



KING COUNTY SOUTH

VOTER

June 2011

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.



FINAL EDITION

Annual Meeting

May 14, 2011

The 40th annual meeting of the LWV of KCS resulted in the passage of a motion to merge with Seattle. The Seattle LWV unanimously approved the merger at their May 12th annual meeting. They also officially approved a name change to LWV of Seattle-King County

President's Message for June

After 40 years the KCS LWV has decided to merge with the Seattle LWV. It was not a unanimous vote, but it was overwhelming. I know this seems like a sad event to some, but it allows us to add our voices to the third largest League in the United States. As a welcoming gesture, Seattle has already changed their name and the combined leagues will be known as Seattle-King County LWV. They have invited us to have two seats on their Board and a section in the Seattle-KC Voter. You will be receiving an invitation from Seattle to join their league and an invitation to their upcoming fundraising Garden Event (details in this Voter).

I want to thank all of you who made this League the kind of organization that I wanted to be a part of. That is a reflection of the women who put in countless hours registering folks to vote, running candidate forums, researching issues, lobbying our congress to make south King County a better place to live. I especially want to thank Becky Cox for all she has done for our league over the years and also congratulate her on her 50 years with the League. Jane Shafer reminded us that back in 1971 when the South King County, Highline and Federal Way Leagues voted to merge creating the KCS League, the intent was to form one King County League at some time in the future. That future is now.

This will be your last Voter from KCS. I encourage you to think of this as a commencement, where our voices are joined with so many others to make change happen.

Mary Ehlers

Presidents' Message from Seattle-King County

A most sincere welcome to the League of Women Voters of Seattle. We are excited that you voted to join us.

We hope you will join a unit, attend forums, become a member of an issue committee and have representation on our Board.

You can find more information about us on our website at www.seattlelwv.org. We will be starting a new column in our Voter newsletter to cover King County news. We hope you will send articles to our editor Nan Moore at nanaction@comcast.net

We believe that this merger will enhance each other's effectiveness. We wish to raise our profile in King County, where you have experience and expertise. We have met some of your members and are impressed with their skills and experience.

You will be a great asset to us.

We understand you are restructuring your units. We hope you will consider joining one. We incorporate “unit choice” meetings into our calendar and there will be other opportunities for you to follow local issues. We have a new unit coordinator who will be happy to talk to you or you can call our membership chair here at **329-4848**.

We truly look forward working with you.

Judy Bevington and Allison Feher, Incoming and Outgoing Presidents

NOTES FROM THE LWVKCS ANNUAL MEETING

As usual, we had a great turnout for our meeting including the current and newly elected presidents of Seattle LWV. The facilities were excellent and the company beyond compare. Sande Nelson lead us through the agenda with great skill and firmness! We were all sure we had more to say but she was watching the clock!

Here is what we did:

- ✓ Discussed the proposed merger with Seattle LWV.
- ✓ Discussed alternatives to merger
- ✓ Approved the merger as proposed
- ✓ Approved an interim budget as proposed
- ✓ Elected an interim Board of Directors (the old Board will continue in this role)
- ✓ Appointed Mary Ehlers and Cindy Piennett to work with a committee of two from Seattle to work out financial and logistical details of the merger
- ✓ Ate a fabulous lunch.
- ✓ Enjoyed a lively talk by Sherril Huff, Director of Elections for King County, (see bio below) about our current mail-in voting system, its merits and its ability to deal with potential fraud. She also discussed the method used by the King Conservation District to conduct an on-line election. It is the future, in her
- ✓ opinion, so we better figure out how to make it work.

(Missing from the annual meeting, Miriam Helgeland, long time League member, board member and community activist—she broke her elbow! Ugh!)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF SHERRIL HUFF- Annual Meeting Speaker

Sherril Huff is the Director of the Department of Elections in King County. She was first appointed to that position by County Executive Ron Sims in April, 2007, and was subsequently the first elected official to lead King County Elections in February, 2009. And, by the way, King County is the 13th largest county in the nation. In 2009, Huff led King County Elections through the historic transition to countywide all-mail voting, making King County the largest jurisdiction in the United States to conduct elections entirely by mail.

Huff's extensive elections administration experience spans more than 30 years, previously in Kitsap County and now in King County. Twice she was elected Kitsap County Auditor. Serving as the administrator of Elections, Records, Licensing, Accounting and Fiscal Management, Huff developed an internal audit program for Kitsap County government that became the model for the internal audit program used in the City of Bremerton. In that position, She was elected to leadership positions within the Washington State Auditor's Association.

PARTY ANIMALS ON VASHON

Please come to the annual Vashon LWV potluck picnic on Thursday, Aug. 18 at noon. This year it'll be held at May Gerstle's home, 7124 SW Maury Park Rd. Vashon. The forecast for the day is good food, good weather and a good time. If you have any questions, please call May at 206-463-0974. An RSVP would be appreciated but not required. For now, enjoy the sun. (As I write this, it is pouring down rain! Ed.)

Violence in Public Transportation Final Input

The League of Women Voters, King County South looked at violence in public transportation. The information gathered by Ann McNeely, Cindy Piennett and Mary Ehlers was used as the basis for a conversation about safety on busses and light rail in south King County. Although there was not an overwhelming concern about safety, discussion findings did highlight concerns which gave participants pause in using public transportation.

Discussion Findings:

Three unit meetings were held to explore the discussion questions during the month of April 2011. The general public was invited to these meetings via newspaper notices and flyers on

community bulletin boards. A Conversation Café discussion approach was used at all the meetings. This approach promotes civil discussion by providing a framework for the discussion questions, requires speakers to be recognized before speaking, and imposes time limits. Conversation Cafes are designed to encourage learning, listening and the sharing of views.

The participants all had used public transportation, but most were not frequent users. Some had used buses to commute into Seattle when working, but no longer did. The discussions at each of the unit meetings found a common concern about using public transportation at night. It was generally agreed that better lighting and more frequent service especially after events downtown would reduce concerns.

Several participants had been made to feel uncomfortable by other riders. However no one had personally experienced violence while on public transportation. Incidences were related that they had heard about.

Multiple participants expressed concern about safety while waiting for the bus at downtown locations like First Avenue and Third Street. This was especially true at night. One solution discussed was having more visible security at those locations.

There was general agreement that better reporting and tracking of violence incidents associated with transit travel should be looked at. The goal should be to establish a collective database for the region with all law enforcement elements contributing.

THEATER PARTY

Time is growing short for advance tickets! Find that return envelop and pay for your tickets before you forget! (Forget? Who does that?)

This year we are co-sponsoring **“Run for Your Wife,”** a farce by Ray Cooney, with the SE King County AAUW. Our preview party will be held at the Civic Theatre in Renton on Thursday, June 2nd, 2011. Curtain time is 7:30 pm. Theatre doors open at 7 pm. The address of the Civic Theatre is 507 South 3rd St. in downtown Renton.

Tickets will be \$17.50 in advance or \$20 at the door.

Bring your **signature dessert goodie** to serve with the complimentary tea and coffee at intermission.

You are invited.

Please join us in a newly formed unit within the Seattle League. We plan on calling this the "King County South" unit.

I urge you to join the Seattle League as soon as possible and then join us in the South end for monthly unit meetings. We meet the third Wednesday at 7pm at the Foundation House on First Ave South in Federal Way.

(Note that when you join the League you do not indicate unit preference and you can go to the unit meeting of your choice.)

Please email me, Cindy Piennett, cindypiennett@gmail.com, if you have any questions. Watch your email for a reminder in September.

Report from State Convention

The LWV of King County South was represented at the Washington State LWV convention by Kathy Jorgensen, Cindy Piennett, Mary Ehlers, and Becky Cox. As an aside, the predicted Rapture did not occur as scheduled.

The first order of convention business was the state board meeting on Thursday evening. Of significant interest to the King County South and Seattle Leagues, the State of Washington approved the proposed merger of the two leagues, which, if approved by national will be known as the League of Women Voters of Seattle/King County. This name falls in line with other leagues which have merged, and the city is named first, followed by the county. The merger needs to be approved by the League of Women Voters of the US, and it is anticipated that approval will happen in the near future. Delegates from King County South and Seattle met separately to discuss details of the merger. Two board members will be selected from King County South to serve on the Seattle Board.

Prior to the commencement of convention business on Friday, George Last, president of the Lake Lewis Chapter of the Ice Age Flood Initiative explained the formation of the geological features of the Columbia River Basin. During the last ice age, a massive amount of water had been held back by an ice dam. When the dam broke, the Missoula flood followed, and the water carved out the basin, and deposited boulders throughout the region. The Missoula flood explains the existence of the multiple dry waterfalls in the area.

The National League was represented by Norman Turrill, from Portland, the first man to serve on the national board, and Marcia Merrins, from Buffalo, NY. The major "buzz" at the convention was a

controversial ad aired by the national LWV, with funding provided by the Sierra Club. This ad aired in Massachusetts and Missouri, and denounced the nay votes of Senators Claire McCaskill (D-Mo) and Scott Brown (R-MA) against the re-authorization of the Clean Air Act. The caption at the end of both ads read “Brought to you by the League of Women Voters.” To view the ads, go to http://www.rollcall.com/news/league_women_voters_brown_mccaskill_clean_air_act_ad-205188-1.html

Marcia Merrins defended the ad as being acceptable in view of the League’s position on clean air and public health. Many attendees at the convention disagreed, and expressed that the ads were in violation of the league’s principles, its non partisan policy, and that they potentially jeopardized the league’s 91 year reputation for fairness and nonpartisanship.

Prior to the start of convention, the Kitsap County League had prepared a Resolution denouncing the ads. During the caucus sessions on Friday and Saturday night, the resolution was revised by the Kitsap, Pierce, Seattle, and King County South leagues. During the floor debate on Sunday, it underwent a number of amendments, and ultimately passed as amended. King County South supported the resolution.

Workshops on Friday included Voter Services/Voter Registration, Program Planning, and Civil Discourse in Partisan Times. Although it can seem difficult for people of differing political beliefs to agree on any issue, one example of cooperation by persons of various political stripes was a group effort by the citizens in Bellingham to oppose a particular location for the city jail.

Assisting with voter registration has been one of the core services of the league. However, it has been found to be ineffective to merely have a presence at a festival, without a “draw” to the voter registration table. Effective venues for voter registration include naturalization ceremonies, farmers markets, and retail establishments. It was also suggested that voter registration drives could be partnered with other organizations.

Suggested ideas for effective program planning included advance distribution of materials, timelines, and a clear delineation of responsibilities.

President Linnea Hirst also encouraged the delegates present to remember the League of Women Voters of all levels in their estate plan.

The speakers on Saturday were Mike Schwenk, Vice President of Battelle, who spoke on the need to educate policy makers regarding science and the potential consequences of policy decisions on the environment and human health.

Kathy Hibbard of the Pacific Northwest National Laboratory spoke on “Climate Change and Humans: What is our Future?” The models for the emissions of carbon dioxide and nitrous oxide do not work. The current goal is to limit climate change to an increase of no more than 2 degrees centigrade. Without implementing practices to control climate change, it will be necessary to develop carbon capture technology.

Ultimately, there is a need to reduce the demand for energy. One of the risks of cultivating bioenergy crops is a decrease in the production of agricultural crops, and an adverse affect on the global food supply. Recent forest management practices (fire suppression) have created undergrowth in the forest which has provided an unlimited supply of fuel for forest fires. One photograph showed a healthy forest with multiple trees, no undergrowth, and enough space between the trees to navigate a Model T. As a result forest fires burn hotter, faster, affect the canopy, and leave the soil sterile.

Jill Conrad, Tribal Affairs Program Manager spoke of her ancestors, and the history of the vibrant trade along the Columbia River among the various tribes. She is a fourth generation college educated Native American. The Columbia River is a source of power, irrigation, and a regional waterway, and she advocated for the protection of cultural and heritage resources of the Native Americans.

Marcia Merrins spoke on the topic of The League, Non Partisanship and Elections in a New Era. The league's reputation is enhanced by its ability to provide unbiased information in a safe, civil environment. She suggested that each league review its non partisan policy every year, preferably at the first board meeting. .

I attended workshops on membership and moderator training. The membership workshop suggested a critique of how welcoming is the league, and partnering with other organizations.

As someone who has moderated both issue forums and candidate forums, I found the session on moderator training helpful. Specifically, having a script, and describing the format and ground rules in advance often prevent difficult situations. Moderators were also advised to state that no recording would be allowed, and that all cell phones and recording devices need to be turned off.

Saturday night dinner involved presentation of Good in Government awards. Two local teachers at an alternative high school were awarded for their work in teaching "We the People" a curriculum on the US constitution. Three of their students described their experiences in this class, and read an essay on the limits to legislative power. The third person receiving the award was the former Kittitas County auditor.

Lura Powell, the non-partisan chair of the State Redistricting Commission, described the history of the redistricting process in Washington and the challenge of drawing district boundaries to ensure that each district has close to the same number of people, and setting the boundaries so as not to divide existing political boundaries.

On Sunday morning an amendment to the state by-laws and the budget were approved. The recommended program, "A one-year update of energy positions with emphasis on Biomass" was adopted. A non recommended study by the Seattle league on privatization of governmental services was also approved. Two resolutions (one of which is described above) were approved. The second resolution pertained to forming a committee to gather supplemental material to change the effects of the Citizen's United decision in the Supreme Court.

The four of us left the convention energized and excited for our new merged League.

Submitted by Kathy Jorgenson

MEMBERSHIP

Now that we are one League in King County, how do I renew my membership?

LWV of KCS usually had our dues drive in the spring so that all members were dues paying by July 1. So, you have two choices:

- Join the state and national League as a MEMBER-AT-LARGE. Send your dues, \$43, to LWV of Washington 4730 University Way NE, #720, Seattle, WA 98105. Indicate on the memo line that you wish to be a MAL. Call the state office at 206-622-8961 if you have questions. (There is a credit card option for paying by phone)
- Join the newly formed LWV of Seattle-King County. Send your dues, \$60, to their office 1620 18th Ave, Ste 101, Seattle, WA 98122. Georgette Valle is the FIRST from LWVKCS to join LWV of Seattle-King County. Way to go, Georgette! Call the office at 206-329-4848 to get questions answered.

MERGER TEAM

Per the merger agreement passed at our annual meeting, there will be a committee of four to work out the merger details. They are Mary Ehlers, Cindy Piennett (LWVKCS), Judy Bevington and Alison Feher (Seattle).

The KCS office will be closed on Sept 30th.

Office Manager Note: Many thanks to those who have volunteered to clear out paperwork that dated back to the 50's! So far, Cindy has been the chief digger through files! Anyone interested in any equipment or supplies in the office contact Mary or Cindy of the Merger Team.

CALENDAR FOR THE MONTH

- June 1: Board Meeting, 9:45-12 noon, 616 SW 152nd, Burien, WA.
Contact Co-president, Mary Ehlers, 253-941-1930, with agenda concerns.
- June 2: **THEATER PARTY.** Renton Civic Theater, "Run For Your Wife."
Curtain time 7:30p.m. Tickets will be available at the door. Co-Sponsored with South King County AAUW.
- June 11: Seattle-King County Spring Luncheon and Garden Tour. SS Community College, 6000 16th Ave. SW. Fundraiser for the Ed Fund. 10:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Call the LWV Sea-KC office at 206-329-4848 for info. Deadline for reservations may have passed but call anyway.
- Aug 16: Primary Election. Get involved!**
- Aug 18: Vashon Picnic. May Gerstle's house. See article in the Voter for more details.

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