

VOTER April 2026

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

President's Message – Polly Parton

Join us on Friday, April 3 for our Table Talk. Our guest Loren Malone, co-founder of Tri-Cities Indivisible will speak on *Defend Democracy*. Following the presentation, Loren will participate in a round table discussion with us. Indivisible is a non-partisan political advocacy group committed to defending our democracy, advancing civic engagement, and empowering residents to hold elected officials accountable. Both LWWA and LWWUS have encouraged joint partnering with Indivisible as our missions are very similar. Remember that on April 17, 2025, the LWWUS declared that the US is in a constitutional crisis. I'm eager to learn about the very successful Indivisible. Thank you Richard and the Table Talk Committee for arranging this. Members, please invite a guest and join us. Location -Richland Library, Friday April 3, 1–2:30 pm

LWWA Washington State Council: June 6 & 7 (the evening of the 5th is optional) Lacey, WA– The Power of Us! We can send 5 delegates and more can attend as non-delegates. Early Bird prices are still good for in person and remote. More information is on the state website or **contact Polly if you're interested- this is a great learning experience! Please consider attending.** Below are the registration fees and QR code to access information and registration page.

- \$115 Early Bird (ends May 15)
- \$60 New member (joined in June 2025 or later)
- \$135 Regular (starts May 16)
- \$25 Early Bird Virtual (ends May 15)
- \$30 Regular Virtual (starts May 16)



Participating in our local league can be impactful and rewarding. Have you served on any of our committees or as Director or Officer with us? Do you want to get more involved in something? Let us know by filling out the membership interest survey or contacting a member of the nominating committee. Email, text or call Polly - Polly Parton, pparton34@gmail.com or 509-551-3818

Annual Meeting May 21, 2026

Join us at our Annual Meeting on Thursday May 21, 5:30 pm at La Bella Vita Kitchen and Bar at 1515 George Washington Way, Richland. We'll try a new location and order off the menu. At the Annual Meeting we elect new officers and board members, adopt a budget and a program of work for the up-coming year. The Marilyn Perkins Scholarship Awards will be awarded to the winners of our annual essay contest. The winners are invited along with their parents. Please put this in your calendar and join us. RSVP to Polly pparton34@gmail.com.

Phishing Scams

We will never ask you to buy gift certificates or gift cards, and we will never ask you to share our membership list. If you are ever asked to share passwords, account numbers or other official data, do not respond via email. Call someone in League that you know and trust and ask if this is a legitimate request. Be very aware of scams. Be safe and keep our members safe.

LWVWA President's Call – Polly Parton

LWVWA Council: June 6 & 7, Lacey – The Power of Us! Early Bird prices are still good for in person and remote. **(Contact Polly if you're interested- this is a great learning experience! Please consider attending)**

The state board has approved Ed Fund money to reimburse their delegates for up to 60% of the cost of the 2026 Council meeting, including registration, housing, mileage, and meals.

LWVUS 2026 Convention in Columbus Ohio, 6/25-28.

State League joins participation in America 250 celebration.

No Kings - LWVUS has joined as a national partner. The Snohomish County League is sharing customizable graphics for signs etc.

'Read for Democracy' Book Club will start in late July. The first book will be *How the South Won the Civil War* by Heather Cox Richardson. More details to come.

Playbook 4: Deepening Electoral Power · Toolkits available: (More to come)

Resisting Threats to Democracy RTD newsletter (resumes 3/19 – biweekly).

It is recommended that local leagues consider adding bylaw language in these areas: removing a board member: for “cause” and rules on how to handle nominations from the floor.

VOTE411 – changes! Legislative and National only this year. Amy Peloff is taking the lead and asking for questions for 2026 candidates. Deadline: May 1.

Candidate Forum Training is being discussed and planned for late April or early May.

Advocacy for LWVWA Priority 2026 Legislation – Lora Rathbone

LWVWA Priority Bill Successes for 2026: “Lawmakers approved 267 bills that will become law if Gov. Bob Ferguson signs them. Among those bills are 48 that LWVWA actively advocated for —with your help.” – Ann Murphy, LWVWA Lobby Team Co-chair.

Listed here are LWVWA priority bills that passed for all issues, and the dates they go into effect. Another list is for the bills that passed both houses, but the governor hasn’t signed them yet. The deadline for his signature is April 4, 2026. The final list are bills we lobbied for but did not pass. The lists include how the local legislators voted. Please send an email to thank them when they supported one of our bills. You can learn more about the bill by clicking on the bill number and reading the final bill report and check back to see if the bill is signed by the governor.

Bills that passed:

[HB 2238](#) *Concerning statewide food security. The 8th & 16th LD legislators all voted YES.

[HB 2338](#) *Authorize community scaled weatherization projects. Unanimous.

Bills that passed both houses but have not yet been signed by the governor.

[HB 1916](#) *Amending voter registration challenges and managing voter registration lists. 8th & 16th no.

[HB 1710](#) Pre-Clearance for Proposed Changes to Election Procedures. 8th & 16th no.

[HB 1750](#) Creating guidelines for voter suppression and vote dilution claims under the WA voting rights act. 8th & 16th no.

[SB 5892](#) Protects voter databases from distribution to unauthorized parties. 8th & 16th no. [SB](#)

[5855](#) *Prohibiting Facemasks in Law Enforcement. 8th & 16th LD legislators all voted no. [SB](#)

[6026](#) *Concerning residential development in commercial and mixed-use zones. The 8th & 16th LD reps voted YES, but the senators no.

Bills our local league lobbied for that did not pass:

[HB 2210](#) *Allow local governments to adopt alternative elections systems (i.e. ranked choice).

[SB 5400](#) *Supporting local news journalism.

[SB 5906](#) *Establish data & personal safety protections within areas of public accommodation for all WA residents. (Protect Washingtonians in Sensitive Public Spaces). *8th & 16th LD senators -no.

[HB 2515](#) /[SB 6171](#) *Large energy use facilities – data centers. Another bill ([SB 5982](#)) regarding data centers passed but needs to be signed by the governor.

[SB 5466](#) /1673 *Improving reliability and capacity of the electric transmission system. A similar bill, [SB 6355](#), was introduced and passed, but needs to be signed by the governor.

**Bills we lobbied for during LWVWA Lobby week*

Communications Corner – Defending Democracy - Bree Bowen

The League of Women Voters of Benton & Franklin Counties and Indivisible Tri-Cities are pairing up to present this month’s Table Talk, “Defending Democracy” on April 3, from 1:00 - 2:30 pm at the Richland Public Library. Our own incredible League president, Polly Parton, will be giving the opening remarks, followed by a presentation by Indivisible Tri-Cities co-founder, Loren Malone.

According a recent article in the newspaper “The Guardian”, since January 2025, the United States has moved with startling speed to consolidate authority and disrupt democracy: [dismantling federal agencies](#), [purging the civil service](#), [firing independent watchdogs](#), [sidelining Congress](#), [challenging judicial rulings](#), [deploying federal force](#), [stifling dissent](#), [persecuting political enemies](#), [targeting immigrants](#), [scapegoating marginalized groups](#), [ordering the capture](#) of a foreign leader, [leveraging](#) the White House [for profit](#), trampling [academic freedom](#) and [escalating attacks](#) on the news media. “In 2025, the United States ceased to be a full democracy in the way that Canada, Germany or even Argentina are democracies,” says [Steven Levitsky](#), prominent Harvard political scientist and author. If Levitsky’s name sounds familiar, it’s because he wrote two very popular best-selling books, “How Democracies Die” in 2018, and “Tyranny of the Minority” in 2022.

Ratings of US democracy by scholars (and Americans overall) dropped [significantly](#) after January 2025, according to data from [Bright Line Watch](https://brightlinewatch.org/), (https://brightlinewatch.org/) a non-partisan democracy-monitoring initiative that surveys political scientists and the public on potential threats and erosions. In its [September 2025 survey](#), experts rated US democracy only 54 points on a 100-point scale, placing the country closer to illiberal or hybrid regimes than to the full democracies of G7 peers such as Canada or the United Kingdom.

League member Richard Badalamente has graciously ordered copies of the mini book “On Tyranny,” by Timothy Snyder to have available for free at the Table Talk. So, if you’re worried about our democracy, come worry with like-minded people on April 3! We hope to see you there.

LWVBF Treasurer’s Report – Carla Ciotti, Treasurer

As of February 28, 2026:

Checking is	\$13,142.65
<u>Savings is</u>	<u>1,857.57</u>
Total	\$15,000.22

Income:

Ed Fund Advance	\$7,500.00
Membership dues	13.61

Savings interest _____ .02
Total income: \$7,513.63

Expenses:

TRYs printing \$627.78
Total expenses: \$627.78

Membership Dues and Donations: In February we received dues for one new member. Welcome!

Expenses: We reimbursed Diane Molleson for the payment to Bettendorf's Printing for the printing of 750 TRY (They Represent Us) pamphlets.

Education Fund: We received an advance of \$7500.00 from our Education Fund to pay for the three scholarships that will be awarded in May at the annual meeting.

Budget Committee: The Budget Committee met on March 11 at Janet Nail's house and developed a draft budget for 2026-2027. It will be presented to the board at the March meeting.

Shortfall Mitigation: The LWVUS committed to make Leagues whole if they took in less in member dues under the new dues model than they would have under the old dues model. Now that we've been using the new process for over a year, LWVUS was able to compare the base year (each League's member count on 1/31/25) with the amount each League did take in during the first year using the LWV Member Portal. Calculations showed that our local league had a shortfall of \$622, so LWVUS is sending us \$622.

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 please remember to use the email address that you used when you set up your LWVUS 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.

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.

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>.

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

Book Club – Polly Parton

On March 9 we discussed *The Briar Club* by Kate Quinn. Female friendship intertwines with individual stories in DC during the 1950s. *Playground* by Richard Powers is our April read. We follow four characters at the intersection of technology, AI and nature with environmental challenges. For May we read *The Ride of Her Life* by Elizabeth Letts. In 1954, 63-year-old Annie Wilkins embarked on a 4,000-mile horseback journey. It's great non-fiction peppered with history. Join us the second 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 will start a book club (estimated 3 books per year). It will start in late July; the first book will be *How the South Won the Civil War* by Heather Cox Richardson. Watch for updates.

pparton34@gmail.com or 509 -551-3818

Calendar of Events

April

- 1 - Voter Registration and Tabling at Orion High School, 4:30 – 6 pm
- 2 - Voter Registration and Tabling at Sageview High School Spring Carnival, 5 – 7:30 pm
- 3 - Defend Democracy Table Talk, 1 – 2:30 pm, Richland Library, Doris Roberts Room
- 13 – Book Club via Zoom
- 21 – LWVBF Business and Planning Meeting/Board Meeting via Zoom

May

21 – Annual Meeting, 5:30 pm, La Bella Vita, 1515 George Washington Way, Richland

Email: lwv.of.bf@gmail.com

Instagram: [lwv.of.bf](https://www.instagram.com/lwv.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 99352

OFFICERS:

President: Polly Parton
1st Vice President: Ruvine Jimenez
2nd 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