

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BENTON AND FRANKLIN COUNTIES

The Benton-Franklin League of Women Voters began as two separate leagues, Richland and Kennewick.

The Richland League was organized in the Spring of 1947. Its first task was to register voters for the Presidential election of 1948. Since Richland, as part of the Federal reservation, was unincorporated and essentially under county rule, the nearest registrar was in Prosser. League members were deputized to register voters and proceeded not only to register over 11,000 persons, but also to draw up precinct lines and street guides.

On April 12, 1957, the Richland League applied for and received Incorporation by the State of Washington. The names of 47 women appear on the incorporation papers.

Meanwhile, the Kennewick League started as a Provisional League about November 1954. It attained League status in March 1956. The first accomplishment of the Kennewick League was the publication of a booklet entitled "Know Your County," in 1957-58.

In 1965 the Kennewick League became the League of Pasco-Kennewick.

In April 1971, the Pasco-Kennewick League and the Richland League merged to form the Benton-Franklin Counties League. Apparently the merger occurred because of the efforts of some of the board members at that time. It took about a year to complete all the necessary paperwork and to work out all the problems: such as from which League were officers to be chosen, whether to be a bi-county or a tri-county League and how to go about the merger. The reasons given for the merger were: "Our community was and is growing together rapidly. The organization needs to be in a position of encouraging this consolidation. It will let us make better use of our woman power and be a more effective and efficient force in the community."

The first local program for the newly-formed League was a review and comparison of the city governments of the three cities. Over the next several years, local studies included the justice system and facilities; "An Evaluation of the Merger of Benton-Franklin Counties"; Port Districts; taxes – those that are properly exempt in the 2 counties; and local government budgets.

"Compiled from a 1976 report found in B-F LWV files.)
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