



Green Mountain CITIZEN

Fall 2020

League Applauds Decision to Deny Suit Against Mailing Ballots

The League of Women Voters of Vermont applauds the September 16 decision of Judge Geoffrey W. Crawford to dismiss the suit against Secretary of State, James C. Condos, challenging the legality of the plan to mail ballots to all eligible voters for the November election.

On September 4, a group of five Vermonters, including a current and former Republican state representative and a Town Clerk, filed a federal lawsuit against Secretary Condos. They claimed the value of their votes would be diminished by voter fraud because the Voter Checklist had not been adequately purged of voters who moved, died, or were ineligible to vote and mailing ballots to every registered voter threatened the integrity of election results. This suit was one of at least 170 such lawsuits challenging Covid-related election procedures in states across the country.

The League joined 19 civic organizations and businesses in filing an Amicus Brief to defend Secretary Condos's plan to mail ballots. However, Judge Crawford did not allow the coalition to submit a brief, determining there was no time to consider amicus briefs in this case.

Judge Crawford found the plaintiffs lacked standing to bring the suit because their allegations did not amount to a sufficiently individualized claim of harm to themselves. He considered them "sophisticated voters who have gone to considerable lengths to obtain counsel skilled in election law and to file a lawsuit in federal court. Of all people likely to be confused about how to vote, these five plaintiffs must be last on the list."

You can read the full dismissal order here: <https://www.vpirg.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/09/Court-Order.pdf>

This is a victory for all Vermonters who want a safe and secure means of voting this year. The argument opposing vote-by-mail because it will lead to fraud has been proven false, time and time again. Vermont has systems in place to deter and detect irregularities or violations in the voting process, both by mail and in person. And, Vermonters continue to have the option to vote at the polls on Election Day.

Message from the Board

Fall 2020

NOVEMBER 3, ELECTION DAY

Return your vote-by-mail ballot by prepaid mail, depositing in in a secure drop box, or at your Town Clerks' office, or handing it directly to a poll worker at a polling place on Election Day. Polls open between 5 and 10 am and close at 7 pm.

In the final weeks leading to the General Election, we are most fortunate that Vermont makes voting easy, safe, and convenient. However, this cannot be said for much of the country, where egregious attempts at voter suppression prevail.

In our current pandemic lifestyle, we are subjected to a constant stream of baseless claims and falsehoods with the deliberate intent to undermine voter confidence and erode public trust in our elections. Misinformation, continuously repeated, perpetuated, targeted, sowing mistrust in the integrity of processes and institutions. As League members, we must speak up, over and over again. Vermont voters need our trusted, nonpartisan voice now, more than ever. Know the facts, counter untruths; we have a democracy to safeguard.

October 22, in collaboration with Brattleboro's Next Stage Arts Project, the League is invited to co-sponsor a free virtual screening of the documentary *Rigged; The Voter Suppression Playbook* and participate in a panel discussion around voting and suppression. We will keep you informed as details become available.

The League will also be hosting a Zoom gubernatorial candidates' forum – a virtual first for us - with partnering organizations, Community of Vermont Elders, Disability Rights Vermont, Rutland Area NAACP, and Vermont Commission on Women. Five candidates have expressed interest and we hope to nail down an October date and time shortly.

Early voting has begun. Take advantage of it. Check the League's Vote411.org website for helpful information. Fellow Leaguers.... let's vote and honor the sacrifices of all the women who fought tirelessly for more than 70 years to get us the right to vote. Vote early, vote safely, vote by mail.

Sue Racanelli

Celebrating 100 Years



League member Jean Hopkins spoke in Burlington on August 26 at a gathering organized to commemorate the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, securing women the vote. The League plays a prominent role on the Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance whose centennial efforts will shift to 2021.

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Kate Rader, Editor

Membership in the League includes a subscription.
If you would like to join the League, go to our website,
<https://my.lwv.org/vermont>, e-mail, or write:

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Youth Voter Project Work Continues

The LWVVT Youth Voter Project got underway in the Fall 2019 with opportunities to visit a number of school districts. League members registered eligible voters at Spaulding High School, U32 High School, Montpelier High School, Woodstock High School, Mt Abraham High School in Bristol and in early March, Lake Region High School in Orleans, Vermont. By the beginning of March 2020 the Project had successfully registered 152 eligible voters in high schools.

Unfortunately, plans to register additional students in interested Vermont high schools were postponed in mid-March given statewide school closings due to Covid-19, with plans to resume the project in the spring and summer. All additional school visits were eventually canceled. As of the beginning of the 2020 school year, there are no plans for League members to go into school settings to register students.

However, the Youth Voter Project Team has continued to meet to brainstorm alternate ways to connect with 18 to 24 year olds to encourage voter registration and voting. Following two focus groups with young voters, their recommendations have focused the project team on using social media to develop messaging to this age group. One recent avenue is the creation of the the LWVV Instagram site. See: https://www.instagram.com/lwv_vt/. Also, a focus group participant, Winona Smith Scholarship winner Audrey Grant, has worked with the League

to develop a short video available on YouTube https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2sRLLDRWTzo_YZLHiJMyRQ/ that clearly explains how to register to vote in Vermont online.

In addition to these updated virtual activities, the team is now working on a Zoom interactive presentation for students at Vermont Technical College sites located all over the state with the assistance of Dana Mitchell, Coordinator of Student Activities and Community Services for the Vermont Technical Colleges. Students will be able to watch and ask questions during a live presentation given by League members explaining how to register, request a ballot and vote in Vermont. This interactive presentation will potentially act as a prototype for future virtual opportunities for colleges and high schools statewide.

Interest in the Youth Voter Project had been high and many of those who were trained in November 2019 and January 2020 to go into schools have become LWVVT members. The project now has up to 15 trained League members who were prepared to visit schools and other sites with this project. As the online presentation develops it is the hope of the Youth Voter Project team that these and additional trained LWVV members will get involved in these online presentations to offer this important information to 18 to 24 year old eligible voters throughout the state during this election season and as a new format to reach young voters in years to come.

League Receives \$10,000 Johnson Family Foundation Grant

In June, Jamie Lerner, the Vermont Program Officer for the Johnson Family Foundation, e-mailed a question about what the League was doing in Vermont to promote voting. Sonja Schuyler called him and talked about our various voter education and involvement projects. He then asked if she could summarize them in an e-mail. The e-mail closed with "...we would be interested in applying for a grant, if the Foundation was offering one." Apparently the description of our work was enough, because the answer was "I am pleased to report that the Johnson Family Foundation has approved a one-time grant of \$10,000 to the League of Women Voters of Vermont for general operations- Congratulations!" This grant has moved our voter education efforts to a higher level and boosted the Youth Vote and Inmate Vote projects that were operating with small grants from LWVUS.

Voter Education Committee Formed

In June, the State Board decided to establish a committee to work on voter education and registration for the up-coming election. We already had a committee for Youth Voting supported by a small grant from LWVUS and the Prisoner Voting Project also supported by a small grant from LWVUS. Both of these efforts had been curtailed by the COVID-19 shut down. We also realized that our usual efforts to register voters and get out the vote would have to change for the upcoming elections.

Sonja Schuyler and Maddy Motta volunteered to organize a Voter Education Committee. We immediately contacted Anne Mixer, who is leading the Youth Vote effort. The other volunteers we recruited are Lila Richardson, Pat Sharpe, and Maisie and Bill Wood. Thanks to the Johnson Family Foundation Grant, we have hired Andrea Olson as Education Project Coordinator, and have brought on Audrey Grant as a Student Intern. Sue Racanelli negotiated with Front Porch Forum for two statewide ads per month up to the November election.

This is a hard working committee, and new opportunities come up all the time. We hope you all have seen the Front Porch Forum ads. We also placed an ad in the Seven Days Primary Election supplement explaining the mail-in primary voting process. We will also have an ad in the General Election supplement. If you follow our Twitter, Facebook, and Instagram accounts, you will also see postings of voter information and voter registration and education activities.

A video by Audrey Grant on how to vote on-line is on our YouTube site. Madeline Motta has a script to produce a DVD on registration and absentee ballot requests for use in the prisons, since in-person access is not possible now. This will be ready soon. We are also working on outreach to nursing homes and assisted living facilities.

If you would like to help the committee, contact Sonja (sonjapeter@comcast.net) or Maddy (madelinemmotta@aol.com). We have been meeting every two weeks by ZOOM.

League Social Media Presence

Thanks to Andrea Olson, the League now has an Instagram account with many followers. We have been able to hire Andrea to help us with our social media for the up-coming election thanks to the funding from the Johnson Family Foundation Grant. She is doing a great job. We now also have a **YouTube** channel and will be posting videos done by the Youth Voter Project. Andrea also has given our **Facebook** page a new look.

Our **Twitter** account has been revived, too. Erika Anderson-Putman volunteered to reactivate our account and has been posting to it. She works for Cabot and has lots of experience with social media. Cabot is a big booster for the League and invites people to Vote 411 on its postings.

Here are links to our sites:

Instagram - https://www.instagram.com/lwv_vt/

YouTube -

https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2sRLLDRWTzo_YZLHiJMyRO/

Twitter - @LWV_VT

Facebook - <https://www.facebook.com/LWVofVT/>

Website - <https://my.lwv.org/vermont>

Voting in Vermont in Translation

Translated versions of the Voting in Vermont brochure are now available for distribution at naturalization ceremonies and to Vermont organizations that provide services to new citizens. The brochures are available in Somali, Nepalese and Chinese. The translations were done by the translators who work with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, Colchester, Vermont Field Office and paid by a grant from the LWV national office.

If you would like to distribute the translated brochures to community organizations, such as human service and health programs, education centers, churches and financial institutions in your area please contact Maddy Motta at madelinemmotta@aol.com or Sonja Schuyler at sonjapeter@comcast.net.

LWV in Election Protection Coalition

LWVCEN member Paul Erlbaum is working with Election Protection to help voters having difficulty registering or having access to the ballot.

Election Protection, led by the Lawyers' Committee for Civil Rights Under Law, is the nation's largest non-partisan voter protection coalition. Through the 866-OUR-VOTE hotline and our voter assistance field program, Election Protection helps ensure eligible voters are able to participate in our democracy while collecting data for meaningful reform so that our elections are free, fair, and accessible.

The national, nonpartisan coalition works year-round to ensure that all voters have an equal opportunity to vote and have that vote count. They have more than 100 partners, including *ACLU*, *Brennan Center*, *Demos*, *Common Cause* and the *League of Women Voters*. Election Protection uses a wide range of tools and activities to protect, advance and defend the right to vote.

Election Protection provides Americans from coast to coast with comprehensive information and assistance at all stages of voting – from registration, to absentee and early voting, to casting a vote at the polls, to overcoming obstacles to their participation.

Throughout the election cycle, our volunteers provide voter information, document problems they encounter when voting and work with partners and volunteers on the ground to identify and remove barriers to voting. Election Protection focuses on the voter – not on the political horse race – and provides guidance, information and help to any American, regardless of his or her voting choice.

We are currently recruiting volunteers in a number of states across the country to help voters in 2020. Please note that we recruit volunteers in the states where they live and cannot support deployment to other states.

Are you a lawyer, paralegal, law student or other legal professional? Sign up to volunteer with Election Protection at <https://electionprotection.wetheaction.org/>

LWVCEN Planning New Program Series

The Central Vermont League has begun work on its 2020/21 series presented in partnership with Montpelier's Kellogg-Hubbard Library

This year's theme, *Policing to Public Safety*, is a spinoff from last year's series on law enforcement in Vermont, with the following programs in the works:

November 11, 2020 – History of Policing in Vermont

January 13, 2021 – Law Enforcement and Mental Health

February 10, 2021 – Racism as a Public Health Issue

March 10, 2021 – The Future of Law Enforcement: from Policing to Public Safety

Because of Covid-19, at least the earlier programs will be presented virtually. We will be working closely with the Library and our presenters on format.

Health Care Advocates Wanted

A national group of LWV health care advocates have formed a Google Group (<https://tinyurl.com/Contact-LWV-Healthcare>) moderated by NEK member Betty Keller. The group is working to promote an improved and enhanced Medicare For All position to both promote single payer health care and to work towards having the national LWV position strengthened. A Health Care Tool Kit is a work in progress and can be found on this site.

Input is sought from Vermont League members who have questions, comments, suggestions or are interested in joining this effort. Contact Montpelier member, Mary Alice Bisbee for more information at maryalicebisbee@gmail.com.

If you aren't a legal professional, sign up with Election Protection with our nonpartisan poll monitoring program at <https://protectthevote.net/> Please email volunteer@866ourvote.org if you have any questions.

LWV, FPF Provide Election Info.

The LWVVT is partnering with Front Porch Forum to provide voter education for voters not familiar with mail-in voting. Twice a month messages relating to mail-in voting are posted in every town across the state.

The League is working closely with the Secretary of State's office to ensure that the information provided in the posts is accurate and timely. The FPF partnership will continue into the November election period.

Subscribe to Front Porch Forum in your town, and make a contribution at <https://frontporchforum.com/supporting-members>.



Education Fund board member Susan Mock (Middlebury) and State Board Treasurer, Debbie Ramsdell (Bristol) were at the Lake Champlain Maritime Museum over the Labor Day weekend to register voters.

Putting Vote By Mail Fraud to Rest

BY AMBER MCREYNOLDS & CHARLES STEWART III

Vote fraud in the United States is exceedingly rare, with mailed ballots and otherwise. Over the past 20 years, about 250 million votes have been cast by a mail ballot nationally.

The Heritage Foundation maintains an online database of election fraud cases in the United States and reports that there have been just over 1,200 cases of vote fraud of all forms, resulting in 1,100 criminal convictions, over the past 20 years. Of these, 204 involved the fraudulent use of absentee ballots; 143 resulted in criminal convictions.

Let's put that data in perspective.

One hundred forty-three cases of fraud using mailed ballots over the course of 20 years comes out to seven to eight cases per year, nationally. It also means that across the 50 states, there has been an average of three cases per state over the 20-year span. That is just one case per state every six or seven years. We are talking about an occurrence that translates to about 0.00006 percent of total votes cast.

Amber McReynolds is CEO of the National Vote at Home Institute. Charles Stewart III is the Kenan Sahin Distinguished Professor of Political Science at MIT, the director of the MIT Election Data and Science Lab, and co-director of the Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project.



Prison Registration Update

Madeline Motta is working with Winona Smith Scholarship winner Audrey Grant to produce an educational video to be used in prisons. The video will provide instructions on registering to vote, requesting a ballot, and properly completing the absentee ballot.

VOTE BY MAIL - THE FACTS

Secretary of State Jim Condos mailed ballots to all active voters for the General Election because of the COVID-19 pandemic. There is a lot of misinformation about mail-in voting, with some suggesting that ballots could be used to conduct voter fraud.

False allegations erode trust so it is imperative that we, as League members, address claims of fraud and inspire confidence in the system. Here is a helpful list for you to address concerns and counter myths.

VOTING BY MAIL WILL LEAD TO VOTER FRAUD

Election oversight in Vermont is very strong and it is extremely difficult to commit voter fraud. There are safeguards and protocols in place to protect ballot integrity and prevent violations.

Ballot tracking, signature verification intelligent barcodes, post-election audits, and severe criminal and civil penalties all ensure that mail-in voting is both secure and reliable.

Once a ballot is returned to the Town Clerk in the sealed envelope with the signed certificate, it is stored in a secure place and not be returned to the voter for any reason.

Voter fraud, through mail-in voting, is very rare with every credible study suggesting it's infinitesimal.

IF I MAIL MY BALLOT, IT WON'T BE COUNTED ON TIME

Some voters believe that Vote-by-Mail ballots are not always counted. This is entirely false. Every mail-in ballot is counted as long as it is completed correctly and returned by the strictly enforced deadlines. Postmarks do not count. Voters can track the status of their ballot on mvp.vermont.gov.

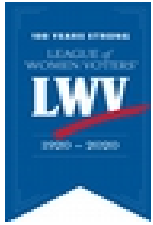
In order to be counted, ballots must be returned to the Town Clerk before the close of office election eve or to the polling place before 7 p.m. on Election Day,

VOTE BY MAIL GIVES ONE PARTY AN UNFAIR ADVANTAGE.

Evidence shows voting by mail does not favor either party. Rather, it has been proven to increase voter turnout regardless of partisanship.

I CAN VOTE BY MAIL AND IN PERSON.

Voting twice in the same election is a federal crime - five years prison, \$10,000 fine or both.



GREEN MOUNTAIN CITIZEN

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LWVUS Statement on Supreme Court Appointment Process

WASHINGTON - League of Women Voters board president Deborah Turner and CEO Virginia Kase issued the following joint statement on rushing the Supreme Court appointment process:

“Four years ago, Senate leaders set a precedent for how the confirmation process for a Supreme Court justice appointee should occur during a presidential election year. In 2016, a Supreme Court seat sat vacant for more than 300 days, showing that there is no reason to rush this process in 2020. If it was too soon then, it’s too soon now.

“The American people are in despair during this global pandemic: millions are out of work and more than 200,000 have lost their lives to this deadly virus. It is the duty of our elected officials to provide relief to the American people and ensure all voters can participate in our democracy by safely casting their votes this year.

“Supreme Court justices serve for life and make decisions that impact every American. They require a thorough vetting process that is transparent to the American people. Such a process would be undermined if rushed through.

“Now is not the time to rush a lifetime appointment to the United States Supreme Court.”