



# *Green Mountain* CITIZEN

Spring 2020



## Message from the Board

Spring 2020

It is, indeed, strange times. The unfolding COVID-19 crisis prompted us to postpone our **Spring Civic Engagement Lunch** featuring Garrett Graff to May 30. However, in light of the growing pandemic, we are closely monitoring developments and will make decisions that balance prudence and safety.

On the League's 100th Birthday on February 14 we celebrated our **Centennial Gala** with members and friends at Capitol Plaza Hotel in Montpelier. Special thanks to members Kate Rader and Mary Hauser who were responsible for organizing a lovely evening that exuded warmth and camaraderie. Appreciation to members Karen Bufka who, with aplomb and grace, carried out mistress of ceremony duties, and Susan Clark, keynote speaker, whose insightful and thought-provoking presentation was both, relevant and engaging. Additionally, the Governor's office issued a proclamation declaring February 14, 2020 "League of Women Voters Day"

Soon, Vermonters will participate in the **Census** and completing the census form by mail, phone, or online will ensure that the state receives funding to support crucial services for all residents. Vermont receives almost \$2.5 billion annually in federal funding for Medicare, infrastructure, and other programs. Let us help get everyone counted.

Vermont voters, in time for the elections, will shortly be able to access **VOTE411**, the League's premier online resource to gain unbiased information on candidates and their issues and navigate the voting process. Member Johnna Ferguson is our liaison with this project.

Recently, LWVVT received grant funding from the LWVUS Education Fund for two projects. **(1) Youth Voter Registration** in high schools across the state and **(2) New Citizen Voter Registration** at all naturalization ceremonies with translation of the League's *Voting in Vermont* brochure in three languages, Nepalese, Chinese, and Somali. Kudos to members Anne Mixer, Madeleine Mongan, and Madeline Motta in securing these grants.

And, so we continue our work of the past 100 years, defending democracy and empowering voters.

**Sue Racanelli**



*State House Card Room Display, Feb. 14, 2020*



*Linda Radtke sings suffragist songs at the Gala*

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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,  
[www.lwvofvt.org](http://www.lwvofvt.org), e-mail, or write:

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## ***LWVVT Ed Fund Board Seeks Members***

The Board of Directors of the LWVVT Education Fund is looking to increase its membership and in particular filling the position of Scholarship Coordinator.

First, some history: In 1997, when the League received a generous bequest from the estate of dedicated member Elizabeth Keyes, they earmarked monies to establish a fund formed exclusively for educational and other charitable, scientific, and literary purposes – the LWVVT Education Fund, a charitable (501(c)(3)) organization. The Ed Fund is administered by a five-member board. When long-time League leader Winona Smith passed away, using donations in her memory, the League established a memorial scholarship in her honor within the Ed Fund .

Each year, three or four Winona Smith Scholarships in the amount of \$1,000 are awarded to a Vermont resident in his or her senior year of high school. Recipients must demonstrate an interest in civic participation and community service, have a need for financial aid, and come highly recommended by one of his or her instructors. This cash award may be used for tuition for college, vocational training, or other career oriented preparation. Applications are submitted online and forwarded to board members. Whenever possible, awards are presented in person at the winner's school's awards day or equivalent.

Board members are appointed for two-year terms. The board meets quarterly, with a fifth meeting in May devoted to reviewing the scholarship applications and choosing the winners. Board organization for the following year is done at the Annual Meeting in October. Only the business of the May and October meetings require in-person participation, and occasionally a conference call suffices in February and August.

The Scholarship Coordinator oversees and coordinates activities related to awarding our scholarships. While the process

To learn more contact Sue ([lwvofvt@gmail.com](mailto:lwvofvt@gmail.com)) or Kate ([catherine.rader@myfairpoint.net](mailto:catherine.rader@myfairpoint.net)).

## ***State League Awarded New Citizen Voter Registration Grant***



*Sec. of State Jim Condos helps with LWVVT new citizen voter registration at the State House on Sept. 11, 2019.*

In February 2020, the LWVVT was awarded a \$1000 grant from the LWVUS Education Fund to support registration of new citizens at the 22 Naturalization ceremonies around Vermont.

The objectives of the LWVVT grant proposal are two-fold: First, to translate the LWV informational brochure *Voting in Vermont* and a LWVVT election voting timeline flyer into the three languages. Second, to distribute the brochure and flyer at VT naturalization ceremonies and community centers and to assist new League volunteers in the non-English speaking communities in providing election information and registering new citizens.

The project is a collaboration with the U.S. Committee for Refugees and Immigrants, interpretation and translation services. The LWVVT brochure and election flyer will be translated into the languages of the three most predominant non-English speaking immigrant populations that have immigrated and have become citizens in Vermont namely, Nepali, Somali and Chinese.

For more information on this project please contact Madeline Motta at [madelinemmotta@aol.com](mailto:madelinemmotta@aol.com).



## ***LWVCV Hosts Gov. Douglas***

Governor Jim Douglas was the guest speaker at the February meeting of the Champlain Valley League at the Fletcher Free Library. The title of his talk was “Can’t We Just Get Along?”

He addressed the current hyper-partisanship in Congress and the divide that has developed among citizens. In his view there are three factors that contribute to the problem: 1) the 24/7 news cycles; 2) ideological migration, and 3) re-districting. The 24/7 news cycle encourages polarization since conflict makes news, so conflict not compromise are highlighted. He thinks people are also moving to communities with like-minded people, or limiting their association with like-minded people. Third, he feels the drawing of legislative districts for congress has been done to favor a particular party. He is thinks that Iowa’s approach which uses a computer model shows promise.

He also addressed problems he sees with Congress itself. He said that now there is very little informal association between Senators and Representatives. Most come into town on Monday night, sit in Congress Tuesday through Thursday, and return home on Friday. Few now have homes in the Washington Area and the informal socializing that happened in the past is rare. No more bipartisan glee club like Jim Jeffords sang in! Representative King from Maine has suggested that members of Congress should stay in Washington for three weeks solid and then go to their home districts for one week. He also said that he has come around to supporting term limits.

Jim now teaches at Middlebury College and is on the Governors’ Council of the Bipartisan Policy Center. The Bipartisan Policy Center is a think tank that works to find bipartisan solutions to problems. The Governors’ Council is made up of former Governors and they particularly work with members of Congress who are former Governors. One success of this group was federal legislation that makes it easier for small businesses to band together to provide retirement programs.



This important election year the League of Women Voters of Vermont will be offering [VOTE411.org](https://vote411.org), one-stop shop for all your nonpartisan election information.

Enter your address at [VOTE411.org](https://vote411.org) to build a personalized voting guide with the information you need to cast your ballot, including early and absentee voting options; polling locations. Starting in July it provides information on your August 11, 2020 ballot; and details on candidates’ positions on issues.

You can visit [VOTE411.org](https://vote411.org) to

- register to vote (<https://sos.vermont.gov/elections/voters/registration/>),

or

- make sure your voter registration record is up-to-date, (<https://mvp.sec.state.vt.us/>),

or

- learn about important voting rules and deadlines in Vermont.

To request or track an absentee ballot online, go directly to your Vermont My Voter Page at <https://mvp.sec.state.vt.us/>

For more information contact Johnna Ferguson at 802-448-0709 or [league@lwvofvt.org](mailto:league@lwvofvt.org).



## ***One Event, Different Lenses***

The Ethan Allen Homestead Museum will present a symposium on the Centennial of Women's Suffrage, on May 16th, at 2 PM. This symposium is co-sponsored by the League of Women Voters and the Vermont Commission on Women. The speakers will present four perspectives on the fight for women's suffrage.

Melody Walker, *Navigating Freedom in Two Worlds – the Vermont Abenaki experience*

Beverly Little Thunder, *On the Shoulders of Our Ancestors and Mother Earth – the Native American experience for federally recognized tribes.*

Kathryn Dungy, "...the courage of their convictions" – *African American women in the fight for suffrage*

Susan Ouelette, *Emma Willard, Women's Education and the Campaign for Suffrage – the role women's education played in the fight for suffrage.*

**Given the COVID-19 situation, Dan O'Neil, Museum Director, is now planning for a virtual event on YouTube. Participants will be able to post questions during the program and it will be taped and sent to CCTV Channel 17 for re-showing and distribution to other public access channels.**

## ***LWVVT Spring Lecture and Lunch Rescheduled***

The LWVVT 2020 Spring Lecture and lunch will be held on Saturday, May 30. Garrett Graff, journalist, author, and historian will speak on *Election 2020: American Democracy under Challenge?* at noon in the Ethan Allen Room, Capitol Plaza Hotel, Montpelier.



Tickets are \$10, free to League members. Send check to LWVVT, P.O. Box 1391, Montpelier, VT 05602. Please respond by May 22.

## ***Valentine's Day Tabling at UVM Davis Center***

The Champlain Valley League tabled at the UVM Davis Center on Valentine's Day, the League's 100th anniversary. It was a good day to be there. We shared the atrium with two student groups supporting candidates for Burlington City Council, a campus life group giving out flowers and chocolate, and a Love your Farmer table manned by agriculture students. We registered a few students and gave important voting information to several others. Apparently, some student activists were telling students that they could register to vote for the Burlington City Council candidate and stay registered to vote in the primary election in their home location. We dispelled that myth.



*Collecting signatures for ERA*



*Registering voters at UVM*

We also collected signatures on our open letter to Senators Leahy and Sanders. To our surprise, many students knew about the ERA Amendment, even though it passed Congress before they were born. It was also a campus day for prospective students, so we got some signatures from parents.

*LWVVT Centennial Gala, February 14, 2020*





## Meet the Board of Directors of the LWVVT

We present here four of the seven-member board. Remaining board member will appear in future issues of the *Green Mountain Citizen*.



**Sue Racanelli, President, [lwvofvt@gmail.com](mailto:lwvofvt@gmail.com)**

Sue has been a member of the League for almost a decade and is committed to issues of voting rights and elections. She is currently steering a League-led statewide alliance, Vermont Suffrage Centennial Alliance (VSCA), to commemorate the August 2020 centennial anniversary of the 19<sup>th</sup> Amendment.

As Manager of Nonprofit Resource Center at The San Diego Foundation, Sue provided critical information and support to nonprofits including trainings on incorporation, governance, fundraising, and sustainability.

Sue enjoys research and reading, the company of her dog, and entertainment provided by her flock of nine hens and one rooster!



**Debbie Ramsdell, Treasurer, [dramsdell@gmavt.net](mailto:dramsdell@gmavt.net)**

Debbie is an activist, community organizer, and small business owner. A long-time member of the League, her interest in voter registration often has her attending naturalization ceremonies to register new citizens.

Debbie has lived in Vermont since 1965, primarily in Charlotte where she was a member of the Selectboard and one of the original developers of a co-housing community. A futile search for old-fashioned wooden clothes drying racks led to her starting a former small business where her son-in-law, originally from Guinea, West Africa, hand-made racks that were sold word-of mouth, and at farmers' markets and fairs. A resident of Bristol, loves reading and traveling, and sports!



**Lyn Blackwell, Ph.D., [lyn.blackwell3@gmail.com](mailto:lyn.blackwell3@gmail.com)**

Lyn is a Vermont historian and writer. She holds a doctorate in US history with a specialty in women's history and has taught at UVM, Norwich University and Community College of Vermont. She co-authored, *Frontier Feminist: Clarina Howard Nichols and the Politics of Motherhood* and has published many articles on nineteenth-century women in the U.S. and the social history of Vermont. Currently, she serves as a consultant for the new website: "Click! The Ongoing Feminist Revolution."

Lyn is a long-time advocate for women's issues and the practice of women's history. She has served on the advisory board of the VCW and Vermont Women's History Project, as trustee of Vermont Historical Society, and was a member of the board of Planned Parenthood of Northern New England.



**Johnna Ferguson, [johnnalynn.ferguson@gmail.com](mailto:johnnalynn.ferguson@gmail.com)**

Johnna first became enthusiastic about the League for their voter information pamphlets in California. Voting rights, fair districting, and civic education remain the heart of what she loves about the League. Johnna joined the board of the LWVVT two years ago and has led our website, email newsletter, and online nonpartisan Vermont candidate voter guide. She also serves on the leadership team for the Champlain Valley League. Prior to moving to Vermont in 2013, she designed and managed websites for authors and artists, and served on the board of a literary magazine for nine years. Johnna is the mother of four children, a published poet, and is nearing completion of a professional certificate in software development. She holds a BA in Linguistics from UCLA

# **GREEN MOUNTAIN CITIZEN**

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