

calendar of events:

Weds., Feb. 4; 7:15 p.m

BOARD MEETING, St. Andrews Lutheran Church, Freemansburg Ave., Stones Crossing, Palmer Twp. All members invited to attend.

Thrs., Feb. 5; 9-11 a.m

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT discussion meeting at the home of Marlou Belyea, 1253 Firethorne Dr., Palmer

Wed., March 4; 7:15 p.m.

BOARD MEETING, 7:15 P.M., St. Andrews Lutheran Church. Members invited to attend.

Fri., March 6, 2-4 p.m.

NPV Compact discussion meeting, at the home of Julie Swan, 1865 Caryn Dr., Hellertown.

NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT

Marlou Belyea, chairman of the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact study committee, has formed a committee of eight—Jane Fisher, Barbara Frankel, Leslie Morneweck, Clare Polanki, Donna Reemsnyder, Zoe Roble, Julie Swan and Liz Toler.

The first meeting for the membership will be held Thurs., Feb. 5 from 9–11 a.m. at Marlou's home, 1253 Firethorne Dr., Palmer Township. Additional discussion groups will be held Fri., March 6 from 2–4 p.m. at the home of Julie Swan, 1865 Caryn Dr., Hellertown. Consensus will be taken at the April meeting tentatively set for Mon., April 20 from 7–9 p.m., location to be determined.

Marlou has staggered the day and time for these discussions in hopes that everyone will be able to attend at least one meeting.

This issue of the *Voter* provides members with some information. For more, log on to www.lwv.org/NPV.

Consensus is due at LWVUS May 1.

Directions to Marlou's: From Rt. 22 take 13th Street exit, go straight to the light and turn left onto 13th St. Go to next light and turn left onto Bushkill Drive. Go just under 2 miles to Stocker Mill Road and turn left. Go over the bridge and up the hill to next left, Firethorne Drive. Marlou's house is 3rd. on the left, #1253

Background for the NPV Compact

The LWV has a long-standing position in support of the direct election of the president by popular vote. Now, members have the opportunity to consider whether to support the 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 enclosed in this *Voter*. Members can learn more about the plan from these sources and consider its ramifications at our consensus meeting in April. Be sure to participate! Who better than the League to be ready to speak to this good-government issue?

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Holiday Party!

pictures by Mary Liz Bauer



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SUPPORT for the NPV 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.

To prepare for the consensus meeting, you can read the complete version of this paper at www.lwv.org/npv by the LWVUS National Popular Voter Compact Study Committee.

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OPPOSE the NPV 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."

To prepare for the consensus meeting, you can read the complete version of this paper at www.lwv.org/npv by the LWVUS National Popular Voter Compact Study Committee.

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How climate change hurts poor communities

LWVUS President Mary Wilson joined the LWV of New York for its annual briefing at the United Nations. The briefing, given by Oxfam America (a LWVUS partner), was on "The Impact of Global Warming on Women and Children Around the World." Wilson points out that it gives a very interesting perspective on the climate change issue as it affects the lives of families and the ways in which natural disasters resulting from climate change are having a devastating effect on the ability of women to provide food and water to their children and otherwise maintain the health and well-being of their families. The following is a summary

of the briefing. For more information go to www.oxfamamerica.org/whatwedo/

Over the course of hundreds of years, poor people have developed ways of coping with changing weather conditions. When torrential rains drench the flood plains surrounding the Mekong River, rice farmers turn to fishing instead. When rainfall levels fall in the Sahel, farmers cultivate drought-resistant crops like millet and black-eyed peas. And where water is always hard to come by in the dry, mountainous areas of the Middle East, local people use traditional, though labor-intensive, techniques to harvest water from the canyons, valleys, and slopes.

Each season is slightly different than the previous one, but having anticipated the changing conditions, generation after generation learns to adapt.

But what happens when the seasons become less predictable and the conditions more difficult to manage? What happens when human activities, like burning coal, oil, and natural gas, change the climate—not just for a season, but for the long-term? Then, lacking the information or resources necessary to understand, prepare for, and respond to increased hazards, many of the world's poorest communities experience unprecedented stress.



Photos by Gayle F. Hendricks

Legislative Dinner

Forty people braved the frigid weather to attend our annual legislative dinner and enjoyed an abundance of excellent food and stimulating discussions. The give and take among the three legislators who attended—Representatives Samuelson, Freeman, and Grucela (clockwise, left)—and the audience were refreshing and informative. We thank the committee for their hard work and the legislators for attending. The legislators who did not attend had conflicts of various kinds.

Committee members were Shirley Lindgren, chairman, Clare Polanki, Joan Dean, Jane Fisher, Joan Carson, and Margaret Krawiec.

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