

THE CHAMPLAIN VALLEY VOTER

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley

October 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
Oct. 15	Noon to 1pm	Community Room Fletcher Free Library Burlington	The Influence of the Media on Elections (Speaker) Journalist Terri Hallenbeck from the Burlington Free Press will join us to discuss how our elections are – and aren't – influenced by both print and digital media.
Oct. 15	7 pm to 8:30 pm	Davis Center (Williams Family Room) University of Vermont	The Influence of the Media on Elections (Panel) Print journalist Sue Allen , blogger Philip Baruth , and TV journalist Kristen Carlson join us to offer their insights on Campaign '08 and to discuss how our elections are – and aren't – influenced by both print and digital media. Tony Gierzynski , associate professor in the UVM Political Science Department, will moderate. We are partnering with the University of Vermont's Political Science Department to host this event.
Oct. 30	10:30 am	Brownell Library Essex Jct.	CVLWV Board of Directors Monthly Meeting. All welcome.
Dec. 10	5:45 pm	TBD	Dinner with Vermont Legislators. Join us for a delicious dinner and the chance to speak with three key legislators about the upcoming legislative session. (More information to come.)

MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT - Marge Gaskins

Perhaps the most exciting election is almost upon us. Registration in Vermont and around the country I hear is bigger than ever. Hopefully there will be a huge turnout and it will all go smoothly.

However we can't count on that even in Vermont. There have been questions about resident validity, problems with an inadequate number of ballots provided, trained workers and counting procedures even during local elections, and the record smallest turnout in the Vermont primary. Some of these issues may have been a one-time glitch, but we have to be aware of them and double-check everything.

The Vermont State League, together with the Central Vermont unit, is sponsoring a debate for the Secretary of State candidates in Montpelier, October 20th. Because the Help America Vote Act is supposed to be fully implemented now, I'm sure that office is trying to smooth some of the law's requirements, but we still need some oversight by the League and by the public and candidates.

If you can go to the debate, that would be great. If not, perhaps you may want to spend a little time watching the action at the polls. You cannot interfere with any voter, or ask questions of the workers, but you can watch, and take notes if you like.

Above all, be sure to vote either in person or by voting early at the clerk's office, or requesting a ballot by mail. You do not have to be sick or absent to do this. And remind all of your neighbors and friends "Democracy is not a spectator sport".

THE ROAD TO HEALTH CARE: PAVED WITH GOOD INTENTIONS

On September 17th, our chapter partnered with Vermont Business Roundtable to host a panel discussion at Speeder & Earl's with **Craig Jones, MD**, the Director of Vermont Blueprint for Health; **Dan Johnson**, a Principal of Hickok & Boardman Group Benefits; and State **Senator Doug Racine**, Chair of the Senate Committee on Health and Welfare. **Lisa Ventriss** of VBR moderated the discussion.

The audience heard about the latest challenges and successes along the rocky road to providing health care (HC) to all Vermonters. Below, in no special order, is a sample of the opinions offered:

- Right now, we have no HC system, per se.
- Investment is needed to create a system that's efficient and can handle large amounts of info
- Vermont Blueprint is working to design such a system
- Visits and diagnoses should be more thorough. Identify detrimental lifestyle behaviors.
- US spends between \$6,000 - \$7,000 per capita on HC.
- Every other nation spends half that amount, often with better outcomes.
- Key question: Where's our money going? Middlemen?

- We have a for-profit HC industry, unlike other countries.
- Uniform claim forms would decrease costs.
- End-of-life choices need to be talked about, too.
- Built-in redundancy, defensive medicine, unnecessary tests, fixing mistakes: all increase costs.
- Prescription drugs are much more costly in the US than elsewhere.
- Need better HC delivery models.
- Most HC dollars are spent on chronic care initiatives for a small % of the population
- We need a greater focus on quality outcomes.
- We should be working to create cultures of health and productivity.

- How to keep HC reform moving forward?
- We have a national HC crisis: costs are not sustainable.
- Costs are being shifted from the government to private payers.
- Many of the uninsured are young adults whose costs are shifted when they, surprise, need HC.
- The reforms being worked on are long-term and focus on the cost-side of the equation.
- We need incentives for wellness. We need more PPOs and fewer HMOs.
- We need "consumer-directed" plans that raise awareness and promote an ownership mentality.
- Contributions toward HC premiums should be based on need / equity.

- Having HC insurance encourages people to see a doctor sooner, before problems get serious and more expensive.
- Therefore, Massachusetts requires HC coverage for all of its citizens.
- In the past year, 10,000 more Vermonters got insured through Catamount, Dr. Dynasaur, etc.
- Medicare and Medicaid are not well-funded. This should be an election issue!
- People don't want government to restrict their access to HC, but in the same breath want to know what government is doing to keep a lid on HC costs.
- Vermont is truly unique, with over 60 different initiatives working on various aspects of HC reform.

TWO MEETINGS ON "THE INFLUENCE OF THE MEDIA ON ELECTIONS" - Keri Toksu

The League of Women Voters of the Champlain Valley and UVM's Political Science Department will examine the influence of the media on elections with two meetings — one during the day and one in the evening — on Wednesday, October 15. Both events are free and open to the public.

The daytime meeting will be from Noon to 1 PM in the Community Room at the Fletcher Free Library. Our speaker is **Terri Hallenbeck**, government/statehouse reporter for the *Burlington Free Press*.

The evening meeting will be a panel discussion and Q&A session from 7:00 to 8:30 PM in the Williams Family Room at the UVM Davis Center, Burlington.

Panelists will discuss how our elections are — and aren't — influenced by both print and digital media. Bring your questions and bring a friend to learn more about this fascinating topic during an unprecedented election season.

Panelists include:

- **Sue Allen**, editor of the *Times Argus* of Barre-Montpelier, Vt. She has served as lead Statehouse reporter for The Burlington Free Press and the Associated Press. She also worked as press secretary for former Gov. Howard Dean. Most recently, Allen was an editorial writer at the Free Press.
- **Kristen Carlson**, senior political reporter for Channel 3 News, regular participant on Vermont Public Television's "Vermont This Week" and Vermont Public Radio's "Vermont Edition," and host of VPT's monthly public affairs program, "Public Square"; and
- **Philip Baruth**, blogger for Vermont Daily Briefing, novelist, and regular commentator for Vermont Public Radio.

Tony Gierzynski, associate professor in the Political Science Department, will moderate.

HAVE YOU PAID YOUR DUES? - June Carmichael

Records indicate at least 30 members have not yet paid. If you are one, please send your check for \$50 (\$75 for a household membership) payable to LWVCV at P.O. Box 8266, Essex, VT 05451.

As a member of the Champlain Valley LWV, you are also a member of the State and the National Leagues and your dues support them as well. A breakdown of your dues shows that \$28 goes to the national league (it will be \$28.50 this coming year), \$12 is sent to the state league, and the remaining \$10 supports our local league. If any member is having economic difficulties in paying dues, please let Marge, Irene, or June know, and a solution will be found to help continue your membership. We value all of our members.

JOIN VPT's STUDIO AUDIENCE ON SUNDAY, NOV. 2nd - Elizabeth Ottinger

Got a Question for the Gubernatorial Candidates?

Want to be Part of the Live Studio Audience at a Televised Debate?*

Vermont Public Television (VPT) Seeks 30 Volunteers for Their "Super Sunday" Debate!

Sunday, November, 2 from 7:00 - 9:00 PM (Broadcast "Live" on VPT)

Please plan to arrive by 6:30 pm

VPT Studios, Fort Ethan Allen, Colchester

Candidates will take questions from the studio audience. Sign Up Now!

Space is limited and reservations will be accepted on a first come, first served basis.

Call: 1-800-639-3351 *or*

E-mail: outreach@vpt.org with your name, phone, and how you learned of this opportunity.

* VPT's Super Sunday debates are part of My SoapBox, an election project funded by the Corporation for Public Broadcasting that seeks to engage Vermonters of all ages in discussion about health care, social security, energy and the environment. Go to www.vpt.org and click on My SoapBox to join the discussion and see what your fellow Vermonters are saying. Community partners are LWV, VPT, AARP, Office of the Secretary of State and UVM.

###