

VOTER July 2026

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – Polly Parton

State council (June 6-7) proved to be an opportunity to ‘talk League’ with a variety of talented, informed and very productive women (yes, and several men too!). Carpooling with Yakima’s President Cindy Olivaris (pictured with me) was filled with great conversation, stories and some wonderful history of her Indian knowledge. We toured the Legislative Building in Olympia and took in the architectural history, the impressive sandstone exterior and the tallest masonry dome in North America at 287 feet. If you or family members have not toured this, make a plan. From the expansive grounds to the statues and art work, it’s worth the trip. Check out the mini-reports from those who attended presentations both in-person and virtually. Most presentations are available on the LWVWA site to watch in their entirety. I have grouped these toward the end of the Voter, before the Calendar. Each one gives us valuable information.



Our June tabling events (let’s call them voter engagements) included celebrating World Refugee Day and Juneteenth Celebration in Pasco. Thanks to Carol Larkin, Michele Pirotte, Polly, Bev Johnson-Torelli, Lora Rathbone, Glenda Williams, Margie Bass, Janet Nail, Pattie Blakeman and Joyce McMurphy for June tabling. Please consider volunteering for an event when you can. Every contact with others helps to engage, educate and motivate our fellow citizens to participate and vote! League members across the nation (this includes you) are continuing doing the good work.

ANNUAL MEETING MAY 21, 2026

Our May Annual Meeting was another fun event with our remarkable members. Thank you to the Scholarship Committee and to the attendees for making a business meeting so enjoyable. Hearing the winning essays read by three bright young students bolstered my belief that our future will be ok. We adopted our 2026-27 Budget, the slate of officers and elected directors, nominating committee chair and two members (listed on our last page of the Voter). Thank you to all outgoing Board members and welcome to those new on the Board. League people are hard-working and some of the most fascinating people you meet and this includes our Benton-Franklin members. We sometimes forget the joys of in-person conversation while we strive to be highly productive on zoom.

SCHOLARSHIP AWARD PRESENTATION MAY 21, 2026 - Peggy Gregory

The 2026 scholarship awards were presented at our annual meeting on May 21, 2026. Barb Puigh and Peggy Gregory greeted the winners and their guests at the two entrances to La Bella Vista.

Maxwell Genetti and his sister sat with Bev Johnson-Torelli and Chuck Torelli. Kirsten Griggs and her parents Benjamin and Heather sat with Barb Puigh. Lola Thomas and her dad Edward sat with Larry and Peggy Gregory.

After dinner Peggy Gregory called each recipient (one at a time) to come to the front of the room and read their essay to the group. The check and certificate were then presented. The winners and guests left before the business meeting began.



Lola Thomas & dad Edward, Maxwell Genetti & sister, Kirsten Griggs between mom Heather & dad Benjamin

IS OUR LEAGUE A CHAPTER OF NATIONAL LEAGUE OR, IS OUR LEAGUE A FEDERATION? - Judy Golberg

To understand the difference between a chapter of an organization and a federation, consider these key points:

1. A chapter is a local branch of a larger organization, often focused on specific regional activities.
2. A **federation** is a group of independent organizations that unite for a common purpose while maintaining autonomy.

3. Chapters typically operate under the guidelines and governance of the parent organization.
4. **Federations** allow member organizations to collaborate while preserving their individual identities and missions.
5. Chapters may have limited decision-making power compared to the central organization.
6. **Federations** often have a shared leadership structure that represents the interests of all member organizations.

Answer: League is a federation. Local, State and National Leagues are recognized by the IRS as individual entities. We share the first three Bylaws Articles while the remaining set of Bylaws Articles is in accordance with Robert's Rules, federal and state laws and based on the individual entities' decision. The different levels of the League of Women Voters work together towards common goals.

COMMUNICATIONS CORNER

VOTING BY MAIL IN BENTON & FRANKLIN COUNTIES – Richard Badalamente

America's Founding Fathers established a national postal system to serve as the information backbone of the new republic, viewing it as essential for the very survival of the new nation.

The Post Office Act of 1792 transformed the ideals of Thomas Jefferson and George Washington into federal law. Signed by President Washington on February 20, 1792, this legislation designed the post office *not as a profit-driven business*, but as a heavily subsidized utility for public education.

The natural order of things has dictated change in how the United States Postal Service operates; personal communications have largely become digital, while shopping has become postal. Changes in employment practices, and employee pensions and healthcare, brought new challenges to the USPS business model.

Beginning with the Postal Reorganization Act of 1970, the Postal Service has been forced to find ways to cover its own operating costs, while still meeting its Universal Service Obligation (USO) to deliver to *every* address at uniform, affordable rates. It has failed to do that for almost 20 years. Don't blame the Postal Service for this; blame Congress.

Applying the old adage, 'When all else fails, reorganize,' the Postal Service has instituted the Delivering for America (DFA) plan consolidating 200 Processing and Distribution Centers into 60 regional "hubs," serving much larger territories.

These new hubs consolidate originating mail from many former post offices, like those in Kennewick, Richland, and Pasco. Instead of mail being postmarked at your friendly local post office, it now travels to Spokane where it's centrally processed, sorted and postmarked. This adds several days between dropping mail in your neighborhood, or supermarket, blue mailbox and having it postmarked — crucial for official mail, like your tax return, and election ballots.

Here in Washington, ballots for the August primary will be mailed no later than July 17, 2026, 18 days before the August 4 Primary (military and overseas ballots have already been mailed). Ballots returned must be postmarked by Election Day, August 4, 2026.

Ballots for the November General Election will be mailed to voters no later October 16, 2026. Military and overseas ballots will be mailed September 19. Ballots returned must be postmarked by Election Day, November 3, 2026.

LWVWA STATE PRESIDENTS' CALL - Polly Parton

- LWVWA is part of Federal Court Hears Challenge to Trump Executive Order Restricting Mail-in Ballots
- August 8 is National Day of Action to celebrate the anniversary of the *Voting Rights Act*. LWVWA encourages local leagues across Washington to plan events or activities (doesn't have to be on 8/8).
- September 15 is National Voter Registration Day, LWV is a proud partner.
- October 5-9 is National Voter Education Week.
- October 20 is Election Hero Day, please thank clerks, officials, staff and volunteers.
- Videos from our 2026 Council are available at <https://lwvwa.org/2026Council>
- Local Leagues are asked to write letters to the editors about the importance of local news to celebrate the 1st Amendment. Details and templates are available in the State Members site - <https://lwvwa.org/First-Freedom>
- 2027 LWVWA Convention will be June 11-13 in Spokane – on campus at Gonzaga University.
- Initiatives: Webpage up: Vote “NO” to Protect Vulnerable Kids - LWVWA Opposes IL26-001 & IL26-638
- Decline to Sign I-500: Opposition continues (to establish heightened voter registration and voting requirements).
- The initiative to roll back the millionaires tax looks on track (LWVWA supported the legislation).

BOOK CLUB – Polly Parton

The Ride of Her Life by Elizabeth Letts was our May book. In 1954, 63-year-old Annie Wilkins embarked on a 4,000-mile horseback journey. A shorter non-fiction story but peppered with history. It was a very enjoyable read. Our June book was *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle, an intimate memoir of rejecting her traditional role of wife. She found her true self with a dramatic pivot as a partner with soccer star Abby Wombach. Glennon asks us to examine our societal expectations to forge a more authentic self. Her self-help advice should not be limited to sexual choices, but applied to making choices without limiting your potential. The July book is *107 Days* by Kamala Harris.

Join us the 2nd 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.

Note - LWVWA is starting a book club in late July. The 1st book will be *How the South Won the Civil War* by Heather Cox Richardson. She is a New York Times bestselling author and has one of the most popular newsletters on Substack, with over 3 million subscribers. Take this opportunity as she will attend the first discussion (on Zoom). To register copy & paste in browser: bit.ly/hcr-july

NEWS REGARDING LONG-TIME MEMBER, MADGE WATSON – Judy Golberg

The Tri-City Herald recently printed the obituary of one of our long-time League members, Madge Watson who died May 30 in Boise. At the time of her death, Madge was 99 years old. She was a 50-year plus lifetime member of League. Madge also served on Richland's Planning Commission and the City Council and served our community in many other ways. Madge was a member we turned to for her expertise as we developed many of our studies and positions.

LWVBF TREASURER’S REPORT APRIL AND MAY 2026 – Carla Ciotti, Treasurer

As of April 30, 2026:

As of May 31, 2026

Checking is	\$13,849.97
<u>Savings is</u>	<u>1,857.60</u>
Total	\$15,707.57

Checking is	\$6,165.94
<u>Savings is</u>	<u>1,857.62</u>
Total	\$8,023.56

Income (April and May):

Membership dues	\$69.64
Donations	89.71
Savings interest	.02

Total income: \$159.37

Expenses (April and May):

Scholarships	\$7500.00
Scholarship expenses	375.26
State Council registration	25.00
Annual Domain fee	23.06
Sec. of State Annual Report	20.00

Total Expenses: \$7,943.32

Membership Dues and Donations: In April and May we received dues from two new members and three renewing members. We received three donations and also received \$389.22 in-kind donations from two members.

Expenses: The total expenses for the scholarship program are \$7875.26. This includes the costs of the scholarships plus printing costs and dinners for the recipients and their parents. Other expenses were our annual domain fee to Bluehost and the annual incorporation fee to the Secretary of State's Office. We also paid \$25 for a member to attend State Council virtually.

Education Fund: The Education Fund Balance remains at \$14,394.54. I have submitted the paperwork to receive a reimbursement for the scholarship expenses of \$375.26. We received an advance of \$7500 for the scholarships in February.

LWV Membership Renewal: Members will be notified by LWVUS 60 days and 30 days before their renewal date and again on the renewal date. Members will be considered active members for 60 days beyond their renewal date (the grace period). If members do not renew by the end of the grace period, they will be dropped from the national roster and our local league's email list. Also, when you renew on-line you need to use the email address that is associated with your LWV account. This is how your account is identified. If you use a different email address, you will be registered as a new member and have a duplicate account. If you don't know which email address to use, please contact Carla, Treasurer (509-521-2158) or Shirley, Roster Manager (509-392-1808)

You can also join or renew your membership by writing a check to **LWVUS** and sending it to our local post office box: LWVBF P.O. Box 765, Richland, WA 99352. You choose your dues amount; it must be at least \$20. \$75 is the recommended dues amount.

If you have questions on how to renew, which email address to use, or need to know when your membership is due for renewal, please contact Carla or Shirley (phone numbers above).

Contributions:

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.

If you would like your donation to go exclusively to our Scholarship Program, please specify that in your note. Also, please contact Carla separately and your donation will be earmarked for scholarships.

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>.

Thank you, Carla Chiotti, LWVBF Treasurer
cchiotti@gmail.com
(509) 521-2158 (text is fine)

LWVWA COUNCIL REPORTS FROM JUNE 6TH AND 7TH 2026

REPORT ON THE STATE OF DEMOCRACY IN WASHINGTON – Bev Johnson-Torelli

Presented by WA Lunell Haught, Jean Snider, Julie Ann Kempf, and Beth Pellicciotti

In this workshop, Democracy was defined as the following:

- “Government of the people, by the people and for the people” (Lincoln, Gettysburg address)
- Greek “demos” (People) and “kratos” (to rule) = “rule of the people” (American Political Science Association)
- Democracy is an electoral, participatory political system in which citizens choose their leaders through free and fair elections, enjoy civil rights and protections and engage in civic society (multiple sources)

Areas discussed were -Voter Participation & Individual Characteristics, Voting Rights, Elections Methods, /conduct of Elections, Money in Politics, Public Records Act, The Digital Divide, The Judiciary, and Civic Education in K-12.

Indicators included: Voter Turnout, Voter Turnout by Gender, Age, Youth between 2016-2024, Ballot Exceptions, Registration, including Automatic and Online, Same Day, No Photo ID, Casting Votes, Ballot Drop Boxes, No Felony Disenfranchisement, Alternative Voting Methods, National Popular Vote Interstate Compact, Primaries, Presidential Primaries, Redistricting Process, Before Elections: Training, Election Officials, Public Monitoring, Ballots-Wait Time to Vote, Use of Paper, Rejection, Recounting, Threat Levels-Protection of Personnel, Process, Paper Ballots, Election Funding, Campaign Transparency, Corporate and Commercial Contributions, Undue Influence, Number of Reported Public Records Requests, Public Records and Exemptions, Transparency and Access to Government Meetings, The Digital Divide: Broadband Coverage, Access to Technology, Digital Literacy, On-line Civic Participation, The Judiciary: Access to Justice, Selection of State and Local Judges, Diversity in the Bar and Judiciary, Judicial Resources, Civic Education in K-12: Assessment of Civics Learning in K-12, Funding for K-12 Civics Education.

Fun Facts: League’s position on Rank Choice Voting: League sees it as one of the options- Just want people to vote! According to Kim Wyman, former WA Secretary of State, the best voter turnout in her experience was the vote on the King Dome. Jean Snider encouraged partnerships with other groups.

Note: LWVBF is currently partnering with AARP and NWPB for the Congressional District 4 Primary Election. Viewing, both digitally and on tv, will be available from mid-July through Election Day, August 4th. Ballots will be sent out the week that includes July 17th.

HOW LWVWA WILL USE NEW RESOURCES TO SUPPORT LOCAL LEAGUES AND BUILD OUR COLLECTIVE CAPACITY – Judy Golberg Presented by President Karen Crowley

At LWVWA's 2025 Convention there was a line item in the budget of \$42,000 the State League received from National. It wasn't earmarked and generated a great deal of discussion as to what would happen with that money. A copy of Karen's full report will be available but this was the first thorough response to that question.

Over the past year, a work group was formed consisting of board members as well as members of local Leagues. This group developed a survey and sent it to all Leagues and after receiving their responses, the work group found many commonalities of needs. From this information the board developed and agreed to reimburse each League a set amount for officer and board insurance; provide each League with a Canva--software for developing graphics and other uses--and a Zoom account--software we use for meetings; assist members financially to attend state and national meetings plus make some changes in the State office to assist the overall capacity of local Leagues. More details will be available in the written report. With all the changes being proposed, the dollar value of these items totaled \$42,000. The Board also committed to a long-term financial plan to continue this support.

This money came from the LWV dues' structure changes. Less money from PMP's (per member payment or dues) would stay with the national League, about the same amount would be returned to local Leagues, while state Leagues would receive the higher percentage. Each state is responsible for deciding what to do with those funds with the goal being to provide assistance to the local League where they need it.

This first use of these funds made by LWVWA was to provide a discount for newer members for Council's registration fee. The number of new League members in this State over the past year is approximately 650. The total number of delegates on Saturday was 103 and Sunday's session had 90 delegates and 18 of the 20 local leagues were represented.

PROTECTING THE RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANTS – Beverly Johnson-Torelli Presented by Susan Martin, Shelley Kneip, Janet Lenart, and Lydia Zepeda

The Concurrence Team is encouraging the topic to move from a LWVWA position to National Concurrence. Discussed were next steps, including forming an immigrant rights affinity group, expanding the lobby team's work on state legislation, and tracking local policies that impact immigrant communities. The **Position in Brief** states that all residents, regardless of immigration status or citizenship, should be treated with dignity and respect, have access to essential state-funded services, have the opportunity to avail themselves of legal representation, and to live and work in safety. It also states that elected officials and government leaders have an obligation to take action ensuring these fundamental rights, including condemnation of xenophobia, discrimination, and anti-immigrant rhetoric. Several LWVBF members have been involved with this topic, including serving on the initial committee and/or actively being involved with the Immigrant Coalition by advising immigrants of their rights if/when they are approached by ICE, seeing them through the process, etc.

PROGRESS ON UPDATE OF 1980 INDIAN TREATY RIGHTS STUDY - Diane Molleson Presented by Janet Hedgepath, Eleanor Waters, Suzi Hokonson and Susan Fleming

This study came about when the study's leaders realized the National League did not have a position on tribal rights. They are covering the following topics: sovereign treaties (what is sovereignty? Are the treaties being honored?); government to government relations; economic prosperity; resources/salmon; education; and missing indigenous women. One of the study participants has made it a point to travel in her van to visit every tribe in Washington. As a result, she has made connections around the state and has been gifted so much from her visits.

They highlighted how the native peoples are story tellers. Their biggest challenge has been to tell—and respect—their stories and try to fit them into the League's topics, “to get ourselves out of the way,” one of the study's participants said.

KEYNOTE SPEAKER: THE HONORABLE G. HELEN WHITENER, **WASHINGTON STATE SUPREME COURT – Polly Parton**

How do you determine the best candidate when voting for a Washington State Supreme Court Justice? Experience and recommendations of other judges are two factors but diversity of life experiences was noted as highly important. Can a court be stewards of justice if both sexes are not represented? We now have five out of nine justices on the Washington State Supreme Court that are female. The current chief justice is also female (Debra L. Stephens). Our state uses nonpartisan elections. The state's code of Judicial Conduct prohibits candidates from making statements about cases and issues that are likely to come before the justices. This brings us back to experience, recommendations of other judges, other lawyers and diversity of life experiences.

There are an unprecedented five seats on the ballot this fall. Voter turnout for these positions is low with an estimated 1/3 of voters opting out for lack of knowledge. We will see more money put to campaigns, more media attention and a more politicized atmosphere this fall. It's time to pay attention.

DEMYSTIFYING MELD - Diane Molleson, Presented by Nancy Halvorson, **Ann Murphy, Lunell Haight, Ellie Hutton and Jeanne Crevier**

This session showed us how our Membership Engagement and Leadership Development (MELD) network strengthens local leagues. With two former LWVWA presidents among the facilitators, we discussed effective ways to engage members: Contact, Connect and Communicate. They suggested we welcome people to League after they join with a personal message (contact); have in-person meetings, discussions, and social gatherings (connect); and keep members informed about activities and find out what they want to get from their League experience (communication). They urged us to connect a new member to a Chair/ Issue Chair and give them “snack-sized” assignments at first, keeping in mind that leaders develop organically if we lay the groundwork.

We learned about League resources, such as the LWVWA Membership Affinity Group for membership chairs and roster managers and the National League’s portal where Leagues across the state share their information. They asked us to answer questions about leadership, such as “When you hear the word leadership, what are your first thoughts?” and “What are some examples of leadership mistakes?”. And they left us with information from the “First Follower Theory” by Derek Sivers who argues that “leadership isn’t crafted by the lone pioneer, but by the first person who joins them because that follower transforms an individual action into a shared movement.”

ANY CANVA EXPERTS OUT THERE? – Polly Parton

Presented by Carolyn Stewart and Joanne Lisosky

Canva was demonstrated with a hands-on, step-by-step exercise for creating brochures, handouts, posters, social media posts and possibly our Voter. A larger goal would be growing civic education and outreach with smart and timely materials. Each Washington League will be offered a free Canva license as part of ‘Build Our Collective Capacity’ with the increase in dues allocation to the state League. The National League Management site has templates of brands, fonts and colors. National also has a Flickr photo storage account with League photos that can be used. I hope to learn some skills but would appreciate help if we have any Canva experience in our membership. Please contact me (Polly) if Canva is your skill and you are willing to assist in materials creation.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

7/6 – Naturalization Ceremony 11 am,
Richland Courthouse
7/21 – Board Meeting 6 pm, zoom
8/18 – Board Meeting 6 pm, zoom
9/9 – Kamiakin Open House 6-8 pm
9/9 – Tri-City Diversity & Inclusion Council
Cultural Event noon – 6 pm, Fair Grounds
9/22 – Board Meeting 6 pm

Email: 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/LeagueofWomenVotersofBentonFranklinCounties)

MAILING ADDRESS:

League of Women Voters of Benton and
Franklin Counties
P.O. Box 765
Richland, WA 99353

NEW 2026-2027 OFFICERS:

President: Polly Parton
1st Vice President: Michelle Pirotte
2nd Vice President: Brianna Harty
Secretary: Diane Molleson
Treasurer: Carla Chiotti

ELECTED DIRECTORS:

Richard Badalamente
Margie Bass
Emily Dirkes
Christine Grantham
Sue Thornton
Glenda Williams

APPOINTED DIRECTORS: (TBD)

NOMINATING COMMITTEE

Brianna Harty - Chair
Emily Dirkes, Michele Pirotte