



VOTER

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The League of Women Voters of Washington, 4730 University Way NE, #720, Seattle, WA 98105
Tel: 206-622-8961 FAX: 206-622-4908 (outside toll area: 1-800-419-2596) email: lwwa@lwwa.org

Linnea Hirst, President
Myra Howrey, Editor

First Call to Convention May 20-22, 2011 Richland, Washington

LWVWA convention 2011 will be held in Richland, Washington on May 20 – 22, with a wine tour in that famous wine region on the afternoon of May 19th and our Good in Government event on Saturday. The GIG event will honor one or two people (or organizations) in the state that have made outstanding contributions toward achieving good government while holding public office, serving on various boards or commissions, or as members of private organizations. Convention is held every two years in order to conduct business: adopt a program, budget, bylaws, resolutions, elect officers and directors, and spend time networking with other local leaguers. It is always an entertaining and informative few days.

Our hosts, LWV Benton-Franklin counties, have done their usual highly organized planning for convention. The state board hopes all local leagues will send their full delegations to Richland in May for what promises to be an interesting and exciting meeting.

Workshops are in the planning stages - these workshops, led by experienced League members, will give you valuable information and materials for enhancing your own League participation, and increasing your League's effectiveness in the community. The subjects were chosen in response to member requests for practical help in developing leadership and strengthening their Leagues. Some workshops topics will be: Moderator training—How to run a forum and keep control; Program Planning—using the league's positions to engage your members and community; National List Serves—How you can use them to make a difference locally; and League Basics—Everything you need to know in 30 minutes.

There will also be workshops on membership—how to keep it, how to grow it. Those workshops will be run by Marcia Merrins, national board member. Marcia will join us at state convention both as one of our main speakers and to run the membership workshops. Those of us lucky enough to have seen Marcia in action running a workshop can vouch for her wisdom, her enthusiasm and how just plain invigorating she is.

We look forward to her help, and we look forward to the possibility of you all joining us at convention. We hope to see many of you in Richland in May!



President's Message *by Linnea Hirst*

I have some very good news!

Many of you have asked for **board training**, and thanks to a legacy gift just received, we can begin this summer to offer that training to many, perhaps even all of your Leagues.

With great thanks to now-deceased Kay Buss, Pullman LWV, we have funds to send someone from LWVWA to do board training for each local League or regional group of Leagues. We will remind you at convention of that possibility so we all can begin to plan those workshops with your new boards.

We're busy at state level with the more usual and always interesting activities. Some of those activities:

Your LWVWA **lobby team**, led by board member Kim Abel, is hard at work following League issues at the legislature, preparing to testify at the appropriate times, and sending out the weekly Legislative Newsletter so all of us can contact our own legislators to back up the work of our lobby team on those issues. Lobby team meets in Olympia every Thursday during session, plus going to specific legislative committee hearings to testify. Thanks to modern technical equipment, lobby team members can now attend team meetings from home if they don't otherwise have to be in Olympia that day.

The lobby team is also working with Chair Bonnie Rimawi to put the finishing touches on plans for **Lobby Day, February 24th**, including speakers to help us better understand the intricacies of the issues at hand.

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

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The statewide **Conservation District study** report may be in its final stages, steered by board member Susan Eidenschink, and will then go to the reading committee. Once they've signed off on the report, it comes to the state board for review, and then to all members for discussion.

We're planning the **convention workshops** as the Benton/Franklin League continues the work on all the other details of convention, to be held **May 20 – 22nd in Richland**. They're also putting together fun activities for all of us who gather the day ahead of convention—watch for all those plans, and plan to come to it all.

As all your **program planning reports** come in to the state office, we'll be condensing, assimilating and working to find common threads in the various reports in order to see what the board can recommend as a future study, update and/or concurrence. We're looking forward to receiving all your reports and seeing where we will be heading in the next two years.

Last, but not least, remember that your **state board liaisons**, Judy Ostrow and Pam Behring, are always at your beck and call when you need help.

Spotlight on Local Leagues

On January 16th, the **Yakima County League of Women Voters** presented a public forum on a proposition currently before the city of Yakima to change the form of city government. The forum was attended by approximately 45 citizens who enjoyed the hot soup and desserts provided by League members.

Each panel member was given fifteen (15) minutes to introduce his/her position on the question "Shall the current City Council/City Administrator system of governance be replaced by a 'Strong Mayor'/City Administrator system in which a mayor is elected directly by the city residents?"

A more detailed summary of the forum can be found on the Yakima County League's website in the February, 2011, VOTER.

LWVUS Federal Education Study

The LWVUS Federal Education Study materials will be ready in May. Local leagues should schedule discussion and consensus meetings in the fall of 2011.

**LWVWA WEBSITE
LOOK FOR IT
www.lwvwa.org**

Penney Van Vleet has been selected as a Ruth S. Shur Fellow, an exclusive group of League members who have been chosen to serve on a national coaching team funded by the *Ruth S. Shur Leadership Institute*. The Institute trains Fellows to support and strengthen emerging League leadership on the state and local levels.

The team currently works with 21 states, participating in the successful Membership Recruitment Initiative, building in leadership development. The Fellows mentor and develop relationships with state coaching teams who, in turn, coach local Leagues in best practices to recruit new members, gain visibility in the community, and develop new leaders. By 2012, LWVUS, with help from this National Coaching Team, plans to support local Leagues in all 50 states in the areas of membership recruitment and leadership development.

LWV Clallam County, as well as LWVWA President Linnea Hirst, nominated Penney for this challenging position and congratulate her on being chosen. She served as president of LWVCLA from 2008-2010 and is also a current LWVWA state board member.

Ann Murphy, **LWV Spokane Area** President, participated in a panel presentation on the future of Campaign Finance Reform. The well attended forum was held in Spokane in January. A broad range of panelists presented information and updates on the status of the topic. Ann presented League history on the topic (we have been at this since 1974 with the LWVUS position!) and emphasized our current LWVWA priority on campaign finance reform for judicial positions.

LWV Clallam County Named “2010 Public Health Hero”

Clallam Public Health Advisory Committee chose the LWVCLA as one of the four 2010 Public Health Heroes. League president Lou Templeton and vice president Nancy Esteb accepted the award from advisory committee chair Mel Melmed in a ceremony December 9 in the county commissioners’ boardroom.

For over six years, the League Health Care Committee has provided the public with health reform information. Between 2007 and 2010, forums included information on the kind of health reform Clallam residents want, the high cost of present health care, bill passage process in Congress, and the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Sara Johnson is chair of the committee.

In naming the League as a recipient of the award, the proclamation states that the award is in recognition of the League’s accomplishments, leadership, and example promoting Public Health.

Presenting the award, Melmed explained that various individuals, groups and programs that contribute to overall good health of Clallam residents are selected.

She said the League was selected “because of all the efforts they made to share information about health care and bring various groups from across the county together to discuss important public health issues of our time.”

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Prioritizing Growth Management Topics

In the past several years **LWV/Spokane Area** has examined local perspectives based on the 2006 LWVWA study: *The Growth Management Act of Washington State – Successes and Challenges*. That study discussed the 14 GMA goals that guide the development of comprehensive plans and development regulations.

At its 2006 Annual Meeting, Spokane members were asked to prioritize the topics of the state Growth Management Act in order to provide direction for local updates. We used the state study as a basic framework, and then set out to find out what was happening in our own community.

In 2007, we looked at aspects of the two related goals of Urban Growth and Reducing Sprawl, as they relate to Spokane County. Specific discussion at unit meetings was on UGAs in Spokane County.

Transportation was the priority goal that was addressed in 2008 with discussion at unit meetings on Transportation as it related to GMA, Spokane County and its cities. We reviewed new amendments to the GMA Transportation goal and received overviews on several local Transportation related topics: Spokane Regional Transportation C (its regional governance and projects), Smart Routes, Spokane Transit Authority (fare increase proposal), Inland Empire Rail Transit Association, North County Transportation, and the North Spokane Freeway Corridor

The focus in 2009 was on Streets and Open Spaces. Unit Meeting discussions centered on a review of current and proposed street and open space policies in Spokane County, City of Spokane, City of Spokane Valley and other cities in Spokane County. We looked at how the rebuilding of streets conform to new standards and what regulations are there to preserve environment (City of Spokane is in the middle of a ten-year street bond rebuild of many streets). Additional consideration was given to winter maintenance (we get a lot of snow here!).

Low Income Housing information will be presented at our April 2010 unit meetings

For 2011, the program planning process selected looking at the Environment – and will review City of Spokane Mayor’s Sustainability Task Force Report and actions.

Ann Murphy, President

LWV Bellingham/Whatcom County

Whether, like James Madison, you believe people's politics are inevitably corrupted by their own self interest, or you follow Thomas Jefferson's more optimistic concept that citizens are motivated by idealistic principals, we can all agree that the art of deliberative conversation should be an important aspect of our democracy.

WWU professors Johann Neem (History) and Brad Howard (Journalism) led a discussion at the January Bellingham/ Whatcom County League meeting on deliberative democracy and the role of the free press in our debates.

Prof. Neems in contrasting Madison's and Jefferson's views, pointed out that even with our founding fathers, the debates were often rancorous and could even end in duels. Yet as Prof. Howard said, while our debates can be heated, it is important to have the debates, and just by meeting and talking with one another, we will be less polarized.

They agreed that it takes work to be a good citizen and the press should be using its power to help us understand what the news means and how it will affect our lives and our core values. The press should help us understand what are the costs and consequences of our decisions at the ballot box, and it should bridge the gap between experts and the public so we can make informed decisions. Prof. Howard feels that as the cost of news gathering goes up, the quality of news reporting goes down, since making a profit has become the driving force in journalism today. Up until the late 1800's, Prof. Neems said that government expenditures on public press were second only to expenditures on defense. Yet we know publicly-funded media is under fire today.

It is fitting that our program was taped (with a link on our website www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org) by Robert Clark from WWU who is working with other volunteers to create a community based TV channel to promote just this kind of discussion.

Washington News Service

"The media's job is to interest the public in the public interest"

These words, uttered by American philosopher and educator John Dewey, form the guiding principle of the Public News Service, parent of the Washington News Service (WNS). To interest the public in public issues is the mission of the League of Women Voters, too – although we may describe it in other terms, such as “encourage citizen participation” or “make democracy work.”

WNS and its member organizations, including the League of Women Voters of Washington, work collaboratively to raise public awareness of important issues and events. WNS staff produce news stories on a wide variety of topics. The news service makes the stories available to radio stations (and, in many cases, to print media as well) at no cost. Many stations, often with little or no production staff, take advantage of the opportunity to download and air stories produced by WNS.

A League member with expertise on a particular issue may be called upon to offer commentary. The League is then credited in the story. When this happens we get a dual benefit: publicity for our organization as well as for an issue we care about.

Over the past 9 years, local Leagues including Bellingham-Whatcom, Clallam, King County South, Kitsap, Mason, Pullman, Seattle, Snohomish, Spokane Area, Tacoma-Pierce, Thurston and Yakima have made voluntary contributions that have enabled the state League to renew our WNS membership annually. Many of these Leagues have renewed their support during the current 2010-2011 year. We hope all local Leagues that can do so will join in supporting this worthwhile enterprise.

Submitted by Lucy Copass,
LWVWA Community Relations (off board)

Civics Education Grants Make a Difference

The Civic Education Grants are designed to help local League's connect with the community, build new coalitions and reach out to voters. We know that Local Leagues are always trying to do these things, but the grant program was established to help with funding. The Grants can facilitate Local Leagues with those projects that you'd like to do for growth and visibility as you carry out your educational mission.

So far this year the Education Fund has given Civic Education Grants to support a variety of great projects:

Spokane Area: Sponsorship of documentary film about the suffrage fight: 'Courage in Corsets'

Kitsap County: - Suffrage Dinner & Celebration activities from July to November and publicity surrounding candidate forums

Pullman - Publicity kit materials & outreach for Election Education Forums

King County South - Conversation Cafe discussions about the impact of violence in the community. A discussion of the book, 'The Nine: Inside the Secret World of the Supreme Court' plus a luncheon featuring Supreme Court Justice Barbara Madson as the speaker.

Clallam County - Organization of a Food Policy Summit to pursue establishing local Food Policy Councils

Bellingham Whatcom/County - Enhancements to election forums and 'Conversations with Elected Officials' event plus a project to honor Suffragists of the 21st Century - some unsung heroes in the community.

Gray's Harbor - Production of educational televised series entitled: "Improving Civil Discourse" which will be used in schools throughout the area.

The projects represent what each Local League is passionate about doing -- from marching in a parade to hosting a meal or engaging in small group meetings. In their own ways, Local Leagues used the grants to enhance the programs and be more effective in their outreach and coalition building. Kudos to all the volunteers who made these events successful!

However, this fund is still under utilized. Every League can participate!

The Ed Fund Board voted to revise the policy for the Civic Education Fund Grants at their last meeting.

Drum roll please...

If your local League has an extraordinary project in mind, the grant is no longer limited to only \$750. The Board wants to encourage you to use the money and not be constrained if you have a great idea and the volunteer power to get the project done!

The Guidelines have been updated as follows:

Grant Limits

- During each fiscal year (July 1 – June 30) until June 30, 2013, \$500 in grant money is available to each local League.
- Grants can be awarded as one grant of \$500 or two separate grants of \$250 each.
- For extraordinary outreach projects the \$500 annual limit will be increased.

Complete guidelines for the Civic Education Grant are found in the Handbook for Local Leagues on the state website:

Your Education Fund

[A Handbook for Local Leagues](http://www.lwvwa.org/studies.html)
at <http://www.lwvwa.org/studies.html>

Also new for 2011:

You may submit a Civic Education Grant request or a request to use money in your own Education Fund by using an online form.

Just click on the appropriate approval request form located on the website beneath the Handbook for Local Leagues.

Contact the office if you have problems or questions with the online forms or if you would like to talk about a project idea.

Thurston Commissioners Put Environment First; Enact Moratorium on Biomass

Late last December, the Thurston County Board of Commissioners met in a brief special session and voted to place a one-year moratorium on biomass burning facilities in the County. It was a thoughtful and courageous decision, and one that is supported by LWVWA and local leagues, based on our positions on natural resource protection.

The one biomass plant proposed here--at The Evergreen State College--is not large compared to facilities operating and on the planning boards elsewhere in Western Washington (notably Mason, Jefferson, Clallam Counties and Gray's Harbor Counties), but the moratorium's significance far transcends that plant's dimensions and the county's boundaries.

For Leaguers unfamiliar with the biomass debate, here's some background:

Woody biomass burning has only recently been envisioned as a potential major energy source in the United States, promoted in the name of reducing fossil fuel dependence and lowering our carbon footprint. Scientists several years ago hypothesized that biomass burning is a "carbon neutral" process, because the trees regrow to resume the uptake of carbon. The prospect of using forest debris--slash from logging operations or trees killed by diseases, infestations and severe weather events--as a fossil fuel replacement rather than letting it "go to waste" or burn on denuded hillsides--seemed eminently sensible and persuasive.

But the presumption of carbon neutrality has since been found flawed-, and it appears that woody biomass burning does indeed add to the carbon footprint and emit other pollutants that compromise human health. Moreover, the amounts of fuel needed to supply the proposed facilities seem likely, in the future, to promote or require the logging of healthy forests throughout Western Washington.

In the meantime, however, a powerful biomass burning industry has emerged, with champions in government--including, notably, Washington State Lands Commissioner Peter Goldmark and Governor Christine Gregoire, who continue to advocate greatly expanded biomass development. And the concept of "carbon neutrality" for biomass, though largely disavowed by science, has been embedded in Washington state law.

Earlier this month, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, perhaps in response to political pressure, decided to defer a rulemaking on biomass carbon emissions for three years. This is disappointing, in that it will likely complicate and delay the process of assuring that best available science is given precedence over considerations for corporate profits and financial incentives from government. Indeed, effective leadership from the federal (and state) government to protect the environment seems unlikely in the present economic climate, and thus we must look to Counties and local governmental units for meaningful action.

The League has no position on biomass burning *per se*. The current environmental priorities for LWVWA include eliminating the burning of coal for energy production and finding cleaner alternatives. Certainly the question of biomass burning can and should be considered in this context. We do not and should not assume that biomass burning should play no role in future energy production. But at present, it is clear that these proposals are being pushed forward with inappropriate haste, driven by funding protocols and potential tax benefits to the industries, and that irreversible harm to ecosystems and human health could result if they go forward without adequate attention to the critical questions that have been raised.

There are several measures in the Legislature this season dealing with biomass development, so stay tuned. (We can also urge our legislators to enact a similar moratorium for the state, despite long odds against passage of such a measure.) Meanwhile, we hope the Thurston County moratorium will remain in place the rest of the year, and that other counties will follow suit.

(Clallam and Mason County are among the local Leagues that are active on this issue.)

More info and supporting documents: Peggy Bruton, gimleteye@comcast.net
In Mason County: Connie Simpson, cgreyhorse@gmail.com
In Clallam County: Lounette Templeton, lounettet@wavecable.com

Peggy Bruton 360 866-7165
gimleteye@comcast.net



League of Women Voters of Washington
4730 University Way NE, #720
Seattle, WA 98105

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LEAGUE WEBSITES AND LISTSERVE RESOURCES

www.lwvwa.org, The League of Women Voters of Washington website provides tools to get involved in the democratic process. Some of the pages are:

Positions, Action and Advocacy—information on League issues, legislative priorities and state government links.

Local Leagues—links to their pages

Members only—(for user name and password, contact state office): Includes lists of state board members, local League leaders, policies and procedures, bylaws, guidelines for Leagues and the Civic Engagement Project papers.

www.washingtonvoter.org. A nonpartisan website for Washington state voting information and elections (a project of LWVW Education Fund). Includes information about registering to vote, a candidates' page and ballot issues page.

www.vote411.org, --non-partisan election information (also from LWV Ed Fund).

www.secstate.wa.gov The Secretary of State's website, with extensive information on voter registration as well as a list of candidates who have filed, initiatives filed, and a state voters' pamphlet.

<http://www.lwvwa.org/positions.html> Subscribe to the LWVWA Legislative Newsletter!

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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