

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

NEWSLETTER

Mansfield, Connecticut

October 2008

Executive Board Meeting

The Mansfield LWV Executive Board will meet Monday, Oct. 27 at noon to 1 p.m. in Conference Room B, the Audrey Beck Municipal Building. The limited agenda is to discuss noon meeting programs and plans and any emergency items that must be dealt with before the next full board meeting in January. The meeting welcomes any board members who can attend, but the executive board members should plan to be there: President, vice presidents, secretary, treasurer.

Save this Date

Holiday Party

December 9, 2008, to be held at the Mansfield's Restaurant
466 Storrs Road, Mansfield Center.

Making Your Vote Count!

Wed October 22, 2008, 7:30-9:00pm Mansfield Town Hall/Council Chambers

Candidates Night will be a little different this year. We're calling the evening, ' Making Your Vote Count', and half of it will be devoted to a speaker and half to a candidates forum. We made this change when the candidates for just one race agreed to participate in our Candidates Night. The evening will begin with a distinguished guest, Leslie D. Mara, CT Deputy Secretary of State, speaking about the procedures and issues of electronic voting, including how the state safeguards your vote. She will be followed by state Senator Don Williams (D) 29th Senatorial District and his challenger, Harry Carboni (R), who will be appearing together in a candidate's forum where they will take questions on issues ranging from the Constitutional Convention referendum to recent state health care proposals.

Moving on to the next KYTF

The Know Your Towns Fair's success owes a lot to planning, organization, and leadership. In recent years, co-chairs Ann Kouatly and Janis Fausey have contributed their energy, new ideas, and hard work to make the fair a great success. We thank you both!

Ann and Janis are taking a well-deserved retirement, although Ann will be available to advise the Fair's new leadership. If you are interested in serving on the KYTF committee for 2009, please contact Cindy Weiss, 429-4015. The Board of Directors has discussed options on how we might proceed with the fair, and how we might join forces with the Festival on the Green. The KYTF Committee needs to form soon to guide those decisions. Please consider being part of one of the town's most successful community activities.

MEMBERSHIP

The initial avalanche of wonderful colored envelopes has dwindled down to a precious few, but I'll wait till next month to see how I alert you on the address label of the next Newsletter. So far, about a third of the renewals have come in, many with very much appreciated contributions. THANK YOU ALL!

We do want to WELCOME our newest members (Please add their names to your rosters!):

Careen Jennings 5 D Sycamore Drive, Storrs, 487-9990, careenjennings@sbcglobal.net

Gene Nesbitt 268 Wormwood Hill Road, Mansfield Center, 487-1122, B: 207-310-8032, ghnesbitt@charter.net

Kris Ridyard 65 Fieldstone Drive Storrs 429-5443, hridyard@charter.net

As always, I appeal to all members to invite new (or old) neighbors, friends, colleagues, etc. to come to LWV meetings and to JOIN! Please do let me know of anyone whom I should contact. I will be happy to share the Newsletter them or answer questions; they may also go to our website: <http://www.lwvct.org/lwvmansfield>,

Anne Smith, Membership (429-0529, anneksmith@charter.net)

THE KNOW YOUR TOWNS FAIR, 2008

The 22nd annual Know Your Towns Fair was held on September 6, 2008, despite the threat of Hurricane Hanna, which thankfully became intermittent showers, not torrential downpours. We were all grateful that air conditioning had been installed in the gym of the Mansfield Community Center and the Boys Scouts were prepared as usual with tarps. Despite the warm, humid weather, the Fair was a great success because of the hard work of everyone involved. Seventy-five exhibitors participated.

Anne Smith was an invaluable help and support in many aspects of the Fair. She arranged for a wonderful string quintet from E.O. Smith High School that delighted us with music in the lounge area. Anne also arranged for members of the Mansfield League to “greet” the Fair goers: Liz Cowles, Maggie McCarthy, Shamim Patwa and Sue Schmerl. Nancy Rucker and Anne Smith did the very attractive display case at the Mansfield Community Center advertising the Fair. Iris Kinnard was present for the entire Fair doing a wonderful job of selling League calendars. Karen Greer was especially helpful in the beginning of the Fair in helping exhibitors find (and or rearrange) their spaces. Also Karen competently handled the publicity for the Fair. We especially appreciated Kathy Moriarty's excellent work in updating and editing the Know Your Town booklet and getting it printed and delivered in time for the Fair. President Cindy Weiss' idea of a presidential straw vote was well received with people proudly displaying their "I Voted" stickers. Many board members were in attendance at the Fair, answering questions and interacting with exhibitors including Cindy Weiss, Joan Neuwirth, Peter Millman, Anne Smith as well as members who were representing other organizations.

UConn, under the very competent leadership of Trudy Nicholls and Cathy Downs was very well represented and the UConn exhibitors stood out at their tables with the blue tablecloths. They were: Ballard Institute, Benton Museum of Art, Center for Continuing Studies, Community Outreach, CRT, CT State Museum, Jorgensen Center for Performing Arts, Office of Community Outreach, Rainbow Center, UConn Coop, UConn Police Dept., UConn Psychological Services Clinic, UConn Soil Nutrient Analysis and, UConn Speech and Hearing Clinic

Jim Hintz, Associate Director for Student Activities, helped greatly by providing the services of students from the Interfraternity Group to set up tables and take them down. His generosity in providing the League with extra tables meant that we did not have to rent tables (our major expense in the past). Therefore we were able to cut the cost of a table to the exhibitors in half (from \$10 to \$5) and be within our budget.

Many volunteers are necessary to produce such a large community undertaking: The Mansfield League of Women Voters Board and members, Curt Vincente and the staff of the Mansfield Community Center, the UConn organizers and participants. The wide range of community participants is what makes the Fair so worthwhile. A special thank you is due to all the exhibitors who came and participated.

Our experience in coordinating the Know Your Town Fair has convinced us of the value to the community of this undertaking. However we believe that the Fair is at a crossroads. Our evaluation forms addressed the question of the seeming conflict of the Know Your Towns Fair with the Downtown Partnership's Festival on the Green. We posed specific questions: "Should the Know Your Towns Fair be the same day as the Festival?", "Would you participate if it were the same day?", "If held the same day, should the Fair be moved to the Festival site?" Our summary of the forms does not demonstrate a conclusive answer. We feel that these are questions that must be addressed, as the juxtaposition of these two events in the same month is burdensome to the exhibitors. However, the responses do not give us a clear indication of what to do. One of our board members is lobbying for the Downtown Partnership to move its Festival to the Spring. One UConn Trustee thought that a fine idea! Someone else suggested, not entirely in jest, that it could be during UConn's Spring Weekend. After ten years of organizing the Fair, we will be very interested to see how the two events develop. And we wish the next year's organizer(s), the same wonderful community support which we have received.

Submitted by Janis Fausey and Ann Kouatly

November 4th Ballot Questions

There will be two questions on the November ballot—one question calling for Constitutional Convention and another question granting voting rights in primaries for 17-year-olds provided they turn 18 by the general election.

Our Connecticut Constitution (adopted in 1965) requires the question for a call for a constitutional convention to be on the ballot every 20 years. In 2005 it was put on the ballot and was voted down. There have been only three constitutional conventions: 1818, 1902, and 1965. This year several organizations are working to convince voters to vote yes to holding a convention. A Constitutional convention puts all questions on the table. A selected group of people reviews the Constitution for possible modifications. The select group then recommends the changes to be made, and the new constitution is put to a vote.

Supporters of the constitutional convention call want direct initiative and referendum to become the way of making laws and amending Connecticut's constitution similar to what California has.

However, the current legislative process, with its public hearings, televised sessions and checks and balances works well for representative government. The League of Women Voters of Connecticut recognizes that it is possible to change the constitution in other ways that have participation from the public. The legislature can approve amendments and submit them to the voters, thereby giving all voters a chance to express their desires without changing the whole constitution.

In November, voters will vote on this question:

Shall there be a constitutional convention to amend or revise the Constitution of the State?

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut urges you to VOTE NO. Here's some background along with the reasons for our opposition.

Why is this question on the ballot?

The Connecticut Constitution was given a full review in our most recent convention in 1965. Changes adopted at that time required this question to be on the ballot every 20 years. The last time the question was on the ballot, voters said "NO" to a constitutional convention.

What is a constitutional convention and what is its purpose?

A constitutional convention is a meeting of a selected group of people to review a state's constitution for possible modifications or revisions, including the adoption of an entirely new constitution. The Connecticut General Assembly prescribes how delegates are selected and the timing of the convention. *All issues are on the table and open for discussion.* Proposals receiving the approval of the delegates are submitted to the voters.

Constitutions provide for a system of governance and often include provisions protecting the citizenry from improper use of government authority. Constitutional conventions have traditionally been used to revise old constitutions or to draft new ones.

How many constitutional conventions has Connecticut held?

Only three — in 1818, 1902, and 1965. The 1818 convention resulted in the Constitution of 1818, which replaced the Fundamental Orders of 1639, and thereby established a new mode of governance. The 1902 a constitutional convention sought to address the issue of reapportionment; however, the convention's proposals were rejected by the voters.

In 1965, following the Supreme Court's "one person, one vote" decision in *Reynolds v. Sims*, a federal district court ordered Connecticut to hold a constitutional convention to revise its legislative districting plan which favored small, rural towns over large, urban population centers. At that time, Connecticut's constitution was given a full review. In addition to the reapportionment provisions, changes were made to the Bill of Rights and to articles dealing with executive powers and the judiciary, a section on free public education was added, and a process for calling future conventions was included.

Can our Constitution be changed without a convention?

Yes, the legislature can approve amendments and submit them to the voters. For example, this November, voters are being asked to approve an amendment which would allow 17-year-olds who will be 18 at the time of an election to vote in a primary.

What are the pro and con arguments to this question?

Supporters hope, through a convention, to enable direct initiative and referendum to become an accepted way of making laws and amending Connecticut's constitution.

Several organizations, such as those that oppose gay marriage or support caps on property taxes, are working to convince voters to vote YES to holding a convention. They say that legislators do not adequately express the will of their constituents and that people need a more direct role in making laws.

Others will urge voters to vote NO because the initiative and referendum process undermines the role of elected legislators. The current legislative process, with its public hearings, its televised sessions, and its system of checks-and-balances, works the way a representative government should. They believe that it's too easy for well-funded special interests to sway public opinion on hot-button issues without presenting balanced viewpoints or analyzing the long-term implications of proposals.

What's the LWVCT position on a constitutional convention?

The League of Women Voters of Connecticut opposes the calling of a constitutional convention. A constitution provides the basic framework of government. We believe that the Connecticut Constitution still works for our citizens as a basic framework of government and that most voters are satisfied with the current system. The League is not convinced that the results of a constitutional convention would be worth the time, expense, and energy. Because all issues are fair game in a constitutional convention, we should not risk losing important revisions made to our constitution in 1965.

The LWVCT also opposes initiative and referendum. If voters are dissatisfied with the actions of the General Assembly, they should make their views known during the legislative process or elect new legislators. At this time, there are no pressing governance issues facing Connecticut that require calling a constitutional convention. The League believes that the Connecticut Constitution continues to work well as a basic framework of government.

For an explanation of the procedures for convening constitutional conventions in Connecticut from the state's nonpartisan Office of Legislative Research, go to <http://www.cga.ct.gov/2008/rpt/2008-R-0296.htm>

League of Women Voters of Connecticut Opposes Constitutional Convention 2008 Ballot Question

Vote NO in November

League of Women Voters of Connecticut

1890 Dixwell Avenue, Suite 203 Hamden, CT 06514

National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact Study

Delegates to LWVUS Convention 2008 voted to study the advisability of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact among the states as a method for electing the U.S. President.

The president and the vice president are the only elective federal officials not chosen by popular direct vote. They are elected by the members of the Electoral College; an institution provided the U.S. Constitution.

As things stand now, members of the Electoral College are chosen by the party receiving the highest vote in most states. As a result of the counting procedure a candidate who fails to be the top vote getter nationally may still win a majority of electoral votes. This happened in the elections of 1876, 1888, and 2000. Only two states, Maine and Nebraska, allow for proportional representation.

In an effort to address the inequity, the National League plans to study the Compact as a possible solution. If you are interested in taking part in the study and/or discussion please contact Joan Neuwirth. 429-5798.

Non-Partisanship Policy (approved and amended 9/22/08)

The Bylaws of the LWV state that the League "shall not support or oppose any political party or any candidate". This non-partisan policy is essential to the League's strength and effectiveness. The LWV of Mansfield expects its Board members to adhere to the following guidelines.

1. The President and Voter Service Director are the most sensitive Board positions; and, therefore, these individuals should not take part in any local partisan political activity.
2. Other positions on the Board may be filled by persons who are members of a party's town committee or who hold appointed or elected positions (provided they are not running for office at the time they serve on the Board).
3. A Board member who becomes a candidate for elected public office must take a leave of absence, until the first day after the election. Registrars of Voters and justices of the peace are not "candidates" in the same sense as other candidates. They may, therefore, serve as Board members (except President and Voter Service Director), even when their names appear on the ballot.
4. Board members are asked to consult with the Board when considering acceptance of a partisan position, which may conflict with the policies outlined above.
5. The political activities of a spouse or relative of a board member are to be considered as separate and distinct from the activities of the board member.

League to Continue "Later School Start Time" Conversation

Lisa Bogan and Carole Young-Kleinfeld, of the Wilton LWV, joined us at our annual fall gathering on September 18th at the Mansfield Senior Center to discuss "Later School Start times for Adolescents." Lisa and Carole were on the study committee for the Wilton League, whose research and advocacy led to a change in school start times in Wilton six years ago. Lisa is now a member of the Wilton Board of Education and the state LWV specialist on the topic. They were joined in their presentation by Dr. Susan Rubman a sleep specialist from West Hartford. Joining us in the audience were Region 19 Superintendent, Bruce Silva, and Ashford Region 19 representative, Janice Chamberlain.

Lisa and Carole shared their experiences of advocacy and the challenges they encountered in the process. They also reported that six years post change, "Nobody - administrators, teachers, parents or students - wants to go back." Dr. Rubman, through a compelling power point presentation, helped us to understand sleep patterns, and the changes to adolescent sleep patterns in particular, that are behind the call for later school start times.

The Mansfield League will provide leadership for continuing a conversation on this issue. In response to the presentation members Michelle Baughman, Gloria Bent, Joan Buck, Ann Kouatly, June Krisch, Carole McMillan, Maribeth Stearns and Zoe Strickler expressed interest in working with this leadership group and they will be joined by Janice Chamberlain. One goal is to hold a community-wide conversation in cooperation with Region 19. Anyone interested in joining this group should contact Gloria Bent at gsbent@earthlink.net or 423-8208.

Submitted by Gloria Bent

Straw Poll Tally

The Mansfield LWV's presidential straw poll at the Know Your Towns Fair yielded the following votes:

Barrack Obama 220	Ralph Nader 8
John McCain 57	Bob Barr 1

The top three candidates were on the ballot in enough states to potentially win the Electoral College votes needed to win the presidency. Bob Barr was on the ballot in 38 states at the time of the Fair and moving in fast on 50, so he was included in the poll, also.

LWV CALENDARS

Calendar sales were off to a flying start this fall at the Know Your Town Fair. They are available, as usual, from Anne Smith (429-0529) and Iris Kinnard (429-9102). At last you can transfer all those little scribbled 2009 appointments on to our attractive new calendars. (The "attractive", thanks again to Joan Neuwirth). The calendars are still \$5.00.

Iris Kinnard Calendar Lady

FALL 2008

WELCOME BACK! It's time to renew your annual membership in the Mansfield League of Women Voters. Your continued support and participation are needed to ensure the ongoing vitality of your League's grassroots citizen efforts. Please renew promptly! *Anne Smith*

Annual membership dues are to be paid by October 31, 2008.

Full Paying Membership Annual dues are \$45, which include membership in the national League (\$28) and the state League (\$16.50).

Household Membership This is available to a second person living at the same address for \$22.50 annually. One set of publications will be sent to each household.

Reduced Rate Any person with a limited income (including students) is eligible for membership at \$22.50 annually.

Please Note: Our bylaws require that names of members whose dues have not been received by December 1 of each year shall be dropped from the membership rolls. This is necessary to avoid making payments to the national and state Leagues for someone who has not paid local dues.

Contributions

Member contributions make it possible to expand programs and services. Please consider making a donation to help fund local League programs and publications. (Contributions and dues are **NOT** tax deductible.) Please fill out this section and the Interest Survey on the reverse side and return this sheet with your payment. Make your check payable to the Mansfield LWV and mail to:

Anne Smith
156 Hillyndale Road
Storrs, CT 06268

Name _____ Home Phone _____

Address _____ Business Phone _____

E-mail * _____

[] Check here if any of this information has changed since last year.

Do you currently serve as an elected or appointed member of a board or commission (local, state or national)? If yes, please indicate _____

* E-mail is a wonderfully efficient way to remind our members of upcoming meetings, as well as for the State and National leagues to keep us up-to-date and inform us of "Action Alerts" (but not too often). Please indicate if you want to place any restrictions on its use or publication. (We publish e-mail addresses in the January roster.)

Dues \$ _____

Contribution \$ _____

Total Enclosed \$ _____

Thank You!



CALENDAR

- October 22, 2008 (Wed) 7:00 p.m., Candidate Forum at Town Council Chambers, Audrey Beck Municipal Bldg.
- October 23, 2008 (Thu) 7:00 p.m., Permanent Commission on the Status of Women, Speak on Pay Equity at Buchanan Auditorium of Mansfield Library.
- October 27, 2008 (Wed) 12:00-1:00 p.m., Mansfield LWV executive board meeting, Conference Room B, Audrey Beck Municipal Building.
- October 28, 2008 (Thu) Last day to register to vote in the November 4 election.
- November 4, 2008 (Tue) Election Day
- December 6, 2008 (Sat) LWVCT Fall Conference, Old Judiciary Room, State Capitol.
- December 9, 2008 (Tue) 12:00 p.m., Holiday Party, Mansfield Restaurant, Mansfield Center.
- January 26, 2009 (Mon) 7:00 p.m., Mansfield LWV Board Meeting, Conference Room B, Audrey Beck Municipal Building.
- January 31, 2008 (Sat) Legislative Breakfast, First Church, Mansfield Center
(note – check Sondra’s form for time).

The League of Women Voters of Mansfield web page address is
<http://www.lwvct.org/lwvmansfield>

Communications to the **Mansfield** LWV can be emailed to
lwvmansfield@lwvct.org

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For more information about items in this newsletter or about membership in the LWV, please contact President Cindy Weiss (429-4015; e-mail: lweiss2007@charter.net), or Membership Chair Anne Smith (429-0529; e-mail: anneksmith@charter.net). Membership is open to both men and women. Dues are \$45 per year and should be sent to Anne Smith, 156 Hillyndale Road, Storrs, CT 06268. Lisa Peterson-Blinn, Newsletter Editor (377-6132), e-mail: lisajpb@gmail.com).

