
Treasurer	June Carmichael	878-8360
Secretary	Jean Norton	879-0872
Director	Amy Bond	879-0628
Director	Mabel Buttolph	863-3990
Director	Sue Golden	985-9524
Director	Jean Hopkins	863-5359
Director	Susan Marks	288-9702
Director	Keri Toksu (Website)	658-0962

Calendar of Events

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

Champlain Valley LWV Monthly Meetings

Date	Time	Place	Description
Nov. 13	10:30 am	Brownell Library Essex Jct.	CVLWV Board of Directors Monthly Meeting. All welcome. (No December meeting.)
Dec. 10	5:45 – 8:30 pm	Eagle's Club 1233 Shelburne Rd. South Burlington	Dinner with Vermont Legislators. Join us for a delicious dinner and the chance to speak with three key legislators about the upcoming legislative session. Please RSVP to Elizabeth Ottinger (862-2860 or eottinger@comcast.net) by Dec. 3.

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - Marge Gaskins

We certainly did make history in 2008...first African American elected President. The longest period of campaigning in modern times, and the most expensive election ever! Though many people think it was a record for negative campaigning I have my doubts about that. After watching the TV series on early presidents, this election was pretty mild. And of course we all know the story of the duel between Hamilton and Burr in which Hamilton died. Now that's negative!

However, I for one am glad it is over, in spite of the excitement, and looking forward to Obama's presidency, and the fulfillment of at least some of his campaign promises.

Now the economy is the big news, and I'm sure we are all feeling somewhat poor after even a trip to the grocery store. Either price has soared or they have decreased the sizes, such as when a can of coffee has shrunk from a pound to 13 ounces. Only with confidence in our leaders and their proposed solutions will investors return to the market.

The expensive wars must end in victory to restore the good name of the USA, and democracy as a way of life. Thank you president-elect Obama for adding this to your list of priorities.

I will risk the charge of mixing politics with religion as did our forefathers, and say "God Bless America" from sea to shining sea.

"THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON ELECTIONS"

Terri Hallenbeck of the Burlington Free Press spoke at our **noon meeting**, Wednesday, October 15.

She has spent twenty-two years covering local news, the last ten at her current employer. Terri answered questions from the group and posed a few of her own. When asked if the media has an agenda, Terri reminded her audience that people comprise the media. People are imperfect, hence media outcomes aren't always ideal.

While she hasn't seen editorial policy supporting a particular agenda, she noted that reporters and editors don't always see eye-to-eye. After all, editors usually determine what should be covered and where articles will be placed. Space constraints impact outcomes, and copywriters occasionally craft headlines that leave readers (and even reporters) shaking their heads.

Given her years of experience, Terri is free to decide what to cover, much of the time. She cited the advantage newspapers have over TV news; she can cover a story in depth when it's warranted.

Her job as a reporter, as she sees it, is how to find, write and tell a good story - one that interests readers and tells them what they need to know. This takes more energy than being a stenographer.

Technology has brought new challenges, not just competition from websites covering news round-the-clock, but also the expectation that the BFP will post breaking news on its website, often from the scene of an emergency. Live reporting is prone to errors; adequate fact-checking takes time.

Terri sees various media outlets "copping out" by turning to "easy to produce, easy to watch" commentary instead of factual reporting. She cautions that while facts are a harder sell, such "fiber" provides better fuel for decision-making than the "adrenalin" that often passes for news.

One of the challenges she faces is trying "balance" her reporting on candidates. She worries that genuine flaws in a candidate can be overlooked, when reporters attempt to prove their "unbias".

Terri believes the media as a whole try to hold people accountable for their actions and try to report their findings accurately. She believes right now, there isn't a better alternative to help shore up democracy.

For our **evening meeting** on October 15, we partnered with UVM's Political Science Department to host a meeting at the Dudley H. Davis Center. Panelists Philip Baruth, Sue Allen, and Kristen Carlson discussed how our elections are — and aren't — influenced by both print and digital media. Thanks to Channel 17, you can watch a videotape of that meeting: <http://www.cctv.org/watch-tv/programs/influence-media-elections>.

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES? - June Carmichael

If you owe dues for the current year, please send your check for \$50 (\$75 for a household membership) payable to LWVCV at P.O. Box 8266, Essex, VT 05451.

DEC. 10th DINNER WITH VERMONT LEGISLATORS

Reserve today for a delicious chicken dinner and a chance to speak with key legislators about the upcoming legislative session! There will be appetizers and cocktails (cash bar) from 5:45 to 6:30pm. Dinner begins at 6:30pm, followed by a short presentation by our legislators of their priorities in the coming legislative session, then Q&A. Please note: the Eagles Club has moved to the location of the former [Jake's Restaurant](#).

Date: Wednesday, December 10, 5:45pm - 8:30pm
Place: Eagle's Club, 1233 Shelburne Road, South Burlington
Legislators: Ginny Lyons (D) and others TBD
Cost: \$20 per person

Please RSVP by Wednesday, December 3, to Elizabeth Ottinger at eottinger@comcast.net or 862-2860.

Pay at the door OR mail your check, payable to CVLWV, to: Elizabeth Ottinger, 7 East Terrace, So. Burlington, 05403.

Your RSVP is a reservation; payment will be expected whether or not you attend.

Bring a friend! The more who attend, the more interesting.

Need a ride? Let us know and we'll try to arrange a carpool. Hope to see you there.

* The Eagle's Club has plenty of parking and is handicapped accessible.

ENVIRONMENTAL ACTION CONFERENCE, Saturday, Nov. 15

[Sandra Steingraber](#), an internationally-renowned environmental health expert and author of [Living Downstream: An Ecologist Looks at Cancer & the Environment](#), is keynote speaker at **Environmental Action 2008 - Mobilizing the Grassroots for Healthy, Sustainable Communities**.

The conference will be held November 15th from 8:00am - 5:30pm in Randolph, VT at Vermont Technical College. Go to <http://www.toxicsaction.org/VTenvironmentalaction.html> to learn more and to register online. You may also register with a check by mail (VT Environmental Action, 141 Main St, Suite 6, Montpelier, VT 05602) or phone (802-223-4099).

This is an opportunity to meet and network with experts and community activists, and to rekindle the spark that fuels our work.

VOTER SERVICE

CV League members registered scores of new voters this fall - at Burlington High School and several Naturalization Ceremonies. Nice seeing so many new citizens become new voters!

SUPER SUNDAY

Thanks to everyone who came out to participate in the Live Studio Audience at Vermont Public Television's "Super Sunday" Gubernatorial Debate on November 2nd!

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!

###

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.