



WASHINGTON STATE

VOTER

Fall 2009 The League of Women Voters of Washington, 4730 University Way NE, #720, Seattle, WA 98105 Linnea Hirst, President
Vol. 51, No. 2 Tel: 206-622-8961 FAX: 206-622-4908 (outside toll area 1-800-419-2596) email: lwvwa@lwvwa.org Myra Howrey, Editor

League Positions this November

Referendum 71: APPROVE

At the biennial State Convention, League members voted to take a YES position on this referendum because of our position opposing discrimination. R-71 asks voters to ratify a bill that was passed in the 2009 Legislature and signed by the Governor. The bill provides equal rights equivalent to those of married couples to couples of the same sex and all unmarried senior couples in many areas including:

- Death benefits for partners of police and firefighters killed in the line of duty.
- Right to use sick leave to care for a seriously ill partner.
- Pension benefits for partners of teachers and other public employees
- Right to workers compensation benefits if a partner is killed in the course of employment
- Victim's rights

The League has joined with a coalition to do voter education, voters pamphlet statements and action. For more information, please go to the Yes on R-71 website: www.approverreferendum71.org

Initiative 1033: Vote NO

The LWVWA Board has voted to oppose I-1033. Based on our position regarding fair, open and flexible taxes, the Board believes this initiative is none of these. I-1033 is misleading and complicated. Limiting expenses through a rigid and arbitrary formula based on population growth and inflation, this initiative falls far short of being able to fund even our current levels of health care, education and other basic services. While I-1033 may sound good on the surface, limiting spending in this way will have many unintended consequences. More information is available at: www.no1033.com

Action Workshops

Kennewick:	Bellevue:
November 7, 2009	November 21, 2009
9:30am to 3pm (lunch will be served)	9am to 2:30pm (lunch will be served)
Lampson Building	St. Andrews Lutheran Church
607 E. Columbia Drive	2650 – 148th Ave SE
Kennewick WA	Bellevue WA

Lobby Team Priority Topics: Public Campaign Financing for Judicial Positions, Early Learning/Education and Washington State Budget Issues.

Registration Form on back page of Voter – Cost \$25 per venue per person

Hope to see you there!

President's Message by Linnea Hirst

It's fall, and Leaguers throughout the state are already bustling, working to further good government and informed voters, as well as to promote our League positions.

- ❑ Our lobby team is working with Lonnie Johns-Brown in planning strategy for the coming legislative session
- ❑ The Benton-Franklin League and the Seattle League are working on coming Action Workshops, with the help of various state board members.
- ❑ Bellingham/Whatcom County League is working on next spring's Council
- ❑ Benton-Franklin members are already working on Convention 2011
- ❑ We are working on plans for this winter's Lobby Day to be held on January 19, 2010.
- ❑ Portfolio chairs are, as always, watching their issues, attending meetings,
- ❑ State board members are working on ways of helping you with membership, development, program-planning, board training...any and all areas we are able to help with.
- ❑ And, of course, each of you in your local league is busy with your own plans and projects for the year, to educate the public in your area of interest to advocate changes you want, to study issues, and to raise money to be able to do it all.
- ❑ For some of you—and you're an important part, too—though you aren't able to take a major part in League activities—you're getting out your checkbook to help League at both state and local levels to accomplish all we possibly can.

Besides all those activities, our statewide focus for the year is the Civic Engagement Project (CEP). In a nutshell, CEP is an educational effort for us all to work to inform and educate the public about the state tax structure and components of tax policy.

Already, the steering committee has gathered background information on the subject and Barbara Bush has run a series of training sessions for Leaguers throughout the state, using telephone and computer for the training. The committee is now producing a few "canned" presentations, should any local member want to use one or more, and is preparing to give whatever help each local league and member would like.

Rosalie Lang, CEP project director, has written a more expansive article (see page 7 of this Voter) about the Project. Please do read it—and please do consider volunteering to be part of this major League effort.

Spotlight on Local Leagues

Kitsap County Bill and Judy Matchett were presented with this year's Mother Earth Award by the West Sound Conservation Council. Judy is a 50 year league member. Kitsap league is also starting a Blog which will be hosted by *The Kitsap Sun*.



Mason County The Mason County League has undertaken a multi-year study of the county budget process as part of its "Know Your County" project. Goals are to educate League members and the public about the budget process and to encourage citizen involvement.

Pullman Over 15 Leaguers turned out to walk in Pullman's Grand Parade for the 21st Annual National Lentil Festival on August 22.

Clallam County League Observers helped reverse the Death with Dignity vote at Olympic Medical Center; brought Sunshine to local government's open records and open meetings; and through letters and statements brought changes to the State Conservation Commission's election regulations. For more information contact Penney Van Vleet at pvv@olympen.com.

Bellingham-Whatcom County will host the 2010 LWVWA State Council Meeting next spring.

Seattle league member Marian Wineman has contributed to a book called "Thoreau's Legacy" which is a collection of essays about climate change published by Penguin Classics and the Union of Conc. Sci. www.ucsusa.org/americanstories

OPPORTUNITY FOR DONORS

The emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008 extends for 2008 and 2009 the "IRA charitable rollover" provision. This provision allows taxpayers aged 70 ½ or older to make tax-free contributions of up to \$100,000 in both 2008 and 2009, from either traditional or Roth IRAs, to qualified charitable organizations such as the League of Women Voters Education Fund. Donations from IRAs are not treated as an itemized deduction, like most charitable contributions, but are excluded from taxable income. Thus, the IRA rollover provision applies to taxpayers who itemize as well as those who take the standard deduction. Every donor's circumstances are different so please consult with your tax advisor to see if an IRA rollover is right for you. Contact the State League at 206-622-8961 for additional information.

OF INTEREST

League Voter Information Website:

www.washingtonvoter.org

As the November election approaches, the State League's website is a valuable source of voting information for Washington's citizens. As print resources diminish, websites continue to grow as the resource for voting information. Here a voter can find detailed information about registration and voting regulations and procedures. To locate additional information, use the NAVIGATOR at the top left of the home page for links to government agencies, including the Secretary of State, and a variety of citizen organizations. This website is funded by the League of Women Voters of WA Education Fund. To update information, contact Becky Cox of the Ed Fund Board (cgcox@nwlink.com) or Judy Ostrow, Voters Service chair of the LWVWA board (2jostrow@comcast.net). Encourage your members to use this helpful and timely website and to publicize it to the members of your community as well.

League of Women Voters of Washington Officers and Directors 2009-2011

Officers

Linnea Hirst, President, Seattle
Kim Abel, 1st Vice President, Kitsap County
Pat Dickason, 2nd Vice President, Thurston County
Myra Howrey, Secretary, Kitsap County
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Penney Van Vleet, Clallam County

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Norman Turrill

Staff

Claudia Downing, Administrative Director
Lonnie Johns Brown, Lobbyist

BOARD ACTIONS

1. Voted to Oppose Initiative 1033.
2. Voted to Support Referendum 71 which would affirm the "Everything But Marriage Act" passed by the Legislature this year.
3. Voted to accept LWV Bellingham-Whatcom County's offer to host 2010 State Council.

JOIN THE LEAGUE LEGACY ASSOCIATES

In 2008 several LWVWA members decided to put the State League in their wills to continue funding the organization that has worked for the issues that mean so much to them. Kay Buss of the Pullman League was a founding woman of the League Legacy Associates, and knew the value of the League's work.

The State League is there to assist the local Leagues; and an on-going fund that will help pay the operations cost of the office and staff working for us is a good bequest that will be a continuing benefit to the people who live here.

Please join these members by putting the LWVWA in your will or trust, and tell the League office so your name can be added to the list. You do not need to provide a copy of your will or even the relevant page. You may use language similar to this to put your bequest in place: **I HEREBY GIVE, DEVISE, BEQUEATH (PERCENTAGE OR \$ AMOUNT) TO THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON. Always check with your lawyer on issues regarding your will or trust documents.**

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

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Send address changes to League of Women Voters of Washington, 4730 University Way, N.E., Suite #720, Seattle, WA 98105



Showing off the LWV Service to WASA award are Pam Behring, LWVWA Board Member; Barbara Mertens, WASA; and Ann Murphy, President Spokane League.

LWVWA Receives State Award

The League of Women Voters of Washington was honored to receive the Service to WASA Award from the Washington Association of School Administrators at its 2009 Awards Luncheon during its Summer Conference in Spokane this past June. Ann Murphy, President of the Spokane League, and Pam Behring, State Board member, represented LWVWA at the awards luncheon.

The award is one of WASA's most prestigious – given to “an individual or group who has made contributions at the state level toward accomplishing the goals of WASA.” Barbara Mertens, Assistant Executive Director for Governmental Relations, thanked the League for its outstanding work – not just for schools but for the multitude of issues taken on and the huge contribution made to an informed and active democratic process.

Catherine Ahl (LWVWA Education Chair) noted that in 1996 and 2000 it sometimes felt like it was only WASA and the League out there, with few resources, working to defeat the well-funded Charter School Initiatives 177 and 729. In 2004, the same two organizations once again worked to defeat

Referendum 55 and support state constitution, public education, and representative government. The huge “No to Charter Schools” vote across the state sent a strong message, for the third time, to the state legislature.

Again, in 2007, WASA and the League were on the same page in supporting a Simple Majority vote to pass school levies. The joint message that “Simple Majority is fair, it is the American way, and it is democracy in action” helped pass the Constitutional Amendment.

Catherine, who could not attend the luncheon, is to be recognized for her tireless work through the years on education matters and for facilitating the partnership with WASA to support public education and advocacy for children in Washington State. On a personal note, Catherine extended her deep appreciation to WASA and especially to Barbara Mertens, with whom she has shared both frustrations and celebrations and many laughs. Catherine said that she has learned so much from Barbara, none more important than when you are dealing with the legislature it's important to keep your sense of humor.

It was indeed an honor for Pam Behring and myself to accept this award for LWVWA and especially to acknowledge the tremendous work that Catherine Ahl has done for education in Washington State.

Ann Murphy
President, League of Women
Voters/Spokane Area

Washington News Service

We have been in the news again. This summer, radio listeners throughout Washington heard Miriam Helgeland, LWV King County South, discuss the July 18th voter deadline, and the importance of voting in the August primary. And radio listeners to 460 stations throughout the country heard Lucy Copass, LWVWA community relations chair talk about the 19th amendment, giving women the right to vote, and the fact that in Washington, women won the right ten years earlier.

During our 2008-2009 fiscal year, Kitsap, Bellingham/Whatcom, Yakima, Snohomish, Benton-Franklin, King County South, and Seattle Leagues all had news articles distributed by WNS. The articles, and the

exposure we get from them, help remind the public that we exist, and that they can turn to us when they need good information on government-related issues.

League pays \$1750 a year for this news service, and we think it is well worth it. In addition LWVWA Education Fund financial support, we also received donations from the following local leagues to help fund this effort: Seattle, Kitsap County, Bellingham-Whatcom County, Yakima, Snohomish County, Benton-Franklin Counties, King County South and Pullman.

Any of us can suggest a League-related story for broadcast consideration. Send the details of your suggestion to Claudia at the LWVWA office: lwwwa@lwwwa.org. The more good news stories, the more good exposure we get.

League Help Wanted Hanford Advisory Board

Meets 5 – 6 times a year, different parts of the state, provides informed recommendations and advice to DOE, EPA, WA Dept of Ecology. Five subcommittees meet more often, generally in TriCities area.

LWVWA has two members on the Board, Betty Tabbutt and Susan Kreid. Susan has had to resign and needs a League member to replace her as soon as possible.

Job requirements: usual for LWV—interest, ability to study, listen, discuss, come to consensus, etc.
Usual LWV pay: expansion of the mind, accolades for a job well done!

Call, email or write LWVWA if you're interested.

LWVWA WEBSITE LOOK FOR IT

www.lwwwa.org

LEAGUE LOBBY TEAM READY TO WORK

With a short session in 2010, the Lobby Team knows it has to work smarter to find opportunities to take action on League positions. With that in mind, the Team looks forward to finding League members who can add their efforts to specific bills. **Will you join us?** We can use help on specific bills or on specific issues. Please contact us as soon as you can and you WILL make a difference. Your Action chair, Kim Abel, 360-874-6774, kbabel@wavecable.com

Save the Date! LWVWA Lobby Day will be held on January 19, 2010.

Education Funding Lawsuit went to trial on August 31

The education funding lawsuit brought by the McCleary and Venema families and the Network for Excellence in Washington Schools (NEWS) against the State went to trial on Monday, August 31, in King County Superior Court in Seattle. The trial is expected to last six weeks. LWVWA is a member of NEWS, a coalition of more than 70 community organizations, school districts, education associations, teachers and parents.

Attorneys for NEWS will argue at trial that the State is failing to live up to its constitutional mandate, which reads: "It is the paramount duty of the state to make ample provision for the education of all children residing within its borders..."

The lawsuit aims to turn the promise of education reform put forward in recent legislation (HB 2261) into a mandate by establishing that, in the words of the Washington State Constitution:
 "Paramount" means paramount, that public education is funded first before everything else;
 "Ample" means ample, more than enough and not just what is left over;
 "All" means all students, not just those living in wealthy school districts; and
 "Education" means the knowledge and skills kids need to succeed in today's world as established in State education standards such as the Essential Academic Learning Requirements (EALRs)

NEWS attorneys will ask the court to issue an order that mandates the State to determine the actual cost of ensuring that all students meet State academic standards and to provide a stable, equitable way to pay those costs.

For more information on NEWS, K-12 funding and daily updates during the trial, visit the NEWS Web site at www.waschoolexcellence.org.

Catherine Ahl, LWVWA Education Portfolio Chair

LWVWA Convention 2009 Report

Members of the League of Women Voters of Washington who attended Convention at the Murano Hotel in Tacoma were dazzled by the setting, the sunshine and the scintillating topics.

Following welcomes by LWV Tacoma-Pierce County President Lyz Kurnitz-Thurlow, Tacoma Mayor Bill Baarsma and LWVUS Board member, Norman Turrill; Norm, Kurt Jacobson, Matthew Erlich and Derek Young gave various insights into the use of internet technology for Voter Service. A question was asked about our 'communication plan' that drew a speechless moment from a room of Leaguers. "What plan?" everyone seemed to be asking.

The mix of new and younger members who attended Convention from throughout the State brought a ray of light into our discussions. The questions and suggestions that followed were a prelude to the fundamental challenge League faces: how do we gain greater exposure to the public and attract new members? A response presented by Barbara Bush is the Civic Engagement Project, where we shine a light on our State budget and the taxes we pay.

Our own budget has been affected by the economy and falling membership. The Board had to enact cost controls that affect members and staff as well as funding an unexpected office move.

Particularly bright moments of the weekend were the Good In Government Awards, given to Senator Rosa Franklin, the Korean Women's Association and the News Tribune. We shared a lovely evening with delightful people at the Washington State Historical Museum viewing the Women's Suffrage exhibit.

Pam Behring, LWV Spokane Area & member of State Board

Civic Engagement Project

The LWVWA, with great foresight and understanding of the state of our world, has opened a conversation with local leagues to enable us to engage with our neighbors and fellow citizens in a much needed discussion of the role of government. Who could have foreseen the anger and violence that has greeted the effort to assure health care to all citizens? The level of civic discourse has disintegrated to a point that cries out for a far reaching effort to build understanding of the role of government in a representative democracy.

Beyond that understanding, it is clear that if we are to have effective, functioning government, we must reconnect growing demand for services with the ability to pay for them. League members believe in enhancing the quality of governance. Underlying that belief is an in-depth understanding of our role as citizens and the need for knowledge based participation in public life. The Civic Engagement Project provides an opportunity for Leagues to open a constructive conversation in our communities so as to deepen our knowledge and to share what we learn with our community.

I have the privilege of working with you as director of the Civic Engagement Project which will support local leagues in developing and carrying out a program centered around state and local budgets and the multilayered tax system. How exciting it will be to find interesting and compelling ways to demonstrate the connections between public policies and peoples' lives! The challenge is to relate issues such as health care, uncrowded classrooms, cleanup of water, efficient transit, safety in our homes and our streets, to real-life budgeting and tax policy.

And, if we can bring all this alive through engaging those of varying opinions and ways of life in an in-depth and informed conversation on how to achieve our divergent goals, we'll strengthen ourselves through new membership and increased sources of financial support. We will also enhance the quality of life in each community as we are able to soften public anger and lack of trust in government with increased understanding.

The steering committee for the project has done months of research and preparation of background papers. There is so much to learn! Training of volunteer League members from around the state has enabled many of us to deepen our knowledge of tax policy in Washington State and its implications for our lives. Quickly, the effort will begin in each league to utilize tested and new ways to engage people in learning with us, not only the facts of tax policy but the necessity of using that knowledge to constructively engage government and do our part to support policies that are positive for our communities.

Together, we can do this. By the time you read this article every League president and each League's lead person for the project will have received a letter from me. I hope to help establish some achievable goals with you for the first year of the project and to support your efforts in building lively conversations through civic engagement in your communities. I know that leagues will also help each other as each learns what works for them and what falls short.

What an important and exciting opportunity. Let us begin.

Rosalie Lang (rosalielang@comcast.net)
Project Director, Civic Engagement Project

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



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