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Maine League of Women Voters Staff

Maine League of Women Voters

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The MAINE VOTER

Published by The League of Women Voters of Maine
P. O. Box 151, Orono, Maine 04473

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MARCH, 1971

Number 5

PROPOSED STATE PROGRAM

1971-1973

After careful consideration of program items submitted by local Leagues, the State Board recommends the following program:

1. Evaluation of structure and functions of state government with continued study and support of measures to improve the Maine Constitution.
2. Support of the principle of a state income tax, both personal and corporate and further study of the tax structure as it pertains to Maine.
3. Study and support of state policies and procedures which promote long-range planning for conservation and development of environmental resources—air, water and land.
4. An evaluation of mental health services in Maine.

No League suggested dropping any of the present program items. The general consensus seemed to be that we continue our current support of governmental reform, without expanding study. The legislature may pass on legislative reform proposals supported by the League and retaining this program item will allow the possibility of further study of the Constitution.

The added words under our income tax item would permit us to be flexible and allow study of revenue-sharing proposals as part of the state tax picture. The fate of the state corporate and personal income tax is unknown and the Maine League would continue our support until the income tax law is secured.

The environmental resources item would remain the same. League members at Convention could determine the direction of future studies under the current wording. For example, solid waste disposal or other environmental problems could be examined.

An evaluation of mental health services in Maine is proposed because of interest expressed by several Leagues. A study of services offered by state institutions and Community Mental Health programs, as well as those educational programs now available, could be undertaken. The League might be of service in correlating material and promoting an objective point of view as we look toward aspects of the problem which will require legislation.

Delegates to Convention will make the final decisions on state program for the next two years. The state Board may make changes in the proposed program on the basis of recommendations received at least three weeks before the Convention opens.

SECOND CALL TO CONVENTION

May 18-19

Holiday Inn, Auburn

Mrs. David Wheeler, Chairman

Each League is entitled to one delegate for the first 15 members and an additional delegate for each additional 5 members. Local League presidents, state Board members, and delegates will vote on program, budget and by-laws. Every League should be fully represented—start planning for a full slate from your League.

GIANT STEP BACKWARD?

On February 18 Scott Lamb of Ellsworth presented a petition listing some 37,000 signatures to the Secretary of State asking for the repeal of Maine's income tax. The legislature probably will not repeal the tax which means the voters of Maine will decide its fate in referendum.

The petition for repeal has had a decided effect on the 105th Legislature. State representatives are being very conservative in their spending. Legislative housekeeping reforms are under consideration in order to cut expenses. Legislators are going through financial gymnastics to avoid increasing the income tax rates before it is put to the voters.

Some increases in funding are necessary to meet the needs of state government in the next biennium. Alternatives for coping with the dilemma posed by the repeal petition are few. Those being considered are: (1) an increase in the sales tax [7% would generate about \$76,000,000]; (2) substantial hikes in the "sin" taxes on cigarettes, liquor and beer; (3) the possibility of new taxes, such as a "head" tax or wildlands tax; (4) the removal of various exemptions from present taxes.

Even with these alternatives, meeting budgetary needs will be difficult. Representative Frank Drigotas, D., of Auburn, is presenting a bill which intends to sweeten the bitter taste of the income tax by increasing exemptions (to \$2,000 per person) for the benefit primarily of the average-income worker and the elderly. If the bill passes, income tax revenues will be cut by about \$10,000,000—a loss which will have to be made up from other sources.

Once again it appears that our state economy must take a step backward as a result of the Repeal Binge; and the Big Headache which inevitably follows must be suffered mostly by the poor, the low-wage worker, heads of large families, the aged, property-tax payers, the infirm and disabled, students, and all others who would be most affected by increased sales taxes and reduced governmental services. Is this what 37,000 Maine citizens really want from the Repeal Petition?

Proposed State Budget For 1971-72

EXPENDITURES

	1970	1971
General Administration		
President's Expenses	\$ 50	\$ 50
Operating Costs		
Secretarial	350	300
Supplies, Printing, Repairs	250	290
Postage	150	200
Telephone	200	250
Audit	35	35
Bank Charges	10	10
Office expenses (rent, lights)	745	0
Telephone (installation, rental)		150
Board Expenses		
Meetings	350	300
Training	0	0
Administrative Committees		
Public Relations	25	20
Budget and Nominating	60	25
Delegates, Travel, Affiliations		
State Convention or Council	200	200
National Convention or Council	450	375
Regional Meetings	0	0
Women's Legislative Council	10	0
Natural Resources Council	25	25
Local Presidents' Council	0	10
Services to Local Leagues		
Organization, New Leagues	175	190
Membership—old Leagues, MALS	75	90
Workshops	50	30
Finance Committee	30	25
Program and Activities		
Publications		
VOTER, including postage	600	395
National material for Board	165	180
National material for MALS	100	150
National material for promotion	0	25
State material for promotion	0	25
Program		
State Committees	75	80
National Committees	25	25
Legislative Action	100	45
Community Services		
Voters Service	200	150
Special Projects (State Facts and Issues)*	(552)	300
National Pledge	2,100	1,900
	\$6,605	\$5,850

INCOME

Local League Support		
Augusta	\$ 250	0
Bangor	450	500
Brunswick	560	625
Houlton	50	100
Kittery-York	133	0
Lewiston	450	475
Mt. Desert	325	350
Orono	700	700
Portland	1,300	1,400
Rockland	392	0
South Portland	400	450
Members-at-Large	250	375
Contributions		
MAL	190	150
Finance Drive	0	200
Other	270	50
Interest on Savings	25	25
Unexpended balance from previous year	0	0
State 50th Anniversary Funds (office expenses)	0	0
Election Night Reporting	860	0
Subscriptions	0	150
Special Projects* (not included in totals)	(552)	300
	\$6,565	\$5,850

The Budget Committee has one good thing to say about the proposed budget—it balances. You will note a reduction under most categories, with the state Finance Chairman charged with the heavy responsibility of looking elsewhere for money. State finance drives, including appeals for tax-deductible monies for special educational projects, may be our salvation.

We are reluctantly giving up the state League office. Even though the office is needed for our state-wide League efforts, we do not have the funds to continue. The 50th Anniversary campaign was to return to the state League a bonus of \$5 per member, or about \$3,200, which was to be used in part to pay for office expenses. Only \$1 per member was received last year and now, with our reserves exhausted, we cannot continue this added expense.

Local League support has been carefully determined, trying to equalize pledges based on membership. We encourage members to come to State Convention in May with positive ideas for easing our financial strains.

State Budget Committee: Mrs. Alan Russell, chairman; Mrs. Francis Duffy, Mrs. Betsy Merriam, Mrs. Raymond Krofta, Mrs. John O'Toole, Mrs. Louis Farley, Mrs. Sue Walker, Mrs. Edward Snyder, Mrs. Don Ziegenbein, Mrs. Lowell Zabel, ex officio.

Consensus On Legislative Staffing

At its February meeting, State Board approved a statement of position based on League consensus on legislative staffing. The League of Women Voters of Maine will support

- Additional secretarial help for legislators during the session and if needed during the interim
- Additional staff for the Legislative Finance Office for budget-review and management analysis.
- More effective use by the legislature of the State Auditor's office in the overseeing of state expenditures
- Additional staff in the Legislative Research Office for research
- Non-partisan research staff where needed by a reduced number of standing legislative committees.
- A strengthened Legislative Reference service
- Expansion of the college and professional intern program, especially to provide needed research and legislative reference services.

The position is closely related to League interest in a legislature reduced in size and meeting in annual sessions to perform its function more efficiently and effectively. Shortly after the position was announced, the League supported L.D. 567 at a public hearing before the State Government committee. The bill, introduced by Rep. Patrick McTeague of Brunswick, would provide for staffing of joint standing committees, the Law Library, and the Legislative Research Office with qualified graduate and undergraduate students on an intern basis. \$50,000 will fund the program if it is approved by the 105th Legislature.

Voters Service Publications

Coming off the press:

How a Bill Becomes a Law in Maine (enlarged and copyrighted)

This is Your Legislature 1971

Voter's Manual revision sheets 1971

Northern Maine Leagues should note the great "Vistas for Voters Service," a new publication on Indians from National.

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