

The Bulletin

Westwood/Walpole League of Women Voters



Volume 6 Issue 8

March 2009

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Steering Committee

Chair:
Shared by all Members

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Kathy Zola

PROPOSED EVENTS March—JUNE 2009 *Changes happen —keep checking*

Interested in joining the League, a study committee,
attending a Steering Committee meeting,
or getting more information on WWVP League?
Please call Marcia Hirshberg 781-326-8784
Or email her at hberg40@comcast.net

March

03—SC meeting (all are welcome)

04—Day on the Hill

*Want to go by bus? Email Marcia at hberg40@comcast.net by
Tuesday March 3.*

06—Deadline for Essay Contest

*10—Consensus Meeting National Popular Vote Compact
See pages 3-6*

12—Guardian Of Democracy Award

Interested in going?

see page 7 and/or contact Marcia at hberg40@comcast.net

April

05—Essay Contest Awards

19—Westwood Candidate Forum

25—Walpole Hazardous Waste Day

May

16—Walpole Day our league will participate

25—Westwood Parade Westwood/Walpole members will participate

29-30 —LWVM Convention, Newton Marriott.

*more information—Watch Bulletin and LWVMA.org
and lwwestwoodwalpole.org websites*

June

07—Westwood Graduation & Lyman Scholarship Award

09—Westwood/Walpole LWV Annual Meeting

The **Bulletin** is published ten times a year, September-June, by the League of Women Voters of Westwood/Walpole MA
Visit the **LWVMA** home page at www.lwvma.org and the **LWVUS** home page at www.lwv.org

Make a Difference! Join the Climate Change Committee



All must cooperate to preserve
and protect our planet, Earth

The Westwood/Walpole League is forming a committee to attack climate change at the local level.

Greg Agnew, Phoebe Joseph and I are looking for other concerned League members to join us in this effort to help our environment and our community.

We have lots of great ideas but need even more ideas and people to accomplish our goal of making our community even more environmentally friendly.

Please join us in this effort to help our environment and our community, Michelle Perry

Interested:

Call Michelle Perry at 781-461-9289 or email her at mmmperry@rcn.com

Global climate change is one of the most serious threats to the environment, health and economy of our nation.

Recent studies show that global warming is already causing environmental changes that will have significant global economic and social impacts.

The League believes that now is the time to act on global climate change. We can reduce global warming pollution by using existing technologies to make power plants and factories more efficient, make cars go farther on a gallon of gasoline, and shift to cleaner technologies. Cities, states and individuals are already adopting many of these solutions, which also reduce our dependence on oil, reduce air pollution, and protect pristine places from oil drilling and mining. State and local initiatives are proving that answers exist.

National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Meeting



DATE: Tuesday, March 10, 2009
TIME: 6:30p.m. -- gathering time
 7:30p.m. -- meeting
PLACE: 100 Edgewood Road, Westwood
Hostess: Jane Walsh

Coordinators: Nan Crossland, Jill Onderdonk, Chris Previtera
Questions: contact Nan Crossland 781-769-1574
Directions: contact Jane Walsh 781-769-8690

SUBJECT: NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT

This is an important Consensus Meeting. Leagues all over the US will meet, discuss, & come to consensus on this important issue.

Grassroots agreement on positions is one of the League's greatest strengths. Preparing for and taking consensus is hard work, but worthwhile. The resulting position will allow the organization to educate the public and affect national policy for years to come, just as we have been doing in other areas for 88 years – it is part of the organization's history.

Attend and be a part history

The 2008 LWVUS Convention voted to adopt a new study: “The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the states as a Method of Electing the President”

Be prepared. Read the articles in the on the next few pages of this Bulletin and Go to LWVUS website at www.lwv.org for in-depth information

At home page:

From blue area on top choose:

For Members

From drop down menu choose:

Projects and Program

From right side choose:

National Popular Vote Compact

Background to National Popular Vote Compact Study

The League has a long-standing position in support of the direct election of the president by popular vote. Now, League members have the opportunity to consider whether to support the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) as a viable process to achieve that result. The NPV Compact would avoid the need for a constitutional amendment abolishing the Electoral College (EC), and would assure that the individual receiving the most votes would become president.

The NPV Compact proposal uses the mechanism of the EC. States that legislatively enact the NPV Compact would agree that their state electors would vote for the individual that received the most votes nationwide. Thus, the popular vote count from all 50 states and the District of Columbia would be added together. State elections officials in all states participating would award their electoral votes to the presidential candidate who receives the largest number of popular votes.

This alternative method of assigning a state's EC votes would take effect only when enacted by states collectively possessing a majority of the electoral votes. This 270-vote threshold also corresponds essentially to states representing a majority of the people of the United States.

The plan includes procedural provisions to help assure smooth functioning of the agreement – conditions that deal with states deciding to withdraw from the Compact at the last moment, enforcement issues and recounts.

Currently four states have passed legislation to enact the NPV Compact.

There are pros and cons to this plan, which are discussed in full in papers found on the LWVUS Web site. Summaries of these papers are also available. League members can learn more about the plan from these sources and consider its ramifications at consensus meetings across the country. Be sure to participate! Who better than the League to be ready to speak to this good-government issue?

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Support for the National Popular Vote Compact

Because the League already supports direct election of the president, arguments against the Electoral College (EC) are not included in the material supporting the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact).

Constitutional Issues The NPV Compact is a way to assure that every person's vote counts equally and that the person receiving the most votes is the winner of the presidency. The same result would be achieved by constitutional amendment but the U.S. Constitution is difficult to amend. The NPV Compact is a viable way to attain the same goal as amending the Constitution to eliminate the EC.

A constitutional amendment is not needed to effectuate the NPV Compact because states already have the right to implement changes in how electors are appointed.

The NPV Compact is a compact between states – a method of concerted state action that has long been sanctioned by the Constitution and the courts.

Evaluating Fairness A candidate can be elected president by receiving the most electoral votes even though he or she did not receive the most popular votes. This is not a result voters expect or desire. As election campaigns are now waged, major emphasis and resources are concentrated in key EC battleground states because that is where elections are won or lost. The NPV Compact would eliminate the emphasis on battleground states and would be more apt to assure campaign strategies that appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate which would foster greater voter participation.

The argument that the plan would negatively impact states' rights is countered by poll results showing that most voters want their individual vote to count, rather than allotting them to electors representing the state as a whole.

Any claim that the NPV Compact is an unprecedented disregard for the U.S. Constitution ignores the reality that voting rights have been

changed through state action many times. Women's suffrage, for example, was instituted by twenty states before passage of the constitutional amendment that made the right universal

Mechanical Considerations Those opposed to the NPV Compact cite mechanical issues that might lead the NPV to fail, but the Compact includes provisions that address issues of enforcement, winning levels and recounts.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act and the NPV Compact are in harmony, assuring equality of votes throughout the United States.

League Issues Opponents say that the NPV Compact conflicts with the League's support of uniform voting standards. Supporters of the Compact advocate its passage in all states, which would result in uniform voting standards. It is true that the NPV Compact could be in effect for an interlude when not all states had signed on to it. The same could be demonstrated for other laws, such as the Equal Rights Amendment. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that uniform voting standards are not now in effect. The NPV Compact could help assure that every vote would be counted equally.

Further, implementation of a method which assures direct election of the president by popular vote is in keeping with the League's long-held position.

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Against the National Popular Vote Compact

There is little respect for the Electoral College (EC). The League opposes it and most voters want a direct popular vote. But is the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) an appropriate way to achieve that result?

Evaluating Fairness Voters supporting the candidate who receives the majority of votes in their state want their state's electors to support their choice. Adoption of the NPV Compact may require a state elections official to direct its state's electors to cast their ballots in support of a candidate who was not favored by the voters of that state.

Passage of the NPV Compact will result in the emphasis of presidential campaigns shifting from the battleground states to areas of large concentrations of population. So, while some voters are disenfranchised by the EC, others might be disenfranchised by the NPV Compact. Because the Compact requires entry into a contract with other states which binds state elections officials to direct electors to vote in a certain way, regardless of the outcome of the election in their state, states' rights are diminished.

In addition, one can question the advisability of a method that bypasses the normal constitutional amendment process in this manner.

Constitutional Issues Many constitutional scholars argue that this plan will lead to extensive litigation involving challenges to the NVP Compact on issues such as the scope of constitutional powers, the Compact itself, the need for congressional approval, the concerns of non-compacting states, and constitutional protections of state interests and their role in elections.

Mechanical Issues/Flaws The methods for

enforcement of this plan are unclear. Opponents question the power and timing to withdraw from the Compact and the power to enforce compliance.

Others express concern about an onslaught of lawsuits between compacting and non-compacting states, as well as procedures in close elections.

The plan, allowing the election of a president by a plurality of votes, does not improve on the current system; neither the present system nor the NPV Compact requires that the president be elected by a majority.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act requires pre-clearance for legislative changes. This, too, has the capacity to engender lawsuits to ensure compliance.

League Issues This proposal does nothing to achieve the goal of uniform standards of voting. The NPV Compact is effective when passed by states representing 270 electoral votes, effectively negating the impact on presidential elections of the voters in states which represent the other half of electoral votes. A system which assures no voter disenfranchisement is a better way to assure that every person's vote counts.

The League has long supported the abolition of the EC. Although the NPV Compact purports to foster the same result, it creates additional concerns. Amending the U.S. Constitution is a difficult process, and we should seriously consider supporting the normal amendment procedures to abolish the EC versus this specific "work-around."

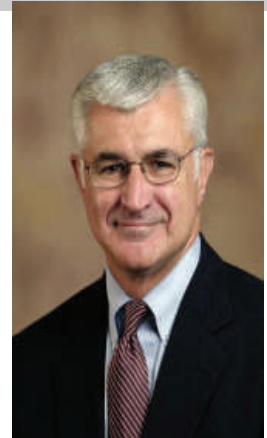
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SAVE YOUR PLACE at the Guardian of Democracy Award Dinner



Guardian of Democracy Award

League of Women Voters of Massachusetts Citizen Education Fund



Guardian of Democracy Award Dinner March 12, 2009

Reception 6:30 p.m. | Dinner 7:30 p.m.

**Honoring
Paul Guzzi**

**President & CEO Greater Boston Chamber of Commerce
Former Secretary of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

**Featured Speaker
Ralph C. Martin, II**

**Managing Partner Boston, Bingham McCutchen LLP
Former Suffolk County District Attorney
Marriott Copley Place, Boston**

**Driving Directions to Marriott Copley Place, Boston
go to lwvma.org click on “more” Guardian of Democracy Award**

**Onsite parking available for the evening -
\$16.00 special event rate (with validated ticket)**

Ticket price: \$150 (\$75 is tax-deductible)



MEMBERSHIP

HELP OUR LEAGUE GROW

Our League is 89 members strong as of March 2009
 Marcia has made an extraordinary effort to bring in new members.
 As the membership chair of both our local league and the LWVM,
 she knows the importance of numbers to keep our League viable at
 the local as well as state and national levels.

But there is just so much Marcia can do without—*your help!*

You can help spread the word and increase our membership by:

- ⇒ Telling your friends and neighbors about the League.
- ⇒ Handing out our Membership Brochure
- ⇒ Inviting people to League meetings
- ⇒ Purchasing items that advertise our League like these shirts & mugs.

Interested in purchasing a shirt or mug!

Shirts \$10 ea or \$5 for two or more; Mugs \$5.00 ea

Call Marcia at 781-326-8784 email her at hberg40@comcast.net

