

## LWVRI BIENNIAL CONVENTION 2023

Saturday, June 24, 2023

Barrington Library

The League Business meeting was convened by President Jane Koster at 10:22 a.m.

Board members attending: Jane Koster, Rosemary Forbes-Woodside, Jill Kassis, Mary Chace, Christine Martone, Donnie McGee, Nina Rossomando, Faye Zuckerman, Lois Waller.

Delegates: MALS: Trish Sylvester, Carolyn Rosenthal, Mary Alyce Gasbarro  
Newport Co. League: Sandy Johnson, Christine Stenning, Jean Quinn  
Maureen Mooney  
South County League: Liz Kroll, Etta Zasloff, Kristen Chambers  
Providence League: Judith Dorian, Mary Frances Cooper, Mary Leite, Susan Mark, Charlotte Toolan, Marian Styles McClintock, Liz Head  
Alternates: Anne Cohen and Molly Clark

### **Adoption of Agenda:**

A motion was made by Liz and seconded by Judith that the minutes of the Convention be approved with three amendments: 1) To allow the State Board to approve the Convention minutes at the next State Board meeting 2) To add to the agenda's Program Report: *State Board Presentation of new study of primary election process* and 3) To add under Voting: *Adoption of new study-Primary election process*. Agenda was unanimously accepted with these three amendments.

**Treasurer's Report:** Rosemary reviewed the Treasurer's report. Treasurer's report accepted and filed.

**Budget Committee Report:** Rosemary reviewed the proposed budget for 2023-2024. There was no discussion.

**Nominating Committee Report:** Nina presented the proposed slate of nominees, explaining that this will be a transition year with new positions:

#### **Transition Year – To June 2024**

Ex-officio President: Jane Koster

1<sup>st</sup> Co-President: Judy Dorian

2<sup>nd</sup> Co-President: Nina Rossomando

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: Sandy Johnson  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Lois Waller  
Secretary: Trish Sylvester  
Treasurer: Rosemary Forbes-Woodside

South County President: Christine Martone  
Newport County President: Christine Stenning  
Providence President or Alternate:

MAL Director: Mary Chace (Advocacy Co-Chair)  
MAL Director: Susan Escherich (Newsletter)  
MAL Director: Donnie McGee (Advocacy Co-Chair)

South County Director:  
Newport County Director:  
Providence Director:

LWVRI Nominating Committee for 2025 – Need 5 members

Christine Martone, Christine Stenning, Providence President or Alternate, MAL, other.

PVD will decide on a Director at the July meeting. Three more Directors needed.

**By-laws Report:** Nina explained that the by-law proposed changes in Articles IV and V reflect the revisions (above) made to the leadership structure: There will be two Co-presidents (one will be the face of the league at all levels, one will organize and oversee meetings, conferences, etc.) There will be two vice presidents, a secretary and treasurer. The full state board will consist of the officers as well as the presidents of each local league. There will be five elected directors, one from each league and two from MALs. Each board member will have an assigned duty/committee.

**Membership:** Rosemary reported on each local league's numbers: Providence League-63 members, Newport County-68 members, MALs-26 members, South County-46 members. There are currently 203 members with an overall increase of 32 new members.

**Advocacy:** Nina reported that for the second year we have had an advocacy committee chaired by Mary Chace and Nina Rossomando. Each of our priority

issues has a team leader and team members who give testimony, write letters, lobby, etc. on the League's priority bills:

- Protecting and Expanding Voting in RI – Trish Sylvester
- Ensuring Transparency in Government – Jane Koster
- Promoting Women's Health and Equity – Mary Chace. This year two priority bills passed, the major one being The EACA (Equality in Abortion Care Act Bills). and bills which would codify the Affordable Care Act protections.
- Supporting Civics Education in RI Schools - Nina.
- Supporting a Constitutional Right to Education and Equitable Education Funding – Joanne DeVoe and Donnie McGee
- Supporting Action to Combat Climate Change – Christine Martone
- Promoting Gun Safety – Kristen Chambers

Thanks to all those team members who pushed for important bills to pass.

Marian S. Mc. Expressed a thanks and appreciation for the legislation to make Juneteenth a Holiday!

Christine M. attended a Generation Citizens event at the State House and encouraged members to learn more about the organization.

**Communications:** Hollie sent a report that says league communications have improved in the past two years. Facebook and the website pages are "looking more and more robust" and we have 703 people following our Facebook page. We need more people who can post on the website, and the "shared aspect of maintaining the website needs work." We are working on being able to send lobbying messages, but in the meantime, emails are reaching members about issues and events to advocate about.

**Education Fund:** Liz reviewed the grants that were given for civic forums and education projects and said the Education Fund helps the League reach its education goals. (She commented that So. Co. League really knows how to use the Ed. Fund.) Grant applications are on the LWVRI website under *Fund Grants*. The Ed. Fund was started by a major legacy gift from Susan B. Wilson, and welcomes contributions from IRA's, etc.

**Program Report:** The State Board presented a Primary Election Study Proposal (proposed by the Board of the Providence LWV). Some underlying issues: only 18% cast a vote in RI state primary, there is a closed primary process, elections are

scheduled late in the process. A study committee would gather information and formulate consensus questions and “perhaps, undertake to resolve this issue.”

### **Local League Reports**

**Newport League:** Christine Stenning reported the League

Currently has over 30 new members

Has been in the process of reorganizing their leadership structure

Held seven forums

Had five Voter Registration Drives

Hosted four special events (for example, showing the movie *No Time to Fail*)

Provided AP Poll Runners

Held a Community Candlelight Vigil on January 6

Were invited to join the President of Ireland at the Pell Center

Had six gatherings for members

Sponsored three lectures

Working with Pell Center, Nationhood Lab and author Colin Woodard to address strengthening democracy

**Providence League:** Liz Head reported the League

Hosted, with Lippitt House, two Community Conversations

Held three Providence Mayoral forum events

Organized the Poll Running for AP

Sent a letter from the PVD League to the House Judiciary Committee regarding support of H6166 (protect librarians and educators from prosecution)

Held its annual Tea at Blithwold

Sponsored three Community conversations on Zoom

Met with Cheryl Space (Dir. Of Community Libraries of PVD) regarding use of ARPA monies in the library

Presented a Primary Election Study Proposal to the State Board

Wrote, published, and mailed the Providence Leaguer

**South County:** Christine Martone reported the League

Published two local voter guides

Held two forums

Is strengthening ties with URI: 1) making connections for interns in Political Sci. Dept 2) working on joint hosting of 3 forums

Has been invited by RI College to assist in student voter registration efforts  
Is in the second year of its *Women's Equality Day* held in August  
Began an essay contest for Women's History Month for 9<sup>th</sup> graders  
Purchased a bench which they donated to the Peacedale Library in honor of the League's presence in the community.

Presented the annual Susan B. Wilson Award

Held annual tea at the Gen. Stanton Inn

Continues voter registration drives, including at high schools

Has seen a deepening of community involvement by members

**MALs:** Donnie McGee reported the League

Has very active members serving in six of the seven Advocacy Teams.

Has three members who are chairs of Advocacy Teams

Has five members who have been active on the State Board

Established an East Bay Forums Committee to plan for state and local forums

Hosted, along with the East Bay Media Group, 12 forums for residents of Bristol Warren, Barrington, Riverside and East Providence to meet candidates.

Gives special thanks to Mary Chace for her League Work this year!

**Observer Corps:** Lis reported the Observer Corps has had one person attempting to observe a local Board. New rules about in-person or zoom meetings complicated observation. There has been some difficulty in finding meeting information and then realizing that decisions were previously made.

## **Voting**

**Election of Officers:** Faye made a motion to accept the slate of officers, seconded by Mary. Discussion: clarification that by-laws say we can appoint unfilled positions. Delegates voted unanimously to accept the slate of officers presented by the Nominating Committee.

**Budget:** Mary made a motion to accept the budget as presented, Judith seconded the motion and delegates voted unanimously to accept it.

**By-laws:** Faye made a motion to accept the by-laws with changes to Article IV Officers and Article V Board of Directors, with appropriate minor edits in the by-law text to reflect the changes. Mary seconded and the delegates voted unanimously to accept the by-laws. \*By-Law amendments at end of minutes

**Adoption of current LWVRI Positions:** Trish made a motion to accept the current priority issues and Nina seconded. The seven issues are:

Protecting and Expanding Voting in Rhode Island

Ensuring Transparency in Government  
Promoting Women's Health and Equity  
Supporting Civics Education in RI Schools  
Supporting the Constitutional Right to Education and Equitable Education  
Funding  
Promoting Gun Safety  
Supporting Action to Combat Climate Change

Delegates voted unanimously to accept the LVWRI current issue priorities.

**Adoption of New Study:** Judith made a motion to accept a new study *-Primary Election Process in RI*. Caroline seconded and the delegates voted unanimously to accept the study proposal. \*Proposal at end of minutes

**New Business:**

There were no directions to the Board

The State Board made a gift presentation to outgoing President Jane Koster in thanks for her 13 years of leadership.

**Meeting Adjourned at 12:00 noon.**

Jane introduced the speaker for the Convention, John Marion, E.D. of Common Cause RI since 2008. He spoke about the National Popular Vote Interstate Compact and Rhode Island's Public Records Law.

Submitted by Lois L. Waller, Secretary

**\*By-Law Changes to Article IV & V**

ARTICLE IV, OFFICERS

Section . 1 ENUMERATION AND ELECTION OF OFFICERS The officers of the LWVRI shall be two co-presidents, two vice presidents, a secretary, and a treasurer plus the immediate past president as ex-officio. They shall be elected in the following manner:

(a) For the transitional year 2023-2024 only, the two co-presidents, the first and second vice-presidents and secretary shall be elected by the Convention. Thereafter, the first co-president, the first vice president, and secretary shall be elected in the odd numbered years and shall hold office until the conclusions of the next regular biennial convention or until their

successors have been elected and qualified.

(b) The second co-president and the second vice president and the treasurer shall be elected in the even numbered years and shall hold office until the conclusion of the biennial Council or until their successors have been elected and qualified.

Section 2 THE FIRST CO-PRESIDENT The first co-president shall be the face and voice of the LWVRI, representing the League in national, regional, and state government matters, overseeing League representation on coalitions and to the public, or designate another to do so; may sign or endorse checks, drafts and notes in the absence of the treasurer; and shall perform such other duties as the state board may direct.

THE SECOND CO-PRESIDENT The second co-president shall oversee League administration including organizing the dates, agenda, and venue of regular and special board meetings, state Councils and Conventions, and preside over said meetings, Councils and Conventions; shall oversee local Leagues and MALS, oversee statewide programs, and perform such other duties as the board may direct.

Section 2 THE FIRST VICE PRESIDENT The first vice president shall be the designated successor of the first co-president and shall perform such duties designated by the first co-president and the board; shall preside in the absence, and fill a vacancy in the office, of the first co-president.

THE SECOND VICE PRESIDENT The second vice president shall be the designated successor of the second co-president, shall chair the Membership Committee, and shall perform such other duties designated by the second co-president and the board; shall preside in the absence, and fill a vacancy in the office, of the second co-president.

#### ARTICLE V, BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Section1 NUMBER, MANNER OF SELECTION AND TERM OF OFFICE The board of directors shall consist of the officers of the LWVRI and the presidents of the local leagues. In addition, there shall be five elected directors, one from each local league and two directors from the Members at Large (MALS). Each of these five directors shall become the chair or co-chair of a board committee.

(Omit remainder of Section 1 in the current by-laws.)

## **\*Primary Election Study Proposal**

(Proposed by the Board of the Providence LWV)

Pursuant to a Providence Leadership Council discussion about the opinion piece published in the Providence journal on February 19, 2023, concerning primary elections in Rhode Island it was decided that this is an issue that deserves more attention. We also decided that it was an appropriate issue for the League.

The authors of the article pointed out that in 2020 only 18% cast a vote in our statewide primary. They consider that this may be due to the closed primary process under which our elections are operated and they outline three possible solutions.

Another of our concerns about the primary process in Rhode Island is that our elections are scheduled so late in the process that very often national results are decided before we even cast our ballots and a presidential candidate visit to our state is a rare occurrence. With this article, and its underlying white paper as a starting point, the Providence League proposes that we conduct our own study of the primary process in Rhode Island and, perhaps, undertake to resolve this issue.

There are study materials already developed to help gather information and formulate consensus questions on multiple LWV sites. Below is a link to the LWV-Maine tool kits page including a tool kit for ranked choice voting. The link will need to be pasted in to access the website.

[www.lwvme.org/publications](http://www.lwvme.org/publications)