

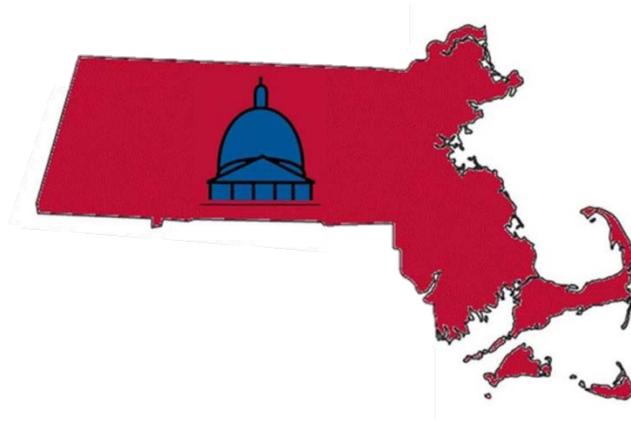


League of Women Voters®

Massachusetts

DAY ON THE HILL 2016

*Why This? Why Now?
What Finally Moves Legislation*



**February 9, 2016
Massachusetts State House, Boston
9:30 am – noon**

"The League of Women Voters is the gold standard in advocacy. I tell my staff when they see the League's name among the supporters of something, pay attention."

--Nancy Pelosi, former Speaker, now minority leader, U.S. House of Representatives

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A Message from Our President

Dear League Members,

Welcome and thank you for attending Day on the Hill! You are proof that democracy is not a spectator sport. Nothing makes a stronger impact on legislators than personal visits from constituents.

The League is excited to explore the question of what drives the legislative agenda and what factors bring bills through the process for a vote, often after they have fallen by the wayside for years. And we hope our panel will help us understand how advocacy groups such as the League can influence this process. We all welcome Senator William Brownsberger, Representative Shawn Dooley, and Pamela Wilmot of Common Cause and thank them for participating on our panel.

This packet contains the information on bills you will need to lobby effectively as you talk with your legislators and their staff members. Similar packets with the bill fact sheets have been emailed to all of the legislators.

I'd like to take this opportunity to also thank the LWVMA Legislative Specialists who make up our Legislative Action Committee. Their hard work over the two-year legislative session makes the League's voice effective on Beacon Hill. They identify key legislation, track it over the entire session, testify at hearings, issue calls for action when action is important, and participate in coalitions. The League salutes them!

Enjoy your day on Beacon Hill and know that the effort you are making is important.

All my best,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jean Cherdack". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name and title.

Jean Cherdack
LWVMA President

Day on the Hill Panel



Sen. William Brownsberger represents the Second Suffolk and Middlesex District including Belmont, Watertown, and parts of Allston, Brighton, Back Bay, and Fenway. He is Senate chair of the Joint Committee on the Judiciary, vice chair of the Senate Committee on Ethics, and a member of the Senate Ways and Means Committee, the Special Senate Committee to Improve Government, the Joint Committee on Election Laws, the Joint Committee on Municipalities and Regional Government, and the Joint Committee on Ways and Means. He is a graduate of Harvard College and Harvard Law School and was an assistant attorney general before going into private law practice. Now a full-time legislator, he was a state representative for five years before being elected to the Senate in January 2012.



Rep. Shawn Dooley serves the Ninth Norfolk District, which includes Medfield, Millis, Norfolk, Plainville, Walpole and Wrentham. He is a full-time legislator and is also an On-Call Firefighter/EMT. In the legislature, he serves on the Joint Committees on Ways and Means, Financial Services, and Revenue, as well as the House Committee on Ways and Means. He has been the town clerk of Norfolk and chair of the Norfolk school committee, and was elected to the House in a special election in January 2014. He graduated from Auburn University and has a master's degree from Anna Maria College. His legislative priorities are to create a stronger economy by combating wasteful spending and lowering taxes, enhance public safety, create more transparency in government, and increase state aid to towns.



Pamela Wilmot is Executive Director of the Massachusetts chapter of Common Cause. She has steered many successful state campaigns for Common Cause including redistricting, campaign finance, ethics, lobbying, open government, and election reforms. She also serves as the organization's national policy expert on electoral reform. She has been executive director of Common Cause Massachusetts since September 2002, as well as from 1989-1993. Prior to Common Cause, she worked for Rhode Island and Mass PIRG, and the Massachusetts and Rhode Island Bottle Bill campaigns, Connecticut Citizens Action Group, and the Wisconsin Citizens Utility Board. She is a graduate of Brown University, Northeastern University School of Law, and Smith College School for Social Work.

Talking Points for Featured Bills

Our Legislative Specialists have each chosen a bill or related group of bills in their area to discuss. These bills are currently active in the legislature. Following this Featured Bills section is a section on other bills LWVMA is supporting. Please focus on the featured bills in your talks with legislators, but if there is another bill you feel strongly about in the “other” section, feel free to bring it up in your conversations. You can find all the bills we support or oppose, testimony on them, and any action we take on our website, www.lwvma.org under the Advocacy tab.

Affordable Housing and Meeting Basic Human Needs—Clare Gordon, Specialist H.1111 - An Act Relative to Housing Production

Lead Sponsor: Rep. Kevin Honan In Joint Committee on Housing

This bill contains measures to increase the production of multi-unit rental housing in the Commonwealth. Market forces have skewed away from producing this type of housing which is most needed by lower and moderate income families, but also by young workers establishing their own households and elders who prefer to reduce homeownership responsibilities. Note that this bill would not add subsidized housing units, which are also needed but funded through the Massachusetts and federal budgets.

- Resistance to density in housing drives up building costs; zoning changes that allow apartment buildings by right are needed across the Commonwealth, not just in the larger cities.
- We cannot afford to subsidize homeless families and individuals without also increasing the supply of affordable rental housing for working people.
- The scarcity of apartments and high rents are retarding the growth in Massachusetts of businesses that employ highly-educated young workers.
- As the number of elderly residents grows, many are seeking smaller dwellings closer to transportation and services, and they would turn over their larger homes to younger families in a natural transition.
- Since this bill would affect every town and city, it is helpful to bring it to the attention of local officials and interested parties, as well as legislators, in order to evaluate where support and opposition are in specific districts.

Child Safety—Palma McLaughlin, Specialist

H.1207/S.834 An Act relative to child-centered family law

Chief Sponsors: Rep. Paul Brodeur and Sen. Anne Gobi In Joint Committee on the Judiciary

LWVMA opposes these bills. These bills would significantly rewrite the Commonwealth’s current child custody law, which allows for an individualized, child-centered approach to child custody, and replace it with a rigid, parent-rights approach to child custody. The bills mandate a one-size-fits all approach to families and remove nearly all judicial discretion. Significantly, the proposed legislation undermines the domestic violence custody presumption law and other protections for survivors of domestic violence and their children. These bills are opposed by major bar associations and domestic violence awareness advocates.

Unlike the current law, these bills:

- focus on the “right to parent” rather than the well-being and best interest of the child
- undermine the domestic violence custody presumption laws and other protections for survivors of domestic violence and their children and require substantial parental cooperation and shared residential responsibility prior to an evidentiary hearing
- dissuade parents from raising legitimate concerns about safety, stability and parenting, based on a presumption that such expressed concerns are from an “unfriendly parent” and call for punitive changes of custody as a consequence, thus shifting the focus from what is in the best interest of the children to punishing parents
- would have a negative impact on low-income parents who are unable to afford attorney representation

Criminal Justice—Colleen Kirby, Specialist

S.71/H.1313 - An Act promoting restorative justice practices

Chief Sponsors: Sen. James Eldridge and Rep. Sean Garballey S. 71 in Senate Ways and Means Committee H. 1313 in Joint Committee on the Judiciary

We support comprehensive criminal justice reform and alternatives to incarceration through the use of a restorative justice program.

- Restorative justice is proven. Since 2000, more than a dozen communities in Massachusetts have partnered with police departments to handle over 600 cases using voluntary restorative justice alternatives.
- Restorative justice brings all parties together to determine how to deal with a wrongdoing that works for those harmed and the community. It reduces recidivism, increases victim satisfaction, and increases adherence to restitution agreements.
- We support establishing an Office of Restorative Justice to collect data and give technical assistance so more communities can implement effective programs. Restorative justice can be used both pre- and post-arraignment to give police and the courts more options to address crime, save the state time and money, and still hold an offender accountable.
- Restorative justice is especially suited for non-violent, young, and first-time offenders. It holds great promise for rehabilitation and giving people support so they don't reoffend.

Criminal Justice—Carolyn Lee, Specialist

H.1620/S.786 - An Act eliminating mandatory minimum sentences related to drug offenses

Chief sponsors: Rep. Benjamin Swan and Sen. Cynthia Creem In Joint Committee on the Judiciary

This bill will eliminate mandatory minimum sentences for minor, non-violent drug offenses. This is both improved justice and a major cost saving for the state.

- Lengthy sentences for minor drug offenses serve no one’s best interest and disproportionately affect people of color.
- Sentences for minor drug offenses are now typically longer than those for violent crimes.
- Long sentences are extremely costly; passage of this bill is estimated to save the state \$90 million annually.
- Over 80% of state citizens have opposed these mandatory sentences in polling.

Elections and Voting—Linda Freedman, Specialist

H.553/S.377 - An Act to establish Election Day Registration

Chief sponsors: Rep. Gloria Fox, Rep. Jennifer Benson, Sen. Cynthia Creem In Joint Committee on Election Laws

The bill will allow registered voters to correct errors on poll books and vote on Election Day without using provisional ballots. New voters can register on Election Day and vote at the proper polling place. They will need proof of residency and ID.

States with Election Day Registration (EDR) have higher voter turnout. The average voter participation in EDR states in 2014 was 12 points above states without EDR. States without EDR averaged a little less than 37% of eligible voters participating in the November 2014 election. Maine leads the nation in voter participation with 58.5% turnout among eligible voters. EDR is popular and the citizens voted to restore EDR in Maine after the governor and legislature overturned it.

Environment—Energy and Resource Conservation—Launa Zimmaro, Specialist

S.1747 - An Act combatting climate change

Chief sponsor: Sen. Michael Barrett In Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

This bill would establish a system of carbon pricing as a means to reduce emissions and spur a transition to clean, renewable energy. The bill is based on the results of a Department of Energy Resources study of the impact of carbon fees on Massachusetts residents and businesses.

This bill will establish a fee and rebate system that will reflect the true cost of carbon pollution by adding a low, initial fee on all fossil fuels based on how much carbon dioxide they emit when burned, with the fee increasing incrementally over time. Revenue generated will be returned to people, businesses, and institutions to offset increased charges.

- Most economists agree that the most cost-effective and efficient way to cut carbon pollution is to add a pollution charge to fossil fuel prices
- Establishing a carbon pollution charge gives energy producers and consumers a strong incentive to conserve energy and to transition from fossil fuels to clean, renewable energy sources
- Modeled on the successful program in British Columbia since 2008. British Columbia cut its greenhouse gas emissions substantially compared to the rest of Canada, while experiencing economic growth slightly higher than the rest of the nation
- Helps Massachusetts reach 2020 carbon emissions reduction targets mandated by the Global Warming Solutions Act of 2008
- Serves as a national model for other states

Good Governance—Carolyn Lee, Specialist

H.3858 - An Act to improve public records

Chief sponsors: Rep. Peter Kocot and Sen. Jason Lewis In Senate Ways and Means Committee

This bill could bring Massachusetts in line with 46 other states that mandate the actual availability of public records to citizens who request them, and that records be made available in a timely and affordable fashion. The MassFOIA (Freedom of Information Act) Coalition is strongly supporting this bill

if it is not severely weakened. The bill has passed the House, and is expected to be reported out of the Senate Ways and Means Committee with substantial changes by late January or early February.

We need a strong bill, not just any bill claiming improved transparency that will:

- Require firm timeframes for providing records and promote access to records in electronic form
- Have a straightforward and effective appeals process when a request is denied
- Lower costs for requesters and limit charges for redacting documents to withhold information
- Require attorney's fees be paid by agencies denying requests when access to public records is wrongly denied, creating an incentive for agencies to obey the law

Health Care—Judy Deutsch, Specialist

These three bills related to single-payer health care have all been referred to the Joint Committee on Health Care Financing.

S.579/H.1026 - An Act for improved Medicare for all

Lead Sponsors: Sen. James Eldridge and Rep. Tom Sannicandro

This bill would establish a single-payer health care system, guaranteeing first-class health care to all Massachusetts residents.

- It would eliminate the high costs of private insurance and the high cost of pharmaceuticals and medical equipment when they are not purchased in bulk.
- It would reduce healthcare costs to the State, municipalities, employers and individuals, saving the Commonwealth more than \$10 billion per year.
- It would be funded by a small tax (which will be significantly offset by eliminating health-insurance-premium expenditures) on employers, employees, the self-employed, unearned income (except Social Security and pensions) and Medicare and Medicaid funds.
- Job training would be provided for additional jobs to provide actual health care.

S. 604 /H.1033 - An Act to establish a public health insurance option

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Jason Lewis and Rep. John Scibak

This bill would create a public health insurance option that would compete with private insurance plans — providing consumers more choice and increased competition.

- It will initially be funded through a modest surcharge on insurance reserves that will cover starting costs which will be paid back with the revenues generated by the plan's premiums; it will be self-sustaining within one year.
- It would encourage private insurers to cooperate, share information and reduce costs.

S.647/H. 965, An Act to ensure effective health care cost control

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Dan Wolf and Rep. Jennifer Benson

This bill would require that, for three years, the cost of the present health care system would be compared with a projected "single-payer health care system," and, if the single-payer system is found to be less costly, a "single-payer health care implementation plan" would be submitted to the Legislature for its consideration. It would be a test to see whether a single-payer health care system would provide quality health care while effecting financial savings to the Commonwealth, and a test to see if the legislature would pass such a program if it were shown that it would.

Immigration—Karen Price, Specialist

H.1061 - An Act relative to equal opportunity for high school graduates in the Commonwealth

Chief Sponsor: Rep. Denise Provost In Joint Committee on Higher Education

This bill would allow students who are not citizens and not legal permanent residents to pay in-state tuition and receive state-funded financial assistance at public institutions of higher education if they otherwise qualify.

- Massachusetts has invested in educating these students K-12, but, if qualified to enter college, they must pay out-of-state tuition at state public colleges and universities.
- This bill gives them access to tuition and financial assistance available to their fellow graduates. At UMass Amherst, for Massachusetts residents, full-time undergraduates pay \$14,171 in annual tuition and fees, while out-of-state students pay \$30,504. At a community college such as MassBay, Massachusetts residents pay \$184 per credit while non-residents pay \$390.
- Massachusetts has an opportunity to enable undocumented immigrant youth to become more productive members of society, as many other states have done including California, New York, Connecticut, Florida and Texas.
- To be eligible, a student must have attended a high school in the Commonwealth for three or more years and have graduated from a high school in the Commonwealth or attained the equivalent from an adult basic education program in the Commonwealth. In order to enroll, the student must also comply with several conditions, if applicable, such as registering for selective service, securing a taxpayer ID number, and filing state income tax returns.
- The Massachusetts Taxpayers Foundation has reviewed such bills twice—in 2006 and 2011—and found that such a bill would be revenue positive.

Note: The Senate companion bill, S.654, closely matches this bill but excludes Massachusetts medical and law schools. Another Senate bill, S.666, is similar but excludes financial assistance. LWVMA is supporting the most inclusive bill, H.1061.

Transportation—Lois Levin, Specialist

H.3613 - An Act for a reliable, sustainable Massachusetts Bay Transportation Authority

Chief sponsor: Joint Committee on Transportation In House Ways and Means Committee

This is the omnibus transportation bill created by the Joint Committee on Transportation from several other bills the Committee was studying. Passage of this bill will ensure both the reform and revenue needed to provide a safe, reliable and sustainable transportation service for Commonwealth citizens.

The bill provides that the Governor should have authority and responsibility to properly manage the MBTA as a state agency. It also:

- Maintains fare caps on the MBTA so fares rise no more than 5% on average every two years, as voted in 2013, and keeps in place free and discounted transfers for MBTA riders who are required to change modes
- Maintains MBTA contract assistance that was part of the 2013 legislative framework for the Transportation Finance Act
- Maintains General Fund transfers to the Commonwealth Transportation Fund
- Allows regional transportation authorities to raise own-source revenue without losing state support, thereby investing in improved service, and allows regional transportation authorities to stretch capital investments over multiple years

Women's Issues—Cindy Nock, Specialist

S.2107 – An Act to establish pay equity

Chief sponsors: Rep. Jay Livingstone and Sen. Patricia Jehlen Reported out of Senate Ways and Means Committee; Senate expected to vote in late January

This bill would amend the current Massachusetts Equal Pay Act to permit employees to discuss their salaries with other employees and to require employers, when advertising jobs, to include the minimum salary the job pays and to prohibit paying less than that advertised minimum. It prohibits employers from seeking a salary history during the hiring process without written authorization.

Requiring an advertised minimum salary for a position and prohibiting requesting salary history prevents an employer from offering less than intended for the position if the employer finds that the applicant was making less at a previous job. This bill also clarifies the comparable work standard by stating that the comparability of jobs is to be based solely on comparable skill, effort, responsibility and working conditions, and that compensation includes wages, benefits and other compensation.

Other Bills LWVMA Supports

Child Safety—Palma McLaughlin, Specialist

S.827 – An Act relative to improving training for child advocates to recognize the indicators of domestic violence

Chief Sponsor: Sen. Linda Dorcena Forry In Joint Committee on the Judiciary

This bill seeks to improve protections for victims of domestic violence and their children and improve the Family and Probate Court’s ability to recognize domestic violence, thereby strengthening domestic violence custody presumption laws. It would include a domestic violence screening in all child custody cases referred to a guardian ad litem. It would require a minimum of 24 hours of professional development training and at least eight hours of training on the indicators of domestic violence from an approved domestic violence organization for all guardian ad litem.

Criminal Justice—Colleen Kirby, Specialist

A number of bills to enable comprehensive criminal justice reform may end up in a single omnibus bill or may be passed individually.

S.802/H.1584 - An Act reforming pretrial process

Chief Sponsors: Sen. Ken Donnelly and Rep. Tom Sannicandro In Joint Committee on the Judiciary

One fifth of the incarcerated population is being held before trial. These bills create a Pretrial Services Division to develop a risk assessment tool, provide training in its appropriate use, collect and analyze data, and provide support programs to pretrial individuals without incarcerating them, and keep people from being held solely due to their inability to pay.

S.729 - An Act relative to parole eligibility

Chief Sponsor: Sen. William Brownsberger In Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Increases incentives for incarcerated individuals to take part in programs that reduce recidivism, such as work programs, training programs, or life skills programs, by increasing time off for good behavior and shortening the time before an individual becomes eligible for parole.

S.1255/H.1475 - An Act to reduce recidivism, curb unnecessary spending, and ensure appropriate use of segregation

Chief Sponsors: Sen. James Eldridge and Rep. Elizabeth Malia S.1255 in Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security, H.1475 in Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Limits the use of solitary confinement, keeps the most vulnerable individuals out of segregation and cuts down on disciplinary segregation, currently allowed up to 10 years. Ensures daily oversight by mental health professionals, provides reentry training for those who have been isolated, and constructs a way to earn one’s way out of solitary confinement

Criminal Justice—Carolyn Lee, Specialist

H.1270/S.810 - An Act relative to the expungement of records of persons falsely accused and juveniles

Chief sponsors: Rep. Carolyn Dykema and Sen. James Eldridge In Joint Committee on the Judiciary

Currently, there is no mechanism to expunge the criminal record of someone who, through no fault of their own, is charged with a crime (or “arraigned”) because of a mistake in the criminal process. This bill mandates the solution.

S.2021 - An Act relative to motor vehicle license suspension

Chief sponsors: Rep. Elizabeth Malia and Sen. Harriette Chandler Passed the Senate in September and passed the House in January

Currently, anyone convicted on any drug offense gets a mandatory driver’s license suspension for up to five years, and juveniles may be barred from getting a license until they are 21. This bill repeals that mandate and further mandates the expungement from the RMV records of all data regarding the suspension and the underlying offense.

S.844 - An Act updating the definition of felony larceny

Chief Sponsor: Sen. Pat Jehlen In Joint Committee on the Judiciary

The felony trigger was set in 1987 at \$250, and this bill updates that limit to \$1300, in line with other New England states.

Education—Terry Yoffie, Specialist

S.2062 – An Act relative to healthy youth

Formerly S.2048 Passed the Senate, in House Ways and Means Committee

This bill would provide young people with access to comprehensive, inclusive, age-appropriate and medically-accurate information about their health and combat serious issues like teen dating violence, sexual assault, and sexually-transmitted infections.

Elder Affairs—Pat Costello, Specialist

H.2029 - An Act regarding notification of patient observation status

Chief Sponsors: Rep. James J. O’Day and Sen. Brian A. Joyce In Joint Committee on Public Health

This legislation requires that every hospital provide to each patient that the hospital places in inpatient or observation status oral and written notice of the patient’s status not later than 24 hours after such placement. The written notice must include a statement that observation status may affect the patient’s Medicare, Medicaid or private insurance coverage and must be signed and dated by the patient receiving the notice or the patient’s legal or other authorized representative.

Since this bill was introduced, similar Federal legislation has been passed. The difference is that the federal version allows 36 hours rather than 24 hours for notification from the time of placement.

Elections and Voting—Linda Freedman, Specialist

H. 600 – An Act relative to UOCAVA voting

Chief sponsor: Rep. Angelo Scaccia In Joint Committee on Election Laws

LWVMA opposes this bill. This bill would allow voters overseas to return their ballots by “secure website” as well as by fax or email, as is currently allowed. We do not feel that there is a website secure enough to be used for voting, and the Department of Defense has said it does not advocate for the ballots of military personnel to be returned by fax, email or the internet. LWVMA urges the legislature to reexamine the current law as well and to eliminate the provision to allow ballots to be returned by fax or email. We have no objection to blank ballots being sent to overseas voters by fax or email.

Environment—Energy and Resource Conservation—Launa Zimmaro, Specialist

H.2870 - An Act relative to protecting consumers of gas and electricity from paying for leaked and unaccounted for gas

Chief sponsor: Rep. Lori Ehrlich In Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

This bill provides a process for calculating unaccounted for gas and requires that all “lost and unaccounted for” natural gas be presumed to be lost, and the cost of unaccounted for gas in excess of the maximum allowable amount and all expenses for decreasing such costs are disallowed for ratemaking purposes. Currently, gas companies have little incentive to replace leaky pipes because they are able to pass along the cost of “lost or unaccounted for” gas to consumers.

H. 2871 - An Act relative to gas leak repairs during road projects

Chief sponsor: Rep. Lori Ehrlich In Joint Committee on Telecommunications, Utilities and Energy

This bill will require that all natural gas leaks that are discovered as part of a repair of a public way or repair of underground water, sewer, and electrical lines, be repaired within 12 months, with Grade 1 leaks (most dangerous) being fixed immediately and the schedule of repairs reported to the municipality. Gas leaks are classified as Level 1, Level 2 or Level 3 based on level of threat to public safety. Currently, only Grade 1 and Grade 2 leaks are required to be fixed and no timeline is given to repair Grade 2 leaks.

Environment—Natural Resources—Lynn Wolbarst, Specialist

H.2119 - An Act to prohibit the distribution in commerce of children's products and upholstered furniture containing certain flame retardants, and for other purposes

Chief sponsor: Rep. Marjorie Decker In Joint Committee on Public Safety and Homeland Security

For decades, toxic flame retardants have been used in upholstered furniture and other products to meet a California state standard for product flammability, the de facto standard nationally. These “flame retardants,” which are now linked to cancer, nervous system damage, decreased fertility, and other health problems, have also been shown to be ineffective at stopping fires, and firefighters are speaking out about high rates of cancer from exposure to these toxic chemicals. Alternative ways to make furniture and other products fire resistant without the use of toxic chemicals exist. This bill would ban the sale of products with these chemicals in Massachusetts.

Health Care—Judy Deutsch, Specialist

S.1206/H.1958 - An Act relative to patient safety

Lead Sponsors: Sen. Marc Pacheco and Rep. Denise Garlick In Joint Committee on Public Health

This bill would establish patient/ nurse ratios to ensure there are sufficient nurses to care for patients. It would include the number of patients that may be assigned to different units. It would stipulate that failures to adhere to the legislated ratios be reported to the Attorney General.

S.1114 - An Act to eliminate health disparities in the Commonwealth

Lead Sponsor: Sen. Mike Barrett In Joint Committee on Health Care Financing

This bill would lessen differences in the incidence, prevalence, mortality and burden of diseases and other adverse health conditions in the access to, or receipt of health care, or both, that adversely affect certain racial and ethnic groups and people with disabilities.

- For example, a map provided by Sen. Barrett's office shows that the Dudley Square area has a diabetes rate of 10%, the Mattapan area has a rate of 10% and Arlington has a rate of 3%.
- The determination of the inequities would be done by the Office of Health Equity that would be established by the Executive Office of Health and Human Services.
- The Office of Health Equity would establish goals for the reduction of health disparities and prepare an annual plan for the Commonwealth to eliminate health disparities. It would collaborate with other state agencies to address the social and economic factors that influence health inequity.

Transportation—Lois Levin, Specialist

H.2698/S.1474 - An Act relative to regional transportation ballot initiatives

Chief sponsors: Rep. Chris Walsh and Sen. Benjamin Downing In Joint Committee on Revenue

This bill will enable a municipality or a group of municipalities to raise additional local money for transportation projects via ballot initiatives, giving voters a more direct role in the process and also showing a clearer correlation between funds being raised and the project(s) for which those funds are used. Regional ballot initiatives are regularly used to finance transportation investments in states all across the country.

Women's Issues—Cindy Nock, Specialist

H.1769 - An Act establishing the Massachusetts pregnant workers fairness act

Chief sponsors: Reps. Ellen Story and Joan Lovely In House Ways and Means Committee

In spite of the passage of the Equal Rights Act in Massachusetts in 1976, and the Pregnancy Discrimination Act of 1978, the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Family and Medical Leave Act of 1993 at the national level, situations still occur in which employers have developed work arounds to discriminate against pregnant and lactating women, denying them needed and reasonable accommodations that will allow them to continue performing their duties. This bill makes it unlawful for an employer to deny reasonable accommodations for any condition of a job applicant or employee related to pregnancy, childbirth, or related conditions if the employee or applicant so requests, unless the employer can demonstrate that the accommodation would impose an undue hardship on the employer's program, enterprise, or business.

H.784 - An Act providing for equitable coverage in disability policies

Chief sponsor: Rep. Ruth Balser In Joint Committee on Financial Services

This bill would remove the barriers to gender equality in privately- purchased disability insurance policies. Currently, state-regulated individual disability coverage, which constitutes 11% of all disability policies sold, is classified by sex, with higher premiums for women (often significantly higher) to obtain the same benefits as men, even when they have the same types of jobs.

Legislative Action Committee

The Legislative Action Committee is made up of specialists in various areas who identify key legislation, recommend League support or opposition, track the bills through the legislative session, lobby legislators and committees, prepare and present written and oral testimony, and recommend and prepare action alerts when needed.

There are many areas of legislation which the League has positions on and could be active in if we had a specialist in that area. If you feel strongly about a topic not currently covered, please consider joining the LAC as a specialist. You can truly make a difference. We often hear the League “should do something” in these areas. We can’t without someone to do it. Maybe you?

Legislative Specialists encourage League members who are interested in closely following an area of legislation or a specific bill to contact them and be added to that specialist’s “team” for notifications of committee hearings and other activities related to specific legislation.

Nancy Brumback, Chair, LWVMA Vice-President
Carole Pelchat, Legislative Director, LWVMA Director

Legislative Specialists:

Affordable Housing, Basic Human Needs--Clare Gordon
Agriculture, Casino Gambling--Louise Haldeman
Child Safety--Palma McLaughlin
Criminal Justice and Courts--Colleen Kirby and Carolyn Lee
Education--Terry Yoffie
Elder Affairs--Pat Costello
Elections and Voting--Linda Freedman
Environment: Energy and Resource Conservation--Launa Zimmaro
Environment: Natural Resources and Public Health--Lynn Wolbarst
Fiscal Policy--June Michaels
Good Governance--Carolyn Lee
Health Care--Judy Deutsch
Immigration--Karen Price
Transportation—Lois Levin
Women’s Issues--Cynthia Nock

To reach any of the Legislative Specialists, email specialists@lwwma.org.

Tips on How to Lobby Your Legislator

What is Lobbying?

Lobbying is part of participation in the democratic process, an extension of the right to be heard, and is an important form of advocacy and public policy participation. The goal of League lobbying is to produce a vote by a legislator in line with our position. Lobbying to convince a legislator of the merits of your position requires an understanding of the rationale that supports that position. The goal is not to threaten or antagonize, but to influence on the basis of your knowledge and understanding of the issue.

Why is the League Unique When It Comes to Lobbying?

There is no shortage of paid lobbyists and special interests who aggressively try to influence legislators on public policy. State legislators, however, are most responsive to their constituents. They need to know that a specific issue is a priority in their community, and it takes the people who live and work in the community to convince them. League members as constituents are the most credible messengers because the legislators are well aware that the League of Women Voters acts, advocates and lobbies on positions that have been established through study and consensus.

When lobbying:

- Address your Senator or Representative properly.
- Identify yourself immediately. Public officials meet too many people to remember everyone.
- Know the status of the legislation. Refer to a bill by number whenever possible.
- Use your own words.
- Be brief and explicit, courteous and reasonable.
- Give legislators succinct, easy-to-read literature; highlight important facts and arguments.
- Write the chair or members of a committee holding hearings on legislation in which you are interested if you have facts that would influence their thinking.
- Get to know legislative staff and treat them courteously. Their cooperation can make or break your chances to reach the legislators themselves.
- Always keep off-the-record comments confidential.
- Write to say you approve, not just to criticize or oppose.
- In a letter, include your address and sign your name legibly. In an email, include your full name, home address and phone number.
- Keep the door open for further discussion in spite of any apparently negative attitudes.

DON'T:

- Don't begin, "As a citizen and taxpayer." Your elected representatives know that.
- Don't apologize for taking their time. Be brief and to the point, and they will be glad to hear from you.
- Don't be arrogant, condescending or threatening toward legislators or their staff.
- Don't argue or back recalcitrant legislators into a corner when they take an opposing position.
- Don't send copies or form letters unless you include a personal note.

How Local Leagues Can Work with Legislators

By Karen Price

Legislative Action Committee Specialist

Local Leagues are a critical link between the legislation that LWVMA supports or opposes and the state legislators who decide the fate of that legislation.

LWVMA's Legislative Action Committee urges local Leagues to get to know their legislators, including committees they serve on and bills they are sponsoring and co-sponsoring. This information is readily available at <https://malegislature.gov/>. Just type your city or town into the "Find a Legislator" box and all your legislators will appear. Click on each to determine committees and sponsoring legislation.

Ways to meet with legislators

Attend LWVMA Day on the Hill and pre-arrange meetings with your legislators in advance. Do not expect legislators to be able to meet with you as a drop-in. When you arrange the meeting or send a reminder about it, make sure the legislator has received the Day on the Hill packet that LWVMA sends to all of them.

Arrange a meeting between your members and legislators. Consider making a "legislative breakfast or coffee" a yearly event for all your members. Plan the date well in advance. Legislators tend to be most available on Mondays and Fridays for in-district meetings. Avoid legislator meetings during the election season if an incumbent is running in a contested race.

Another option is to invite your legislators to a meeting for a specific purpose. Be aware of their time constraints and let them know in advance why you wish to meet.

Invite legislators to your League's events such as forums and celebrations. If you have invited a legislator from outside your district to speak at a forum, you could ask your representative to introduce her/him or have a role in the Q+A period.

Give your legislators an opportunity to recognize the League with a citation for a special event such as an anniversary or other celebration. With advance notice to legislative aides, such awards can easily be arranged.

Meet with a legislator shared with other Leagues. It is also very effective to hold a joint session with other Leagues who share a senator or representative. This allows for a larger group of people to attend and illustrates the "oneness" of the League.

Attend your legislator's pre-announced office hours. Many legislators hold pre-announced in-district drop-in office hours at a public location several times a year, open to any constituent. The legislator or an aide will attend, and if you want to specifically request the legislator be there, call her/his office. Come prepared to discuss LWVMA supported or opposed legislation, which you can find at www.lwvma.org.

Attend your legislators' open district meetings. Some, but not all, legislators hold a regularly-scheduled open meeting for all constituents. It is worthwhile to have a League presence at these meetings, although discussing specific legislation might be difficult in this large setting with limited time for open

discussion. It is a good time to make general points on areas you think the legislator should focus on, for example, open records, housing, public transportation or civic education. League positions should be your guide if you are speaking for the League.

Preparing for your meeting

In preparation for meetings with legislators, access the LWVMA website, www.lwvma.org, to determine what legislation you want to discuss, and let the legislators know in advance. The LWVMA website also includes testimony for most of the legislation. Any of these written testimonies can be printed and handed to your legislators. You may give them information on several bills, but it is probably best to focus on a small number of interest to your League members.

If you are meeting to discuss a specific bill, be especially aware of where that legislation is in the process (joint committee, House or Senate Ways and Means Committee, scheduled for full Senate or house vote). To find the status of a bill, go to www.malegislature.gov and type the bill number into the search box. When the bill comes up, click on the title which takes you to a full report on the bill, including “bill history,” which gives current status. If it is in a joint committee or Ways and Means, determine if your legislator is on the relevant committee and whether she/he plans to vote the legislation out of committee. The LWVMA LAC can give guidance on this.

If you meet your legislators, alone or in a group, after Day on the Hill, you can use the Day on the Hill packet for reference, in addition to what is posted on LWVMA’s website.

If you are meeting early in the legislative session, you can give legislators an opportunity to outline their goals for the session and state their committees and chairmanships.

Although the above focuses on state legislation, there may be local issues that you want to address with your legislator. Here, your local League positions can guide you.

Holding the meeting

One or two people should facilitate the meeting. If specific bills will be discussed, having an informed spokesperson for each gives more voices a chance to be heard. Remember, unless your legislator is on a relevant committee or is a co-sponsor of a bill, she/he may have no knowledge of the bill. This is your chance to educate and persuade.

Some League members may come with an agenda, often her/his pet legislation. If that bill has not been approved by LWVMA, the facilitator should say so and ask the member to discuss it outside of this meeting. It is helpful to state this up front as well.

Arrange the meeting to enable face-to-face contact, such as around a table or in a circle. A classroom-style setup may make discussion more difficult, but can work.

You could follow up with the meeting with a letter to the editor of the local paper thanking your legislators for meeting with you. This simple gesture is much appreciated by the legislators.

For more information on lobbying and on how the legislative process works, take a look at the 2013 League Advocacy booklet on our website [<https://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/03/Advocacy-Booklet2013.pdf>]

State Legislature Resources

Overall information on Legislature-- <https://malegislature.gov/>

State Senators—email address, phone, room number

<https://malegislature.gov/People/Senate>

State Representatives—email address, phone, room number

<https://malegislature.gov/People/House>

Legislative Committees— <https://malegislature.gov/Committees>

Joint Committees--

<https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Joint?generalCourtNumber=189>

Senate Committees-- <https://malegislature.gov/Committees/Senate>

House Committees-- <https://malegislature.gov/Committees/House>

Status of Current Legislation--

<https://malegislature.gov/Bills/Search>

Legislative Schedule, Committee Hearings—

<https://malegislature.gov/Events>

State House floor plans—

<http://lwvma.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/03/RO2LQG1.pdf>

How to find your legislator—

<https://malegislature.gov/People/Search>

Restaurants in the Beacon Hill Area

This website lists a wide range of restaurants in the Beacon Hill area, with links to each restaurant to check menus and prices:

<http://www.urbanspoon.com/n/4/303/Boston/Beacon-Hill-restaurants>

Here are Yelp's reviews of restaurants in the Beacon Hill area:

http://www.yelp.com/search?find_desc=Beacon+Hill+Restaurants&find_loc=Boston,+MA