

LWVWA's Civics Education Project about Public Hospital Districts

LWVWA's position on health care is clear: all people should have access to the health care they need; and it should be affordable, geographically accessible, and cover all legally approved services including abortion and end of life care.

First, this is not about a Public Health Department, but a Public Hospital District (PHD). A PHD is organized to assure a community has access to the health care services it deems necessary or desires. Because a PHD is governed by elected officials and paid for by property taxes, the community has a vote.

At the state League Convention in June, delegates voted unanimously to approve the PHD Civics Education Project. Understanding existing PHDs in our state (currently there are 58) and what healthcare is offered by the PHDs in those communities will provide needed grounding for this project and is what the project team will tackle first. Currently only 44 PHDs have hospitals. However, a PHD also may also provide a service or services not being offered by a hospital such as hospice or emergency care. Whether or not PHDs are providing legally approved services for their communities will also to be collected during this phase. As hospital mergers are becoming more common place and secular health care is being lost, PHDs might fill needed gaps.

Next, understanding the degree to which local Leagues are aware of the management process of PHDs, and how the community can be informed and involved will guide development of tools. These tools will be offered to Leagues so they may provide education to community members regarding what health care options are currently being offered, and what might be improved or added. How to influence health care service decisions through commissioner elections and citizen presence at PHD meetings is the goal of the project and fits nicely within the LWV's wheelhouse of a well-informed citizenry.

How might this project apply to us in this county, since we do not have a PHD? Recognizing that inadequate health care can adversely affect everyone, what do we know about healthcare in our county or district? Perhaps as a League we may identify there are missing services, and we need a PHD too!

Go [here](#) for more information on PHDs in Washington.

Contact the Civics Education PHD Project Team [here](#).