



## VOTER

December 2025 –  
January 2026

<https://my.lwv.org/washington/benton-franklin-counties>

### **President's Message – Polly Parton**

Our fall Election Observation process is complete and thank you to our dedicated observers and our organizers Kelly Doyle and Judy Golberg. Judy Golberg planned a 'sweet treat' thank you to our election staff and officials of both Benton and Franklin Counties. They ensure our voting process is secure.

Our new member social on 11/13 was a topped off with Kennewick Councilman Chuck Torelli giving valuable info on the process for citizens to effect change. Many of us had questions and he graciously (and with humor) answered.

Sunday December 14 from 2 to 4 pm is our Holiday Party. Our guest speaker, Jane Schmoetzer is the Rector at All Saints Episcopal Church in Richland. Invite your plus one (or more) for our December tradition with snacks, beverages, great conversation and a timely speaker. Then on Saturday January 17 at our Program Planning (or Program for Action) meeting we will address new and old positions. Check out the articles on both of these events.

Do you want to get more involved in something? Email, text or call Polly and let me know what you are interested in. [Polly.parton@yahoo.com](mailto:Polly.parton@yahoo.com) 509-551-3818

### **U. S. Constitution - Preamble**

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution for the United States of America. (Capitalization and spelling as written.)

### **Holiday Party – Polly Parton**

Save the date Sunday, December 14 at 2 pm for our Annual Holiday Party. As always, we combine food, friends (old and new) and hear what some community members are doing. This is a great time to bring your spouse, plus one, friend or neighbor. Catch up with league members

and welcome some new ones. You're welcome to bring a small appetizer, dessert, or beverage. No time to shop or cook? No problem, your company is still appreciated!

Our speaker will be Jane Schmoetzer, the Rector of All Saints Episcopal in Richland since 2010. Jane came from Montana where she was Rector for a cluster of four mission churches. She has a Bachelor of Science in Metallurgical Engineering from Purdue University and Master of Divinity from Seabury-Western Theological Seminary. Members of Jane's church opened the All Saints Warming Center (part of the Interfaith Homeless Team) and has had two years of providing an overnight shelter on severe weather nights for individuals and families. The November new member social was the 'kick-off' for collecting packs of socks (and hand warmers) to present to Jane for the homeless. If you missed that event and want to contribute, that is always appreciated.

Sunday 12/14, 2 to 4 pm  
316 Northview Loop, West Richland  
Please RSVP to Polly at [pparton34@gmail.com](mailto:pparton34@gmail.com)

### **Scholarship Committee - Judy Golberg and Peggy Gregory**

If you are interested in helping with this year's scholarship program, please add January 5, 6:15 pm via Zoom on your calendar! Thank you for volunteering.

At that meeting we will finalize the theme for the essay portion of the application and decide on how many scholarships and what dollar amount we will be awarding. Assignments will be made for the few projects associated with this program.

Special thanks to those League members who have made donations to the Education Fund to add to the gift honoring Marilyn Perkins who died in 2021. John Perkins donated the original funding that started this program and we are forever grateful. For newer members' information, Marilyn was a long-time member who served as our president for several years, was a facilitator for many of the candidate forums, and was passionate about civic education.

Please let Judy or Peggy know if you are interested so we can add you to the invitation towards the end of December for this first Monday in the new year.

Judy - [jgolberg@charter.net](mailto:jgolberg@charter.net) and Peggy - [palfgreg@gmail.com](mailto:palfgreg@gmail.com)

### **Election Observers Program - Judy Golberg**

Another election has been certified. Next one comes along in February. We appreciate Benton County Auditor and the Election office staff for this program. Thank you to all our election observers: Mary Jo Coblenz, Chuck LoPresti, Bev Johnson-Torelli, Diane Molleson, Polly Parton, Margie Bass, Carla Chiotti, Pattie Blakeman and Patty Hamilton. We also have at least two other League members that I'm aware of who are temporary staff members during the election season: Joyce McMurphy in Benton County and Elaine Hetherington in Franklin County. Your time and work are very much appreciated. Thank you.

## Notes From the November Washington League President's Call

LWVWA will present “Welcoming Immigrants” to the National Convention next year for concurrence. It is a timely study.

The Unite & Rise Playbook 3 is about building partnerships. Three groups - National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), American Association of University Women (AAUW) and Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) have partnered with League.

Activists across the state have started to promote initiative I-126. This initiative threatens our Vote By Mail process, Women’s voting status if you’ve had a name change and the integrity of our voting roles. The League is promoting “Decline to Sign”.

Lobby Week is January 26 - 30. This is the time we present our issues to local representation and ask questions of them. (thank you, Lora Rathbone for leading our group).

Affinity groups are open to all members. They are MELD (Membership, Engagement and Leadership Development), Treasurer, Voter Services and DEI will be coming. Affinity groups are committees of League members from around the state who are interested or want to learn more about the same topics.

VOTE411 is looking for a new project manager.

The High School Video Contest is still active.

*Techniques to Sway Opinions* will be the next LWVWA training on January 20, 6:30 - 8 pm.

Check out the LWVWA website <https://www.lvvwa.org> for information on any of above. Are you signed up for the Newsletters? Go to the State website (above) click on *About Us*, then *Member Newsletters*

**In League** – with member content to make the most of your League membership, once monthly on 3<sup>rd</sup> week.

**The Evergreen Voter**- with updates on elections, activities & events, every other month

**Resisting Threats to Democracy** – how to resist threats to democracy, every 2nd & 4<sup>th</sup> week (not active while **The Legislative Action Newsletter** is published).

**The Legislative Action Newsletter** - with key issues and action alerts through the State Legislative Session.

## New Member Welcome Social - Janet Nail, Membership Chair

The new member social was held on November 13. New members were welcomed and the program was presented by Chuck Torelli, Kennewick City Council Member. Chuck discussed

the functions of city government, how to proceed when having a concern with a city function and the differences between the four city governments.

The attendees “kicked off” the collection of socks for All Saints Episcopal Church. The church assists homeless people during the cold winter months and Jane Schmoetzer, the Rector at the church will be the Holiday Party speaker on December 14. The new member social collected 208 pairs of socks to present to her.

## **Program Planning – Judy Golberg**

Program planning will be held at Polly’s home: January 17, 10 am – noon, 316 Northview Loop, West Richland. Bring a brunch item to share if you can or just come!

On January 17 our members are being invited to attend a Program Planning meeting. Why, you may ask? (Besides the fact that we enjoy meeting in person and sharing good food!) What do you mean by program planning? I’ll try to make it simple. It isn’t a simple process nor are the words we use any help so here goes....

### Study, Positions and Program Planning

The reason we go through this process is to have a basis to speak and take action on various issues as an organization. In order to do so, we need to have an official “position”. In order to have an official position we go through a “study” process. And finally, the study itself is based on suggestions developed during “program planning”. It is this first step we are inviting you to attend.

The above process takes place on the local League level, the state level and nationally. Our organization does not support nor oppose public issues or take action unless we have a position. Speaking out on democracy is based on the very foundation of the League’s Principles and is always an appropriate issue to defend. Our website has a glossary of League lingo under the Member Tools tab that may help. The website also lists our local League’s positions. Check it out! <https://my.lwv.org/washington/benton-franklin-counties>

Bring your ideas for local or national issues to the planning meeting for discussion. These suggestions will be taken to the Board and prepared for our Annual Meeting where they can be approved for a formal study. The other option is to present a program using these topics at one of our Table Talks. Next year we will have the opportunity to make suggestions at the local and state level.

## **Advocacy – Lora Rathbone**

The LWVWA Legislative Action Newsletter provides weekly easy-to-follow summaries of the legislative process, updates on key issues, and action alerts. This newsletter is only distributed during Washington's legislative session, which begins January 12, 2026 and ends March 12. Some of the most effective work our league can do is early on in the session on short notice. Please sign up to participate in helping pass our priority legislation!

## **Communications Corner – Richard Badalamente - Watson v. RNC and the Future of Election Day**

"Election Day" is over, but is it?

The 2025 "off-year election" wrapped up November 4 at 8 pm. Physical ballots had to be received no later than 8:00 p.m. on the 4<sup>th</sup> or have been postmarked no later than that day.

Here in Washington, ballots post-marked on November 4, 2025 go through a certification period, where ballots collected from drop boxes on election night or returned by mail with a valid postmark will be opened, noted, cured, and counted for up to 21 days (RCW 29A.40.110).

The League of Women Voters supports this process — we believe in the power of the vote, and right of every eligible voter to have their say. No one should be disenfranchised because the 'mail boat sank.' Not everyone agrees.

Watson v. Republican National Committee, now before the U.S. Supreme Court, will decide whether states can count mailed ballots that are postmarked by Election Day but arrive afterward. The case stems from a Fifth Circuit ruling striking down Mississippi's five-business-day grace period for ballot receipt. The outcome could have major implications for the 16 states that now allow post-Election Day receipt.

States with grace periods include:

Alaska (10 days), California (7), Illinois (14), Kansas (3—ending 2026), Maryland (10), Massachusetts (3), Mississippi (5, under challenge), Nevada (4), New Jersey (6), New York (7), Ohio (4), Oregon (7), Texas (1), Virginia (3), West Virginia (5), and Washington (about 21).

All other states require ballots to be received by Election Day. If the Supreme Court upholds the Fifth Circuit, these grace-period states would have to rewrite their laws; if it reverses, states retain discretion to count timely mailed ballots. The decision will shape how America defines 'Election Day'—a single day, or a process that accounts for modern mail voting realities.

## **Initiatives and Referenda – Information taken from Secretary of State's website- Judy Golberg**

In 1912, Washington became one of the first states to adopt the initiative and referendum process, thus securing the rights of citizens to make and remake their laws, and to provide a check over the decisions of their Legislature.

Today, if Washingtonians are dissatisfied with certain laws or feel new laws are needed, they can petition to place proposed legislation on the ballot. The process is termed "**Initiative**" because the electorate can initiate legislation. The electorate can either place a proposition directly on the ballot or it can submit the proposed law to the Legislature at the regular legislative session allowing the elected representatives an opportunity to enact the proposed legislation themselves instead of placing the measure on the ballot.

A **Referenda** allows citizens, through the petition process, to refer acts of the Legislature to the ballot before they become law. The Referenda also permits the Legislature itself to refer proposed legislation to the electorate for approval or rejection.

The Initiative and Referenda processes guarantee Washington's electorate the right to legislate. Sponsors of Initiative or Referenda measures must obtain a substantial number of petition signatures from registered voters in order to certify their measures to the ballot or to the Legislature.

Washington's history has shown the Initiative and Referenda processes to be effective in protecting the people's interests. In fact, many of our most significant laws, such as our public disclosure laws, were enacted by this process.

For more details, see: <https://www.sos.wa.gov/sites/default/files/2024-03/initiative-and-referenda-handbook.pdf>

## **LWVBF Treasurer's Report – Carla Ciotti, Treasurer**

As of October 31, 2025:

Checking is	\$6,341.43
<u>Savings is</u>	<u>1,857.51</u>
Total	\$8,198.94

### **Income:**

Membership dues	\$ 432.55
Member donations	\$ 324.84
Non member donations	\$1,000.00
Savings interest	.02

**Total income: \$1,757.41**

### **Expenses:**

Annual P.O. Box fee	\$244.00
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**Total Expenses: \$244.00**

**Membership Dues and Donations:** In October we received dues from 31 returning members, and donations from six members. We also received a very generous donation from a non-member. Thank you!

**Education Fund:** The balance of our 501(c)3 Education Fund remains at \$16,894.54.

**To donate to the Education Fund:** Members can donate to our education fund by sending a check to: **LWVWA Education Fund**. The address is 1511 Third Avenue, Suite 801, Seattle, WA, 98101, Attention: Ed Fund Treasurer. **Please note on the check or separately that your**

**donation is for the Benton-Franklin League Education Fund.** Donations to the Education Fund are tax deductible.

**To donate to our local league:** Members can donate to the League of Women Voters of Benton and Franklin Counties by either writing a check to LWVBF, P.O. Box 765, Richland, 99352 or clicking the Donate button on our web page and using PayPal  
<https://my.lwv.org/washington/benton-franklin-counties>.

**LWV Membership Renewal:** Thank you to members who have recently renewed their memberships. The majority of members whose memberships expired at the end of September have renewed. Those who have not renewed by the end of November will be removed as active members from the Membership Roster.

## **LWVBF Book Club – Polly Parton**

In November we discussed *The Frozen River* by Ariel Lawhon inspired by the life and diary of Martha Ballard, an 18<sup>th</sup> century midwife. Based on a Martha's diary this story unfolds like a modern mystery with a strong female lead. December's book takes a lighter look on a serious subject. Phoebe Stone arrives at an Island Inn where she plans to end her life but a chance personal connection changes everything. *The Wedding People* by Alison Espach turns out to be a great holiday read. We have not decided January's book yet. Please notify me to put you on our list as that choice will be announced soon.

Join us the 2<sup>nd</sup> Monday each month at 6 pm via Zoom by emailing or texting Polly Parton to be added to the link. We keep discussions to one hour. Please join in even if you did not squeeze the book into your schedule.

[Polly.parton@yahoo.com](mailto:Polly.parton@yahoo.com) or 509 -551-3818

## **Calendar Of Events**

### **December**

- 10 Book Club via Zoom
- 14 Holiday Party, 2 – 4 pm, Home of Polly Parton

### **January**

- 12 Book Club via Zoom
- 17 Program Planning Meeting, Home of Polly Parton
- 20 LWVBF Business and Planning Meeting/Board Meeting via Zoom

Email: [lww.of.bf@gmail.com](mailto:lww.of.bf@gmail.com)

Instagram: [lww.of.bf](https://www.instagram.com/lww.of.bf)

Facebook: [League of Women Voters of Benton & Franklin Counties](https://www.facebook.com/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Benton-Franklin-Counties-100009101111111/)

## **Mailing Address:**

League of Women Voters of Benton and Franklin Counties  
P.O. Box 765  
Richland, WA 99352

**OFFICERS:**

President: Polly Parton

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: Ruvine Jimenez

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Michelle Pirotte

Secretary: Diane Molleson

Treasurer: Carla Chiotti

**ELECTED DIRECTORS:**

Margie Bass

Brianna Harty

Marci Palmer

Mary Shaw

Glenda Williams

Shirley Sonnichsen

**APPOINTED DIRECTORS:**

Lora Rathbone

JoAnne Dimond

Leona Hassing

Beverly Johnson-Torelli

Richard Badalamente

Emily Dirkes