



League of Women Voters of New Hampshire
4 Park St. Suite 200, Concord NH 03301

THE NEW HAMPSHIRE VOTER

www.LWVNH.org

August 2010 newsletter

www.VOTE411.org

Message from the President

It's summertime, but the livin' isn't all easy. Our newsletter editor has gone on vacation, one of our board members (secretary Marilyn Lieto) has resigned from the board to run for a seat in the NH House, and the rest of the board has been busily working on voter service.

So please forgive the informality of this newsletter, but believe that it comes to you chock full of news!

First, with just a few weeks until the **Sept. 14 primary**, be sure to read the article about **VOTE411.org**. It's very exciting that LWVNH is taking part in this non-partisan electronic voters' guide for the first time!

Your state and local **study committees on women incarcerated in NH** have been very busy, with a recent visit to the newly opened Cheshire county House of Corrections, a review of the consensus results from four local Leagues and 8 individual members around the state, and the very successful June council meeting at which four guest speakers met with forty League members and some guests to tell us more about the corrections system in NH. More details on these inside.

Right after the primaries the successful candidates will be calling voters, running ads, going to every potluck supper they can find. The League tradition of **candidate forums** will offer voters a chance for more substance, with direct contact with candidates. As of this writing, the League will moderate forums in Meredith (Sept. 17 or 24), New London (Oct. 20), and Concord (date TBA). Check the LWVNH.org calendar.

Wishing you a happy end of summer and an exciting fall election season!

Liz Tentarelli, 763-9296

Online Voters Guide: VOTE411.org

Voters in NH can now find non-partisan information on candidates for US Senate and House, Governor, State Senate, and Executive Council on the LWVUS website, VOTE411.org. After the primary, we will delete the unsuccessful candidates and add any third party candidates who qualify by the Sept. 8 deadline, so that we are ready for the Nov. 2 general election.

The state board sent letters to 97 candidates, asking them to participate and to answer several questions on key issues. A number of other League members then made the follow-up phone calls urging candidates to take part. Many thanks to those members! So far we have had about 50% respond. Candidates can still put up answers before the Nov. 2 election.

One candidate for state senate sent us this comment after we went "live": *"I found this survey to be one of the most informative of all the ones I have ever filled out or looked at. ...I like how you allow the candidates to use their own words. The set up for the observer to then look at the responses is good. Having both responses electronically on the same page is very helpful for the viewer. I actually read a number of them and found it interesting. I have filled out many surveys over the years. This one was actually pleasurable. Your questions were very fair and to the point especially given how you allow the responses to be created by the candidate. Just thought you might want that positive feedback."*

Enclosed is a poster about **Vote411.org**, which we are asking each member to put up where others can see it—a community bulletin board, at your church, the post office—wherever voters looking for a source of non-partisan information might see it.

Every League member can help **"Get Out The Vote"** by spreading the word.

August 26, 2010: The League Celebrates 90th Anniversary of the 19th Amendment – Women’s Equality Day

On February 14, 1920, with passage of the 19th amendment imminent, suffragists met to transform their movement into the League of Women Voters to help educate women to be responsible voters. On August 26, 1920, just days after Tennessee became the thirty-sixth (and last- needed) state to ratify the amendment, the Secretary of State signed the proclamation enacting the 19th amendment giving women the right to vote.

This 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment provides an excellent opportunity to honor the amazing organizing efforts of the many thousands of women and supportive men who worked to secure the vote for women in the United States. Their story is a remarkable testimony to the unrelenting tenacity and spirit of women who were seen as powerless and yet achieved the largest single extension of citizenship rights in our nation’s history.

Celebrate the day by joining League members and others for a special presentation of the award-winning film “Iron Jawed Angels.” Post-film discussion with Dr. Courtney Marshall, UNH professor of Women’s Studies and English, and Marianne Jones, Executive Director of the Women’s Fund of NH. This showing has been arranged by the Women's Fund of New Hampshire and costs only \$6 for admission. Thursday, August 26, Red River Theatres, 11 South Main St. Concord, NH

6:30 PM Film; 8:35 PM Discussion

Set in the decade leading up to women’s suffrage, “Iron Jawed Angels” tells the remarkable and little-known story of a group of passionate women who put their lives on the line for women’s right to vote.

GRANITE STATE FAIR TAX COALITION

Public Forum Dates in Fall 2010 “Putting Our Money Where Our Mouth Is: New Hampshire's Priorities and Budget”

LWVNH is a member of this coalition, whose goal is “a balanced tax system, based on ability to pay, that reduces the state's dependence on property taxes and thus property tax rates, and includes new revenue sources sufficient to meet the state's needs.” The coalition seeks to keep the discussion open by discouraging candidates from taking “the pledge.” Panel discussions and community conversations will be facilitated by the coalition on the following dates in six towns across the state. Attend, bring a friend, spread the word!

September 21, 7:00-8:30 p.m.

Keene Public Library Auditorium

September 23, 7:00-8:30 p.m

Portsmouth Public Library Levenson Room

September 29, 7:00-8:30 p.m

Nashua Public Library

September 30, 7:00-8:30 p.m
broadcast)

Claremont: Sugar River Valley Tech Center CCTV Studio (live

October 5, 4:30-6:00 p.m.

Hanover: Nelson A. Rockefeller Center at Dartmouth College

October 6, 7:00-8:30 p.m

Concord: Rundlett Middle School Activity Room

Visit www.nhfairtax.org to find out about local house parties on the topic, to be held around the state this fall..

Dues are due: New Hampshire League Members-at-Large will shortly receive their annual dues notice. Local Leagues have also sent their dues renewal notices. Local treasurers join us in urging you to pay dues promptly, as we must make the annual per member payment to LWVUS. In addition, any extra donation you send with your renewals will be much appreciated by your local or state League and will be put to good use.

Members-at-large may send their \$40 (or for two people in the same household it's \$55) renewal to LWVNH Treasurer, 4 Park St. Suite 200, Concord NH 03301 *Mary B. Perry, treasurer*

**National LWV members:
Please join your state League!**

At the LWVU national convention, certain changes were made that will limit how the state League can include the nationally recruited members (these are members who have been paying dues directly to LWVUS rather than to a local or state League). Starting next year, we will not have access to your addresses for sending newsletters. Also, LWVUS plans, eventually, to discontinue this category of membership.

We don't want to lose any of our members!

If you get a dues notice from LWVUS, please instead send your dues to LWVNH. You'll still be a member at all levels, but the state League will be able to keep you informed of New Hampshire issues.

You may mail your dues (\$40 for an individual or \$55 for two people in the same household) to LWVNH Treasurer,
4 Park St. Suite 200, Concord NH 03301.
Note on your payment that this is a conversion from nationally recruited to state membership.

Future Newsletters:

We want to be sure that every League member in NH gets all of our state League newsletters. But in the winter, when snow flies and some of our members flee to warmer climes, we find too many of our newsletters coming back. We have been using bulk mail postage to save money, but under new postal regulations, undeliverable bulk mail comes back to us with postage due!

To be sure you get your newsletters, let us know of address changes, either permanent or temporary. You can email us your winter address and the months you'll be there, or send us a postcard.

And if you are used to getting newsletters from other organizations online, we can save even more of our League budget by emailing you the link to our newsletter in PDF format.

So tell us how and where we should send your future newsletters:

Email us at LWV@kenliz.net or drop us a note: LWVNH, 4 Park St., Suite 200, Concord NH 03301

“Why Law Enforcement Officials Want to End the War on Drugs”

Presentation and discussion, open to the public

Oct. 13, 7:30 pm. Tracy Library, New London (corner of Main St and Pleasant St)

Richard VanWickler, Superintendent of the Cheshire County House of Corrections, will speak on “Why Law Enforcement Officials Want to End the War on Drugs.” Mr. VanWickler is a member of LEAP (Law Enforcement Against Prohibition), a non profit organization started in 2003 by four retired police officers who feel that the war on drugs is a failed national policy in need of immediate reform. LEAP feels that our

national drug control policy should seek to reduce crime, death, disease and addiction and that our current policy achieves none of these. LEAP has swelled to over 15,000 members and is now in over 90 countries around the world. LEAP is working hard to remove the devastating effects of prohibition on our society and to establish a system of legalized, controlled and government regulated markets which will reduce crime, death, disease and addiction.

This talk will be very relevant to members who have been studying women incarcerated in NH because a large number of them have been arrested for drug related offenses.

Book sale fundraiser: If you live in or near Concord, plan to attend the Capital Area League's giant used book sale, an annual event to raise money for their voter service activities. Tell your Concord area friends about it: Sept. 11, at 32 Ridge Road in Concord - hours 8-1.

The League is taking donations of books: phone Peg Fargo to arrange a dropoff in advance. 226-4574

State study of women incarcerated in NH—an update in 4 parts

Study consensus: What have we decided so far.

The two-year study of the impact of women incarcerated in NH has reached its halfway point. At meetings last spring and via individual mail-in responses, we have reached consensus on the following points so far:

All participating agreed that this issue is an important one on which the League should have a position from which to advocate because the problem is growing, there is a large financial impact on taxpayers, the recidivism rate shows that incarceration isn't working for many, and that the unique needs of female offenders and their families need to be addressed.

All agreed that the county houses of correction, the first place of incarceration for most offenders, should focus attention on building life skills capacity, preparing plans for inmates upon release including further drug and alcohol treatment, and offering counseling and education so that recidivism will be reduced.

The local study committees were unanimous in stating that increased access to programs in the HOCs is money well invested to reduce recidivism. They discussed which programs in the HOCs should focus on gender-specific needs and listed healthcare, trauma-related counseling, substance abuse treatment, anger management, and some parenting skills. They agreed that the HOCs should take advantage of communications technology to offer more courses, especially in the HOCs with small numbers of female inmates. Members further agreed that work opportunities in the HOCs and on crews working in the community should be increased for women offenders.

The question of whether HOCs should do comprehensive intake assessments of each offender and develop individual program plans based on the results drew some cautionary remarks, which the League will take into consideration should legislation arise on this issue. A standardized assessment tool is not yet in use in the HOCs.

Coming up in our study:

Among topics to be looked at in the next 6 months before the final consensus meetings are held: recidivism (see a thorough study of this on our LWVNH.org webpage devoted to the study), courts and sentencing, alternative sentencing, how well the newly implemented parole and probation procedures are working, and we will continue investigating the mental health issues and treatment offered while incarcerated and in the community both pre- and post-incarceration.

If you want to attend local study committee meetings, let us know and we'll send you email announcements of meetings. Also you may read numerous reports in our website.

Incarceration testimony:

Our study of women incarcerated in NH won't be done until next spring, but already we have been asked to speak to legislators on the topic. On August 16, Peg Fargo and Liz Tentarelli presented our findings about the county houses of corrections to the Interagency Coordinating Council For Women Offenders, a state council set up a couple of years ago that has been meeting monthly. Peg Fargo has been attending those meetings regularly. We were honored to be asked to give our views, and even more pleased with the discussion our findings provoked. If any member would like a copy of our testimony, we can send it as a Word document file attachment. Request a copy by emailing LWV@kenliz.net

Experts speak to the League about incarceration issues in NH:

LWVNH held its biennial Council meeting on June 4, 2010, in Bow, NH. We had four experts speak to us about women incarcerated in NH.

William Wrenn, Commissioner of Corrections (NH Dept of Corrections) reminded us that 97% of incarcerated NH inmates will eventually return to society. The average prison stay is 3 years. For those reasons it is important that we understand who these people are, what their needs are, and do all we can to prepare for a better life upon release. He gave us an overview of the prisons in NH (Concord for men, which also includes the state's secure psychiatric facility; Berlin prison for men, which opened in 2000, now has 750 inmates including a minimum security dorm for 120 men in a renovated gym; and Goffstown women's prison, opened in 1989, housing usually 120 women) There are also 3 halfway houses (Shea Farm in Concord serves 44 women).

In the past, recidivism for women was about 38%. Now it's 55%. Space is limited at all prisons for programs and treatments, but especially at the women's prison. A new prison must be built or more space somewhere found. Mr. Wrenn said, "We're a lawsuit away from having to do this."

Joanne Fortier, Warden of the Women's Prison at Goffstown described the inmates: up to 77% have mental health issues. One-third of the current population has severe, persistent mental health problems. 85% have substance abuse issues, many times interrelated with the mental health problems. Past trauma can be difficult for the staff to even hear about (and the female inmates, unlike many male inmates, want to talk about their issues with staff). Many are mothers, with poor work histories.

The capacity of the women's prison is officially 104, but they typically have 115-

120 inmates, with another small group housed at Strafford County HOC (many by request). They usually don't send mothers there, because the prison offers contact visits and the jail does not.

Michael McAlister (Director of Field Services) explained probation and parole, field offices, and collection of fees and restitution. He also explained electronic monitoring and alcohol "bracelet" monitoring. There are 58 probation/parole officers to serve 6,687 cases. Probation officers receive extensive training, and in spite of the difficulties of the job, there is low turnover. Officers are responsible for supervision, but also have to help offenders succeed in the community. "We don't like it when one of our cases goes bad," he said. Upon release, "there is truly a lack of community resources."

Ron White, Superintendent of the Merrimack County House of Corrections described two periods in the history of the courts and corrections: Hands on, hands off: For a long time, courts were hands off, let prison officials determine how jails were to be run. Then the Attica prison riots against bad prison conditions changed that (they were televised). Now courts have a lot to say about what happens to inmates, what programs they must complete in jail, etc.

Pre-Attica, very few females were incarcerated. But as women's equality in the workplace and the military took hold, offending females were viewed differently and often incarcerated. The Rockefeller drug laws also played a part in this. Challenges facing the HOCs include the difficulty of classifying and separating female offenders when there are small numbers in any particular HOC. He pointed out that if we send offenders back to the communities after we've stabilized them on meds, but don't give them a way to get meds upon release, they'll return.