

The Rhode Island

The newsletter of the
League of Women Voters of Rhode Island
One Richmond Square, Suite 220 A-W
Providence, RI 02906

Voter



Winter 2016

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League Day at the State House 2016—March 30

Good Government: the Long View

Plan now to attend League Day at the State House 2016 and come away re-energized by the League and its work. At League Day, you'll learn about the nitty-gritty of the important issues of the 2016 legislative session and what the League has been doing to push forward our agenda. League Day highlights who we are and what we do. The 2016 League Day is scheduled for Wednesday, March 30, from 4:30-7 P.M. at the Governor's Reception Room in the State House. Registration is \$10.

One of the issues that is on the top of the League's list is shining a bright light on how Rhode Island is governed, which is why we've planned League Day at the State House around the theme—"Good Government: the Long View." Members of the press, good government groups, and Rhode

Island government will be part of a panel providing background to the state of state ethics and discuss what needs to be done moving forward. You'll come away knowing more about open meetings, access to public records, the history of the Ethics Commission, the "speech in debate" clause in the Code of Ethics, and what the differences are between the major bills now being considered.

The panel discussion, which will begin at 6, will be moderated by Linda Levin, president, ACCESS RI. Panelists will include Channel 10's investigative report Katie Davis and Common Cause RI Executive Director They will

Good Government continued page 7

We've Moved! LWVRI Opens New Office in Providence

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island has moved its office from East Providence to One Richmond Square in Providence. The new space is closer to Smith Hill and the State Capitol as well as the offices of other Rhode Island good government groups. It is handicap accessible with plenty of parking.

One Richmond Square located on Providence's East Side in a re-purposed industrial building on the Seekonk River and offers both the LWVRI and the LWVRI Education Fund a convenient location and easier access and safer storage for League files.

"This convenient location will make it easier to highlight our advocacy," says LWVRI President Jane W. Koster. "LWVRI lobbyists can host regular meetings with our good government partners and League lobbyists will have a place to gather before hearings at the Capitol. I hope this comfortable, engaging, and accessible space with plenty of parking will encourage League volunteers to join in our work whether



One Richmond Square, Providence, home of the new LWVRI office.

its by attending hearings at the Capitol or answering calls during election season

Jane points out that the move would not have been possible without the help of several key players. And she thanks in particular the LWVRI Education Fund for supporting the move and LWVRI members Derry Riding, Liz Head, Hollie Courage and Janet Carroll for sorting through League records at the old office—in the middle of the summer heat!—and generally carrying out all the chores associated with moving.

"Although the moving process was not always fun," says Jane, "we were fascinated as we sorted through our records. There were position papers dating to the incorporation of the LWVUS in 1920. What an amazing history."

Plans are in the works for an open house so all members can visit the new quarters.

With the move, the League phone number has changed; it is now 401-339-9766. The complete address is LWVRI, One Richmond Square, Suite 220 A-W, Providence, RI 02906. The League's website address (www.lwvri.org), e-mail (state@lwvri.org), and Facebook listing remain the same.

A Busy Season for the League

by Jane W. Koster

There is so much exciting news to share with you. First, I am so pleased about our move into our capital city. Although a small office, the new location offers ample parking with excellent access to Routes 95 and 195. The central location and pleasant surroundings provides the League a welcoming environment for our members and others who support our mission and our work.

We are also excited about the growth of our local league in the southern part of our state. The LWV South Kingstown/Narragansett has many new members and is extending its boundaries into four additional towns including Westerly, Charlestown, Hopkinton and Richmond. To reflect the larger geographic area, the League—once the LWVUS ratifies the new League—will take on a new name, LWV South County. Linda Bongiolatti is the new president of the League, and we extend a warm welcome to all our new members from that corner of our state.

This past summer I represented the League on Secretary of State Gorbea's "Voting Equipment Task Force." The Secretary's initiative is good news for Rhode Island and its voters. During this Legislative session, the LWVRI will once again be advocating at the State House to modernize the state's voting and elections process in the hope of making it easier for all to participate in our democracy. We will promote online voter registration, in-person early voting, same-day registration and the purchase of membership to the Electronic Registration Information Center (ERIC), which allows states to compare official data on eligible voters. Although the Task Force has finished, we will stay in contact with the Secretary of State's office and follow the progress of the Task Force's recommendations. The Secretary of State has already sent out a RFP for e-poll books, which would allow a quicker check-in process (no more long lines!), more accurate and up-to-date voter rolls, and eliminate the need to scan approximately 450,000 ballots. The League supported these initiatives during the 2015 legislature as well.

You may have also read about the various confrontations at the Board of Elections' meetings. The League continues to attend those meetings and bring oversight to its actions. We are there representing not just the League, but all of Rhode Island's voters.

In late January, the LWVRI co-sponsored a meeting with Common Cause RI featuring Ari Berman, author of *Give us the Ballot: the Modern Struggle for Voting Rights in America*, who shared ideas from his most recent book. Secretary of State Nellie Gorbea joined us for the discussion.

As we have for almost a decade now, we continue to support the same ethics bill we lobbied on last year. We presented testimony to the Senate Committee on Judiciary on February 23, supporting Senate bill 2060. If passed by the General Assembly, voters in November will have a chance to vote on this important amendment that would finally restore the power of the state Ethics Commission over the Legislature. You can read more about this issue on our blog, LWVRI in Action (lwwriaction.blogspot.com/search/label/Ethics).

I continue to represent the LWVRI on ACCESS/RI's board. This legislative session we will introduce bills proposing amendments to RI's Access to Public Records Act (APRA) and the Open Meetings Law. This legislation will increase and strengthen these RI statutes and increase transparency at all levels of our government. In late October 2015 LWVRI with ACLU RI, ACCESS/RI, RI Press Association, and New England First Amendment Coalition met with Governor Raimondo's Chief of Staff and other staff members. At the meeting, we reiterated the need for increased government transparency and the opening of government records to the public.

Please follow us on Facebook, answer our calls for action in our occasional e-mailings, and read our blog "LWVRI in Action (lwwriaction.blogspot.com)" to keep up with the latest information on the bills the League is supporting or opposing. (See the story on page 5 for a "how-to.") Our Advocacy committee does a great job of tracking legislation, and LWVRI's Mary Chace, who lobbies on women's issues, and I testify on important legislation at the Capitol, but without e-mails and phone calls from constituents, legislators will not feel compelled to act.

Please join us on March 30th for League Day at the State House for a panel discussion on "Good Government: A Long View" that will address this issue in detail. See page 1 for details.

In League,



The Rhode Island Voter

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island

One Richmond Square, Suite 220 A-W, Providence, RI 02906

www.LWVRI.org 401-339-9766

Jane Koster, President

Patty MacLeish, Voter Editor

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that 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 any citizen of the United States. Non-citizens may become associate members. Annual dues of \$50 for an individual and \$75 for a household include automatic membership in Local, State and National Leagues. Membership forms are available at www.LWVRI.org or call 401-434-6440. Please join us and help promote informed citizen involvement in government.

The Rhode Island *Voter* is published four times a year: August, October, January and April. Periodic postage paid at Providence, R.I. and additional mailing offices. ©2016 LWVRI

League Expands Reach in RI's Southeast Corner Welcome LWV South County

Over the past few years as more members from the southern reaches of the state, particularly in Westerly, have joined the League of Women Voters of South Kingstown/Narragansett, it has become apparent that the geographic area covered by LWV South Kingstown/Narragansett needed to expand to cover other towns and villages.

"We are confident the LWVUS will approve the expansion and name change and are excited to welcome the new members from Rhode Island's southeast corner," said LWVRI President Jane Koster.

At the LWV South Kingstown/Narragansett's annual meeting in December Linda Bongiolatti was elected president. The other officers elected in December are Christine Davidson Vice President; Mary Adams, Treasurer; and Rosalie Harris, Secretary.

"I'm very excited that the LWV South Kingstown/Narragansett will expand to include Charlestown, Westerly, Richmond, and Hopkinton," said Linda. "With that expansion will come a new name 'LWV South County,' which will reflect the growth of the area covered."

Linda replaced Pam Anchetta who served as president for many years. Under Pam's leadership the League held regular public meetings on local topics, voter registration drives at the University of Rhode Island, and can-

LWVRI Annual Fund-raising Campaign Underway

The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island Needs You!

By the time you receive this copy of the Voter, you will have also received a letter from LWVRI President Jane W. Koster in which she outlines the League's work for the past year and makes a good case for why you should support the League.

She points out, "We can not do this work without your support. Help us turn this beautiful state around, improve the political climate, and show everyone that we have an honest, transparent, and welcoming government. "

Answer her call!

And if that letter has already found itself in your recycling bin, don't worry. You can donate on line a www.lwvri.org--click on support us. Or simply send your check to LWVRI, One Richmond Square, Suite 220 A-W, Providence, RI 02906. Donations made to the LWVRI are not tax deductible; to support our voter service and education activities, make a tax deductible donation to the "LWVRI Ed Fund."

Thank you.

The Rhode Island Voter

didates' forums. Pam was also instrumental in developing the LWVRI's video program. Working with Chair Christine Davidson, Pam was a mainstay of the Susan B. Wilson Award. Pam will continue her work on the LWVRI Board of Directors and the LWVRI Education Fund Board.

Call for Applications— Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards

The League of Women Voters of South County is pleased to announce the ninth annual Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards, which honor Rhode Island's innovative teachers and their exceptional work in civic education. The award is funded through the generosity of the LWVRI Education Fund.

Three prizes will be awarded. The Grand Prize award is \$1,000, the Jury Prize \$500 and the Honorable Mention Prize is \$250. The Wilson Awards committee is currently accepting nominations for the award. Get details and apply online at www.lwvri.org/wilsonaward.htm. Deadline is April 30.

Since 2007, this annual award has been given to three individual teachers or teams of teachers for work that has already been accomplished and whose impact has already been assessed. So please consider nominating a worthy teacher currently teaching in any Rhode Island school (preK – Grade 12) or forward the website link to colleagues and friends.

Susan B. Wilson, a founding member of the League of Women Voters South Kingstown/Narragansett (no the LWV South County), was a passionate proponent for education and civic engagement. In naming these awards in honor of Susan B. Wilson, the League of Women Voters of South Kingstown and Narragansett acknowledges the importance of her work for the League and for the values of voter education and civic engagement, which she espoused.

LWV So. Kingstown/Narragansett's Pam Anchetta (left) with Chariho High School's Mark Gardner and League members Christine Davidson, Rosalie Harris. Mark was corecipient of the 2014-15 Susan B. Wilson Civic Education Merit Awards' Grand Prize



Common Cause Rhode Island & League of Women Voters Rhode Island

March 16
3PM

#RhodyVotes

VOTING &
ELECTIONS
LOBBY DAY

Join the League of Women Voters of Rhode Island and Common Cause Rhode Island for a Lobby Day 2016, 3 P.M. – 4:30 P.M. Members of the League and Common Cause will meet on the 2nd Floor of the State House at 3 P.M. There will be a briefing with talking points and other materials to prepare you to meet your legislators. We'll go in groups to talk to legislators about our position on voting and elections. Contact LWVRI president Jane Koster if you plan to attend (janewkoster@gmail.com).

Call for Accommodations for Breastfeeding Mothers is Answered

In the past, if you were a lactating woman, you could not expect to receive any special treatment from the RI Bar. According to the results of a survey (www.aclu.org/map/breastfeeding-policies-during-bar-exam-state) conducted by the ACLU and Law Students for Reproductive Justice, Rhode Island has rated a D- for its efforts in accommodating women who are breastfeeding during the time that the bar exam is offered.

The ACLU notes that the “report card findings highlight the widespread barriers that women face in pursuit of their legal careers. State boards must acknowledge that their outdated policies contribute to this problem and must take an active role in eliminating these barriers. Women should not be forced to make a decision between their families and their careers.”

In November David Wollin, Chair of the Rhode Island Board of Bar Examiners received a letter sent by some pretty powerful names—LWVRI, ACLU of Rhode Island, Planned Parenthood of Southern New England, Women’s Fund of Rhode Island, Rhode Island NOW, and Rhode Island Women’s Bar Association. The letter noted that every other New England state does make appropriate accommodations, and that this coalition believed, “...there is no reason for this to be delayed any longer. We therefore request

the Board to take up this matter expeditiously and adopt a policy designed to meaningfully accommodate breastfeeding applicants in time for the next Bar exam.”

Two months after the letter was sent, the Rhode Island Supreme Court has now adopted amendments to the Board’s Rules of Practice that will allow breastfeeding applicants to request and obtain accommodations easily. The new regulations note:

An applicant who is otherwise eligible to take the bar examination, but who does not qualify for accommodations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), as amended, may request administrative nonstandard test accommodations when applying for admission.

Examples of nonstandard test accommodations are: ...whatever accommodations may be necessary to pump breast milk during the bar examination.....”

Happily in February 2016, mothers can be assured that being a mother won’t interfere with their need to take the Rhode Island Bar.

And thanks to the RI Judiciary for changing this arcane policy.

LWV Newport County Presents Joan C. Arnold Award to Jamestown Residents

The League of Women Voters Newport County honored Jamestown residents Linda and George Warner as the recipients of the Joan C. Arnold Civic Participation Award. The award was presented to the Warners at a wine and cheese reception on December 3. Joan C. Arnold was a long-time member of the LWV Newport County and of the LWV Rhode Island and served in many other organizations in the community. The Warners, lifetime Jamestown residents, are longtime volunteers at Beavertail Lighthouse and are actively involved in Jamestown town government and many other local organizations.



Pictured at right are (l.-r.), award winners George and Linda Warner, and Joan C. Arnold's daughters, LWV Newport County member Kathy Gallagher and Anne May.

LWV Newport County Holds Legislators Forum

The LWV Newport County will sponsor its annual Legislators Forum on Saturday, April 2, from 9:45-11:15 at the Newport Public Library, 300 Spring Street, in Newport. All the legislators from Newport County— Sen. Louis P. DiPalma (District 12), Sen. Walter Felag (District 10), Sen. John Pagliarini, Jr. (District 11), Sen. M. Teresa Paiva Weed (District 13), Rep. Marvin Abney (District 73), Rep. Dennis Canario (District 71), Rep. John Edwards (District 70), Rep. Daniel Rielly (District 72), Rep. Lauren Carson (District 75), Rep. Raymond E. Gallison (69) and Rep. Deborah Ruggiero, (District 74)—have been invited.

LWV Newport County member Erin Dollard will moderate the event, which is open to the public.

How the League Can Help You Be in the Know

Keeping up with the presidential primaries, following what's happening at the state capital, and paying attention to your local school board—it's all too much sometimes. The League is here to help you be in the game when it comes to participating in democracy. Staying in the know about politics and understanding the issues, while still saving sometime for reading, being with your family, and binge-watching the current Netflix favorite, doesn't leave much time for making your voice heard in Providence. But the League is here to help! Here are three things you can do:

LIKE US ON FACEBOOK. We try to post two to four times a week linking you to articles on important issues and the latest postings on our blog.



Once you "like" us, you'll receive regular automatic updates, or you can just visit, www.facebook.com/lwvrhodeisland and view our latest postings. If you like what we post, remember to share the post with friends.

VISIT OUR BLOG, "LWVRI in Action (lwvriaction.blogspot.com)." LWVRI in Action is where we post the latest information on pending legislation. The blog will also link you directly to the RI Legislature's web page that provides easy access to the text of bills and where a particular bill is along the path to becoming a law.

GO TO THE STATE HOUSE WEB PAGE. Visit webserver.rilin.state.ri.us/legislation/ to track a bill and get con-

nected. The same links also provide direct e-mail to your senator and representative.

CHECK YOUR EMAILS FROM THE LWVRI (and forward them to friends). The LWVRI has been sending weekly e-mails to members about what is coming up each week in the



Call To Action

Legislature. The Action Alert will give you a brief description of all the important upcoming hearings and votes with links to the LWVRI in Action blog where you will find details of the legislation and handy links to committee members emails. Share the email with others who may be interested in the topic. If you are not getting messages from us, please make sure we have your e-mail address. You can sign up on our website, as well—look for the button on the left side of the page. If we do have your address, but are not receiving e-mail updates, check your junk e-mails for a message from the "LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS RHODE ISLAND and then add us to your contact lists. If you have other problems, please e-mail Patty MacLeish, at pmacleish@verizon.net.

It's easy to keep track of the issues that are nearest and dearest to you.

LWV New England Conference will Emphasize Communications

Please join The League of Women Voters of Rhode Island, Maine, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut and Massachusetts for the tenth annual Leadership Development conference on April 9-10 at the Hampton Inn in Wells, Maine

The theme for this year's conference workshops will be communications: getting the League's message to the public and to elected officials, as well as improving internal communications at all levels. The three workshops will deal with aspects of communication—social media, with an emphasis on Facebook and Twitter; working with the press to get the word out in print, radio and TV; and effective advocacy, particularly with Congressional delegations. The keynote speaker is author and political strategist Celinda Lake. She is the co-author of the book *What Women Really Want: How American Women Are Quietly Erasing Political, Racial, Class,*

LWVUS Names: Wylecia Wiggs Harris Exec. Director

The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) has named Wylecia Wiggs Harris as its new executive director. Dr. Harris brings to the League many years of seasoned leadership experience, a passion for organizational development and a commitment to excellence. Dr. Harris comes to the League after 11 years at the American Nurses Association Enterprise serving as chief operating officer for the American Nurses Association (ANA), the American Nurses Credentialing Center (ANCC) and the American Nurses Foundation (ANF)

"I am thrilled that Wylecia will be bringing her talents and leadership acumen to the League of Women Voters," said Elisabeth MacNamara, president of the League of Women Voters of the U.S. "Her considerable skills in guiding organizations and setting a strategic vision and roadmap for the future will be incredible assets to the League."

"This position with the League of Women Voters means a great deal to me. It provides me with an opportunity to devote my leadership experiences to an organization whose mission closely aligns with my personal convictions. The League's efforts to engage all voters has always been professionally inspiring to my work," said Dr. Harris.



Wylecia Wiggs Harris

Dr. Harris's remarks at her welcoming reception in November, provide more insight into her vision for the League and why she found this new position so compelling. Those remarks are available at the LWVUS web site (lww.org/content/remarks-wylecia-wiggs-harris-reception-welcome-dr-wylecia-wiggs-harris

and Religious Lines to Change the Way We Live.

If you wish to attend, please contact LWVRI President Jane W. Koster at state@lwwri.org. Please note that the League of Women Voters Education Fund will provide \$50 toward the cost of staying overnight to the first twelve LWVRI League members who register. Saturday lunch is included in the registration fee of \$20. Dinner on Saturday evening will be on your own at area restaurants. Call the hotel directly (207)-646-0555 and tell them that you're with the League.) Breakfast is included in the room rate.

What is the LWV New England Leadership Development Conference?

For the past nine years under the moniker of "Quad States," the small Leagues of Rhode Island, Vermont, Maine, and New Hampshire have gathered together to meet with LWVUS leaders. Quad State was an opportunity for Leaguers to hone skills and to learn more about national programs. A few years ago, the Quad States invited members from Massachusetts and Connecticut to attend as well, and the Quad State Conference became the LWV New England Leadership Development Conference. All League members are welcome to attend and there are stipends available to cover the cost.

LWV So. Kingstown/ Narragansett Holds Forum on Open Records

The LWV So. Kingstown/Narragansett will hold a forum, "Public Records, A Citizen's Right" on Tuesday, March 29 from 6 -7 P.M. in the auditorium in the Westerly Library, Westerly, RI. The panelists at the forum will be, Michael Field, RI Assistant Attorney General; Melissa Long, Director of Administration for RI's Secretary of State; John Marion, Executive Director, Common Cause RI; and Linda Levin, founder, ACCESS RI and retired URI journalism professor. The League hopes the workshop will help to educate the public about their civic rights and responsibilities. The discussion for this event will focus on Freedom of Information and Rhode Island's Access to Public Records Act (APRA).

League Day at the State House Good Government: A Long View

Wednesday, March 30, 2016—Reserve Today!

Register Today—Seating is very limited, so please register early; deadline is March 28. Cost: \$10; Students: \$5. **Bring some guests! Members who bring two or more non-League members to the event will receive free registration.** Please send this form with your payment; the price includes the program and reception with hors d'oeuvres, sweets and beverages.

YES! I will join you for League Day at the State House.

Number attending _____ @ \$10 per person Number attending _____ @ the student rate \$5

YES! I am bringing non-member guests to League Day at the State House. Their names are listed below.

Number of guests _____ @ \$10 per person/\$5 per student—My registration is Free! Please enclose payment for your guests with this registration

I cannot attend, but I have enclosed a donation to the League of \$ _____

Name (as you wish it listed on your badge) _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Names of my guests

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____

Enclosed please find my check for \$ _____ made out to the LWVRI for _____ registrations.

Please make checks payable to: LWVRI and mail to Rosemary Forbes Woodside, LWVRI Treasurer, 23 Skysail Ct., Jamestown, RI 02835.

Questions? Contact Jane W. Koster at janewkoster@gmail.com

Good Government *continued from page 1*

provide background on the Access to Public Records Act, Open Meetings Act and amendments to these laws that are currently under consideration by the legislature.

Plan to bring a friend—or two—along, so they can see what we do. All members who bring two non League guests will receive a free registration. We also are requesting that local Leagues contact their representatives and personally invite them to stop by from 4:30-5 to “Meet the League.” It will be a great opportunity for local League members to connect with their representatives.

The social time will be followed at 5 with presentations by members. We’ll hear from the Advocacy Committee on our priorities for the 2016 legislative session. There will be handouts on women’s health issues, elections and voting, and the ethics bill, which will allow you to later confidently present the issues to your representatives. Local Leagues and the LWVRI Education Fund will also present reports.

The deadline for registration is March 25. Don’t forget, there will be no registration fee for any member who is accompanied by two or more guests. Register online at www.lwvri.org or mail in the registration form above.

League Day is held in the Governor’s Reception Room. Parking is available on the street outside the State House or at the nearby Providence Place Mall garage. Please join us and bring friends who also are interested in good government.

Join Us! Become Part of Making Democracy Work



Membership in the League is \$50; two members of the same household may join for \$75. To join please send a check and this form to LWVRI, One Richmond Square, Suite 220 A-W, Providence, RI 02906, and help Democracy Work! Or, join on line at www.LWVRI.org.

Name _____

Address _____

E-mail _____

Phone _____

The League of Women Voters of RI
172 Taunton Ave., Suite 8,
East Providence, RI 02914

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Coming Up—League Events

Thursday, March 10, 1 P.M.

LWVRI Education Fund Meeting at the North Providence Library

Monday, March 14, 10 A.M.

LWVRI Board Meeting, Jamestown Library

Wednesday, March 16, 3-4:30 P.M.

Lobby Day at the State House

Sunday, March 27

Deadline to register to vote in the Rhode Island Presidential Primary

Tuesday, March 29, 6-8 P.M.

LWV South County forum “Public Records: A Citizen’s Right” at the Westerly Library

Wednesday, March 30, 4:30-7 P.M.

League Day at State House: “Good Government – The Longview.” Panel discussion.

Thursday, April 7, 1 P.M.

Book Group at Susan Excherich’s home in East Providence. Book: But Isn’t This What We’re S’posed to Do? by LWV Providence member Marian Styles McClintock. All are welcome. To learn more

about the Book Group, call Hollie Courage at 401-274-6173 or Linda Jenkins at 401-816-0331.

April 8-10

LWV New England Quad State Conference, Wells, Maine.

Monday, April 11, 10 A.M.

LWVRI Board Meeting, LWVRI office, One Richmond Square, Providence.

Tuesday, April 26

Rhode Island Presidential Preference Primary

Tuesday, April 26, 11:30 A.M.-1 P.M.

LWV Newport County Annual Meeting. Green Valley Country Club. Dr. James Ludes, Executive Director, Pell Center will speak.

Thursday, May 5, 5-7 P.M.

LWVRI Biennial Council Jamestown Library.

June 16-19

LWVUS Convention Washington, D.C.