



KING COUNTY SOUTH VOTER

October 2009

LWV Mission: The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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October Program

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**Ready, Aim, Mark those Ballots
Need Help? Come to Our Ballot Issue Meeting and Become
Informed!!**

**Come hear pros and cons of the State and County Ballot Issues.
(Yes, there are County issues)**

**Where you say? Renton School District Offices
300 SW 7th St., Renton, WA
7:00 p.m.**

PRESIDENT PRO TEM MESSAGE

President's Message

After three years as President of AAUW, I have been an inactive member of the League of Women Voters. I attended the Annual Meeting to help steer the course for our South King County LVW due to the lack of a person willing to serve as President. Little did I know, when Mary Ellen Hamblin drafted me to join the Board, that I would end up serving as President, if only temporarily!

I volunteered to do September and October, because I wanted to make sure that the October Ballot Issues Forum becomes a reality. It now appears that there will be two State-wide issues on the November Ballot, as well and two King County Charter Amendments. The State issues are I-1033 to lower Property Taxes, and Referendum 71 to overturn a Senate Bill passed by the Legislature concerning the rights and responsibilities of state-registered domestic partners.

The King County Council, acting on a recommendation from a citizen's commission, placed the two proposed King County Charter amendments on the November Ballot. One of the proposed amendments would remove budget allotments language. It would delete Charter Section 475, which mandates that the

County Executive provide estimates, or allotments, of what each county agency will spend each quarter.

This process was used in the past when budgeting and accounting was primarily done on paper without the use of automated computer systems. The Financial Policies Advisory Task Force, a panel created

by the council to review the financial and debt policies of King County, recommended to the Charter Review Commission that the allotment language be removed.

The second measure would clarify the selection process of the members of the Charter Review Commission by making them subject to council confirmation. It would also require the County Council to publicly discuss each recommendation made by the Charter Review Commission, and how the Council will proceed with these recommendations. (Ordinance 2009-0348)

Every 10 years, a commission of King County citizens is appointed to recommend changes to the charter, which is the basic "constitution" of county government. Last year, the commission proposed 12 charter amendments, but recommended placing the measures before voters in phases to avoid overloading the ballot in any one year. Six measures were voted on last November, of which five were approved.

Charter amendments must appear on the November general election ballot.

The Ballot Issues Forum will be held on October 8th at 7:00 PM at the Renton School District Offices, 300 SW 7th Street. (in downtown Renton, one block West of Rainier Avenue) It is a joint project with the Southeast King County AAUW, and a great chance to show the community the powers of the League!

Karen Lunder

ON-LINE CALENDARING FOR THE LEAGUE

A Reminder from last month.....

KCS now has an electronic calendar accessible by any league member on the internet. The calendar shows each unit meeting, board meeting, dates when Voter inputs are due and a variety of other items. If you have suggestions for other items to include on the calendar, please let us know. This is a living document and is available for anyone in the league to make inputs. We are still figuring out all the features, but it seems to be a very easy program to use.

If you want to look at the calendar, type in the url:

**www.google.com/calendar (to go to the website)
sign in (upper right corner) with: walwvkcs@juno.com
password: consensus**

You will know you are signed in because it will have the league email at the top right of the screen.

You can click on any event and it will let you edit or delete. If you click on any given day the program assumes you want to add an event and will bring up a screen to add an event. Just use the "back" arrow to get out. It is easy to

correct, so don't worry about messing anything up.

Mary Ehlers has agreed to be the "calendar master" so if you want her to add events or make changes please send her an e-mail (maryehlers@comcast.net) or call her at 253-941-1930.

When you change or add something on the calendar, please let Mary know for coordination purposes as we get used to using this new tool. If you think you might have deleted or changed something that you need Mary to fix, please let her know.

BOOK REVIEWS

Subject: THE LEMON TREE -- a short review

The LEMON TREE by Sandy Tobin published in 2006 is a valuable narrative history of Israeli - Palestine dilemma including personal impact on real people. I am grateful I made the effort to get through this often grim record of what has happened there during my lifetime. An historical novel could not have had a larger effect on my thinking. You may remember this story when it was broadcast on NPR. Extensive notes on where Tobin obtained his data are included. Nothing was imagined or fabricated. I totally rely on the validity of what is written.

Many of you remember hearing on NPR about the house, the lemon tree, and the two people (an Arab and a Jew) connected to same. Both sides are well documented and told with empathy.

I understand now why the right of return is so important to the Arabs. I understand more clearly why the Jews want a place to feel secure and safe and permanent. How futile some actions are however much one justifies the behavior! Pain, retaliation, pain, retaliation cycle will never end until those actions are replaced with each side accepting why their opponents see things so differently. This narrative gave me some hope that a solution to the dilemma can be resolved when, if individuals so choose. The impact of this book will continue to hit me for a long time while removing some of my own Bias toward this very complex scene.

Submitted by Faye Wilkenson

Review Number 2

Ecological Intelligence by Daniel Coleman, (2009). Book Review by Miriam Helgeland

The author talks about companies who do Life Cycle Assessments, (LCA) on products. This includes pollution during manufacture but also ethical labor practices. He also

mentions Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED) certification for products. If there were "radical transparency" about the impacts of what we buy alert concerned shoppers would vote with their dollars and competition would force better production practices. However, Robert Reich says that "socially responsible gestures companies make are mere public relations gambits..." He favors coercion through government regulation - after first closing down the lobbying by business interests. This could take years or forever.

Gradual improvements may be too little, too late. For instance, gasoline needed per mile has dropped but the number of miles driven has risen so greatly as to cancel any benefits to the environment. (There is no mention of overpopulation in the book.)

An interesting part of this book is its frequent mention of Wal-mart's work in research and actions toward better monitoring of its overseas manufacturers. Other companies such as REI and several European companies are also given credit. The book is somewhat tedious but just reading the last chapter might be worth the time.

Organizations which give information on line:

www.goodguide.com for evaluations of health, environmental, and social impacts of products.

www.environmentalhealthnews.org for daily updates of scientific findings on health and the environment.

[www..cosmeticsdatabase.com](http://www.cosmeticsdatabase.com) for Skin Deep, the data base of ingredients in cosmetic and personal care products.

BOOK CLUBS = NEW MEMBERS

(Do you see a pattern developing in the previous two articles by our members?)

The Board has been discussing how to increase our membership. Ellen Kritzman mentioned that many League members also are active in book clubs in their communities. She thought they might be willing to pass along information about the King County South League at these meetings and invite folks to come to either a unit meeting or one of our upcoming forums. This has led to a flyer that will be made available at our upcoming meetings, unit or general, designed to had out to potential members at book club or other community meetings. Each Unit Leader will be getting these fliers.

Mary Ehlers and Ellen also discussed the idea of have our own LWVKCS book club. One hurdles is how far flung our members are. We are exploring the idea of a virtual book club using a vehicle like Facebook for posting comments about the books. If you have ideas about how to do this or any other ideas about increasing membership, please let us know.

Mary Ehlers, 253-941-1930 and Ellen Kritzman, 206-567-4837.

CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

Dear League Colleagues,

It is with some trepidation, because of the size and importance of the Civic Engagement Project, that I introduce myself as the project director for this effort. The trepidation arises from the difficult time in which we live. Too many Americans are screaming at each other instead of talking together. Too many are uninformed about the way our society works, or should work, and so the bad economy, the risk of job and home loss, the violence here and abroad and the growing lack of trust in government as a key institution have seemed to paralyze our ability to solve problems in a mutually respectful way.

The job the LWVWA has charged all of us with is to help citizens in Washington State learn about government's role and function and the financial structure that underpins its ability to fulfill its role. We seem, as a people, to have lost the connection between the services we want and problems we want solved and the need to pay for them. Thus the exaggerated reluctance to pay taxes even as we demand more and more services.

We must find an effective way to call forth civic engagement so that together we can, individually and collectively, solve the problems which beset us. Key to effective action is understanding our budget crisis and related government and tax issues of which we in League are all too aware.

So, let us begin. I recommend that we cut our teeth on this project by addressing Tim Eyeman's latest initiative, 1033. It will be on the ballot this November so we have no time to lose. The State League has taken a position opposing. Our job is to build understanding of the content and implications of the initiative. Education about it will begin the process of building understanding of the tax structure within a representative democracy so it gives us a chance to try different ways of communicating with the public to encourage informed voting. We can then use what we learn when we begin the longer term job of comprehensive education about government, the budget and the tax structure.

I want to provide a framework for this educational effort which I urge you to seriously consider.

- The general public is under informed and misinformed about government. It follows that we must simplify in order to engage people.
- As we have seen in the health care "town meetings" too many people are not engaging issues - they are acting out their fears.
- There is a pervasive mistrust of government profoundly at odds with the League's belief in working for better government.

The traditional mode of presenting public issues has been through forums with speakers and opportunity for audience questions. I hope you will also consider other ways to engage people in your communities.

How about opening conversations with people in small groups, perhaps in living rooms, or in a library, or in a school meeting room. You will know the places in your communities where people feel comfortable and could be encouraged to talk to one another. The steering committee has prepared excellent background papers crammed with information on government and tax policy. I will work with the steering committee and intern we hope to engage, to prepare one page summaries which will help you frame the issues when you meet in conversation groups and which could then underpin the conversation about the issues you are addressing. 1033 is a great issue to begin with because, if passed, it will have profound effects on schools, health care, public safety, tax levels, the entire scope of services on which we depend.

Perhaps you could think about circles of conversations. For example, League members could hold a series of small meetings presenting the materials and engaging those in attendance. From these attendees we could hope there would be at least one person from each group who would like to host such a meeting at their church or organization, and thus a second round of conversations could be set up with a citizen chair and a league member in support. Perhaps from this round others would step forward to host still more conversations so that these spiral out into the community reaching more and more people.

As experience is gained to make these conversations effective, a representative of the press could be included so s/he could report on the content and civic engagement of the participants. Thus the League would become more widely known in each community and more members might be attracted which would strengthen League's outreach and perhaps even its finances.

Of course, this is just one way to carry out this mission of civic engagement. There are many public service organizations throughout the state: rotary, masons, oddfellows, medical societies, PTAs - you know where it will be important. But the key word here is ENGAGEMENT. Let's help our neighbors feel they not only gain understanding of our community and state problems but they can do something about them, especially if they engage with others.

If you agree we should begin with 1033, there will not only be materials from the steering committee but there are places on the net to help you. Smudget, the blog on state policy on budget has a steady stream of accurate and easy to understand simple explanations of the budget. They have done 3 blogs on various aspects of 1033. Give them credit when you cite them.

The Children's Alliance made up of representatives of some 30 or more agencies which serve children has a web site expressing their concerns about the impact on children of the Initiative.

The Economic Opportunity Institute based in Seattle is a gold mine of researched information on budget and policy. We have Marilyn Watson's permission to use her excellent paper on the structural deficit, again with citation. Their email address is: info@eoionline.org.

Jan O'Conner from the Seattle League has been doing research on 1033 and I'm sure will share what she has learned.

It's also important to read the initiative yourselves so you fully understand what it contains when you have conversations about it.

Many League members throughout the state have been the beneficiaries of extensive training via telephone conferencing. They are anxious to get started and are available to help in their communities.

I am available by email (rosalielang@comcast.net). I will want to learn your plans so I can keep track of what is happening statewide, help you share with each other what you learn through your experience and offer any help I can.

LET US BEGIN!

With every good wish for your success and with hope you will have fun working on this project,

Rosalie Lang (rosalielang@comcast.net)
206-922-2664
900 University Street, Apt. 900
Seattle, WA 98101

WE HAVE \$\$\$\$ FOR OUR OWN CIVIC ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

The KCS League has been awarded a \$500 Civic Engagement Grant! This award will fund two public forums, in November and March. One forum will address how property values affect taxes and the second will explore renter and landlord rights. Mary Ellen Hamblin has agreed to chair a committee for the property tax forum. We are still looking for a chair for the renter and landlord forum, but Miriam Helgeland and Susan Sanders are ready to help with this one. We can use this grant money for printing, publicity, speaker honorariums, rentals and other supplies. With some aggressive publicity, it is hoped these forums will attract new potential members. We need several folks to help out in making these two activities a success. Please contact the chair or Mary Ehlers (206-898-7743) if you are interested in helping.

THE LEAGUE IN ACTION

As many of you know, the lawsuit filed by two families and NEWS (Network for Excellence in WA Schools) against the state of WA went to trial on Monday, August 31. LWVWA is a member of NEWS. NEWS lawyers will argue that the state is not fulfilling its "paramount" constitutional duty to "make ample provision for the education of all children..." More information will be in the Fall LWVWA Voter.

For daily updates during the trial, go to www.waschoolexcellence.org

**Catherine Ahl
LWVWA Education Chair
360-697-7924**

More League Action

This is the testimony your transportation Chairperson (lobbyist) gave before the Transportation Committee on September 8, 2009.

**TO: THE WASHINGTON STATE TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION
Re: Proposed State Ferry System Summer Surcharge.**

The League of Women Voters of Washington opposes the implementation of any summer surcharge for users of the ferry system, particularly the additional super surcharge of 10% proposed by the Commission.

To implement the surcharge would:

- Penalize residents of ferry dependent communities who must use ferries to get to medical appointments, shop or conduct off island business, particularly those who can least afford it.
- Increase the delivery cost of goods and services to and from ferry communities.
- Increase the use of our surface highways, even encourage single occupancy vehicle use. If driving around is even possible, it increases fuel cost for individuals, businesses and service providers.
- Further separate our marine highways from the rest of the Highway System in terms of tolling. It is still expected that the ridership recover the cost of maintenance and operation of the Ferry System, while not expecting the same on the rest of our highways.

The League of Women Voters of Washington supports a balanced and seamless transportation system in which policies are determined by consideration of community livability and character, job/housing balance, environmental impacts, social factors and energy consumption.

We believe... Ferries in Washington State are part of the highway system and should be funded as such. The fare box should not be expected to totally fund ferry operations.

Our state highways do not terminate at the Sound, but continue to the opposite shore. The Washington State Ferry system should be recognized as a seamless continuance of the highway system and should be funded accordingly. Until a highway system-wide tolling approach is developed in Washington, we find the lack of parity between the ferry system tolls and the rest of the highway system unacceptable.

Thank You,

Luella Wells, Transportation Chair
League of Women Voters of Washington

CC: Governor Christine Gregoire; Senator Mary Margaret Haugen; Representative Judy Clibborn

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League Members and Friends

Congratulations on 89 years of LWV and of woman suffrage! Thought you'd be interested in the news story that aired yesterday. In addition to good coverage in Washington state, the story got picked up by ClearChannel and broadcast by 460 of their stations nationwide.

Lucy Copass
Community Relations, LWVWA Education Fund (not "LWV King County" :-)

Begin forwarded message:

Subject: Public News Service-WNS story for August 26, 2009 WA Women 'Vote' to Celebrate Eq

Public News Service-WA

August 26, 2009

WA Women 'Vote' to Celebrate Equality Day

SEATTLE - Today is Women's Equality Day, commemorating the date that women got the right to vote in America, 89 years ago - and Washington was ahead of the crowd, even back then. Our state allowed women to vote ten years earlier, in 1910, although it was a hard-won battle that took three 'tries' and more than 50 years.

According to the Secretary of State's historical election timeline, in the 1800s, the liquor industry didn't want women to vote, afraid they would use the ballot box to restrict alcohol sales. Lucy Copass, community relations chair for the League of Women Voters of King County, says Washington women have been a political force since then.

"Women served in the State Legislature early on, and as mayor of Seattle, and held responsible positions - so, we were in the vanguard for women's suffrage."

Today, with a woman governor and two female senators, Washington is still at the forefront. However, when it comes to equality in national politics, there's a long way to go, says Copass.

"Certainly women are underrepresented in running for higher office. Well over 50 percent of the population is women, and yet, only 74 out of the 435 Congress people are women; only 17 out of the hundred senators are women."

Copass says according to the U.S. Census Bureau, about 65 percent of the women who are registered to vote in Washington cast ballots in the 2008 presidential election, although the turnout for this month's primary, with mostly local races, was dismal for both sexes. Even with the convenience of mail-in ballots in most counties, only about 30 percent voted.

ULTIMATE ACTION

League of Women Voters of Washington

ACTION WORKSHOP 2009

REGISTRATION

Cost: \$25 per venue per person

Lunch Provided

Choose one or both venues:

Benton/Franklin Counties, November 7, 2009

Bellevue, November 21, 2009

Name _____

Tel/email _____

VISA M/C

Card # _____

exp. date _____

Check enclosed

Mail to: LWVWA, 4730 University Way N.E., Suite #720, Seattle, WA 98105

SANDRA DAY O'CONNOR

Justice Sandra Day O'Connor gave two entirely different speeches while in Seattle September 14th. The Seattle Times reported she addressed judges being appointed rather than elected during a lunchtime talk at Seattle Universities Law School. Miriam Helgeland and I attended her evening address at the Seattle Town Hall on the importance of teaching Civics. She said more and more states no longer require Civics and as a result fewer citizens understand how our government works, what their responsibilities are and what they can do to effect change. She talked about a web based game for designed to teach middle school kids civics that can be found at ourcourts.org. She was humorous but stayed on message about civics. She answered about 6 questions ranging from "Are you sorry you left the court when you did?" to "how can we make public education funding more equitable? " Justice O'Connor was impressive as a speaker and a role model for anyone one of us. If you tried to get tickets and were unable it was because her speech sold out (over 900 tickets) in less than 2 hours.

Mary Ehlers

LWV STATE AND KING COUNTY POSITIONS ON BALLOT ISSUES

Referendum 71

At the biennial State Convention, League members voted to take a YES position on this referendum because of our position opposing discrimination. A YES vote retains the bill that provides equal rights to all couples. A NO vote is to cancel the bill. This is a tricky vote so be sure to vote what you really want.

Initiative 1033

The League opposes this issue. The decision was based on our position regarding fair, open and flexible taxes.

King County Charter Amendments

Appears that there will be four on the ballot. Stay tuned for information regarding the King County Leagues' possible endorsement of Amendment 4 dealing with high conservation value properties.

Read your Voter's Pamphlet for other issues in your area (there are lots).

CALENDAR

- Oct. 1: Seattle 1st Thurs. Forum, 7:30 pm, First Baptist Church , 9th and Harvard.
Topic: Ballot Issues
- Oct. 4: West Seattle/Vashon Single Payer Health Care Action Team
Southwest Seattle Library. (Eek, no time given!)
- Oct. 5: Last day for mail-in and on-line voter registration
- Oct. 5: 7:00 p.m., City Candidate's Forum, Black Diamond Elementary Gym.
Moderated by the LWV.
- Oct. 6: Absentee Ballots mailed
- Oct. 7: 9:45-12 noon, Board Meeting, 616 SW 152nd , Burien WA
- Oct. 8: 7:00 p.m.: Ballot Issues General Meeting at the Renton School District
Offices, 300 SW 7th St, Renton, WA.
Chair: Karen Lunder, 206-772-1727.
- Oct. 11: 2-4 p.m.,Single Payer Health Care Action Team. Beacon Hill Library
- Oct. 26: Last day for IN PERSON registration for voting.
- Nov. 3: General Election
- Nov 17: 7:00, Civic Engagement Forum on Property Taxes. Highline School
District ERAC Bldg., 15675 Ambaum Blvd., Burien WA.

LWV of KCS
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206-243-7161

walwvkcs@juno.com