



# League of Women Voters of Washington

Barbara Seitle, President // Barbara L. Bush, Action Chair // Newsletter edited by Stasha McBride

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League office: 4710 University Way NE #214, Seattle 98105 / 206-622-8961 / 800-419-2596 / [lwvwa@lwvwa.org](mailto:lwvwa@lwvwa.org)

## January 13 - January 23, 2009

Greetings, League Members:

Action is cranking up at the Legislature. This past week the number of bills introduced increased to over 600 – and we’re only in the second week. Today’s newsletter will include a number of new ones.

In some cases we will be asking you to send a message slightly different from what we usually do. There will be bills that create newly funded programs that the League favors and we want to support. But, at the same time, because of the state fiscal situation this year (with shrinking rather than expanding General Fund revenues) we don’t want to see existing valued programs cut to fund new programs.

So, our message will be:

“LWVWA recognizes that in the state’s current fiscal situation there are no General Fund moneys to support new programs. At the same time, we endorse the policy of this legislation, and when funds become available we will support funding.”

We will still be able to support, without this qualification, legislation that affects the Transportation Budget or the Capital Budget or legislation that carries its own funding source, as in the case of user or polluter fees. And, if federal funds become available for any of these programs, we will be ready to endorse the funding.

Of course, you are always free to say whatever you want when speaking as a private citizen. But, if you speak as a League member, we will ask that you include this message where appropriate.

The Lobby Team values all the contacts that you make. As in past years, it is very helpful if you report your contacts by email to the Lobby Team member along with any responses from legislators.

Barb Bush  
Action Chair

## Action Items

### Watch - [SB 5444](#)/[HB 1410](#) Creating a comprehensive system of public education programs, finance, and accountability

These bills are based on the long-awaited Task Force on Basic Education Finance report. We support the purpose of these bills but do have concerns. Future groups are established to decide issues that should have been included in the report. Funding would not begin until 2011-12 and be completed by 2016-17, and no funding proposal is included. Bills with a different proposal for funding Basic Education will be introduced next week based on the plan presented to the Task Force by the Full Funding Coalition (associations representing school boards, administrators, teachers, principals, and public school employees). These bills will contain a revenue source.

**League Positions** - LWVWA believes the state has the responsibility for fully funding basic education, all programs mandated by the Legislature, and maintenance and operations costs.

**Status** - Hearings scheduled next week on [SB 5444](#) in the Senate Early Learning & K-12 Education Committee on Jan. 26, 1:30pm and Jan. 28, 8:00am and on [HB 1410](#) in the House Appropriations Committee on Jan. 28, 6:00pm

**ACTION** - Contact your **local school district officials** and ask what some of their funding concerns are and their thoughts on these bills. Then please contact me and let me know.

Contact: Catherine Ahl, [cathahl@hotmail.com](mailto:cathahl@hotmail.com), 360 697 7924

**Support - HB 1493** Prohibiting the use of patient health care information for prescription drug marketing  
This bill is similar to HB 3774 and SB 6241 prohibiting the sale or use of prescriber-identifiable prescription data for commercial or marketing purposes introduced in the 2008 Legislative Session and supported by the League. The 2008 legislation did not pass through the Legislature. **HB 1493** would prohibit sale or use of prescriber-identifiable prescription data for commercial or marketing purposes absent prescriber consent. This legislation is part of the legislature's commitment to promote evidence-based practices and cost containment.

**League Position** - "Quality health care at an affordable cost" is a basic goal for health stated by the LWVUS. The practice prohibited by this bill is a cost driver and influences prescribing practices that may not be in the best interests of health care consumers.

**Status** - **HB 1493** will be having a hearing during the week of February 2<sup>nd</sup>. There is no companion bill so, should this bill pass in the House it would then need to pass in Senate. Members of both major political parties have signed on as co-sponsors of this bill. The prime sponsor is **Rep. Jamie Pedersen** with co-sponsors **Appleton, Campbell, Clibborn, Cody, Conway, DeBolt, Ericks, Green, Hasegawa, Hinkle, Hudgins, Kagi, Kenney, Moeller, Morrell, Nelson, and Seaquist.**

**ACTION** - Contact any of your representatives who are sponsoring or co-sponsoring this bill to thank them for their support. Contact any of your representatives who are members of the Health Care and Wellness Committee and have not signed on to support this bill, **Driscoll, Ericksen, Bailey, Kelley, Pedersen.** Ask that they support this important legislation. Remind them that data mining destroys privacy of the patient-physician relationship and drives up overall health care costs. The pharmaceutical industry spends \$3 billion each year purchasing physician specific prescription information allowing them to tailor their marketing directly to individual physicians.

**Contact** - Susan Eidenschink, [susaneiden@harbornet.com](mailto:susaneiden@harbornet.com), 253 572 9305

**Support - SCHIP (State Children's Health Insurance Program) S.275/H.R.2** Federal Legislation

The **SCHIP (S.275/H.R.2)** bill supplies funding to states to cover children at, or near, the federal poverty level. The House version of this bill contains the Legal Immigrant Children's Health Improvement Act (ICHIA), but the Senate version of the bill does not. Under current law, low income, legal non-citizen children and pregnant women must wait five years before they are eligible for federally funded health coverage under Medicaid and SCHIP. Insured immigrant children are more likely to receive preventive care and are likely to use emergency rooms less. Federal funding from SCHIP will help Washington State bridge the gap in our current budget. The LWVUS is lobbying for the reauthorization of SCHIP.

**ACTION** - Contact Senators **Murray** and **Cantwell** asking them to support the reauthorization of SCHIP and the inclusion of funding for immigrant children.

**Contact** - Susan Eidenschink, [susaneiden@harbornet.com](mailto:susaneiden@harbornet.com), 253 572 9305

**Support - HB1191** Providing incentives to support renewable solar energy

This bill provides commercial incentives for locally created and installed solar electric technologies. **HB1191** creates the carbon-free commercial scale energy generation account. This bill would help meet the anticipated energy shortfalls in a way that would not increase climate change (global warming).

**League Position** - LWVUS supports predominant reliance on renewable resources. LWVWA recognizes that in the state's current fiscal situation there are no General Fund moneys to support new programs. At the same time, we endorse the policy of this legislation, and when funds become available we will support funding.

**Status** - Will be heard by the House Technology, Energy and Communications committee Wed. Jan. 28 at 8 a.m.

**ACTION** - If a member of the above committee (**McCoy, Eddy, Crouse, Haler, Carlyle, Condotta, Finn, Hasegawa, Herrera, Hinkle, Hudgins, Jacks, McCune, Morris, Takko, Van De Wege**) is from your district, tell him/her that you support the policies of the above three bills, but LWVWA recognizes that in the state's current fiscal situation there are no General Fund moneys to support new programs. At the same time, we endorse the policy of this legislation, and when funds become available we will support funding.

**Contact** - Toni Potter, [antoniapotter@comcast.net](mailto:antoniapotter@comcast.net), 206 365 8949

### Support - **HB1004** Adding products to the energy efficiency code

This bill requires that certain products sold in the state meet specified requirements for efficiency. Energy efficient products release fewer greenhouse gases into the atmosphere, thus reducing environmental damage.

**League position** - LWVUS supports use of a variety of energy sources, with emphasis on conserving energy and using energy-efficient technologies. LWVWA recognizes that in the state's current fiscal situation there are no General Fund moneys to support new programs. At the same time, we endorse the policy of this legislation, and when funds become available we will support funding.

**Status** - The hearing for this bill was moved from last week to Monday, Jan. 26 at 1:30 before the House Technology, Energy & Communications Committee

**ACTION** - If a member of the above committee (**McCoy, Eddy, Crouse, Haler, Carlyle, Condotta, Finn, Hasegawa, Herrera, Hinkle, Hudgins, Jacks, McCune, Morris, Takko, Van De Wege**) is from your district, tell him/her that you support the policies of the above three bills, but LWVWA recognizes that in the state's current fiscal situation there are no General Fund moneys to support new programs. At the same time, we endorse the policy of this legislation, and when funds become available we will support funding.

**Contact** - Toni Potter, [antoniapotter@comcast.net](mailto:antoniapotter@comcast.net), 206 365 8949

### Support **SB 5418** Regarding electric vehicles

This bill provides preferential tax treatment for the construction of electric vehicles and the infrastructure to support them. It requires state and local governments and other entities to implement the use of electric vehicles by modifying zoning and development codes, building permits, transportation policy, and environmental regulations. As transportation is the greatest source of greenhouse gas emissions in Washington, facilitating electric vehicles would lessen the impacts of climate change.

**League Position** - LWVUS supports predominant reliance on renewable resources.

**Status** - Will be heard by the Senate Environment, Water and Energy Committee on Friday, Jan. 30 at 8 a.m. This hearing will be on TVW.

**ACTION** - If a senator from your district is on this committee (**Rockefeller, Pridemore, Honeyford, Delvin, Fraser, Hatfield, Holmquist, Marr, Morton, Ranker, Sheldon**) tell him/her that you support the policy but LWVWA recognizes that in the state's current fiscal situation there are no General Fund moneys to support new programs. At the same time, we endorse the policy of this legislation, and when funds become available we will support funding.

**Contact** - Toni Potter, [antoniapotter@comcast.net](mailto:antoniapotter@comcast.net), 206 365 8949

### Support - **HB1007** Creating a sustainable energy trust

This bill establishes utility-based sustainable energy trusts by charging customers not more than one dollar and ninety cents per month. The trust can be used to reduce the cost of deploying sustainable energy projects and smart energy technologies in the state. This will allow people to use more renewable energy to meet the growing demand for energy without increasing greenhouse gases, which cause climate change.

**Position** - LWVWA supports action by appropriate levels of government to encourage the use of renewable resources.

**Status** - This bill will be heard on Monday, Jan. 26 at 1:30pm before the Technology, Energy and Communication Committee

**ACTION:** If your representative is on this committee (**McCoy, Eddy, Crouse, Haler, Carlyle, Condotta, Finn, Hasegawa, Herrera, Hinkle, Hudgins, Jacks, McCune, Morris, Takko, Van De Wege**) please ask him/her to support the bill. **Note to callers:** The bill is financially supported by a charge so **it will not take money** away from existing programs the League supports.

**Contact** - Toni Potter, [antoniapotter@comcast.net](mailto:antoniapotter@comcast.net), 206 365 8949

### Support - **SB 5452/HB 1384** Increasing the debt limit of the housing finance commission

These bills would allow the outstanding indebtedness of the commission to increase from five to seven billion dollars at any time. This should make it easier for agencies and non-profits to acquire the funds needed to

increase the stock of low-income housing. This long-term debt is part of the capital budget, not the operating budget.

**Status** - **SB 5452**, referred to the Financial Institutions, Housing & Insurance Committee, and **HB 1384**, referred to the Capital Budget Committee, have not yet been scheduled for hearings.

**Contact** – Betty Sullivan, [jaybetty2@msn.com](mailto:jaybetty2@msn.com), 206 682 5240

**Support** - **SB 5300/HB 1250** Concerning the housing trust fund

These bills would allow capital appropriations for the housing trust fund to be used for project application, review, selection, contracting, and project development. The housing trust fund is part of the capital budget, not the operating budget.

**League Position** - The LWVUS housing position seeks to “support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American Family.” The LWVWA housing position requires “all levels of government and the private sector share the responsibility to help alleviate the housing shortage in the low income sector [. . . and that] the state government should provide information, assistance and coordination for housing programs at all levels.”

**Status** - **SB 5300** was referred to Financial Institutions, Housing & Insurance Committee on January 20 and is scheduled for public hearing at 3:30 PM on January 28 (Subject to change) **HB 1250** is scheduled for public hearing in the House Committee on Capital Budget at 3:30 PM on January 27 (Subject to change)

**Contact** – Betty Sullivan, [jaybetty2@msn.com](mailto:jaybetty2@msn.com), 206 682 5240

**Oppose** - **SB 5000** Limiting property taxation

This bill would provide property tax relief by setting base years for property tax valuation computation and limiting property tax valuation increases to one percent per year over the base year until ownership of the property changes on owner-occupied property claimed as a principal place of residence. This bill would require an affirmative vote by the state’s voters. It would appear on the ballot as a proposed amendment to Article VII of the state Constitution (Senate Joint Resolution No.\_\_\_\_.) **SB 5000** would provide a tax break to owner-occupied property used as a principal residence by limiting to 1% a year, the amount that the assessed valuation could increase. This measure could result in a serious misstatement of the property’s value over the course of time, leading to great tax disparities between newly-purchased property and property that has been owned by the same person for many years.

**League Position:** LWVWA states, “any tax exemption proposal should be carefully evaluated for purpose, benefit and cost; and, all tax exemptions should be periodically reviewed [. . .] inequities in the distribution of the tax burden should be removed [. . . and] only broad general principles of taxation should be included in the constitution.”

**Status** - **SB 5000** is sponsored by Senators **Sheldon, Parlette, Swecker, Benton, Holmquist**, and **Roach**. This bill was referred to the Senate Ways & Means Committee and has not yet been scheduled for a hearing.

**Contact** – Betty Sullivan, [jaybetty2@msn.com](mailto:jaybetty2@msn.com), 206 682 5240

**Support** - **HB1210/SB 5203** Regarding insurance coverage for autism spectrum disorders

Both bills require that insurance include funding for treatment of autism spectrum disorders. Current treatment is frequently very effective in promoting acceptable behavior resulting in a productive adult.

**League Position** - “Quality health care at an affordable cost” is a basic goal for health stated by the LWVUS. LWVWA recognizes that in the state's current fiscal situation there are no General Fund moneys to support new programs. At the same time, we endorse the policy of this legislation, and when funds become available we will support funding.

**Status** - Both bills have had a first hearing and **SB 5203** will receive a second hearing in the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee on 28 Jan at 8 AM.

**Contact** – Wayne Martin, [docmartin934@aol.com](mailto:docmartin934@aol.com), 425 746 9960



## Issue Background Items

### GOVERNMENT

The government agenda League will be following is beginning to come together. The Public Financing for the Supreme Court bill is out of review. We hope to have it filed early next week. It does contain a fiscal requirement, but with the proviso that the bill will not become effective until three million dollars in funding becomes available. [HB 1517 Restoration of Voting Rights](#) has been filed in the House and the Senate bill should be filed early next week.

Contact - Barbara Seitle, [bseitle@whidbey.com](mailto:bseitle@whidbey.com), 360 221 3792

### HEALTH CARE

During the 2008 Legislative Session [SB 6333](#), a bill **establishing a citizens' work group on health care**, passed the Legislature. This bill asked the Legislature to contract with a consultant to evaluate a number of health care reform proposals. The report on this evaluation will be released on January 25th and representatives of Mathematica, the consulting firm, will present their findings to the health care committees on January 29th. At 8:00 am the House Health Care & Wellness Committee will have a work session on this evaluation, and at 10:00 am the Senate Health and Long Term Care Committee will have a similar work session to hear from representatives of Mathematica. This work session will be open to the public, but will not be open for public comment. One of these committee meetings may be broadcast on TVW, but the schedule for January 29th is not available at this time.

There were five plans included in this legislation:

1. A proposal that modifies insurance regulations to address specific groups that have lower rates of coverage, such as small employers and young adults.
2. A proposal that includes the components of the Massachusetts legislation to establish a health insurance connector.
3. A proposal to provide a comprehensive, standardized benefit package for all residents.
4. A proposal to establish a single-payer system similar to the health care system in Canada.

The fifth proposal, the Insurance Commissioner's proposal for a guaranteed benefit plan, was studied as a separate proposal, and a report on this proposal will be released in February. The legislation calls for the Governor to make appointments to a nine-member citizen's work group representing various interests to be impacted by health care reform. This is an important evaluation of health care reform plans. The fact that the single-payer proposal contained the wording "similar to the health care system in Canada," may have caused its evaluation to be less accurate than some of the other evaluations, which contained state funding mechanisms.

Contact - Susan Eidenschink, [susaneiden@harbornet.com](mailto:susaneiden@harbornet.com), 253 572 9305

### REPRODUCTIVE RIGHTS

So far no policy bills have been filed. I attended three committee meetings that reviewed the current financial status. In all three, one member of the Committee pointed out that funding of family planning actually saved the State money. Perhaps the cuts may be less than we feared.

Contact – Wayne Martin, [docmartin934@aol.com](mailto:docmartin934@aol.com), 425 746 9960

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## For Reference

### KEY SESSION DATES

The 61st Washington State Legislature opened its long session on Monday, January 12. The 2009 legislative session in Olympia runs from January 12 to April 26. Every day (including Saturday, Sunday, and holidays) is counted in the 105-day session. The Lobby Team will meet regularly during the session to talk with the League lobbyist, Lonnie Johns-Brown, and to decide on priority action for the upcoming week.

**Jan. 12** – First day of regular session

**Feb. 25** – Last day to read in committee reports in house of origin, except House fiscal committees and Senate Ways & Means and Transportation committees

**Mar. 2** – Last day to read in committee reports from House fiscal committees and Senate Ways & Means and Transportation committees in house of origin.

**Mar. 12** – League Lobby Day

**Mar. 12** – Last day to consider bills in house of origin (5 p.m.)

**Mar. 30** – Last day to read in committee reports from opposite house, except House fiscal committees and Senate Ways & Means and Transportation committees.

**Apr. 6** - Last day to read in opposite house committee reports from House fiscal committees and Senate Ways & Means and Transportation committees.

**Apr. 17** - Last day to consider opposite house bills (5 p.m.) (except initiatives and alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session).\*

**Apr. 26** - Last day allowed for regular session under state constitution.

\* After the 96th day, only initiatives, alternatives to initiatives, budgets and matters necessary to implement budgets, messages pertaining to amendments, differences between the houses, and matters incident to the interim and closing of the session may be considered.

## **C**ONTACT LISTS

Portfolios / Lobby Team – <http://www.lwvwa.org/about/officers.html>

Legislators – <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/DistrictFinder/Default.aspx>

Legislative Committees – [www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/committeelisting.aspx](http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/committeelisting.aspx)

## **L**EAGUE POSITIONS

LWVWA positions – <http://www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/Program%20In%20Action%20website.pdf>

## **R**ESOURCES

League action website - [http://www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/advocacy\\_index.html](http://www.lwvwa.org/advocacy/advocacy_index.html)

House Floor Activity as it happens – [flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov/default.aspx?chamber=3](http://flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov/default.aspx?chamber=3)

Senate Floor Activity as it happens – [flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov](http://flooractivityext.leg.wa.gov)

Public hearings as they happen – [tvw.org](http://tvw.org)

Bill information – text, analysis, status, committee action – [apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo](http://apps.leg.wa.gov/billinfo)

Bill room (legislative information center) – **360-786-7573**

State budget information – [www.ofm.wa.gov](http://www.ofm.wa.gov)

Governor’s website – [governor.wa.gov](http://governor.wa.gov)

Washington state’s official website – [access.wa.gov](http://access.wa.gov)

### **Speaking to a Legislator**

Visit, write to, call, or email the legislator directly (follow “Legislators” link above). Or, use the toll-free Legislative Hotline available weekdays from 8:00 am - 8:00 pm, and Saturdays from 9:00 am - 1:00 pm:

**800-562-6000** / TTY: 800-635-9993

Legislative hotline operators will send your message to one of your legislators, all three of your legislators, the governor and lieutenant governor, or all of these, as you request. Language translation services are also available. Person placing the call needs to know enough English to understand “Please Wait” and to report the language needed.

### **Addressing a Letter to a Legislator**

Representative \_\_\_\_\_ Senator \_\_\_\_\_

P.O. Box 40600 P.O. Box 404[leg district]

Olympia, WA 98504-0600 Olympia, WA 98504-04[leg district]

### **Visiting Your Legislators**

Citizens are welcome to visit their legislators in Olympia on any day during the session. Making an appointment first is prudent but not always required. Later in the session, town hall meetings back in the legislators’ home districts are good opportunities for talking to your legislators. Lobby day events provide organized support for visits.