



WASHINGTON STATE

VOTER

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The League of Women Voters of Washington, 4710 University Way NE, #214, Seattle, WA 98105
Tel: 206-622-8961 FAX: 206-622-4908 (outside toll area 1-800-419-2596) email: lwvwa@lwvwa.org

Barbara Seitle, President
Betsy Greene, Editor

SIMPLE MAJORITY ON NOVEMBER BALLOT

In November 2007, for the first time in sixty-three years, the voters of Washington State will have the opportunity to vote on a constitutional amendment (Engrossed House Joint Resolution 4204) which, if approved, will allow school district levies to pass with a Simple Majority rather than a super majority. Since 1977 the League of Women Voters of Washington has had a position that school levies should be passed with a Simple Majority and supports a Yes vote on EHJR 4204.

Washington's constitution states there is no higher priority than the education of all children. Despite this primary mission, school districts are subject to an obsolete constitutional requirement of a higher "supermajority" threshold for voter approval of school levies. The supermajority requirement allows a minority of voters to prevent resources for student learning when the majority supports those resources.

In 1944 when voters passed the constitutional amendment requiring a 60% super majority to pass school levies, there were over 2000 school districts and elections were held without public notice. In 2007 there are 295 school districts, public notice is required for all elections, and there are

newspaper articles and other communications about election issues. All elections must be run on specific dates, most counties have gone to all mail-in elections, and all voters have the right to receive a ballot in the mail. Therefore, "stealth" elections are impossible.

At the LWVWA state convention, a Simple Majority caucus brought together League members from across the state to work to ensure passage of EHJR 4204. These League members will partner with their local school districts, PTAs, levy committees, AAUW, and others to educate their communities about EHJR 4204.

Officials are elected with a Simple Majority, initiatives and referenda are passed with a Simple Majority, and most local jurisdictions pass taxes with a Simple Majority. The Simple Majority is fair, it is the American way, and it is democracy in action. EHJR 4204 would restore fairness and equity by allowing school levies to be approved by a majority of those voting (and, by the way, EHJR 4204 can be passed with a Simple Majority).

Catherine Ahl, Education Portfolio Chair

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Convention 2007 has come and gone. We are reviewing the evaluations we received (you can still send one in if you neglected to leave it) and are very pleased with the constructive comments the delegates made. You have given us some good direction not only for Convention 2009, but for some workshops at Council 2008.

The theme for Convention was "Setting Priorities", and two of the final workshops were "Setting Priorities for Local Leagues" and "Setting Priorities for the State League". The state board will be meeting August 10 to review the report from the workshop and set its priorities for the year. Local League delegates were asked to write one thing they wanted to take away from Convention and implement when they got home. We look forward to reports on how well that is going.

The workshops all generated a lot of interest not only in League procedures, but in who does what. For a list of state officers, directors, staff, and portfolio chairs, please refer to our website at lwvwa.org for an updated list. We would like to have local League portfolio chairs or action chairs contact their state counterparts and let them know what you are working on locally; are you doing a study they might be interested in, have you held a forum or a meeting about a particular subject? They would like to know. We are very interested in having our programs reflective of the state. The flip side is that they may be able to help you set up a meeting or a forum, or get assistance from the LWVWA or a coalition we belong to.

We also passed four Resolutions and one study (see articles in this *Voter*), passed a budget for the next two years, developed a new position from the Election Reform study, re-adopted our existing positions, and elected a new board of directors and nominating committee.

We have five new directors on the state board this year and the nominating committee did an excellent job in achieving a board that truly reflects the membership of the state. The Leagues represented are Cowlitz, Kitsap, Pullman, Seattle, Spokane, Snohomish, Tacoma, and South Whidbey Island.

This past spring, the state board re-instituted the liaison program whereby each board member acted as a liaison

for two or three Local Leagues. We intend to be even more proactive with that program in the next two years to maintain the dialogue we began at Convention.

So, let us continue moving forward together to achieve our strategic goals:

- to be more visible in our communities
- to increase the membership that is so vital to our organization
- to reach out to other organizations that have similar goals for good government, quality education, health, the environment and social justice

Thank you for the opportunity to serve as your president. I look forward to another two years of working with all of you to strengthen League in Washington.

Barbara

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2007-2009**

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LWVUS COUNCIL 2007

The focus of Council this year was the League process for decision-making. We began with Program; program planning as in selecting a study, coming to consensus, and from there, developing a position and taking action. Participation in program planning for LWVUS by local and state Leagues is way down; only 29% of Leagues participated in 2006. Question: is the system broken, or are Leagues satisfied with what is happening? There was discussion, but no conclusion reached. Presentations were made, and dialogue with the board followed on Concurrence, Consensus, Advocacy, and the appropriate use of Resolutions. We brought back a lot of ideas for dialogue at our state Council in 2008.

Membership recruitment is frequently on the agenda and this year was no exception. A report was given on the Membership Recruitment Initiative of 2006-7 in which five local Leagues participated, the results of which are posted on the LWVUS website.

Presentations were also made on the progress of the immigration study and the task force on global climate change as well as the internet neutrality task force.

There was an impassioned presentation by Congresswoman Eleanor Holmes Norton, Delegate for the District of Columbia, on D. C. voting rights Sunday afternoon, and a workshop presentation on a fair and independent judiciary later that day. The banquet speaker was Ray Suarez of the News Hour, after which he signed copies of his new book on immigration.

The highlight of Monday morning was a panel discussion on immigration. The League immigration study was shortened last year to a two year study instead of three. It is on track for local League consensus this fall. Please refer to the calendar in this *Voter*. Meanwhile, read the article in the February 2007 National *Voter* and on-line at www.lwv.org.

President Mary Wilson's opening remarks, as well as more detailed information on Council 2007 is available on the LWVUS website. It is recommended reading for all.

Both LWVUS and LWVWA hold Council within 12 months after Convention. The purpose of Council is to give guidance to the board on program and methods of work, as well as pass the annual budget. Each state League is permitted two delegates, as is the District of Columbia League, and each major city, one delegate. Washington was represented by Barbara Seitle and Barbara Bush, and Seattle was represented by Denise Smith.

Barbara Seitle

What is consensus?

It is easier to say what consensus is not, than what it is. Consensus is not a vote - rather, consensus is mutual agreement of League members arrived at through discussion. During discussion, everyone has the opportunity to express their viewpoints, and the issue is examined from all sides. Consensus questions, created by the appropriate study committee and approved by the Board provide structure for the meeting, as members discuss the pros and cons until it becomes apparent whether or not consensus has been reached on each question. The study committee analyzes the consensus responses and using this information, creates a position statement. Once approved by the Board, the statement immediately becomes the League's position and is the basis for action on the issue. This type of member involvement in the organization and its consensus process tends to ensure member commitment to the resulting positions. In addition, members have the opportunity at each Annual Meeting or Convention to decide whether or not to re-adopt these positions.

From lwv.org

Spotlight on Local Leagues

LWV–Pullman and the WSU Thomas J. Foley Institute presented a two day program on Judicial Independence in April. Gerry Alexander, Chief Justice of the Washington State Supreme Court spoke on “Safeguarding Citizens’ Rights: the Role of an Independent Judiciary”, followed by commentary by WSU Political Science Professor J. Mitchell Pickerill at a public forum. At a public luncheon the next day, Chief Justice Alexander spoke about “The Selection of Judges”. He also met with WSU students in classes on campus. Chief Justice Alexander’s appearance in Pullman was funded by a grant from the LWVUS Education Fund, and the Program on Constitutional and Legal Policy of the Open Society Institute.

LWV–Yakima County published *Examining the Puzzle of Health Care for Children in Yakima County* as the culmination of their study of child health care in Yakima County.

LWV-Tacoma-Pierce County published *How Well Do You Know Your Library an Examination of Library Services in Pierce County*.

The LWVWA Ferry Study is available online, www.lwvwa.org, with the discussion and consensus in the Members Only section. Copies of the study were distributed to local Leagues at convention.

Study of Early Care and Education of Young Children - Birth to Age Five adopted at LWVWA Convention

This one year study will use the *High Priority: Study of Early Care and Education of Young Children*, Seattle/LWV, 2005, as a primary resource, look at recent state legislation as well as other appropriate reports to update the 1984 LWVWA Day Care position.

Something NEW - State Committees

Calling all Leaguers interested in issues of statewide concern.

Two committees will tentatively meet at the same time and in the same general place in Ellensburg in September to do at least the following:

- decide how each statewide group should work
- what it should work on
- what its goal should be for the year.

At this writing, the committees, their chairs and contact information include:

Health: Ann Brand, 206-852-2945, anlbrand@comcast.net

Transportation: Linnea Hirst, 206-322-3076, lwvquilter@comcast.net

The hope is that each Local League has at least one member interested in each of these committees so that every League will be represented on each. Please, send names and contact information by summer’s end

There are other League issues which might benefit by having a statewide committee so it is possible others will be formed. Leaders need not be Portfolio Chairs. Tell the state office if you are interested.

Linnea Hirst, Program Chair

Board Splinters

June 21, 2007

The LWVWA board voted to:

- **Oppose I-960**
- **Continue membership in the Washington Coalition for Insurance Parity**

Home Visits for Children with Asthma Reduce Suffering and Health Costs

Study and action by the LWVW and their Lobby Team played a major role in obtaining funding from the 2007 Legislature for a pilot program to help 720 low income children with moderate to severe asthma in King County. Trained and culturally appropriate community health workers (CHW) supervised by nurses and physicians will provide three home visits, Hoover vacuums with dirt finders, allergy control bedding covers, a commercial door mat, and a home environmental assessment to reduce exposure to asthma triggers. Using the vacuum and covers reduces exposure to dust, dust mites, mold, other allergens, brominated flame retardants (PBDEs), phthalates, lead, pesticides, and many endocrine disruptors that mimic hormones in the body. Low cost actions that improve ventilation such as cleaning out fans and opening windows also reduce exposure.

The home visits are estimated to cost \$786 per child and produce a saving of \$2300 through fewer stressful visits for the child and family to hospitals, emergency rooms, and doctors. This pilot program will help establish standards for selection, training, and administering of CHW that will allow this pilot program to be efficiently duplicated for the 39,000 children in this state and the millions of kids in the US who have two or more asthma symptom days each week.

Senator Jeanne Kohl-Welles and Representative Shay Schual-Berke, MD were the legislator champions for this budget proviso with strong support from many legislators west of the Cascade Mountains. LWVWA worked with the American Lung Association of Washington (ALAW), the Public Health Seattle King County (PHSKC who will administer the program), and the Washington Physicians for Social Responsibility (WPSR) who lobbied hard for the program. The careful scientific justification by James Krieger, MD of PHSKC was convincing as was the determination of our champions. There is much documentation that

home visits reduce asthma, health costs, and absence from school as well as early learning problems for preschool children. The US Institute of Medicine's asthma guidelines recommend such action.

Perhaps health maintenance organizations (HMOs) will cover home visits for such children when their large customers and the State Insurance Commissioner ask for such coverage along with a sharing of the savings in reduced premiums. A joint letter written by the LWVWA, ALAW, and WPSR to all the HMOs in the State in August of 2006 asking for consideration of such coverage has not produced much action. The State Department of Social and Health Services has shown a keen interest in getting Medicaid children with asthma into this program to reduce the 50% of medical costs that the State pays. The US Medicaid program which pays the other 50% will also see a cost reduction.

Anyone in the greater Seattle area who has asthma or wants a healthier home can ask for a free home visit by a Master Home Environmentalist (MHE) by calling the ALAW at 206-441-5100 or www.alaw.org/mhe. MHE trainings are given in the spring and fall. Study, consensus, and action by the LWVW and LWVWA lead to the founding of the MHE program in 1992. It has spread to 18 cities in the US.

John Roberts, Chair Home Environment Committee

LWVWA Education Fund Wins Award

The Washington State Bar Association Council on Public Legal Education voted to give its Flame of Democracy Award to LWVWA EF for *The State We're in: Washington* and its general body of work.

Resolutions

Adopted by Convention Delegates

Civics Education

Whereas, in 2006 the Legislature amended earlier (2004) legislation to mandate the teaching and assessment of civics education in elementary, middle, and high schools beginning with the 2008-09 school year, and the funding of pilot projects around the state to develop a curriculum, including innovative civics projects and assessments, and

Whereas, with the emergent lingo "Classroom Based Assessments" (CBAs), a civics CBA is a module designed to teach about government through hands-on, creative projects which give students opportunities to reason about issues. Each CBA will include an individual written product, submitted for assessment. OSPI reports that teachers are enthusiastic about this un-WASL like approach, and they are eager for curriculum and training, and

Whereas, the funding for developing and implementing CBAs has been minimal with this year's appropriation at \$47,000 and next year at \$36,000 for a system with 295 school districts in the state. This year math and science received most of the available education funds, leaving civics high and dry. In 2008 a request will be made for \$1.4 million for civics education, the arts, and health – with the bulk going to civics, and

Whereas, many League positions could be cited, two stand out. A core Principle of LWVUS begins: "The LWV believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens...." Training children to be informed and active citizens is the purpose of the program under discussion – which was enacted in law in 2006. This brings us to the LWVWA education position that "All programs mandated by the legislature should be fully funded by the state." We must insist on it.

Therefore, be it resolved, The League of Women Voters of Washington, meeting in Convention in Vancouver, WA, June 22-24, 2007, give priority to supporting appropriations requests for the development and implementation of the 2006 legislative mandate to teach and assess civics at the elementary, middle, and high school levels.

And Whereas, Leaguers across the state will want to support civics education because K-12 civics education is so essential to our mission. In developing community support for legislation or an educational project for students, sharing of information with local Leagues will be necessary.

Be if Further Resolved, that LWVWA help local Leagues give their support to civics education (a) by issuing Action Alerts to local Leagues about relevant legislation as it arises, and (b) by facilitating communication among local Leagues about civics education projects they are developing.

Climate Change

Whereas, due to the urgency of the global warming/climate change issue and the need for immediate action,

Therefore, be it resolved, by The League of Women Voters of Washington, meeting in Convention in Vancouver, WA, June 22-24, 2007, that climate change legislation and public education on available solutions be made a top priority by the LWVWA.

Governor Thank You

Whereas, Governor Chris Gregoire established the Blue Ribbon Commission to evaluate the needs and potential for improved health and health care for all in Washington State, and

Whereas, she has demonstrated outstanding leadership in providing healthcare for all the children of Washington, and

Whereas, she continues to emphasize the importance of prevention and wellness activities, and

Whereas, she has signed legislation that creates mental health parity for those who are insured,

Therefore, be it resolved, The League of Women Voters of Washington, meeting in Convention in Vancouver, WA, June 22-24, 2007, send a letter to Governor Chris Gregoire to heartily thank and commend her for outstanding leadership, and urge her to continue to promote universal coverage with adequate benefits for all residents of Washington State.

State Children's Health Insurance Program

Whereas, the Federal-State Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) is up for reauthorization in Congress this year, and

Whereas, SCHIP has been remarkably effective in assuring health care coverage for otherwise uninsured children in Washington, and

Whereas, it is the goal of Washington to assure health care coverage for all of Washington's children, 133,440 of whom remain uninsured even after the recently enacted expansion in coverage by the State, and

Whereas, this goal can be achieved only through the federal-state partnership in funding available to the state through the State Children's Health Insurance Program, and

Whereas, the budget resolution passed by the Senate and the House of Representatives in March, 2007, set aside \$50 billion—on top of the current level of \$25 billion—for SCHIP over the next five years, therefore

Be it hereby resolved that the League of Women Voters of Washington State, meeting in Convention at Vancouver, WA, on June 24, 2007 urge LWVUS to communicate to our Members of Congress to vigorous support of the enactment of SCHIP reauthorization with the additional \$50 billion included in the budget resolution.

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 the League of Women Voters of Washington, 4710 University Way NE, Suite #214, Seattle, WA 98105

Calendar

State Board Retreat - August 10, 2007

Primary Election - August 21, 2007

State Board Meeting - September 14, 2007

Action Workshop, November 10, 2007

Washington State Ferry Study consensus due
in LWVWA office, December 4, 2007

LWVUS Immigration Study Leader's Guide
with consensus questions distributed
September 1, 2007

Local Leagues take consensus - September
2007 to January 2008

Consensus due at LWVUS - February 1, 2008
LWVUS adopts position - March/April 2008



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