



February 2008

President's Letter

Co-presidents:

Joyce Barnes
Phyllis Frankel

Exec. Director

Sandy Peck

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The January *Voter* is chock-full of information; I hope you keep it to reference during the remainder of the legislative session as bills are debated, amended and voted upon. And I especially hope you're making your voice heard by calling or e-mailing your own representative and senator on issues up for discussion.

January's unit meetings focused on those legislative issues. Divided into tiers, the topics gave members a chance to chime in on education, air quality, health programs and more. A new member, at the Library unit for the first time, said she was amazed at how stimulating it was. That's what keeps us coming back, right?

February unit meetings will focus on program planning for next year's unit activities and for the national convention in June. In the *January Voter*, Ann O'Connell writes about competing interests for new national studies: Health Care and Direct Election of the President. Another interest that is coming to the fore is education. Think about what you'd like the national League to study over the next couple of years and convince others with your sage insights and brilliant oratory. ***And think about what we should be doing locally. Remember, if you propose a study, you will be chairing the committee to do the work.***

The results of responses to the Immigration Study were sent to the national office on February 1. We're all looking forward to the final document; discussions in all of the units helped us understand just how complicated the issue is and how many different viewpoints and opinions exist.

The League of Women Voters of Utah supports the newly-passed Shield Law and wrote to the Supreme Court to express that support. Go to lwv.utah.org to read the letter. I want to personally thank the State Board and Co-Presidents Alice Steiner and Nancy Melling for their quick response to the proposed rule.

Save March 19 for the annual Sunshine Week presentation from the National Press Club, followed by a panel discussion on the topic "Government Secrecy: Censoring Our Right to Know." Panelists include Attorney General Mark Shurtleff, Dan Harrie from the *Salt Lake Tribune*, Ben Winslow from the *Deseret Morning News* and our own Sherilyn

PRESIDENT continued on next page ...

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Health Care Reform Update

Substitute HB133, Health System Reform, sponsored by Rep. David Clark, has passed the House and will soon be voted on by the full Senate. The substitute bill asks the Department of Health, the Insurance Department and the Governor's Office of Economic Development to work with the Legislature and develop and implement a strategic plan for health system reform and creates an Office of Consumer Health Services. This task force approach is less ambitious than the provisions in the original HB133, but some reform advocates think it's a good start. They are pleased with an amendment requiring the task force to first study the full impact, with federal approval, of moving children from CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) onto private plans subsidized by Medicaid through the Utah Premium Partnership to ensure appropriate and effective coverage.

The bill enacts a tax credit for insurance premiums and asks the Insurance Department to work with insurers to standardize insurance applications and their electronic submission. Funds are appropriated for the Health Department to collect, analyze and distribute health care cost and quality data and to standardize electronic exchange of clinical health information. This streamlining should help control costs and improve the quality of health care under whatever plan the task force comes up with. There's also money to pay for expert help with task force research. However, as the Governor points out, there is no assurance that the cost of health care insurance will be reduced much, and there's no mandate for universal coverage. Both will be important if health care is to become really affordable.

Reforming the whole health care system is an enormous task. We wish the task force well and urge lots and lots of public and expert input.

— *Sandy Peck*

...PRESIDENT continued

Bennion, who represents the League on the Utah Foundation for Open Government and has a special interest in journalism ethics. For more about this annual event, go to

www.openthegovernment.org.

The Legislative Lunch on January 29 was well attended (standing room only). The three speakers brought us up to speed on current legislative issues in the areas of education, air quality and water issues. The lobby corps deserves our highest accolades. They are there from dawn to way beyond dusk, keeping track of almost impossible-to-track bills, talking to many legislators who sometimes prefer not to talk.

And Sandy, bless her hard-working-heart, synthesizes it and puts it into an understandable format for League members to read on KCPW each weekday morning. Be sure to say thanks to all of them; they really make us look good!

— *Joyce Barnes*



**COMPARE
CANDIDATES
ON HEALTH
CARE**

Each of the U.S. presidential candidates has his or her own health-care reform plan. To compare the presidential candidates' proposals for health care reform, go to www.health08.org.

Utah Sadly Number One

Mental Health America's ranking of states by mental health status revealed Utah as the state with the most depressed population. Utah also ranked among the 10 states with the highest suicide rates per capita. The study found that the factors most likely to reduce depression and suicide rates were greater numbers of psychiatrists, psychologists and social workers per capita, fewer people reporting inability to access health care due to costs, fewer people reporting unmet mental health care needs, higher levels of education, higher numbers of antidepressant prescriptions per capita and greater rates of individuals with health insurance.

Factors Influencing State Mental Health Status & Suicide Rates

According to the study, Utah has the highest percentage of population reporting unmet mental health needs at 8.2%, and there are only 8 states with fewer psychiatrists per capita. Interestingly, a relatively high percentage of the population access mental health services at 17%. There are only 4 states reporting a higher percentage of population accessing mental health services. However, spending on antidepressants is greater in 25 states. One can extrapolate that, while access to mental health services may be adequate in general, access to psychiatrists and antidepressants may not be keeping pace with the need, much to the detriment of Utahns.

Does access the mental health services in Salt Lake County mirror the rest of the state? The Salt Lake League is conducting a study examining access to mental health services in the county. If you are interested in assisting with this study, editors will soon be needed. If you are willing and able to participate in the editing process, please contact Angelique Goodhue by phone at 467-1752.

Ranking by depression status composite measure	
SOUTH DAKOTA	1
HAWAII	2
NEW JERSEY	3
IOWA	4
MARYLAND	5
MINNESOTA	6
LOUISIANA	7
ILLINOIS	8
NORTH DAKOTA	9
TEXAS	10
GEORGIA	11
VERMONT	12
NEBRASKA	13
FLORIDA	14
CALIFORNIA	15
MASSACHUSETTS	16
PENNSYLVANIA	17
VIRGINIA	18
NEW YORK	19
NEW HAMPSHIRE	20
ALASKA	21
MICHIGAN	22
DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA	23
DELAWARE	24
ARIZONA	25
ALABAMA	26
NORTH CAROLINA	27
SOUTH CAROLINA	28
KANSAS	29
WISCONSIN	30
TENNESSEE	31
MONTANA	32
MISSISSIPPI	33
COLORADO	34
WASHINGTON	35
NEW MEXICO	36
OREGON	37
CONNECTICUT	38
INDIANA	39
ARKANSAS	40
MAINE	41
WYOMING	42
OHIO	43
MISSOURI	44
IDAHO	45
OKLAHOMA	46
NEVADA	47
RHODE ISLAND	48
KENTUCKY	49
WEST VIRGINIA	50
UTAH	51

— *Angelique Goodhue*

REASONS IMMIGRANTS SHOULD FILE

Apart from the legal obligation to file a tax return, there are several other good reasons an undocumented immigrant should file:

- The taxes help fund public programs
- The taxpayer may be entitled to a refund based on the amount withheld from his paycheck.
 - The U.S. government monitors compliance with tax obligations and can impose penalties on those persons who don't fulfill them.
- If the taxpayer is in a transitional immigration status it is important that he build a history of compliance with tax obligations. This could be useful later if the individual tries to change his immigration status.

Immigration Issue Can Be Taxing

There are an estimated 12 million persons living in the United States who are not U.S. citizens and do not have residency status or a valid work visa. Of these 12 million undocumented immigrants, 60% (7.2 million) of them are working and earning income. If you earn income in the U.S., paying taxes is not a choice but an obligation, regardless of legal status. It is important to note that residency for immigration is not equal to residency for tax filing purposes. To quote the IRS, "Our job is to make sure that everyone who earns income within our borders pays the proper amount of taxes, even if they may not be working here legally".

There are several scenarios for filing taxes, but the most common is having income from salaries, wages and tips earned by persons living and working here. *(Also, remember that besides state and federal withholding, social security taxes (at a rate of 6.2% of gross income) and Medicare taxes (at a rate of 1.45% of gross income) are also withheld. But if the undocumented worker is using an invalid social security number, he may never benefit from those programs.)*

The ITIN – individual tax identification number

An undocumented immigrant might not possess a valid social security number, so in order file taxes, they must procure an ITIN by filing a W7 form. The ITIN will serve as their unique ID that allows them to file a tax return and obtain a tax refund if they qualify. If they are providing more than half the support for dependents in Mexico or Canada, then getting an ITIN for those dependents will likely increase their tax credits and possibly their refund. *(IMPORTANT: Having an ITIN does not change the immigration or work status. It doesn't entitle the taxpayer to Earned Income Tax Credit, and Child Tax Credit is only received if the qualified dependents live in the United States.)*

Preparation of tax returns and the W7 can be very tricky and is best left to those who specialize in the process. It is wise to choose a tax preparation company that acts in the best interests of the taxpayer and abides by the IRS rules. If anyone would like more information about a specific situation you may contact me at 268-5031.

— **Judy Herink**
Tax Advisor, H&R Block

**HELP
FUTURE
VOTERS**

This spring I will be contacting our area high schools to see if we can come in and talk to the Seniors about voting and elections and get them registered to vote for the President in November. If you are willing to “present” or register voters please contact Kathy Dorn Voter Service 277-0897 or kmd1965@msn

Convention Up Close, Personal

The national convention of the League of Women Voters is in Portland, Oregon, this year. The dates are Friday June 13th to Sunday 15th.

We are reserving a block of rooms just outside the city but connected by MAX light rail, which is free and runs 24 hours a day. If you are interested in being in this block, please contact Kathy Dorn – kmd1965@msn.com.

Kathy needs to know how many nights you will plan to be there and if you have a roommate or will be willing to share with someone from our town. Most from Utah are flying because it is a 12- to 13-hour drive and we will not need a car while there.

Rates are still being negotiated, but they will be less than the Downtown Hotels.

We need to get sense of how many are going. This is the closest that Convention will be to Utah for several years. It is very rewarding to be there and see the excitement and the discussion and the key note speaker and all the other Leagues from all over the country.

COME JOIN THE EXCITEMENT AND BE INSPIRED BY ALL THE LEAGUE ENTHUSIASM.

New Member Corner

Margo Thurman 1737 Cornell Cir, SLC 84108
486-4546

Margo is a retired teacher and principal in Granite School District, coordinator for special education in the special education and preschool department. She’s been on the board and president of the National Council for Exceptional Children and has been active in the Epilepsy Association of Utah. She likes gardening, reading fiction and mysteries, and joined the League at the suggestion of Joyce Barnes.



Gertrude Duncan
175 E. 6030 South 84121
272-4963

Brooke Johnson
1095 Brook Cir. Kaysville 84037
801-499-6145

Unit Meetings

*See Back Page for Times/Places
Program Planning Resources accompany this newsletter*

HINCKLEY FORUMS

Held in Orson Spencer Hall, Room 255 and broadcast weekly on KUER FM 90.1. All forums are free and open to the public and are sponsored by the Hinckley Institute of Politics and The Sam Rich Program in International Politics (select forums).

Hinckley Institute Presents ...

Tues. Feb. 12
10:45 a.m.

War and Terror: How the New York Times Covers Today's Big Global Conflicts

Ethan Bronner, Deputy Foreign Editor of the *New York Times*.

Tues. Feb. 12
Noon

Global Security in the Information Age

Janet Reno, Former Attorney General of the United States of America. A live simulcast streamed from the S.J. Quinney College of Law Sutherland Moot Courtroom. Attorney General Reno does not directly or indirectly endorse the S. J. Quinney College of Law, the University of Utah, its products or services.

Fri. Feb. 15
Noon

Article VI: Faith, Politics, America – FREE FILM SCREENING

An intense discussion of the role of faith in politics. It asks voters whether they would have denied America some of the greatest presidents in history because of their religious beliefs. Article VI of the constitution ignites the film's exploration of the current political religious bigotry, and intolerance in America. *Co-sponsored by the ASUU Presenters Office.*

Tues. Feb. 19
2 p.m.

Unfinished Business in the Balkans

William D. Montgomery, Columnist; former career diplomat and U.S. Ambassador to Bulgaria, Croatia, and Serbia and Montenegro.

Wed. Feb. 20
10:45 a.m.

Congressional Update

Congressman Rob Bishop (R-UT).

Wed. Feb. 27
2 p.m.

American in Danger

Stephen M. Studdert, former senior White House advisor to U.S. Presidents Ford, Reagan, and Bush; Author, *American in Danger: What YOU must know to protect yourself.*

Co-sponsored by Critical Issues Press.

'Policy Perspectives' Studies Tax System

The University of Utah's Center for Public Policy and Administration has placed an in-depth policy report — "Is the Utah Tax System Obsolete?" — online at <http://www.cppa.utah.edu/>

You can download the February edition of *Policy Perspectives*, as well. In this month's edition:

- * Is the Utah Tax System Obsolete?
- * Strengthening Our Economic Future
- * Legislative Issues to Watch
- * Tsunami Tuesday (February 5)
- * and more.

Following is a synopsis of the Center's in-depth tax report:

How well does Utah's tax system perform according to sound tax policy principles? Where does Utah rank among the Intermountain Western states? This report evaluates Utah's tax system and provides a comparison of eight Intermountain Western states according to fundamentally sound tax policy principles. Tax policy experts often state that broad tax bases and low tax rates are the pillars of sound policy. This study illustrates the wisdom of this idea and shows how a broad tax base, low uniform rates, and a few other crucial provisions, produce the top performances in tax policy in the Intermountain West. Read "An Evaluation of Utah's Tax System and A Comparison of Eight Intermountain Western States".

As for the 2008 Legislature, the Center summarizes three major issues to watch:

Issues to Watch
2008 Utah Legislature
by Jennifer Robinson, MPA and Tricia Jack, MPA, CPPA Research Associates

The Center for Public Policy and Administration's "Issues to Watch" reports on key areas of legislation for the 2008 General Session of the Utah Legislature. The three issues we highlight this year are Health Care Insurance Reform, Education, and Taxes.

Read about these issues, and then compare them to the League's priorities, detailed on our website: www.lwvutah.org.

DONORS ROLL CALL

Earl and Corinne
Wunderli
Family
Foundation

Nancy Young

Teri Lane

Donna Vogel

Wayne
Martinson

February Units will focus on member recommendations for program for the Salt Lake League and for the National League for 2008-2009

Please let us know what issues are important to you!

Each year League members are asked to give input to the League's program for the next year. Participating in program making is one of the most important things a League member can do. League programs are limited only by our imagination about problems and our womanpower.

Only about 30-35 percent of Salt Lake League members attend unit meetings regularly. If you cannot attend your unit meeting, or do not attend regularly, please

***Send the enclosed Program-Making 2008-2009 Salt Lake Worksheet and LWWUT Program form to the office by February 28.**

(Current programs for 2007-2008 are enclosed)

***If you do attend a unit, you can take your completed forms to your February meeting.**

League Principles of Program Making

- Does it fall within League Principles?
- Does the League already have positions that can be applied to the proposal?
- Is government action needed? Possible?
- How much member interest has been expressed for the issue?
- Is this the crucial time for the issue?
- Do the political realities permit effective action?
- Is this the appropriate level of the League to address the issue?
- Will the League's involvement make a unique impact? Increase the League's influence and credibility?
- What are the prospects for funding anticipated educational activities and/or action strategies
- Will the League be able to draw on allies?
- Is a committee and chair available?

Please fill out and bring to your February unit or print and mail to LWV office 3804 Highland Drive, Suite 8, Salt Lake City UT 84106 to be received by February 28. You may also email your responses on this form to lwyvat@xmission.com

SALT LAKE LWV PROGRAM MAKING WORKSHEET

What issues should the Salt Lake League study or take action on next year? Items on this year's program are listed briefly below (full program attached) with boxes for answers to the following questions about each item or any part of it. (You may also make notations on the current program page.) Should we drop the item? If so, why? Should we keep it but fine-tune the wording? Should we expand the item by adding a new study or activity? What do you think? Finally at the bottom, there's space to write in your ideas for a completely new idea for a timely study or project that doesn't seem to fit under any of our eight categories.

Program Item	Drop? Why?	Reword? Fine-tune only – No substantive change	Unit or General Meeting Topic/ Ideas about implementation	Expand item substantively with new study or project
1. Action to expand voter service				
2. Action to improve city and county government				
3. Action to achieve more effective planning in the Salt Lake area				
4. Action to protect and improve environmental quality				
5. Action to achieve effective public transportation				
6. Action to achieve equal rights for all and to combat discrimination and poverty (housing, employment, day care, welfare, etc.)				
7. Action to achieve excellence in education for Salt Lake County schools				
8. Action to improve community mental health services in Salt Lake County				
**NEW STUDY A new idea				



LWVUS PROGRAM PLANNING REPORT FORM 2008

*Indicate which one of the following you have a recommendation for: Review an existing Position, New Study or Program Item, Concurrence, or No Recommendation. **You may choose only 1 option.***

A. REVIEW – Is there any LWVUS position (see Public Policy Positions in Brief) your League proposes for review? Leagues may select one LWVUS position for consideration for review each biennium. If adopted, a Review Committee will be appointed to examine the position and, if appropriate, suggest changes and updating.

___ **Proposed Review - Review Health Care.** By review we mean **to update materials and to promote education at the local and state level rather than redoing the entire study.** (under Social Policy)

___ **OTHER REVIEW?**

B. NEW STUDY/PROGRAM ITEM – If your League has a recommendation for **one** study item, *please write a brief summary of the scope of the study in 25 words or less under the appropriate heading below, or choose one of the 2 studies proposed by other Leagues:*

1. Representative Government

___ **Proposed Study: “The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President.”**

2. International Relations

3. Natural Resources

4. Social Policy - Education

___ **Proposed Study:” What role should the federal government play to support a public education system that provides opportunity for all to reach their highest potential and develop patterns of life-long learning and responsible citizenship?**

___ **OTHER NEW STUDY?**

C. No New Study

___ We discussed the issues but have no new Study or Review to recommend at this time.

(over)

D. CONCURRENCE - If your League has a recommendation for a concurrence with another League's position, fill in the appropriate information below:

Not Applicable

(The League of Women Voters of Salt Lake has received no requests for concurrence.)

1. Title and/or brief summary of the scope
2. Name and location of the local or state League study/position with which your League is recommending concurrence.

PUBLIC POLICY POSITIONS

League of Women Voters of the United States

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

Voting Rights

Citizen's Right to Vote. Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation. Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.

Election Process

Apportionment. Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

Campaign Finance. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.

Selection of the President. Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct-popular-vote and work to abolish the Electoral College. Support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. Support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates.

Citizen Rights

Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation. Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision making.

Individual Liberties. Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights.

Public Policy on Reproductive Choices. Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.

Congress and the Presidency

Congress. Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision-making capability and effective performance.

The Presidency. Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

United Nations

Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.

Trade

Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers, expand international trade and advance the achievement of humanitarian, environmental and social goals.

U.S. Relations with Developing Countries

Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.

Arms Control

Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.

Military Policy and Defense Spending

Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

NATURAL RESOURCES

Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

Natural Resources

Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.

Resource Management

Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

Environmental Protection and Pollution Control

Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.

Air Quality. Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.

Energy. Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.

Land Use. Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.

Water Resources. Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.

Waste Management. Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.

Nuclear Issues. Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.

Public Participation

Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.

Agriculture Policy

Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

SOCIAL POLICY

Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

Equality of Opportunity

Equal Rights. Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.

Education, Employment and Housing. Support equal access to education, employment and housing.

Fiscal Policy

Tax Policy. Support adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that relies primarily on a broad-based income tax.

Federal Deficit. Promote responsible deficit policies.

Funding of Entitlements. Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

Health Care

Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.

Meeting Basic Human Needs

Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.

Income Assistance. Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.

Support Services. Provide for essential support services.

Housing Supply. Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.

Child Care

Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.

Early Intervention for Children at Risk

Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.

Violence Prevention

Support violence prevention programs in communities.

Gun Control

Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.

Urban Policy

Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

Death Penalty

The LWVUS supports the abolition of the death penalty.

Whatever the issue, the League believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibilities, adequate financing, coordination among levels of government, effective enforcement and well defined channels for citizen input and review.

February 2008 LWVSL Units

NATIONAL PROGRAM PLANNING BACKGROUND

Along with local program planning, we also do national program planning this year. We can choose to review any current LWVUS program item or add a new one. This year other Leagues have invited us consider three issues that are important in the national debate: a new LWVUS **study** (either Public Education or National Popular Vote for President) and an LWVUS **position review** (Health Care Position). Or we can suggest our own study or review.

We are reminded that only one new study or one new position review can be recommended to LWVUS from the Salt Lake League, which will be done by combining unit responses to the **LWVUS Program Planning Report Form** included with this material. (Individuals who cannot attend a unit may fill it out and send it to the League Office.) We need to receive your suggestions by **February 28**. Here is background material on a suggested Position Review and two suggested New Studies

HEALTH CARE REFORM – Position Review

HCR4US has been informed that to encourage LWVUS attention to health-care reform more broadly and actively, local Leagues should ask that health-care reform be recommended as a Review item for 2008-10. Local Leagues may do this when completing their program-planning forms which are due March 1. A Review will allow for the updating of our present health care position without the funds, time, and human energy required for an entire new study.

Therefore we urge that you include the Review of health-care reform as one of your recommended items. **Please add that by “Review”, you mean “to update materials and to promote education at the local and state level rather than redoing the entire study.”** ("Review" is the first category on the program planning response form.)

If there are a sufficient number of such recommendations, and if enough delegates vote for health-care reform as a Review item at the Convention, the LWVUS staff will then be able to devote the time and energy needed to get this vital work done, although we understand that LWVUS would appreciate funding assistance.

HCR4US is a group of over 200 LWV members across the nation. A steering committee of about 15 members has "met" in monthly conference calls since the 2006 LWVUS Convention to promote education and inform League members and staff, and the public, about the LWVUS health-care position and ways to implement it.

We are very grateful that the LWVUS Board elevated health care to the status of a priority item in early 2007 and that the LWVUS staff worked so hard to get more SCHIP funds to try to enable more children to get the health care they need and deserve. But we know that the health-care crisis in our nation, as well as the health-care position of the LWVUS, requires even more work on more fronts.

Please contact us at HCR4US@yahoo.com or call 978-443-8609 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,
 HCR4US Steering Committee members
 Health Care Reform for the US
<http://www.hcr4us.org/>

Just in case you have not been following the US health care issue closely, here are some facts about our country's situation. Some reports date back a few years, but count on it, stats have not improved since these reports were written.

1. Over 46 million Americans are uninsured and at least that many are underinsured.
2. In 2004, Elizabeth Warren of Harvard Law School published a study showing that 50% of all personal bankruptcies followed a medical crisis. And of those people filing personal bankruptcy, 75% had health insurance ("Sick and Broke", Elizabeth Warren, Miami Herald, 2/12/2005)
3. Family insurance premiums in the United States are averaging more than \$9,500 per annum. (Kaiser Family Foundation, 2005)
4. Insurance is tied to employment in the USA. If you lose your job, you lose your insurance. Health insurance should be portable and lifelong.
5. The U.S. is the only developed country that does not offer universal health coverage to its residents. Plus the USA has higher infant mortality and lower life expectancy rates than the other developed countries with universal coverage. (United Nations UNDP Human Development Report, 9/7/05)
6. There are more than 9 million children (one in nine) in the USA who are uninsured.
<http://www.childrenshealthcampaign.org/>
7. Health care costs are draining municipal and school budgets all over the country (check your local area to see what percentage of their costs are going to health care coverage of their employees.)
9. Small businesses are straining to provide any coverage at all for their employees, thus making them less competitive.
10. Many independent contractors and family-owned business owners do without any health care coverage at all for themselves or their employees due to high health care coverage costs.

11. Physicians for a National Healthcare Program (PNHP) maintains that under a "Medicare for All" plan, the U.S. could save almost \$300 billion in total health care costs while providing universal coverage for all. (<http://www.pnhp.org/>)

12. In 2004, total health care spending accounted for 15.3% of the United States GDP. The average for other industrialized OEDC (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development) countries was 8.9%. (<http://www.oedc.org/>)

13. In recent elections, health care was mentioned as one of the most important concerns in the minds of the electorate (just after the war in Iraq) in many national polls.

14. In every car that GM makes, approximately \$1500 goes toward the health care costs of its employees. This high cost provides strong incentives for American businesses like GM to take their manufacturing plants to countries like Canada which already have a national health care plan for its citizens (Washington Post, 2/11/05).

15. Co-pays and deductibles continue to rise for those who have insurance. Insurance companies shift the rising cost of health care to patients.

Finally, health care should be a right of all those living in the USA, not a commodity that is distributed and sold to those who can afford it and leaving those who can not afford it without any health care coverage.

For more information check the web sites of PNHP (<http://www.pnhp.org/>) and Health Care Now (healthcare-now.org) - both strong advocates for universal, single payer health care.

Now is the time for the LWV to become a strong voice in support of universal single payer health care reform. We remind you, and please remind your local League, that the LWVUS has a position in favor of universal single payer health care. Now is the time to act. Start with your own local and state League!

Sincerely,
HCR4US Steering Committee
(Health Care Reform for the United States)

IMPORTANT NOTE: *Health Care Reform 4 US is a network of individual LWV members and acts in alignment with LWVUS position on Health Care for purposes of public education and advocacy. We may need to act quickly and are not structured to consistently employ the LWV consensual and approval process. We will not use the League name in any materials or public communications.*

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE FOR PRESIDENT – New Study

The League of Women Voters of New York State respectfully requests Leagues across the country to recommend the adoption (at the National Convention in 2008) of a National Study entitled:

“The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President.”

Leagues are urged to recommend this exact wording when returning their Program Planning Report Forms to LWVUS by March 1st. The forms are available at the LWVUS website under: For Members – Council & Convention – Program Planning. Direct link is:

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Program_Planning&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=153&ContentID=9577

Why we are making this request

NY State Delegates Embraced Study of Compact for NPV

After lobbying and caucusing, delegates attending the NY State Convention in May 2007 enthusiastically adopted the non-recommended study: *Should NYS Join the Compact for a National Popular Vote?* By the time of the final vote at the Sunday morning plenary session there was only one “no” vote. The motion to adopt the study more than met the requirement of support from 3/5 of the voting delegates. In June, the NPV State Study Committee began its research. The timetable approved by LWVNYS board required that all study materials including consensus questions would be out to local Leagues by the end of January 2008. In fact, the NPV study guide is near completion.

Background on NPV

Under the U.S. Constitution, the states have exclusive and complete power to allocate their electoral votes, and may change their state laws concerning the awarding of their electoral votes at any time. Under the National Popular Vote bill, all of the state’s electoral votes would be awarded to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The bill would take effect only when enacted, in identical form, by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes—that is, enough electoral votes to elect a President—meaning 270 of 538.

As of November 11th, the bill has 366 legislative sponsors in 47 states. 43 bills have been introduced in all but 8 States and **10 Legislative Chambers Have Now Passed the Bill:** Maryland became the first state to enact the National Popular Vote bill on April 10, 2007. The bill has also passed the Hawaii House (35-12) and the Hawaii Senate (19-4). The bill has passed the Colorado Senate and the Arkansas House. On May 2, 2007 The Illinois House of Representatives passed the National Popular Vote bill. On May 14th the California & the North Carolina Senates passed the National Popular Vote bill. Clearly, the time is ripe to study this issue so that we know whether we support using a compact as a method for electing the President by National Popular Vote.

LWVUS Decides LWVNYS Cannot Adopt a Position on NPV

While conducting their research, the NPV Study Committee heard from Leagues across the country that they had been told that they could/should not do the NPV study for a variety of reasons. This concerned the NPV study committee and on September 17th requested clarification and assurances from LWVUS. On October 25th, after four months of work, LWVNYS was notified by our LWVUS liaison that LWVNYS could not adopt a position on the NPV because a State cannot adopt a position on a National issue. Many are distraught that LWVUS allowed us to spend precious resources on this endeavor. For four months, local Leagues have been holding education sessions, publishing articles, and educating ourselves about the NPV compact. Leagues reported that the study was generating a lot of interest from current, as well as potential new members.

So that the League of Women Voters-US can build on the foundation of our work, we ask Leagues to:

1. On the Program Planning Report Form: in the section New Study/Program Item, under the heading Representative Government, enter: New Study worded **“The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President.”**
2. Help us spread the word to your League contacts across the country.
3. Let us know if you will recommend the study to LWVUS so we can track our lobbying efforts.
4. Send delegates to LWVUS Convention June 13-17, 2008 to vote in favor of study.

In order to see why this idea merits further consideration go to:

<http://www.lwvny.org/npv.html> or go to <http://www.nationalpopularvote.com/index.php>. For more information contact: Lori Dawson, LWV Saratoga, ldawson@skidmore.edu, 518-580-0547 or Carol Mellor LWV Hamptons, <mailto:camellor@aol.com>

Thank you for considering our request.

Sincerely,

Martha Kennedy, LWVNYS President
Joann Ross, LWVNYS Director, Citizen Education
Lori Dawson, LWVNYS NPV Study Chair

Selection of the President ¹

The League's History

A League Study of the presidential electoral process culminated in a 1970 position supporting direct election of the President by popular vote as essential to representative government. The League testified and lobbied for legislation to amend the Constitution to replace the Electoral College with direct election of the President, including provisions for a national run-off election in the event no candidates (President or Vice- President) received 40 percent of the vote. The measure, which passed the House and nearly passed the Senate in 1971, has been revived in each

¹ League of Women Voters of the United States of America “Impact on Issues 2006-2008” (ONLINE), Washington, D.C.: LWVUS, publication #386, 10/10/07
http://www.lwv.org/Content/ContentGroups/ImpactIssues/2006_Impact_web.pdf

Congress without success. In 1997, the LWVUS again called for abolition of the Electoral College and for direct election of the President and Vice-President in testimony before the House Subcommittee on the Constitution. The League has supported national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections to ensure equity for voters from all states and to facilitate the electoral process.

What Leagues Can Do:

RECOMMEND A NEW STUDY at LWVUS

In February 2001, a memo was sent to the state and local Leagues outlining the League's position on the Electoral College under the LWVUS position on Selection of the President. The League believes strongly that the Electoral College should be abolished and not merely "reformed." One "reform" which the League specifically rejects is the voting by electors based on proportional representation in lieu of the present "winner-takes-all" method. Such a system would apportion the electoral votes of a state based on the popular vote in that state. Instead of making the Electoral College more representative, such proportional voting would increase the chance that no candidate would receive a majority in the Electoral College, thereby sending the election of the President to the House of Representatives where each state, regardless of population, would receive only one vote. Election of the President by the House further removes the decision from the people and is contrary to the "one person, one vote" principle. The League also does not support reform of the Electoral College on a state-by-state basis because the League believes there should be uniformity across the nation in the systems used to elect the President.

At the 2002 Convention, the League voted to expand and update the position. The League came to concurrence on a new position in June 2004. Our new position takes into account the entire presidential selection process and supports a process that produces the best possible candidates, informed voters and optimum voter participation.

The League's Position

Statement of Position on Selection of the President, as Announced by National Board, January 1970, Revised March 1982 and Updated June 2004:

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

EDUCATION – New Study

The five Santa Clara County Leagues urge us to consider a study of education using the wording:
"What role should the federal government play to support a public education system that provides opportunity for all to reach their highest potential and develop patterns of life-long learning and responsible citizenship?"

(The following comes from Roberta Hollimon, Chair)

"Why do we need a LWV national position on education?"

The federal government has been involved in public education since the early days of our nation. In the past the LWVUS has been able to advocate based on our existing Social Policy Position (herein).

Our current positions allow us to advocate at the federal level for equal opportunity and nondiscrimination in education. The LWVUS in 1972 supported Title I, which prohibits sex discrimination in educational institutions that receive federal aid. At the national level the League also worked to oppose anti-busing/anti-desegregation initiatives in Congress.

In 1974-76 LWVUS program added the phrase "equal access to...quality education," reflecting League recognition that "equality" and "quality" ultimately are inseparable.

In 2002, Congress passed NCLB, amending existing law, in an effort to increase educational achievement and make schools accountable through assessments and sanctions. The law requires reauthorization every five years and LWVUS has no position that would allow us to have a voice in this debate on accountability, curriculum, teacher qualifications, governance, etc.

League of Women Voters of Salt Lake
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UNIT MEETINGS Judi Short, Unit Chair
"PROGRAM PLANNING" 487-7387

Feb. 27 **Bench Bunch**
(Wed.) League Office,
3804 Highland Dr.
9:30-11 a.m.
Carolyn Dunn, Unit Chair
278-9409

TBA

Challengers
Home of Pat Eager
2229 Westminster Ave., SLC
Noon – Bring sack lunch
Marelynn Zipser, Unit Chair
578-2069

Feb. 25 **Girl Scout Headquarters**
(Mon.) (formerly Old Farm)
445 East 4500 South
11 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
Anne Zeigler, Unit Chair
944-4163

Feb. 28 **Main Library**
(Thurs.) 210 East 400 South, SLC
Conf. (Room D) Level-1
1-2 p.m.
Kathy Dorn & Joyce Barnes
Co-Chairs
277-0897

Feb. 18 **Night Owls**
(Mon.) Home of Judi Short
862 E. Harrison (1375 So.)
7:30 p.m.

**NOTE:* If you cannot attend your regular unit meeting, please attend any of the units above.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS IS A NONPARTISAN POLITICAL ORGANIZATION THAT
ENCOURAGES INFORMED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION IN GOVERNMENT,