

The University of Maine

DigitalCommons@UMaine

Maine Women's Publications - All

Publications

4-1-1969

The Maine Voter vol. XVI, no. 6 (April 1969)

Maine League of Women Voters Staff

Maine League of Women Voters

Follow this and additional works at: https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/maine_women_pubs_all



Part of the [Women's History Commons](#)

Repository Citation

Staff, Maine League of Women Voters, "The Maine Voter vol. XVI, no. 6 (April 1969)" (1969). *Maine Women's Publications - All*. 556.

https://digitalcommons.library.umaine.edu/maine_women_pubs_all/556

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@UMaine. It has been accepted for inclusion in Maine Women's Publications - All by an authorized administrator of DigitalCommons@UMaine. For more information, please contact um.library.technical.services@maine.edu.



The MAINE VOTER

Published by The League of Women Voters of Maine

VOLUME XVI

APRIL, 1969

Number 6

41st STATE CONVENTION

May 13 and 14

Holiday Inn, Portland

(Portland-Westbrook Turnpike Exit)

Tuesday, May 13

- 9:00 Registration and Coffee
- 10:00 First Business Session
- 12:30 Luncheon
Report from National Council by delegates
Mrs. George Birkett and Mrs. Robert R. Masterton
- 2:30 Second Business Session
- 6:30 Banquet—50th Anniversary Theme
Speaker: Mrs. William M. Christopherson of the
National Board
Dramatic Production—The League's own talent!

Wednesday, May 14

- 8:00 Local President's Breakfast
- 9:30 Third Business Session
- 12:30 Luncheon
Report on Massachusetts School of International
Relations—Mrs. Angelo Lacognata
- 2:00 Post Convention state Board meeting.

NATIONAL VISITOR TO HIGHLIGHT CONVENTION

Word has just been received that Mrs. William M. Christopherson, First Vice President of the LWV of U. S. and Vice Chairman of the 50th Anniversary Campaign will attend the Maine Convention! A resident of Louisville, Kentucky, Mrs. Christopherson has served on the national Board since 1964. She will be available for consultation and advice, and will address the Banquet on the 50th Anniversary.

The official business of the biennial state Convention is to authorize a Program for action, elect officers and directors, and adopt a budget. Convention events and business sessions are open to all members of the Maine League of Women Voters, but voting privileges are held only by the delegates chosen by local Leagues, local presidents (or their alternates), and members of the state Board.

ELECTORAL COLLEGE SPOTLIGHT ON MAINE

The state of Maine has recently made Electoral College news right under our noses! Maine is in the limelight as the first state to adopt the so-called district plan of electoral reform (L.D. 74—Redrafted as L.D. 887). The original bill, introduced by Representative Glenn Starbird, divided the state into four Presidential Elector Districts, based on groupings of state Senatorial districts. An Elector would be "chosen" from each district, under the present procedure at party conventions, and would cast his electoral vote to reflect the popular vote in his district.

The bill was redrafted when, at a State Government Committee hearing, it was pointed out that it would be possible for a presidential candidate to win three out of the four districts and still **not** be the state-wide winner. The later draft provided that one Elector be "chosen" from each Congressional district, and that two be "chosen" at-large, as are senators.

(Continued on page 4)

HOUSING IN MAINE

The most casual observer cannot travel far in Maine without being aware that there is a serious housing problem in the state. The census figures cited in the State Planning Office report, **Housing in Maine**, published in December 1968, show that housing conditions in Maine are worse than in the United States as a whole. It further states that Maine's housing problem is state-wide since it is serious in every county and in both urban and rural areas. The report indicates that of 364,617 housing units in Maine only 223,237 or 61.2% can be classified as sound with all plumbing facilities. The remaining 141,380 are sub-standard. 74% of housing in the United States meets the Census criteria of "adequate," a significantly higher percentage than Maine's 61.2%. The percentages of adequate housing in Maine range from Cumberland County's 72.7% to Washington County's 41.5%. Urban housing, though hardly satisfactory, is in better condition than rural. 74.5% of urban housing is sound whereas only 50.4% of rural housing met adequate standards of decency. In other words, one of every two rural dwelling units in Maine is sub-standard. To analyze the figures further, 60,680 housing units in Maine are listed as deteriorating and 19,681 are considered dilapidated. In other words, 80,000 units need to be substantially repaired or entirely rebuilt.

The overall need and especially the almost 20,000 dilapidated units and a small number to accommodate normal population growth should be compared with the present rate of home construction in the state. The number of residential housing units (public and private) authorized over the last few years is:

1962	1,198
1963	1,247
1964	1,036
1965	1,197
1966	1,363
Total	6,041

Add to this picture the fact that in 1960 there were 6,180 trailers in the state. In the last eight years, the number of mobile homes coming into Maine has risen from 1,078 in 1961 to 2,152 in 1968. In the last four years, 7,537 trailers entered the state.

These figures are an indication that the present rate of construction activity is not sufficient to meet the need. Certainly, the housing needs of the poor and the elderly are not being met by the present construction rate, especially when one considers that new housing is obviously not purchased by those who have just moved out of dilapidated dwellings. But this is not just a problem of the poor and the aged. There is evidence of an unmet demand for new housing among all income groups. Housing is a social problem, but it is also related to the economic development of the state since suitable housing at all economic levels often influence decisions of persons and industries considering moving into the state.

The housing situation is very complex and there do not seem to be any obvious or easy answers. Some of the related problems are:

- lack of easy access to information
- lack of technical know-how
- shortage of money within the state
- lack of construction firms whose capital base is sufficient to underwrite large housing projects
- unrealistic local zoning laws and planning boards
- building and housing codes too restrictive for low and middle income housing
- high building costs, both material and labor
- unnecessarily expensive methods of building
- uncertainty about industrial and population growth
- choice of site and land development
- long-range plans for highway placement.

Involved in the problems of housing are many groups such as builders, bankers, federal, state and municipal officers and boards, realtors and, of course, the buyers, the people who will be living in the houses. In the final analysis, the problem of housing is essentially a concern for people.

The comprehensive Housing and Urban Development Act of 1968 represents a series of programs designed to meet the national housing problem. However, these programs are useless without substantial effort at the state level to put them into action. At present there are less than twenty local housing authorities or non-profit housing project sponsors in Maine and of these, only half have active programs. The need of communities and private organizations for information and technical assistance in housing construction is paramount. Few municipalities or private groups have the knowledge or the manpower to solve the complicated problems contained in the whole housing picture.

To begin to meet the housing needs of Maine, there are before the 104th Legislature several bills related to housing. **L.D. 1219, An Act to Create a State Housing Authority**, would establish a statewide vehicle to implement existing and encourage new private, non-profit corporation, state and federal government programs. The bill would amend the existing law which now permits creation of municipal housing authorities. The State Housing Authority would have the responsibilities and powers held by municipal authorities. It would operate over the entire state, but in any area which already has a municipal authority, only with the consent of that authority. The State Authority would assist in planning, coordinating and carrying out all existing programs that will encourage further participation by private enterprise and individual effort. This would be achieved by offering comprehensive services to municipal officers, housing sponsors and administrators, potential and actual occupants of residences, architects, contractors, and financiers. The services would in-

(Continued on page 3)

HOUSING IN MAINE

(Continued from page 2)

clude consultation about types of housing sponsorship, types of financing, style of design and land use, construction techniques and complimentary facilities and services such as social, medical, recreational and educational ones. The Maine Housing Authority would have five commissioners, appointed by the Governor, who would be responsible for all policies and operations.

In order for the State Authority to have the power to acquire from banks, life insurance companies, savings and loan associations and other financial institutions first mortgage loans and to guarantee repayment of loans secured by home mortgages, a constitutional amendment is necessary. This is L.D. 1315, **A Resolve, Proposing an Amendment to the Constitution Pledging Credit of the State for Guaranteeing Portions of Certain Home Mortgages and Housing Development.** If L.D. 1219 and L.D. 1315 become law, it would greatly increase private and state money available for housing construction. By placing more money in the home mortgage market and by guaranteeing to cover that part of the mortgage normally called down-payment, it would allow those persons to become home owners who could normally manage monthly payments but who are unable to raise the capital for closing costs and down-payment.

Most importantly, if these two bills are enacted into law, the state would have for the first time a housing information center which could give technical and financial assistance where needed. Direct action could be taken, with permission of the municipality, in areas which do not have the resources to operate alone.

The shortage of money within the state has been mentioned. In order to make Maine housing a more attractive investment, the present foreclosure laws must be changed. L.D. 590, **An Act Relating to Power of Sale Mortgages** and L.D. 736, **An Act Relating to Period of Real Estate Mortgage Foreclosure** would do just this. The present law requires a twelve month period of redemption on foreclosed mortgages and is a great obstacle to the housing market. This stipulation keeps banks from loaning to so-called "marginal risk" clients, who are the people most in need of improved shelter. Large out-of-state financial institutions and insurance firms will not invest their funds in Maine under the present circumstances. L.D. 736 suggests a three month redemption period (though this may be amended to six months) and if passed, this law should provide a greater opportunity for improved housing for Maine people.

The League has no position on these bills but many local leagues have been studying the housing situation in their own communities and have already reached agreement on the fact that implementation of equality of opportunity for access to housing depends not only on non-discrimination practices but also on the availability of an adequate supply of housing for low and moderate income families.

Mrs. Thomas P. Riley
Human Resources Chairman

LEAGUE SUPPORTS HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION

At a hearing before the State Government Committee on April 9th, Mrs. Thomas P. Riley, Human Resources Chairman, spoke for the League in favor of establishing a Human Rights Commission. Enthusiastic approval had been received from Mrs. Herman W. Lewis, national Human Resources Chairman, in response to our request for authority to act in the state Legislature under a national League position.

Two very similar bills were heard, L.D. 1280 introduced by Senator Peter Mills and L.D. 1384 introduced by Representative Patrick N. McTeague. Both sponsors agreed that the differences between the bills were negligible and that a recommendation for passage of either bill would please them both.

In her testimony, Mrs. Riley reviewed the League position on equality of opportunity as it has developed over the past five years. "This position is derived by League members from an intensive study of the facts about poverty and discrimination. . . We are convinced that the proposed legislation would provide machinery to prevent discrimination in employment practices and housing opportunities for all the citizens of Maine."

"Although Maine laws now make it a crime to discriminate on the grounds of race or religion in employment practices or rental housing, the League feels that the enforcement of these statutes would be enhanced by passage of the proposed legislation. We believe that administrative procedures and responsibilities should be clearly defined and widely publicized, that mediation and legal redress should be readily available and that the process should ensure every possible protection for both the complainant and the persons or institutions against whom complaints are lodged."

Approximately 40 persons, blacks and Indians among them, attended the hearing and several gave testimony of discriminatory practices which had affected their lives in one way or another here in the state of Maine.

THE MAINE VOTER

VOL. XVI NUMBER 6

Published six times a year in July, October, November, January, March and April by the *League of Women Voters of Maine.*

Second class postage paid at Bangor, Maine 04401

Editor: Mrs. Charles D. McEvoy, Jr., 51 Highland St., Bangor 04401

President: Mrs. Stanley L. Freeman, Jr., 13 Glenwood St., Orono 04473

Subscription price 50¢ per year as part of membership dues.

from the
President's Desk

The role of the League as a watchdog has certainly been well illustrated in the flurry of activity over the Liberty Amendment Resolution recently introduced in the Maine Legislature. (See your March MAINE VOTER for an explanation of the Amendment which would, among other things, repeal the federal income tax!) Our flyer, "**Legislators Beware—the Liberty Amendment is Here,**" was distributed to all Legislators on the next legislative day following the introduction of the amendment in the House. Newspapers, radio and TV picked it up. The response was so quick that an Orono League member who knew of our trip to Augusta with the flyers said, "I didn't think you'd had time to get to Augusta when I heard the League's stand on the radio." The League did seem to be the only group, except for the proponents, who knew or cared about the Resolution. It was a great opportunity to throw light on a measure that might have slipped through unnoticed. Calling attention to it may have been all the action needed.

However, not sure that our initial action was enough, we plan to follow through with testimony at the public hearing before the State Government Committee on L.D. 1428—the Liberty Amendment Resolution—is heard. State House pundits say the Resolution has little possibility of serious consideration by the Legislature, but we don't dare take a chance.

After the initial publicity, I did get a phone call from a proponent of the Amendment who questioned me about the League's opposition and who assumed that anyone opposed must be either a Socialist or a Communist. As we talked I realized that there are people who sincerely believe that government concern for the welfare of the people as exemplified in government activities undertaken under the general welfare clause of the Constitution is part of a long-standing Communist conspiracy. And if you believe, as I do, that the general welfare clause has provided the very flexibility needed to keep democracy strong, then there's no hope of the proponents and opponents of the Liberty Amendment convincing one another! However, there's a large middle group that hasn't thought about it at all. Our job is to inform them.

Madeleine Freeman

APPOINTED TO TASK FORCE

The League's concern for Maine's environmental resources was recognized by Governor Curtis when he recently appointed Mrs. Stanley L. Freeman, Jr., to represent the League of Women Voters of Maine on the Task Force on the Maine Environment. The purpose of the Task Force is to develop a comprehensive plan for the orderly development of the Maine environment and suggest legislation for its implementation.

AIR POLLUTION BILL HEARD

Confusion reigned at the Air Pollution hearing before the Natural Resources Committee on April 17th. First to testify was Dr. Donaldson Koons, Chairman of the Water and Air Environmental Improvement Commission, who asked that L.D. 1290 be withdrawn and that the legislation which appears in the University of Maine "**Air Resources of Maine—a preliminary study**" be substituted in its place. In spite of the insistence of the chairman that the hearing was on L.D. 1290 as printed, witnesses proceeded to offer testimony on both versions of proposed air pollution control legislation, the bill as printed being somewhat less stringent.

Mrs. John Dimond spoke for the League, expressing support for regulation of air pollution in this state. "The provisions that the WAEIC may establish air quality regions, adopt reasonable ambient air quality standards, set emission levels within regions, provide for licenses, or for variances when absolutely necessary, and that it will be the agency for control and enforcement, are sound. Adequate safeguards in the form of hearings and appeals are in the law."

"**Air Resources of Maine**, the study done by a research team from the University of Maine headed by Doctors Douglass and Sproul, has shown that Maine does have types of pollution similar to those existing in most areas of the U. S. Sulfur oxides from fuel combustion, particulate matter, hydrogen sulfides, methyl mercaptan, and hydrocarbons from automobiles contribute to impure air. Legislation passed this year must provide power to regulate our known pollutants. And most important, legislation passed now must provide the state with ability and power to regulate sources of pollution which will come soon if industrial expansion such as oil refineries or aluminum smelting plants become a reality."

ELECTORAL COLLEGE SPOTLIGHT ON MAINE

(Continued from page 1)

The LWV of the U. S. is watching events here with great interest. Mrs. Robert R. Masterton, State Government Chairman, has been asked to report on the legislation at National Council meeting in Washington.

The bill was reported out of committee unanimously "ought to pass", and sailed through both houses with scarcely a word of debate! The Governor refused to sign the bill since he favors abolition of the Electoral College. However, he did not veto it, and the bill became law, along with another related bill to pledge Electors to vote for the candidate of the party they represent.