



VOTER

April 2021

www.lwv-bf.org

President's Message ~ Beverly Johnson-Torelli

It is amazing to think that only seven short weeks ago, we were in the middle of a snowstorm. Now spring is in the air! We look forward to April showers and May flowers. After enduring 2020, this spring season in particular comes with the feeling of hope and a new beginning. In the meantime, our League plans to continue Making Democracy Work by emphasizing Civics Education and Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI), as well as local program topics. Hopefully in 2021, in-person activities and events, including voter registration will become routine once again. Articles in the Voter and/or the Annual Meeting packet will be forthcoming to keep you up to date. In fact, please mark your calendar for May 20th at 6:00 pm for this year's Annual Meeting. All members are encouraged to attend.

In addition, this is a reminder that League members are always welcome to the Board meetings on the third Thursday each month at 6:00 pm via Zoom. If you are interested in attending, contact me at: sasjoh@aol.com and you will be sent the link. The next meeting is April 15th.

The virtual legislative session is currently in full swing and is scheduled to end on April 25th. A "special thanks" to our Advocacy Chair, Lora Rathbone, who continues to keep us updated. Technology makes it so easy to weigh in on the bills that resonate with each of us. Legislators are responding by sending letters via email regarding the status of individual bills. Some of you have reported receiving these letters.

In this edition of the Voter, you will see an article on Public Banking. It was provided by Toyoko Tsukuda, who was a member of our League until she moved to the westside. As you may know, SB 5188 supporting public banking had a public hearing in the Senate Business, Financial Services and Trade Committee on January 28, 2021. On March 25th, E2SS 5188 was voted out of committee, so it continues to move forward.

Since several League members expressed an interest in learning more about this topic, it was decided to disseminate the information to everyone.

Election season dates: May 17th --First day to file a declaration of candidacy. May 21st--Last day to file a declaration of candidacy. May 24th--Final day to withdraw from the ballot. May 28th--Deadline for submission of Voters' Pamphlet statements and photographs.

Save the date(s): Mark Thursday, June 24th through Monday, June 28th on your calendars for the virtual LWVWA Convention entitled: The Next Hundred Years: Defending Democracy. All members are invited to attend. If you are not a delegate, you will be able to sign up as an observer. More details will be forthcoming at a later time.

Request for help from LWVWA- Beverly Johnson-Torelli

Washington State LWV is requesting help for the following tasks at the state level. Please let me know at sasjoh@aol.com if you are interested in any of them, and I will pass on your contact information.

- Lobby Week 2022
- Social Media person to work with Lea Galanter (Communications Portfolio) including Facebook Posts for LWVWA.
- Office help: sending letters, data entry.
- Researchers: information for DEI Committee.
- Fundraising help: manage Facebook donation campaign.

Public Banking ~ Toyoko Tsukuda

Committee: Summary of the WA State Public Bank, March 24, 2021 The League Public Bank

WA State is on the verge of establishing the state-owned public bank a.k.a WA State Public Financial Cooperative (SB 5188 in 2021). It will be the 2nd state-owned bank in the nation.

The purpose of the cooperative bank is to “*encourage self-reliance by local and tribal governments in meeting their public works and economic development needs by providing opportunities to finance a broad array of public infrastructure and economic development projects, including housing.*”

The state-owned cooperative bank is where the state, local or tribal governments could become a member by their contributions and fees. Then, the members can deposit their public funds to the cooperative bank. As it is a bank, the deposits and the state funding enable the cooperative to borrow money or issue bonds to make much larger amounts of capital available to finance member government

projects with lower costs. In particular, it serves very well small or rural communities that find it difficult to secure funds due to high costs to obtain bonds. The cooperative operation does not create state debt in order to make capital funds available for borrowing by local and tribal government entities. The cooperative bank could partner with private sector banks for some opportunities.

WA State, which received a C grade for infrastructure from the American Society of Civil Engineers, needs to prioritize investment in infrastructure to protect public health and the environment. The cooperative bank is designed to be an infrastructure investment bank for the public. It has also a goal of providing 35% of loans for housing in low-income areas after five years of operation.

The beauty of a public bank, such as the cooperative, is that it not only creates a public lending tool for infrastructure but also achieves greater credit capacity (cash flow) through successive lending and spending within the community. The bill sponsor, Sen. Kuderer emphasizes how a public financial cooperative will help to stabilize communities during tough economic times saying, “The cooperative allows us to keep projects going, to keep people working, and that way the impact to the local economy won’t be as bad as it would normally be during a recession.”

Some state representatives worry that the cooperative bank will end up lending money unfairly and unwisely, saying that private sector banks are run by professionals who lend money to creditworthy applicants and that competitive banking business should be left to the professionals who know what they are doing. However, these worrying points are not well substantiated. The bank professionals’ track record is truly more troublesome (such as 2008 financial meltdown) than the history of lending to infrastructure projects in WA. There were no defaults on loans for infrastructure projects done in the last 35 years in the state. The transparency and accountability are built in the structure of the cooperative bank and the elected officials who oversee the cooperative would be accountable for the outcome of the bank operation. The bill’s expectation is that the cooperative bank will be managed by professionals.

The LWV of Washington Public Bank Task Force evaluated the issue of a state-owned public bank and determined the cooperative public bank is consistent with the league’s Privatization position on the management of public assets. Therefore, LWVWA supports SB 5188 creating the state public financial cooperative. As of March 24, 2021, the bill has passed the State Senate and now is in the House Consumer Protection and Business Committee for consideration.

Treasurer's Report ~ Shirley Sonnichsen

On February 28, 2021:

Checking is:	\$5,806.40
Savings is:	\$1,856.64
Total:	\$7,663.04

Income: \$86

We received \$75 in dues; \$11 for TSWI.

Expenses: \$2.48

We paid \$2.48 in PayPal fees.

Membership and dues: In real time we have 77 members including new members, Carla Chiotti, Marsha Stipe and Janet Taylor. An updated Membership List has been sent to members only.

Education Fund: \$604

We have \$604 to use for TRY's or other projects if needed.

Budget Committee:

The Budget committee, Janet Nail (Chair), Ann Roberts, Peggy Gregory and I met in March and established a proposed budget for FY2021-2022. The budget was sent to board members with talking points. The FY2021-2022 budget was approved at the March Board meeting to be voted on at the Annual Meeting in May for adoption.

State and National Conventions:

The State League "Virtual" convention will be held June 24-28, 2021. We will be able to have the President (or alternate) and 3 delegates attend and anyone can be an observer. The registration and more detail will be available by May 14. New members are encouraged to attend and be delegates. It is a great way to learn about the process of adopting budget, programs, and officers. Delegates will need to attend the voting sessions.

The National Convention is in alternate years and will be late June 2022 in Denver, Colorado. There is no information on the National website yet. Assuming this will be an in-person Convention, the estimated registration is \$360 and hotel \$209. \$2500 has been budgeted for 3 members to attend as delegates with members paying for airfare and sharing a room.

You Can Be An Advocate ~ Lora Rathbon

This is the beginning of week 12 of the 2021 legislative session, which lasts five more weeks, ending on April 25. The Legislature reached the “policy cutoff” date on Friday, March 26. The only remaining bills are those related to operating, capital, and transportation budgets. To follow what is happening, go to the great resource the LWVWA has put together at <https://lwvwa.org/2021Issues> Find the issue that interests you, and click on “learn more”. Next month I will let you know which bills passed, and which legislators to thank for their support. And thank YOU for supporting our League priorities!

Civics Education Committee ~ Lora Rathbon

In March Michelle Pirotte and others put together a brochure of what our league offers for Civics education. Mary Shaw contacted the schools, and we heard back, with short notice, that there would be a Kennewick School District Social Studies Curriculum planning meeting. The draft brochure, along with our Power Point slides, was sent just in time for their meeting. The finished brochure will be printed and distributed later. There is also a digital copy of the brochure that we will send to the school districts.

But first we need to have a planning meeting to be ready when we get an invitation! (We have already been invited to repeat our on-line presentation to Theresa Buczek’s class in May.)

If you want to join us, it is not too late.

The next meeting is: **3:00pm Wednesday March 31**. Ask Lora Rathbone for the zoom invitation at ldrathbone@outlook.com

WA League of Women Voters – list of projects and activities

In August 2020, the LWVWA Civics Education Committee was formed with the purpose of conducting a thorough inventory of civics education activities for adults by Leagues in our state, then to share these activities among the local Leagues. This committee has seven members, including myself from leagues all over the state.

Civics education occurs in both formal and informal settings with adults. The range of activities included formal programs offered through libraries and community colleges as well as information on the structure of government at candidate forums and voter registration events. This resulted in a very extensive list of 160 activities that leagues can use for ideas and resources for their own activities.

The committee will meet again in the fall of 2021 to update the inventory and include K-12 activities.

We may find helpful ideas for our high school presentations in Category One: US, WA State, Local and Tribal Government, History, and Role of Citizen. It applies to basic civics understanding including topics covered in the League textbook, *The State We're In: Washington*. There also is a newly released edition for grades 3-5.

Membership, Engagement and Leadership Development (MELD) ~ Polly Parton

March 15th zoom meeting

MELD calls provide a monthly interaction between Leagues to network, share ideas, accomplishments and best practices with guidance and mentorship from our coach Lynn Busacca. Our State Liaison Susan Fleming also shares State and National resources with us and gives state leaders summaries from the local Leagues. Benton-Franklin is currently in Pod #5 with members from Kitsap, Grays Harbor and Thurston Counties. Our calls are 60 minutes, Lynn provides an agenda. Discussions are casual and productive.

Some highlights of our last call are:

- Kitsap League free webinar-3/27, Climate Change and Your Health: Prepare Now! 10am-12pm
- Kitsap League free webinar- 4/21, Plastics, The Big Picture, Local Insights and What You Can Do
- Thurston League (Carol Goss)- 3/27, Lacey Cultural Celebration where community groups (and Thurston League) give presentations of stories, dance, art, music, and food. Event is on-line for 30 days (replaces past live celebrations)
- Kitsap League (Carol Larsen) to update “Learn About Your League” brochure to be more engaging and colorful as a hand-out
- Thurston League (Tony Wilson)- moving their website to “Club Express”, may be more user friendly for large leagues and interactive volunteer activity sign-up and reporting.

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) Committee ~ Judy Golberg

Many thanks to Sabiha Kahn for inviting our guest speakers Cielo Castro, Alexia Estrada, Zahra Roach, Cekedra Cole, and Shir Regev and for our speakers to share their personal stories with members of our League during the 3/11/21 Table Talk. Rev. Rick Matters followed with an invitation to receive further DEI training using a 3-part series called *Racism: The Power of Illusion*. Members were touched by the stories and agreed that it would be great to have Rev. Matters present this program. In order to schedule this series prior to summer the following dates have been scheduled: April 22, 29, and May 27, 6:00 pm. More information will be sent via email to register. We would encourage all our members to set aside time to join with Rick to learn about our own bias and become more aware of our community and its history.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

March 31, 3:00pm ~ Zoom Civics Education Committee

April 15, 6:00pm ~ Zoom Board Meeting

April 22, 6:00pm ~ Zoom Table Talk, Racism: The Power of Illusion

April 29, 6:00pm ~ Zoom Table Talk, Racism: The Power of Illusion

May 20, 6:00pm ~ Zoom Annual Meeting

May 27, 6:00pm ~ Zoom Table Talk, Racism: The Power of Illusion

June 24 through June 28 ~ Virtual Convention: The Next Hundred Years:
Defending Democracy

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