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A printable version of The Voter will be available at LWVSpokane.org

From the President

Jean Richardson

Learn by Doing

I'm writing this column on the 4 th of July. Couldn't be a more appropriate moment to think about our mission: Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

Each year, on or near the 4 th, I try to listen to a reading of the

Declaration of Independence. It only takes a few minutes to listen to these contemporary Americans read these 18 th century words that we say still motivate us today. It often causes me to think what a tremendous task this corps of volunteers undertook in forming a new country.

Shortly after I moved back to Eastern Washington, specifically, to Spokane a few years ago, I was browsing in Second Look Books and found a copy of my 7 th grade social studies textbook from Hartline school. It was pricey but also interesting. It is heavy as a brick and goes into the economics of farming in the area, geology, commerce, and “the geographic pattern of the population,” the subtitle being “A Regional, Human, and Economic Survey of Resources and Development.” I remembered it as being our text for civics, as well. Well, it was a long time ago, and you know what memory can be.

But, somehow, between my mother, who was also our Bluebird troop leader, taking us to tour the capitol in Olympia (have the pictures to prove it), me watching her climb the stairs to talk with the principal about the quality of education in our school, and the mornings watching Schoolhouse Rock animations about how a bill becomes a law, I learned a bit about civics. And then I spent 30 years sunk down in the fascinating world of software development, where big companies wag the dog on legislation, and working 60 hours per week and more means you haven’t a moment for the kind of citizen engagement that maintains a democracy.

I and so many others over the last few decades have been building our current society, and now, having looked up from our desks, many of us see a different world where the vote is not always accessible to our citizens, our society still doesn’t work for a large portion of the population, and the average person on the street has little idea how a bill becomes a

law—or how an idea becomes a bill, for that matter—and many have come to feel their precious vote doesn't matter.

The League's mission: Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy. That's a pretty big undertaking, and it cannot be accomplished in a matter of a few years. It is evergreen because children are constantly being born and immigrants are constantly arriving—maybe not as many or as quickly as some would deem right—in both cases—but new minds are needing civics education and modelling of civic engagement.

The last few years there have been so many new women joining the local League. Many of you are wanting to engage and requesting guidance. This year we have plans to add programs to facilitate learning about civic engagement—from book discussion groups to an opportunity to meet local representatives, followed by a trip to Olympia to see them in action. Being an engaged citizen is a multilevel experience; you choose both how deep you go and how high you soar. We are in a time where voting is not enough. I suspect many of our fellow citizens don't vote because they aren't sure where to start in understanding the issues.

You and the League can help here, too.

The League's **Observer Corp** is a group of members who commit (individually and sometimes in pairs or small groups) to attend these meetings and make notes about what they see, what concerns them about what is said in the meetings, how they are conducted, and what they think needs the League's attention. Observing our local government in action is key to understanding the issues facing the Spokane Area and disseminating important information to its citizens. Due to the pandemic many public meetings are now conducted online and recorded for later viewing, which can be an attractive option for some members who may

like to observe but are prevented by busy schedules. Please contact **LWVSALeadership@gmail.com**, if you are interested in learning more about this.

Voter Services is one of the most important parts of our program. Today, cheerful, trained volunteers “tabled” at an Independence Day event. They were prepared with educational materials about the League and materials for registering new voters and helping those new voters understand how to vote in Washington state. With all the new folks moving in, sometimes people are not new to voting so much as to voting in their new home town. You can help them understand how to be a voter in Washington. **Elaine Harger, the new chair of Voter Services**, can get you connected as a tabling volunteer, too. These are short term, even one-time commitments—or you can make a career of it if you choose. Please contact her at **eharger@drizzle.com**.

The **civics education program** seeks volunteers which they train to speak in the local public schools in support of the civics education program. Our Civics Bowl program on KSPS has won a national award for its quality. Reach out to **LWVSALeadership@gmail.com** to express interest and be connected to a committee chair.

There are **issue committees active around affordable housing and homelessness and the environment** in this League that would be happy to have you involved in their research and education efforts. Contact **LWVSALeadership@gmail.com**, and we will route you to the chair of the committee you are interested in.

And, if all this sounds a bit overwhelming, **come to the luncheon on the second Friday of the month (this month at Perkins on Division)**, and we can chat about your interests, what brought you to the League, and

how you can include yourself in activities that interest you and benefit the League. Or come to a general membership meeting (they resume in September) and reach out to me there. I'd be happy to get to know you and help you find a place where your interests in joining the League can be met.

I don't know what it was about my mother and friend, Wilma, climbing the stairs at the grade school that so sticks in my mind. I knew she was coming to talk to the principal about something she thought should change. I knew somehow she was involved with educational quality and that she knew how the state government worked and thought we should, too. I suppose it had something to do with the do-it-yourselfness of her approach. She talked with friends, attended PTA meetings, and talked with people in power about what she thought should change. She didn't have a fancy education at the time; rather, she was later part of the wave of "returning women students" in the 70's and 80's. She just did her homework and spoke up. **She left with me an impression that anyone could---and citizens should---speak up about the running of the country, starting at the local level.**

Last week, I had an interesting experience. I tracked down the woman who was in my job before I was, and we had a great conversation. She's running for mayor in a town that now includes what was the small town where my mother climbed those stairs. The school was long since torn down, and its footprint is marked by a sheet of asphalt. We talked about how what was a small town is a neighborhood now and the fact that she was on the city council for years before she decided to run for mayor. She has a day job—a lot like mine. Yes, she clearly has a lot of energy, but not everyone needs to run for mayor. **You can lend democracy a hand in other ways, and the League can help you learn how.** Learn by doing; that's generally the best way—and meet a lot of interesting

women doing it.

I'll see you around!

LWV Spokane Area Luncheon!

Friday, July 14, 2023
12 pm to 1pm

Perkins Restaurant
12 E Olive Avenue, Spokane, WA
Just south of the Division Street Bridge

R.S.V.P. to Jean Richardson at 503-788-8998
or jean@azuregate.net

Board of Directors

President	Jean Richardson
Vice President	Pamela Joyner
Treasurer	Mike Bell
Secretary:	Carol Lander-McVicker
Director	Lin McGuinn
Director	Elaine Harger

June Board Meeting

Wednesday, June 21, 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm on Zoom

This was the first meeting of the newly elected LWVSA Board and was conducted on Zoom by President Jean Richardson. Board members present were Jean Richardson, President; Carol Landa-Mcvicker, Secretary; Elaine Harger, Treasurer; and Lin McGinn, Director. Guests included Mike Bell and Lori Ritchie.

Actions Taken

- Board Staffing
- Elaine Harger resigned as Treasurer and was unanimously elected as a Director and appointed Voter Services Chairperson.
- Mike Bell was unanimously elected as Treasurer.
- Lori Ritchie was unanimously elected as a Director and appointed Communications Chair.

Note: We are still in need of a Membership Chair, Action Chair and Criminal Justice Chair. Please contact Jean Richardson if interested at Jean@azuregate.net or 503-788-8998.

- It was unanimously approved to continue our Directors and Officers Insurance.
- It was unanimously approved to grant Claudia Craven's request for a membership scholarship.
- The Board unanimously approved purchase of "I am a Voter" pins and a Gorilla Cart for transporting materials to various meetings.

Other Business

- The Board will consider a complaint process related to Member Rights and Responsibilities at the next Board meeting.
- Lunell Haught is working on a Lobby Day for February 4-6, 2024

- Meeting locations were discussed including Shadle Library and Spokane Community Colleges. There was interest in varying the site of meetings and hosting them both in person and via Zoom.

For more details regarding this meeting, please contact Carol Landa-McVicker at cj_99224@yahoo.com.

As always, LWV Spokane Area members are welcome and encouraged to attend Board meetings held **every third Wednesday from 4:00 pm to 6:00 pm**. These meetings are virtual on Zoom.

Please R.S.V.P. to LWVSALeadership@gmail.com if you'd like to attend a BOD meeting and we will send you the Zoom link.



Voter Services

Elaine Harger, Chair

Change is happening! As the new Voter Services chair for LWVSA, I

must first thank Mike Bell who has been able to rejoin the Board of Directors as Treasurer. With Mike's return, I was appointed at the last Board meeting to take on the administrative side of Voter Services in partnership with the incomparable Becky Dickerhoof who continues (for now) to be the force behind — and familiar face at — voter registration events.

On the Fourth of July, Becky and Beth Pellicciotti were at the ready to register voters at the 61st annual Freedom at the Arboretum event at Fitch Arboretum (To see the *Spokesman Review* article click [here](#).)

The League's next scheduled voter registration opportunity will be in Cheney at Eastern Washington University's Neighborfest on September 22. More info on volunteering for that event will be available in the August issue of The Voter.

We also have a message from Beatrice Crane with the state League regarding Vote411, which includes a call for volunteers. Beatrice writes,

"Vote411 will soon be available for the primary election...It's a small field in the primary this year – the bulk of the races will be in the general election. Most of those who are in the primary are candidates in nonpartisan races with at least two opponents. Once we have published, we would be grateful for any efforts to nudge the candidates who have not yet responded to our questions.

Vote411 has made it much easier to find information about the races and candidates not on your personal ballot. If you enter your address, you will see links All Races and All Candidates on the right side of the page directly below the display of races on your own ballot. If you want to bypass your personal display, start by clicking on MENU at the top

left corner of the page. Set the state, scroll down to Washington Voting Information, and select Candidate and Ballot Measure Information.

Be sure to send information about candidate forums that you would like displayed on Vote411 to vote411@lwwva.org<<mailto:vote411@lwwva.org>>. You may also use this address for any general questions about Vote411. Communications about candidate questions should go to vote411questions@lwwva.org<<mailto:vote411questions@lwwva.org>>.

Speaking of questions, we were very happy to have Donna Dziak of LWVWC assume responsibility for them this year. Many of you have already been in touch with her. She and our other committee members, Amy Compestine, Julie Anne Kempf, Karen Madsen, and Gail Shurgot, have been working behind the scenes to get us ready for the primary.

Thanks for all you do to encourage candidates to participate and to inform the public about Vote411. Beatrice, bscrane48@gmail.com"

I look forward to meeting all of the LWVSA members who are active in Voter Services work and all who might be interested in helping out. You can expect to hear from me again soon!

Questions? Interested in helping? Contact Elaine at eharger@drizzle.com or 509 893 8862.



AHHS - Affordable Housing and Homelessness Solutions

Our members continue to monitor our city, county and regional response to the housing and homelessness crisis. Most recently we were at the Spokane Regional Collaborative meeting on July 28. After 90 days the three former Spokane city officials, Gavin Cooley, Rick Romero, and Theresa Sanders, presented their proposal for the Spokane Regional Authority for Homelessness, Housing, Health and Safety. We received copies of the documents outlining the proposed charter and legal requirements to create a regional authority, much like the transit authority that controls our public bus system. As Gavin Cooley expressed, "Now the real work begins."

To be effective, the Collaborate needs to be supported by Spokane City, Spokane County and all the regional municipal governments. This is no small task, as each of those governments express concerns about funding sources and a functional governing board. **We encourage all members to visit Spokaneunite.org for more details. Your representatives need to hear from you.**

On July 4th we were at **Freedom in the Arboretum** promoting our local League. While there we were able to talk to several elected officials and candidates running for local offices. We talked to them about the proposed Spokane Regional Authority for HHH&S and the homelessness crisis. They all expressed concerns about how this will be funded, especially considering what has already been spent on TRAC (the Trent Warehouse). During these discussions we learned that the Canon Center, which was closed in May,

has not been reopened. Our League continues to recommend sanctioned encampments, access to bathrooms and washing facilities and storage units for the residents of our community that face homelessness. **We encourage our members to talk to these candidates to learn how they propose to work together to deal effectively with the housing and homelessness crisis.**

Freedom in the Arboretum, July 4, 2023



From the left: Ron Dickerhoof, Vickey Dalton, Tim Fitzgerald (County Clerk),

Jennifer Calvert, Becky Dickerhoof, Beth Pellicciotti, and Judy Silverstein.
Freedom in the Arboretum, July 4, 2023



County Auditor and League Member, Vicky Dalton, helping with voter education, Freedom in the Arboretum, July 4, 2023.



Jennifer Calvert at the Spokane League table, Freedom in the Arboretum, July 4, 2023.

Environmental Issues

Amy Compestine, Chair

Spokane Area League Visits Conservation District, Explores Voting Procedures

LWV Spokane Area (LWVSA) Environmental Issues Committee organized a field trip for League members to visit the Spokane Conservation District (SCD) campus on May 25th, 2023. Sixteen LWVSA members enjoyed a presentation by SCD Director Vicki Carter covering the history, programs, volunteer opportunities, funding mechanisms, and voting procedures of SCD. Then we took a walking tour of the 50-acre former quarry site that serves as SCD's campus. The entire SCD encompasses 1.1 million acres, including 300,000 acres of farmland, 400,000 forested acres, 68 lakes, and 500 miles of rivers and streams. SCD programs span a wide range of conservation activities, including: water resources management, forestry management, educational opportunities for school groups and community members, community tree canopy support, production agriculture programs, backyard conservation, and small-producer farm support services and programs.

About 25% of SCD funding comes from an annual \$10 flat rate on every parcel of land in the Conservation District. The Spokane County Board of Commissioners has authority over how the SCD uses the funds collected from parcel fees, which add up to about \$6 to \$8 million each year. Other SCD funding sources include federal funds, state funds, private donations, fees for specific services, an annual fundraising tree sale, and grants.

Washington's 45 Conservation Districts (CD) provide voluntary, incentives-based programs that empower private landowners to implement conservation practices. Each CD is governed by a local Board of Supervisors. By state law, each CD has 2 Supervisors

appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission and 3 elected supervisors, with one supervisor elected each year for a 3-year term. Currently, voters who want to participate in SCD elections must request a ballot from SCD and mail their paper ballot back to SCD in March.

We asked Director Carter about the SCD's unusual voting procedures. Ms. Carter described how the SCD uses social media, newsletters, website announcements, special events, and podcasts to advertise the elections every year. We learned that the SCD utilized Spokane County's general ballot once in the early 2000's at a cost of \$87,000 to elect one volunteer Supervisor.

Subsequently, the cost of placing a SCD Supervisor election on the general ballot was determined to be too expensive, as funds used on the election process are funds not applied to Conservation District programs and services. According to Director Carter, putting each of the 45 Supervisor elections on the general ballot would cost Washington's Conservation Districts about \$2 million annually.

LWVSA's Ann Murphy consulted with Spokane County Auditor Vicki Dalton to learn how election fees are determined. Essentially, every jurisdiction with an item on a ballot pays a proportional cost of the election, including: production and mailing of voter pamphlets; ballot printing, mailing, and return postage; and staff time for 140 employees. With 350,000 registered voters in Spokane County, running a SCD Supervisor election on a general ballot every year would be very costly for the SCD.

LWVSA enjoyed our educational visit to our local Conservation District. We highly recommend checking out your local CD and building a relationship with this non-regulatory government agency supporting conservation practices on private lands in your neck of the woods. Sign up for a newsletter from your local Conservation

District and be on the look-out in March, during Conservation Month, for your chance to request a ballot and vote!

Additional Resources:

For a detailed account of CD's and their election procedures in Washington, see the LWV Washington's 2011 report on Washington State's Conservation Districts [here](#).

State law authorizing Washington's Conservation Districts, their activities and elections of Supervisors is encompassed in [RCW 89.08](#)

Following the consensus process, LWVWA adopted these positions (from Program in Action): Conservation Districts (2012) The League of Women Voters of Washington

- CD-1: Believes that Conservation Districts have a unique role with landowners to encourage conservation of all resources and the League supports that independent role.
- CD-2: Supports any independent group, separate from the state regulatory departments, which supports and encourages landowners' conservation work and assists landowners' efforts to develop sustainable business practices.

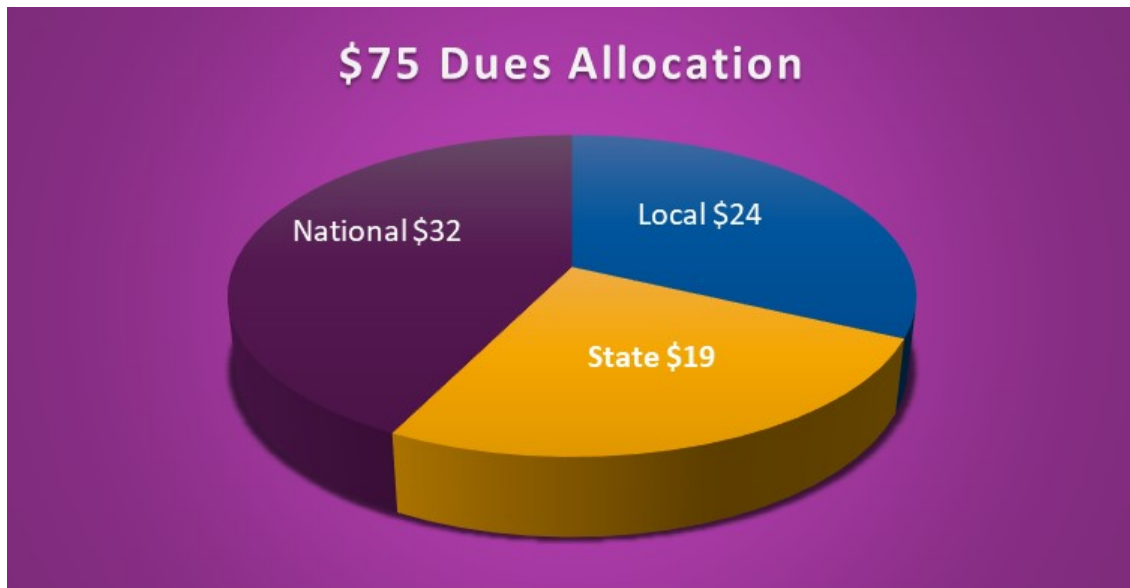
Election Methods (2000, 2002, 2012) The League of Women Voters of Washington:

- EM-1: Supports state election laws allowing for more options for alternative election systems in governmental jurisdictions at both the state and local levels.
- EM-2: Believes that consideration should be given, when evaluating election systems, to how well they promote "representative-ness", citizen participation and accountability, as well as keeping the cost of

elections within range by holding them in regularly scheduled General or Special Elections.

Join the League of Women Voters of Spokane Area

[Join or Renew Online](#)



Calendar



July 14, 2023 - LWV Spokane Area Luncheon 12:00 pm at Perkins Restaurant

July 19, 2023 - LWV Spokane Area Board of Directors Meeting 4:00 pm on Zoom



Need a Member Directory?

A printable pdf of the most recent issue of the member directory can be found on the Members Only page of LWVSpokane.org. If you're not able to access it, [please email LWVSACommunications@gmail.com](mailto:LWVSACommunications@gmail.com) and we'll send you one.

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