

Mid-Session Advocacy Updates

Many bills have moved out of committee and will be moving onto the legislative calendars in the coming weeks. **Since it is hard to predict when bills will actually make it to the legislative calendars, it is essential for advocates to let their legislators in the next two weeks know which bills you support or oppose. This is the time for active advocacy!**

Here is an annotated list of the bills which our LWVCT Specialists have been following. Issues are listed in red, they include Campaign Finance, Election Laws, Water Resources and Solid Waste, Mental Health, Reproductive Choice, Gun Laws, Health Care, School Finance and Quality Education. Scroll through to find the issues important to you.

Campaign Finance - Jim Redman, Specialist

Since last reporting, the GAE (Government Administration and Elections Committee) passed 4 campaign finance related bills out of committee on 3/22. They are SB934, HB5589, SB1027, and HB7281.

Testimony on SB934-AN ACT RESTORING THE CITIZENS ELECTION PROGRAM was in favor of the original bill. The statement of purpose of the bill is to (1) restrict money in state parties' federal accounts from being used on state races, (2) permit gubernatorial candidates participating in the Citizens Election Program to raise additional funds and qualify for supplemental grants under the program, (3) eliminate grants from the citizens election program without an opponent, (4) Permit members of the State Elections Enforcement Commission to serve more than two consecutive terms (5) maintain consistent annual funding of the Program even if the fund is overdrawn, (6) require increased disclosure with regard to campaign consultants, (7) adjust the lottery process by which districts are randomly selected for audit, and (8) make technical changes.

It is important to note that SB934 allows additional fundraising opportunities for unopposed candidates and allows for a grant when an unopposed candidate is challenged by a late entering opponent.

Language, however, from SB211, which we opposed, was inserted into SB934 that came out of the GAE committee on 3/22. The inserted language requires the SEEC to issue a ruling on a complaint within one year from the finding of just cause for an investigation. This requirement severely hampers the SEEC's ability of due diligence in addressing complaints. This presents a dilemma as to whether the inserted language of SB211 has doomed the bill to failure or compromises its original intent. We are in communication with the introducer of the original bill, the SEEC, as to the next course of action. **We are watching to see how the language changes in this bill. In order to support it wholeheartedly, we need to urge our legislators to remove the SB211 language from the bill.**

We continue to support HB 5589- AAC CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM which will (1) create bright lines between coordinated and independent spending (2) address in statute independent expenditure political committees, (3) increase disclosure of sources of funds used for independent expenditures, (4) require board of governance authorization before certain entities make certain campaign-related disbursements of funds and disclosure of such disbursements to shareholders, (5) prohibit independent expenditures or covered transfers by foreign- influenced entities, and (6) impose limits on covered transfers.

We also continue to support SB1027-AAC CAMPAIGN FINANCE DISCLOSURES, which requires the disclosure and itemization of all contributions, regardless of amount, to certain candidate and

exploratory committees, certain political committees and all party committees. The bill previously exempted contributions of fifty dollars or less.

We generally support HB7281- AAC CAMPAIGN FINANCE which requires the State Elections Enforcement Commission to conduct a study of the efficacy of various aspects of the state's campaign finance framework, including the Citizens' Election Program, disposition of complaints before the commission, reporting and disclosure of requirements, content restrictions and attribution requirements for political communications and public financing of campaigns for municipal offices. We offered the opinion that we supported the bill with the condition that the SEEC would receive the funding and resources for the study above and beyond their present funding allocation. The SEEC, the regulatory agency and watchdog of campaign finance and administrator of our model Citizens Election Program, has experienced systematic reductions to its budget, and is operating on life support. A system of campaign finance is only as good as its regulatory agency, and continued cuts to such agency jeopardizes its efficacy.

All of the bills out of committee affirm the Leagues position of limitations on campaign contributions and expenditures, work toward the goal of full disclosure and support the partial public funding of campaigns.

Election Laws – Yvonne Senturia, Specialist

Please check Yvonne's list of co-sponsors to see if one of your legislators is on the list so you can make a constituent contact to support our advocacy for these bills.

The following three bills have been advanced to the Office of Fiscal Analysis. Statement of Purpose (for bills only) is followed by LWVCT testimony in italics, and list of co-sponsors: Please urge your elected representatives to do everything they can to bring these bills to a vote and a positive outcome.

SB897 AN ACT CONCERNING ELIGIBILITY FOR ELECTORS TO VOTE BY ABSENTEE BALLOT.

Statement of Purpose: To expand eligibility for absentee ballot voting to any elector who is absent from his or her town of voting residence for any reason and at any time during the hours of voting at an election, primary or referendum.

The League believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote and therefore encourage efforts to maximize voter participation. The League supports measures which assure that absentee ballot privileges are available to all electors – for any reason or no reason at all.

Co-sponsors of SB-897

[Rep. James M. Albis, 99th Dist.](#)

HJ95 RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO PERMIT EARLY AND REGIONAL VOTING

Currently absentee balloting is the only form of early voting allowed in Connecticut. The League believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote and therefore encourage efforts to maximize voter participation and early voting. We strongly support resolutions to amend the state constitution, which is necessary to vest the General Assembly with the authority to create an early voting system.

Co-sponsors of HJ-95:

[Rep. Gregory Haddad, 54th Dist.](#) [Rep. Matthew Lesser, 100th Dist.](#) [Rep. Michael Winkler, 56th Dist.](#) [Rep. Josh Elliott, 88th Dist.](#) [Rep. Robyn A. Porter, 94th Dist.](#) [Rep. Susan M. Johnson, 49th Dist.](#) [Rep. Linda A. Orange, 48th Dist.](#) [Rep. Henry J. Genga, 10th Dist.](#) [Rep. Russell A. Morin, 28th Dist.](#) [Rep. Roland J. Lemar, 96th Dist.](#) [Rep. James M. Albis, 99th Dist.](#) [Sen. Steve Cassano, 4th Dist.](#) [Rep. David A. Baram, 15th Dist.](#) [Rep. William Tong, 147th Dist.](#) [Rep. Kelly J.S. Luxenberg, 12th Dist.](#) [Rep. Michael D'Agostino, 91st Dist.](#) [Rep. Mike Demicco, 21st Dist.](#)

HJ96 RESOLUTION PROPOSING A STATE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT TO EXPAND THE USE OF ABSENTEE BALLOTS

The League supports measures which assure that absentee ballot privileges are available to all electors – for any reason or no reason at all. The League supports resolutions that would amend the state constitution, to vest the General Assembly with the authority to loosen the standards for obtaining an absentee ballot,

Co-sponsors of HJ-96

[Rep. Gregory Haddad, 54th Dist.](#) [Rep. Matthew Lesser, 100th Dist.](#) [Rep. Michael Winkler, 56th Dist.](#) [Rep. Josh Elliott, 88th Dist.](#) [Rep. Robyn A. Porter, 94th Dist.](#) [Rep. Susan M. Johnson, 49th Dist.](#) [Rep. Linda A. Orange, 48th Dist.](#) [Rep. Henry J. Genga, 10th Dist.](#) [Rep. Russell A. Morin, 28th Dist.](#) [Rep. Roland J. Lemar, 96th Dist.](#) [Rep. James M. Albis, 99th Dist.](#) [Sen. Steve Cassano, 4th Dist.](#) [Rep. David A. Baram, 15th Dist.](#) [Rep. William Tong, 147th Dist.](#) [Rep. Kelly J.S. Luxenberg, 12th Dist.](#) [Rep. Michael D'Agostino, 91st Dist.](#) [Rep. Mike Demicco, 21st Dist.](#)

The following three bills are currently in the Legislative Commissioner's Office, the step immediately prior to the Office of Fiscal Analysis. Statement of Purpose is followed by LWVCT testimony in italics and list of co-sponsors:

HB5434 AN ACT ADOPTING THE INTERSTATE COMPACT TO ELECT THE PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES BY NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE.

Statement of Purpose: To enter Connecticut into the Agreement Among the States to Elect the President by National Popular Vote, thereby committing the state's votes in the Electoral College to the presidential candidate that wins the popular vote nationally, regardless of whether such presidential candidate wins the popular vote within the state.

The League of Women Voters believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice President is best for representative government. The National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact provides a way to achieve the goal of choosing the President of the United States by popular vote without amending the Constitution, which is a protracted process with delayed outcome. The NPV Compact would guaranty the winner of the popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia becomes the President. Accordingly, LWVCT supports HB5434, HB5205, HB5435, HB5736 and SB9 and opposes SJ11.

Voters believe that the candidate who "wins" an election should be the candidate who received the most votes – either a majority or a plurality (in multi-candidate elections) in our democracy based on "one person, one vote." When this does not occur, the legitimacy of our electoral system is called into question. Yet out of our nation's 56 presidential elections, there have been five elections in which the candidate elected to the presidency was not the person who won the most votes.

Under the current Electoral College system, presidential candidates tend to focus their campaigns on the relatively few battleground states that determine an Electoral College victory or loss. A large part of the

country is virtually ignored by the candidates, and residents of non-key states become passive observers of the election process. With a shift to the NPV Compact, voters across the country, including Connecticut, would have a greater sense that their votes do indeed count in a meaningful way and would have an incentive to pay attention, vote and participate in the electoral process. **The League believes that it is more important than ever that we preserve the democratic ideal of making each vote count.**

Co-sponsors: REP. LESSER, 100th Dist.; REP. ALBIS, 99th Dist. REP. LINEHAN, 103rd Dist.; REP. HADDAD, 54th Dist. REP. ELLIOTT, 88th Dist.; SEN. WINFIELD, 10th Dist. REP. D'AGOSTINO, 91st Dist.; REP. HENNESSY, 127th Dist. SEN. FLEXER, 29th Dist.; REP. PORTER, 94th Dist. REP. GODFREY, 110th Dist.; REP. JOHNSON, 49th Dist. REP. URBAN, 43rd Dist.; REP. DIMASSA, 116th Dist. REP. WINKLER, 56th Dist.; SEN. BYE, 5th Dist. REP. CANDELARIA, 95th Dist.; REP. HAMPTON, 16th Dist. REP. GRESKO, 121st Dist.; REP. ROSE, 118th Dist. REP. TERCYAK, 26th Dist.; REP. STEINBERG, 136th Dist. REP. BUTLER, 72nd Dist.

HB6423 AN ACT EXTENDING THE HOURS OF ELECTION DAY REGISTRATION

Statement of Purpose: To permit applicants in line for election day registration prior to eight o'clock p.m. to be admitted as electors and cast a vote in an election.

The League of Women Voters is dedicated to improving the electoral process and maximizing voter participation. The number of voters wishing to use election day registration can be highly unpredictable, opening the opportunity for long lines and many citizens denied the opportunity to register and vote. The League supports HB6423, which allows individuals in line before 8:00 to register and vote.

Co-Sponsors: REP. LESSER, 100th Dist.

HB6576 AA PERMITTING ADDITIONAL POLLING PLACES AT INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION DURING ANTICIPATED HIGH-TURNOUT ELECTIONS

Statement of Purpose: To require (1) any municipality containing an institution of higher education to establish a separate voting district at such institution if such institution reports certain data to the United States Department of Education for the year prior to the election, and (2) the registrars of voters or the legislative body of such municipality, as the case may be, to provide a suitable polling place at such institution for which a separate voting district is established.

The League of Women Voters supports contingency plans for elections and maximizing voter participation. This bill would allow institutions to voluntarily expand the number of polling places to reduce wait times and therefore increase access and voter participation. The League supports HB6576.

Co-sponsors: REP. HADDAD, 54th Dist.; SEN. FLEXER, 29th Dist. REP. ELLIOTT, 88th Dist.

Water Resources and Solid Waste – Carolyn Bayne, Specialist

SB 753: AN ACT CONCERNING THE VIABILITY OF EXPANDING THE BOTTLED WATER INDUSTRY IN CONNECTICUT.

A Joint Favorable Substitute (3/10/17) requires the DEEP commissioner to consider the withdrawal of water from state rivers and streams for commercial bottled water operations when developing stream flow

regulations. It also specifically requires the Water Planning Council (WPC) to consider commercial bottled water operations when developing the state water plan, which is expected to be made public by July 1, 2017. Expanding the bottled water industry in CT is a controversial issue for numerous reasons, the least of which is that large bottlers are entitled to discounts on water and sewer rates that other consumers are not. This bill is on the Senate calendar.

SB 506: AN ACT CONCERNING WATER USAGE AND CONSERVATION DURING DROUGHT CONDITIONS.

The goal of this bill is to ensure adequate water supplies by requiring municipalities to put on their websites what actions need to occur if watershed levels fall below various capacities (50%, 35%, 20%). Currently, the DPH may implement mandatory water restrictions only after the Governor has declared a water supply emergency; this bill would encourage conservation prior to such emergency. SB 506 has been reported out of LCO (4/4/17).

HB 6313: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A TAX ON SINGLE-USE PLASTIC AND PAPER BAGS.

In order to encourage greater use of reusable bags, this bill would establish a nominal tax (not less than five cents) for single-use carry out plastic and paper, effective 10/1/17. The original bill proposed that funds collected be directed to DEEP and used for environmental conservation purposes, but a change now directs them to the general fund as a funding mechanism for the state's parks. This change has garnered support, as recent state budgets have cut funding for state parks.

This bill, in one form or another, has come up in the last few sessions. Public testimony has largely been supportive, with some arguing that it is a regressive tax that hurts the poor. HB 6313 has been referred from the House to the Finance Committee.

HB 5618: AN ACT CONCERNING AN INCREASE IN THE HANDLING FEE FOR BOTTLE REDEMPTION CENTERS

This bill is intended to promote recycling and the continued employment of workers in the bottle redemption industry. The costs of recycling bottles have increased since the bottle bill was passed more than 30 years ago, yet the handling fee has not. Many redemption centers have closed, and others struggle to remain in business. In states with higher deposits, consumers return a higher percentage of containers. Another bill proposed this session, HB 5877, would have expanded the bottle bill to include sports drinks, juices and teas, but never made it out of the Environment Committee. HB 5618 is on the House calendar.

RAISED SB 996: AN ACT ESTABLISHING A BOTTLE RECYCLING FEE IN LIEU OF A REFUNDABLE DEPOSIT

This bill would replace the \$0.05 deposit with a non-refundable \$0.04 bottle tax, and bottle redemption centers would be replaced by curbside pick-up. Written testimony suggests that this bill is highly unpopular, with many arguing that the bottle bill should be updated (as in HB 5618) and not eliminated. SB 996 is on the Senate calendar.

HB 6329: AN ACT CONCERNING HYDRAULIC FRACTURING WASTE IN CONNECTICUT

This bill will permanently prohibit the storage, disposal, handling and use of hydraulic fracturing waste in Connecticut. It supersedes the moratorium passed in 2014, and written testimony indicates it has wide support. HB 6329 is on the House calendar.

Gun Laws – Susan Iseman, Specialist

We supplied comments/testimony on HB6200 for the 3/15/17 public hearing. This bill would have allowed law enforcement to request to see the permit of individuals openly carrying a gun in CT, without the reasonable suspicion of a crime. The bill did not pass out of the Judiciary Committee.

Mental Health - Caroline M. Adkins, Specialist

There were five bills relating to mental health before the Legislature this session. In addition, two other bills were broadly deemed to be related. One included the Governor's Budget Recommendations for Public Health Programs. This was quite contested and a motion failed to win support. Another general bill aimed to repeal the Affordable Care Act (ACA). No action was taken on this bill.

Action on two other bills was stalled with their referral to other committees: (1) Mandate for Insurance Coverage for Certified Peer Counselors moved from the Insurance Committee to the Public Health Committee. This bill was strongly opposed by the Insurance Committee as it would introduce another mandate for coverage that the Insurance companies would not pick up (due to provisions in the ACA) but the state would have to then defray the costs. (2) A bill about the Coordination of Mental Health Services with parental notification about available services for children were moved from the Public Health Committee to the Committee on Children.

One bill related to establishing a Task Force Regarding the Impending Shortages in the Psychiatry Workforce received a favorable response. It is waiting to be placed on the House calendar for a vote. Two other bills, very general in nature, appear to be stalled with no public testimony or other information available since January.

At this time, specific advocacy efforts by the League would not appear to be helpful with respect to action on these bills.

Reproductive Choice– Birgitta Longnecker, Specialist

PRO-CHOICE BILLS

- 1) SB 586 AA expanding mandated health benefits for women, children and adolescents, and requiring that the commissioner of social services amend the state Medicaid plan to provide expanded contraception benefits. Even though the U. S. Congress did not act on repealing the ACA, it is still a major threat and could mean the end of birth control coverage, if this bill is defeated.
- 2) SB 494 AA concerning health insurance cost-sharing requirements for prescription contraception.
- 3) HB 6175 AA creating a task force to ensure continued access to affordable and comprehensive health care coverage.
- 4) HB6492 AA confirming a woman's right to choose.

ANTI-CHOICE BILLS

- 1) SB 324, SB 321, SB 315, HB 5566 All related to parental notification.
- 2) SB 330 AA requiring an ultrasound before an abortion.

School Finance - Martha Banks, Specialist

Connecticut's fiscal problems are having a dramatic impact on education funding.

- **Communities are going to see significant changes in Educational Cost Sharing (ECS) Grants and in Special Education Excess Cost funding.**
 - Under Malloy's proposed budget, well over 100 communities will experience significant, if not total reductions, in ECS funding. These funds are being shifted over to less affluent communities. The communities receiving increased funding, however, do not need to spend the money on improving education.
 - The Special Education Excess Cost Funding pool will be increased (some money is being shifted from ECS into excess cost), but communities will no longer have equal access to these funds. Previously towns could apply to the state for excess cost grant money when the cost of educating a special education student exceeded 4.5 times the district's average per pupil spending in the prior year. The pool of money was distributed on pro rata basis among the towns applying for the grant. Under Malloy's proposal, a town's relative wealth will be used as a litmus test to determine how much funding a town will receive for what are mandated expenditures. The most affluent communities will receive almost no excess cost funding. The least affluent may receive up to 54% reimbursement for expenditures.
- **Communities will be asked to fund one third of the contributions that are required to fund teacher pensions.**
 - Previously the state was responsible for 100 % of this funding.
 - **When these pension bills are factored in, all but 14 towns, even those towns receiving more ECS and Excess Cost funding in 2018 vs. 2017, will experience net reductions overall.** Some examples: Though Bridgeport receives \$8.3 more in educational funds, it will have a net loss of \$4.6 million. Hartford receives \$12.2 more in funding, but has a net loss of \$4.8 million. New Haven's \$5.3 million reduction in educational funding combined with the pension contribution results in a net reduction of \$20.3 million. **There are 14 towns that experience a net increase in funds under Malloy's proposal.** The three largest winners are Waterbury, which has a net increase of \$25.8 million, New Britain, which has a net increase of \$12.7 million and Hamden, which has a \$8.3 million net increase.
- **School construction reimbursement levels will be decreased and less money will be set aside to fund new construction.**
 - The state currently reimburses poorer communities at a rate of 80% for school construction projects. The proposed rate for next year is 70%.
 - The more affluent communities are reimbursed at 20% and their reimbursement would decrease to 10%
 - Reimbursement rates for school districts that have 2500 or fewer students will be decreased in the out years—with the goal of incentivizing regionalization.

Other areas to be watched:

- The results of Connecticut's appeal of the Judge Moukawsher's decision
- Potential regionalization of some special education services

Health Care - Naomi Schiff Myers, Specialist

HB 6175: AAC A Strategic Plan to Ensure Continued Access to Affordable and Comprehensive Health Care Coverage. This bill has not moved out of the Insurance and Real Estate Committee. Its movement is probably contingent on the passage of federal legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act which luckily has not happened.

HB 7125: AAC A Study of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. This bill was voted on favorably by the Insurance and Real Estate Committee.

This bill requires the Department of Insurance (DOI) Commissioner to conduct a study on the impact of any changes to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. The DOI does not employ research staff and would have to hire one actuary and one analyst as consultants. The estimated one-time cost for having the consultants complete the study is up to \$173,000 in FY 18 depending on what changes are made to the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. I don't think our position allows us to support this bill.

Quality Education – Gloria Bent, Specialist

SB000954 An Act Concerning the Development of a Plan for Universal Preschool has passed out of committee. Access to quality preschool would help to ensure Connecticut students begin their school experience with the foundations necessary for acquiring literacy skills.

The following proposed bills still await action by the committee, but would provide positive and essential steps in moving toward quality education for all students. The sheer number of submissions of AAC Student Learning, Achievement and Opportunities suggests the renditions will be combined and come forward in some form. When that happens, I believe we want to submit testimony in support of the bill.

SB137 AN ACT CONCERNING EDUCATION EQUITY.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened: That title 10 of the general statutes be amended to provide access to quality education by (1) expanding the birth-to-three program, established under section 17a-248b of the general statutes, (2) providing for universal preschool, (3) restoring funding for the child care subsidy program, established pursuant to section 17b-749 of the general statutes, and requiring that employees of child care programs receiving funding from such child care subsidy program be paid at least fifteen dollars an hour, (4) increasing minority teacher recruitment and hiring to close the student-teacher diversity gap, (5) expanding the use of community schools, as described in section 10-74i of the general statutes, (6) increasing recreational opportunities, (7) limiting classroom size in alliance districts, as defined in section 10-262u of the general statutes, (8) providing paid mentorship and tutoring opportunities, (9) increasing state funding for special education and English language learners, (10) honoring the education cost-sharing formula, (11) creating alternate disciplinary programs, (12) protecting immigrant students and their families, (13) limiting the role of testing, and (14) establishing and funding a mentorship program for student teachers.

AAC Student Learning, Achievement and Opportunities

PSB 45, 712, 716, PHB 6109, 6115, 6530, 6783, 6790, 6791, 6802, 6833, 6849

That title 10 of the general statutes be amended to (1) expand access to high quality preschool, (2) establish full day kindergarten opportunities, (3) establish tutoring opportunities and other strategies to ensure literacy and numeracy proficiency by the end of grade three, (4) require the Department of Education to develop and disseminate school climate surveys for use by public schools, and (5) expand locally-developed school transformation models to reform low-performing schools, including, but not limited to, community schools.