

ANNUAL REPORT
The League of Women Voters of Mason County
July 2023-June 2024

To Our LWV-MC Members,

The 2023-24 Program Year promised to be a busy one, with plans for election season activities, provocative monthly programs, education and advocacy on local climate issues, and action both statewide and within Mason County. And we were not disappointed! Our League hit the ground running with an examination of school boards and their structure, function, and challenges. Then we pivoted to community candidate forums, both via Zoom and in person. Our popular Speed Dating with the Candidates brought forth the following letter to the editor from a local voter:

Thank you Mason County League of Women Voters for organizing Speed Dating with the Candidates. Candidates moved from table to table with five minutes at each table. Being able to question the candidates directly was invaluable. I learned about the Port of Shelton and how it affects Shelton, I heard about recent issues with curriculum at the school district, and I was able to put a face to candidates. It was a great experience. I was sorry that a significant number of candidates chose not to attend. I would have liked to meet them.

And we learned. Our monthly speakers introduced such potent topics as serving the unhoused, access to a college education, and the challenges to running a non-partisan race; while the Climate Change Committee investigated solid waste and timber sales and how to navigate the State Environmental Policy Act.

Internally, we modernized and approved changes to our organization's essential legal document: the bylaws. Externally, the Board strengthened our public outreach by forming a Communications Committee and revitalizing our Facebook presence.

So what of the future? The LWV-WA June Council inspired us to develop relationships with local allied organizations and excited us with thoughts of future studies on both caregiving and how we welcome immigrants to our community. The next program year will bring opportunities to build upon our hard work.

We must never give up!

Yours in Democracy,
Amy, Dee Ann and Lynn
League of Women Voters of Mason County Leadership Team

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1. FINANCIALS

2023-24 Fiscal Year

- By the end of May 2024, the LWV-MC had assets of \$12,465.91
- The checking account contained \$5912.93, the CD was \$1116.11, and the Education Fund was \$5436.87
- By the end of May 2024, the liabilities totaled \$2993.50, representing LWV-WA and LWV-US dues
- The Board approved an additional expenditure this year for a Directors and Officers Liability Insurance policy
- Basic dues remained at \$60 per individual membership with options to become an Irene Davis member at \$100 or a Jean Moore member at \$120
- Out of 60 new and renewing members, 23 designated Irene Davis and Jean Moore memberships, thus providing additional funds for 501 c-4 activities
- Donors contributed \$1,582.90 to the LWV-MC 501 c-3 Education Fund this year

2. VOTER SERVICES COMMITTEE

School Boards Study

During the Fall of 2023, the Committee took a deep dive into the structure, role and importance of local school boards by visiting all nine county school districts and hosting a panel on “Governance Role of School Directors” with speakers from WSSDA (Washington State School Directors Association) and WASA (Washington Association of School Administrators) at the September membership meeting.

Candidate Forums and Events

- Held two Zoom events to meet school board candidates from Grapeview, Hood Canal, and Southside
- Hosted “Speed Dating With the Candidates” on October 17 at PUD #3 with approximately 70 residents attending and asking questions of candidates for Superior Court Judge, Shelton School District Board, Shelton City Council, and Port of Shelton Commission.

Voter Outreach Members staffed a voter registration table at Allyn Days

Civics Education

A subcommittee spoke to classes at North Mason High School, James A. Taylor High School, and Shelton School District’s Cedar High and CHOICE High Schools, with an emphasis on being an informed voter, types of elections, and the structure of state and national governments. In May, students in Hannah Palmer’s civics class at Cedar High School attended an LWV-MC meeting to learn about the three upcoming ballot initiatives and challenges in the voting process from the Mason County Auditor.

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Voter Services – Civics Education cont'd.

600 *They Represent You* (TRY) brochures were printed and distributed throughout Mason County at locations including countertops and bulletin boards at county offices, transit station, tribal buildings, senior centers, post offices, other civic buildings and at local high schools to distribute to seniors.

3. MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

- Sixty (60) members joined or rejoined during the past program year
- Welcomed five new members with calls and informational packets
- Held one League 101, an orientation for new members
- More than 65% of membership engaged in activities during the year, including participation on the Board and committees, at speed dating and candidate events, voter registration drives, advocacy, TRY brochure publication and distribution, member communication, and research.
- Used a variety of communication tools to stay in touch with membership, including phone calls, emails, newsletters, cards, hikes, and social time at meetings

4. PROGRAMS

September Panel on Roles and Responsibilities of the School Board of Directors and Superintendent with representatives from Washington State School Directors Association (WSSDA), Washington Association of School Administrators (WASA), and four Washington School Directors and School Superintendents.

October Speed-dating Candidate Forum at the PUD 3 with school board, city council, Port Commission, and Superior Court candidates

November Julie Anderson, 2022 candidate for Secretary of State, presented her experiences and insights running a non-partisan race in a partisan world

December Phyllis Farrell, Thurston County environmental activist and former League Lobby Team Chair, advised on strategizing for climate resiliency in Mason County

January Presentation on Public Hospital Districts with Cynthia Stewart and Tricia Grantham

February Advocacy program with Joshua Wright, Legacy Forest Defense Coalition, speaking on Harstine Flats Legacy Forest protection; Sherri Dysart, Mason County Climate Justice, speaking on action for the Green Amendment; and Chris Mason, FairVote and Fix Democracy First, speaking on Ranked Choice Voting.

March Challenges in housing the poor and homeless of Mason County with Colleen Carmichael, Executive Director of Quixote Communities

April “Why College?” discussion of programs for accessing college with a panel of four college administrators: Sandra Kaiser, Director for Government Relations at The Evergreen

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Programs cont'd.

State College, Riva Villa, Director of Upward Bound, Dr. Lori Thompson, ESD Consortium for Student Success and Carmen Hoover, Olympic College Shelton.

May League Issue Chair advocate, Cynthia Stewart, explained League positions on the three ballot initiatives for November elections and Mason County Auditor, Steve Duenkel, led discussion and Q&A on preparation and process within the Mason County Elections Office.

5. ADVOCACY

- **December** LWV-WA Action Workshop
- **January** Participated in Lobby Week to learn about current legislation and met virtually with 35th Legislative District Senator seeking support of key bills
- **January to March** Advocated throughout 2024 Legislative Session through the Legislative Newsletter and weekly Action Coffee Time (ACT) Zoom sessions on issues and legislation.
- **May 31 to June 2** Partnered with LWV Thurston for LWVWA Council 2024 themed “Ignite the Vote!” with exciting, energizing, and educational sessions in Lacey

6. CLIMATE CHANGE COMMITTEE

This year, the Climate Change Committee concentrated its efforts on education and action as they investigated the effects of climate change on our county and state, including solid waste recycling, legacy forest preservation, and legislative and local government advocacy. All LWV-MC members were encouraged to participate in the following activities:

September Toured the Eell’s Hill Solid Waste Transfer Station

October Held a Zoom webinar featuring Fran Sant from the Department of Ecology who discussed the State Environmental Policy Act and its ramifications

November Hosted Representative Beth Doglio who spoke on upcoming environmental and climate issues and described climate-related bills coming down the environment and energy legislative pipeline in the 2024 session.

Participated in a legacy forest hike at Harstine Flats to better understand the upcoming timber sale

December Hosted Joshua Wright, Legacy Forest Defense advocate, reported on local impact of timber sales, how and where money is allocated and Phyllis Farrell with LWV-WA Lobby Team spoke on “Climate Resiliency Strategies in Mason County” at the general membership meeting.

2024 Legislative Session Advocated for climate-related bills during the legislative session

Ongoing Participated in the updating the Mason County Comprehensive Plan both by attending planning session meetings and putting forward strong advocacy for focused attention on the newly legislated Climate Resiliency element.

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7. COMMUNICATIONS COMMITTEE

The LWV-MC Board appointed a Communications Committee in December 2023 to expand and enhance outreach to the broader Mason County community and other Leagues. During the past program year, the committee:

- Expanded the reach of Facebook with 110 posts designed to support LWV-MC activities and programs, provide voter information, and mark holidays relevant to the history of voting rights.
- By June 2024, increased number of followers to 378 with the majority being women and people over 65
- Reestablished a relationship with the Mason County Journal, with meeting announcements and regular reporting on programs
- Other communication tools: Published three editions of The Voter newsletter, and regularly updated the lwvmasoncounty.org website

8. COLLABORATION AND STATEWIDE REPRESENTATION

- The Shelton branch of Timberland Regional Library invited LWV-MC to feature its Notable Women display at their “Shelton Stories” event with the support of six members who set up and conducted visitor presentations of the eight honored women.
- LWV-MC co-sponsored the State Council, providing planning, committee representation and volunteers
- The LWV-MC was well-represented in the larger LWV community, serving on the LWV-WA State Board, at regional MELD pods (membership, engagement and leadership development), at Local League Presidents’ and Treasurer meetings, and on the Redistricting and Rank Choice Voting Committee.
- Local members attended Council, national LWV Convention, Lobby Days, and Action workshops

9. BYLAWS COMMITTEE

- After a yearlong update process with regular reviews and reports to the Board and Membership, the LWV-MC unanimously voted to accept the amended bylaws on November 21, 2023. The desired outcome was bylaw changes to best support a growing League with a more flexible leadership model, expanded standing committee structure, and clarity around financial processes.