

## **Biographical Statement about LWVA for the Chamber Award**

The League of Women Voters of Amherst, founded in 1939, is a nonpartisan organization that encourages active participation in government at the local, state and national levels. Known for its work in registering voters, informing the public about candidates for office, and providing information on ballot questions, the League also studies public policy issues, seeking consensus among members in order to take informed positions.

During the past 75 years the League has been instrumental in the adoption – or defeat – of many policies in Amherst, ranging from reversing a ban on employing married women teachers (in 1940) to banning the use of Styrofoam containers (in 2014). The League has supported school building projects, adoption of the town manager form of government, establishing public kindergartens, provision of low and moderate income housing, and policies to foster a healthy business environment.

At the state level the League has worked successfully for equitable taxation, as well as for greater government efficiency and accountability.

Membership in the Amherst League is open to men as well as women and currently stands at about 180 members, the largest local League in the Commonwealth. The organization collaborates with other Amherst civic organizations, providing non-partisan information and garnering support for its positions.

Our signature annual fundraising event is the Book Sale on the Amherst town common during the first weekend in May. For the last 45-plus years, the League of Women Voters of Amherst has been recycling thousands of books for the Amherst Community.

Every year we prepare for elections by holding Voter Registration drives. We organize Candidate Nights to introduce those running for office to the community. We publish Election Guides with ballot questions and biographical information about each Town Meeting Candidate, as well as the educational pamphlet “They Represent You” which lists the contact information for all of our representatives in town government. On election nights we collaborate with Amherst Media to televise live election coverage.

We work with the Amherst Town Meeting Coordinating Committee to organize a pre-Town Meeting warrant review and we often speak at Town Meeting on issues on which the League has taken a position. We hold legislative receptions where members can ask our legislators questions. We organize advocacy programs and study groups in areas such as health care, energy, and beginning this year, Aging in the Amherst Area.

In all, the League contributes vitally to making democracy work in Amherst.