

League of Women Voters of Connecticut Biennial Convention 2007

Bartels Hall
University of New Haven
300 Orange Avenue (US 1)
West Haven, CT

PROPOSED NEW STUDIES

I. Study of Emerging Media and Internet-Related Issues proposed by LWVCT Board

Background

After the LWVCT spearheaded a successful resolution supporting "Net Neutrality" at last spring's LWVUS Convention, the Connecticut League has become aware of several media and Internet-related issues that are now moving to the state legislative arena.

We'd like to keep up with the changing media and technology landscape.

LWVCTEF has authorized a state-level Interim study of several issues that will affect Connecticut residents — access to the Internet, the availability of public access television and public affairs programming, and the way in which Connecticut residents receive their news — who owns what media in this state.

So far in the 2007 state legislative session, there have been at least 10 bills introduced that would have been appropriate for the LWVCT to comment on if we had had positions on emerging media and Internet-related issues. Depending upon the findings of the study group, Connecticut Leagues may be able to take a more active role in future legislation relating to media and communications.

Scope

Study topics will include Net Neutrality, community access television, media ownership/consolidation, and universal Internet access in Connecticut.

Study begins in April 2007 and continues through October 2007.

Materials for local League concurrence with the study group's conclusions as well as consultation from study group members will be made available to local Leagues during November/December 2007 — after completion of the study.

Study group membership is open to any interested League member.

Membership

Jara Burnett, LWVCT President; Carole Young-Kleinfeld, Communications VP; Pua Ford, LWVCT Secretary; Christine Horrigan, Government Director. Local League members are encouraged to join the committee.

Time Frame/Process

March/April 2007

Board approves study plan
Semi-monthly meetings—telephone conferencing or in-person or as needed.
Written records of meetings and research

May/June 2007

Progress Report to LWVCT Board and to LWVCT Convention
October/November 2007

Completion of study and concurrence materials sent to local Leagues

January/ February 2008

Member Review of concurrence materials

LWVCT Board evaluates whether concurrence achieved

Resources

Research & Personal Contacts

Printed and online materials

CT DPUC , The Connecticut Network (CT-N), The CT Attorney General, Citizens Cable Councils

Telecommunications companies

Relevant LWVCT Positions/LWVUS &CT Principles

Principles: Support for individual liberties in The Constitution, citizens' right to informed participation in government.

Resolution: 2007 Net Neutrality Resolution.

LWVUS Position: Citizen's Right to Know.

2. Study on Early Voting for Connecticut

Proposed by the League of Women Voters of Hamden/North Haven

A one-year study for concurrence of the advantages and disadvantages to early voting in Connecticut, using, in part, existing research produced by the Office of Legislative Research, relevant information from various states permitting early voting, material from THE VOTER and other LWV material, and other studies.

Background

As of this writing, Connecticut General Assembly Senate Bill 5 is favorably making its way through the Connecticut Legislature to change the Connecticut Constitution to allow restriction-free (no excuse) access to absentee ballot voting, the only available early voting law in Connecticut. There are now thirty-six states that have a variety of early voting laws. With the introduction of optical scanners at the polling places, the introduction of full early voting is a timely extension of voter reform calls.

Scope

The LWV ELECTION REFORM AGENDA supports efforts that help realize the promise of full enfranchisement, a stated goal of Early Voting advocates.

Thirty-six states have some form of early voting. Absentee Balloting is one form of Early Voting. Other forms of early voting include the 2 week prior to Election Day voting at various and convenient locations in the districts. Pennsylvania, Michigan, and Ohio are in the

midst of implementing early voting programs. Twenty-five states have no excuse absentee voting. Connecticut, Michigan, and Virginia are in the process of proposing the law changes needed for no excuse absentee voting implementation.

Committee Membership

Janice Bruce, of the Hamden-North Haven League, has agreed to chair the study. As of this writing, League members are needed to form a committee.

Timetable for the study

June 2007:

- Seek approval for the Early Voting Study at the State Convention

June - November 2007

- Form a Study Committee.

- Meetings of the Committee to study relevant background information for Connecticut and updated relevant information and evaluations of early voting patterns as they becomes available after the elections.

December 2007:

- Distribute background material to local Leagues.

- Schedule presentations for local Leagues, as requested.

January - March 2008: Concurrence process by local Leagues

- Background information distributed to local Leagues in Connecticut

- Local discussions about full early voting as an alternative to the present system

April - May 2008

- State-level validation of the concurrence process and acceptance of the position

- Committee formulates Action Plan

The study would modify the existing Election Laws position.