

THE VOTER



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This Newsletter published by and for the League of Women Voters of Yakima County

MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

VISION

To empower citizens to shape better communities worldwide.

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LWVWA: www.lwvwa.org

Our League Story:

Presented November 16th, 2010

Charlotte Kendrick

by Jane Sarmiento-Schwab

Charlotte Kendrick was the spark that ignited the idea for a Yakima chapter of the League of Women Voters. Since I suspected that Charlotte would be reticent to talk about her role as the catalyst who brought together other women to found the League, I first spoke to Joyce Dennison, a long-term member. She characterized Charlotte and the other women who nurtured and supported the formation of the League as “gutsy, bright, and independent women.” Their efforts made the League a reality in 1950. See page 2.

INSIDE

Pages 5-8, The League Forum: “City Council vs. Mayor”

Page 4, Review of the Basic Rules of the League, Linnea Hirst, LWVWA, President.

Page 9, Registration forms for League Lobby Day: Feb. 24th.

I then met with Charlotte for her perspective on how the League came into its own. She emphasized that the League was to be a non-partisan organization. In our often partisan world, it isn't easy for people to take off their partisan hats. This was true for the Yakima League. Charlotte said it was challenging to think in non-partisan terms. With persistence, the League succeeded in keeping the non-partisan hat firmly on its head.

Charlotte credits the other founders for setting the tone for non-partisanship. Thus, the Yakima chapter mirrored the national organization's neutrality on political parties, candidates, and issues. Only after research, study and consensus would the League take a stand on an issue.

Charlotte emphasized that “a whole lot of people backed me up” in building a non-partisan coalition, made possible because women from both political parties joined together in the League venture. Basically, they included Lois Hoff, Laura Hopp, Elaine Stevenson and Ann Gilbert Ulrich, the first president, someone Charlotte described as gracious with her time and energy. Charlotte's mother, influential in forming a League in Richland, spurred Charlotte on in this endeavor for Yakima.

To forge non-partisan projects, it was vital for the League to be represented by both Republicans and Democrats. For this, Charlotte sang the praises of Lois Hoff whom she fondly called, “Mrs. Republican”, adding that she was a respected community member who enticed many into the League or solicited their support for the organization.

Besides these incredible women, a League representative from the Tri-Cities came to Yakima to assist the new chapter with its bi-laws.

The hard work of garnering members challenged the group. Membership drives were necessary and, Charlotte noted, “We emphasized the idea that asking for donations would advertise what the League could do for Yakima.” It gave her and other members an opportunity to talk to businesses to explain the League's purpose in a very direct way. This required making appointments and preparing a pitch to sell the League.

Charlotte liked to talk about the League's purpose in answering a community need for a non-partisan group that would get people together to learn about issues affecting the whole community. She admitted that she preferred organizing events rather than asking for donations. Early meetings were held in people's homes on a regular basis and some meetings were social. National meetings were too expensive to attend.

With fondness and pride, Charlotte remembers her efforts in putting out a newsletter informing the community of League activities. She thought of her total involvement in the League as “one thing I could do for the “community.”

I asked what her husband Leo thought of her involvement with the League. She answered, “I'm sure Leo was very pleased.” I would surmise that Leo was pleased to see a determined partner take on a project that could enlighten

Leo and Charlotte settled in Yakima as an ideal-sized town to rear a family. And we're glad they chose Yakima as both of the Kendricks contributed greatly to Yakima.

Michael and I enjoyed many evenings at the Kendrick home. It was lovely for me to spend a couple of afternoons visiting with Charlotte about her memories of the early days of the League. For those of you who don't know Charlotte, let me say that not only is she intelligent with a good sense of humor, she's also intuitive and very graceful in her dealings with others. I always think of Charlotte with a ready smile and a sincere interest in others. It is appropriate that she is honored today for her leadership in giving the League its start in Yakima.

A Review of the Basics of League Governance by Linnea Hirst, LWVWA President

Nonpartisan Policy: we do not support or oppose candidates for public office. Ever.

We do work hard to inform and educate the public:

Candidate Debates: 3 important sources from LWVUS, www.lwv.org :

League Basics

Guidelines for State and Local League Debates, including “Empty Chair” situations

Face to Face: A Guide to Candidate Debates, especially Legal Consideration section

(Can be funded through Ed Fund.)

Advocacy: Based on member study and agreement on selected issues. Involves concerted efforts to achieve public policies consistent with League positions. Advocating change through education of policymakers and the public is education and *a legitimate use of Ed Fund money*.

Lobbying: Promotes or opposes specific pieces of legislation. *(Can't be funded by Ed Fund.)*

Voter Services: Designed to provide citizens with unbiased, factual information that they can use as a basis for reaching their own decisions. Voter services materials must not contain statements of League positions, and League positions on ballot issues must not be discussed at voter services events. *(Ed Fund money can be used.)*

Citizen education activities: provide information on public issues, including those on which we have a position. By law and by League policy, it isn't necessary to present both sides of an issue in such situations.

League can present educational forums about issues on which the League has a position, provided that the discussions focus on issues of concern rather than the merits of specific pieces of legislation, no lobbying takes place and no call to action is issued.

(Can use Ed Fund money.)

Lobbying activities must be kept completely separate from voter service activities, and voters' guides and other voter services materials and publications must not contain statements of League positions.

Only the president or designee is permitted to speak for the League. All members are strongly encouraged to take action, but should in no way indicate that they are League members in their communications.

Linnea Hirst, President

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January 16th Yakima County League Forum Report by Elaine Smith

Reception: Doris Ayyoub

Welcome: Cynthia Garrick, LWVYC President

Introductions: Mary Crago, VP for Programs

Emcee: Becky Scholl,

Lunch: Kitty Jubran, Jackie Call, Karen Pilon, Vickie Whiteman

Panel:

Ben Shoval, real estate developer, “Strong Mayor” advocate and donor.

Mary Place, former council member and former mayor.

Wes Crago, City Executive, Ephrata, Washington.

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?”

Ben Shoval: A strong mayor elected directly by the voters will have a positive effect on crime (gang violence) and infrastructure (e.g., potholes.) The question to ask yourself is “How do you feel about the issue?” Do you want to replace the current system with a new one or retain the status quo? Do you see a problem with current system or are you happy with the current system?

Mary Place: Proposition One (1) up before the voters was “rushed out” of the council without a public review of the actual language of the charter revision. For example, Article II, Section 5, does not give the City Council access to the city staff. This will necessitate the Council hiring additional staff at an additional expense for the city.

The mayor hires with the Council's approval but he/she fires on his/her own, decides the duties of Boards and Commissions and can remove members of those bodies on his/her own. He/She is responsible for all laws by which “law and order” are maintained, brings city laws, ordinances and regulations (i.e., legislation) to the Council

which means there is no “separation of powers.” He/She can adopt measures as he/she sees fit. A super majority of five (5) is required to override a mayor's legislative proposal. Through an elected mayor, political pressure can enter into actions and policies of the city in, for example, land use and the awarding of contracts. Yakima has an annual budget of 200 million; on average 2000 checks are issued by the city per month. Yet it is proposed that an elected mayor could “hold another job.”

Article VI, in Ms. Place's opinion, outlines an “unworkable system.” What would be the mayor's qualifications as compared to those of a professionally trained manager? His/Her attendance requirement for council meetings is lax. He/She could miss a full two months of meetings. He/She can remove and replace departments. He/She has to negotiate with thirteen (13) city unions. His/Her accountability will be to fund-raisers not to the city or its citizens.

The current council system has produced good mayors who have done well in crises: e.g., Betty Edmonson, Henry Beauchamp, Pat Berndt, Clarence Barnett. The current council design is a “corporate” model of Board of Directors and Management. A “strong mayor” design introduces “politics” in the management of a \$200 million budget. It is a design which will cost money and not be efficient.

Wes Crago: Mr. Crago compared the two forms of governance. His position on the issue is based on his background both as a city councilman in a Council/Manager format (formerly in Ephrata) and as a city administrator in an elected Mayor format (currently in Ephrata). He qualified his personal preference for the elected Mayor format by saying that his experience in Ephrata determines his opinion. He qualified all of his statements with the generalization that WHO is elected in either format is more important to the success of city government than the form of government selected. The particular character of a city (i.e., population, economic base, size) and the PERSONS ELECTED are the most important considerations in the success of city governance. He urged those in the audience to stay involved in the issue and in the workings of the city regardless of the outcome of the special election before us. The differences in the model of governance do not affect the cost of governance. Whether the change is expensive or cost neutral depends on other factors than the form of city governance.

Mr. Crago's two page comparison of the two forms of governance is available from the League office, 509 452 3419 and on the Yakima League Website, lwvwa.org/yakima/index.html.

Written questions from the audience were sorted and presented by Becky Scholl, who also reminded the body that the League standard is “civil discourse” in a public forum.

Many questions referred to the signs distributed throughout the city which claim that a “strong mayor” choice will affect crime and taxes. Ben Shoval's response was that typically a “strong,” elected mayor will focus on crime and that he/she will spend more on policing and less on programs that currently address crime through community interaction.

Mary Place responded that the state budget affects crime and criminal sentencing. Some questioners asked “who is behind” the proposition. Who wrote the proposition to amend the city charter? Who contributed to the campaign?

Mary Place reminded the group of the recent WalMart controversy. In her opinion, the “strong mayor” proposition is backed by “land developers” and hands decision making power to one person: the mayor. And despite complaints of delays in local decision making regarding land use by contractors, “land use is controlled by state government regulations.”

Ben Shoval suggested that some who criticize the proposal have “an ax to grind.” The proposal was prepared by a committee of city council members; a draft of the proposal was reviewed by the city's attorney and given two public hearings.

Mary Place challenged the statement that the review given the proposal qualified as a public hearings. The only public hearings were on the question of whether to create a proposal for a public vote. The proposal language itself was not given a public review.

The two panelists did not agree on the issue of the cost of a change. They did not agree on the question of the efficiency of the two forms of city governance.

Wes Crago reminded the body that the efficiency of either form of governance depends entirely on the quality of leadership in the elected officials. He reminded the audience again that the quality of leaders depends entirely on the continuing involvement of citizens in their local government of which this forum was an example.

A SAMPLING OF QUESTIONS FROM THE AUDIENCE
City Council/Mayor Forum, January 16, 2011
by MARY CRAGO, V.P. for Programs

**The vast majority of questions dealt with how a strong mayor would make a big difference: lower taxes but make safer streets?*

**Many wished to know who exactly are the financial contributors to the campaign for change, and why.*

**Who, beyond the financial contributors, were from among city residents involved in the amendment drafting process?*

**How would the city benefit if the mayor can also "not be restricted from other employment?" *If a strong major has to appoint a city manager, how does it reduce costs for the taxpayer?*

**Many people wanted to know more specifics than were printed in the Sunday Herald-Republic (salaries, adding another layer of administration, taking care of our infrastructure but not raising taxes, etc., the money concerns)*

**Is this really a proposal about safe streets and taxes? The charter change allows the strong mayor to override a denial of a variance. Isn't this just a way to get special treatment for special interests?*

**There is a commonly held belief that this movement is coming from a conservative block and friends rather than anyone from the general citizenry.*

**What effect would this change have on redistricting?*

**Wouldn't this non-partisan race obviously be ideological and partisan?*

League of Women Voters of Washington

LOBBY DAY

Thursday, February 24, 2011

Registration 8:30am; Program begins 9:00am

REGISTRATION

Cost: \$25 per person

Lunch Provided

Columbia Room, State Capitol, Olympia

Name _____

Address* _____

City, State, Zip _____

Tel/email _____

__ VISA __ Mastercard# _____

exp. date _____

Check enclosed _____

Mail to: LWVWA, 4730 University Way N.E., Suite #720, Seattle, WA 98105

*required for credit card processing

* You will make a difference when you come to Lobby Day at our State Capitol.

* Learn how to help our Volunteer Lobby Team and then put it in practice immediately.

* Make appointments NOW to meet your Legislators and spread the League's priorities (find the 2011 LWVWA Priorities at www.lwvwa.org under Positions.)

Directions:

From I-5 Southbound: Bear right on ramp at sign reading "Exit 105A to State Capitol" and go west for 0.8 miles. Continue on 14th Avenue SE and go west for 0.4 miles to the Visitor Information Center at Capitol Way S at 14th Avenue SW

From I-5 Northbound: Bear right on ramp at sign reading "Exit 105A to State Capitol" and go northeast for 0.3 miles. Bear right on 14th Avenue SE and go west for 0.6 miles to Capitol Way S at 14th Avenue SW.

You can see a map at <http://www.ga.wa.gov/visitor/direction.htm>

Or, you can check out the Legislature web-site at <http://www.leg.wa.gov/legislature/pages/visitingthelegislature.aspx>

League of Women Voters Of Yakima County

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Return Service Requested

Voter

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF YAKIMA
COUNTY

Cordially invites you to: JOIN US!

Name: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

E-Mail: _____

Membership Categories:

_____ **\$10 Student Associate**

_____ **\$60 Basic**

_____ **\$70 Contributing**

_____ **\$80 Supporting**

_____ **\$40** Each additional family member

at the same residence

Student Associate is not a voting member