



VOTER

August 2024

www.lwv-bf.org

President's Message ~ Diane Molleson

Welcome to the 2024-2025 Year in League! A big welcome to our new and returning officers and board members. We were all elected (or reelected) at our Annual Meeting on May 21.

In June, Beverly Johnson-Torelli organized the candidate forums for the 2024 Primary Election on August 6 with the help of several LWVBF members. We also helped the State League host the forum for the primary candidates for the Attorney General (AG) race, which was held in person at WSU-TC on June 18. All three candidates for the AG race participated, and it was a pleasure to welcome them and the LWVWA's president, Mary Coltrane. We are now starting to plan the forums for the General Election where we will cover 17 races.

The AG forum is available for viewing at www.lwvwa.org along with the forums for the other state races (Superintendent of Public Instruction and Commissioner of Public Lands). The LWVBF's Primary forums for the 4th Congressional District and the 14th Legislative District, Positions 1 and 2 can be seen on the LWVBF website — <http://www.lwv-bf.org>— YouTube, through the Cities of Richland and Pasco, and the Columbia Badger Club through August 6. Also check the League's site Vote411.org for more voter and election information.

Richard Badalamente, who has been leading the LWVBF's efforts to raise awareness of Emergency Risk Protection Orders in Benton and Franklin Counties, was the guest speaker for our Table Talk on ERPOs on June 7. Members from the Kennewick Police Department, Domestic Violence Services (DVS), Support, Advocacy & Resource Center (SARC) and the NW Justice Project attended and participated in a lively discussion after his presentation. More information on our ERPO project is in a separate article.

Our League will host a presentation and discussion of the Climate Commitment Act and Initiative 2117 on August 29 at 6 p.m. in the Richland Public Library. (See details in a separate announcement).

We are also planning a Wine Night in October to welcome new members, and we have several voter registration drives scheduled where we would welcome volunteer help. We hope you will join us at some of these events. Happy Summer!

Table Talk on August 29

Initiative I-2117 and Washington's Climate Commitment Act

Please join us on **August 29 at 6 p.m.** in the Gallery Room at the **Richland Public Library (955 Northgate Drive)**. Douglas Ray, Board Chair of Carbon Washington and Senior Research Fellow Emeritus at Pacific Northwest National Laboratory, will share his views on the strengths and weaknesses of the Climate Commitment Act and explain why he and Carbon Washington oppose Initiative 2117. The League of Women Voters of Washington State also opposes the initiative. Information on all three ballot initiatives will be provided.

Refreshments will be served.

Voter Registration Drives: Help Wanted

The LWVBF has the following voter registration drives scheduled. Please contact Diane Molleson at molleson@frontier.com if you can volunteer. Thank you.

- September 5:** **Kamiakin HS Resource Fair** (600 N. Arthur St. in Kennewick) 6-8 p.m. Bev and Diane have volunteered.
- September 7:** **Celebration of Community, Diversity & Culture**, sponsored by Tri-Cities Diversity and Inclusion Council, Howard Amon Park (500 Amon Park Dr.in Richland.) LWVBF to register voters early – mid afternoon TBD. Volunteers needed.
- September 17:** **Naturalization Ceremony**, Federal Building (825 Jadwin Avenue, Richland), 10 a.m. Chris Grantham has volunteered. More volunteers needed.
- September 17:** **Seattle Children's Tri-Cities Clinic** (8232 W. Grandridge Blvd. Kennewick.), time TBD. Volunteers needed.
- September 19:** **WSU-TC** (2710 Crimson Way), 11 a.m. – 1 p.m. Diane, Bev and Chris have volunteered.

LWVWA 2024 Council

The LWVWA Council was held in Lacey, WA on June 1 and 2. LWVBF members Leona Hassing and Diane Molleson attended as virtual delegates. Council opened with a lively Keynote speech by Squaxin Tribal Chief Kris Peters that touched on the tribes' history, generational trauma, and strong family ties to their communities that continue today.

Another highlight included a dramatic adaptation of Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins' book, *The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters*. Jefferson-Jenkins is a former two-term president of the LWVUS and the first African American to hold that position.

There were two Plenary sessions to elect new board members and nine workshops to choose from. I attended "Understanding the Lobby Team: Talk to Issue Chairs and Ask Questions," where the Issue Chairs for Healthcare, Behavioral Health, Early Care and Education of Young Children, and Climate and Energy discussed how they follow bills, write testimony, testify in hearings and communicate with membership. In "Communicating with Diverse Population Groups," Leagues related how they connected with other community organizations, found young voters "so they don't have to find us," and, in one case, reached out to a marketing group. In "Leadership is a Balancing Act," Leagues, in particular Leagues without a president, shared how their boards balance responsibilities.

In the final session, in-person and virtual attendees discussed *Staying Nonpartisan in Partisan Times* as Leagues gear up for the 2024 election. Among the many points raised was clearly differentiating between the League's voter services work and its advocacy work and remembering that "advocacy is not our purpose" when conducting candidate forums or hosting voter registration drives.

Extreme Risk Protection Order (ERPO) Project Update ~ Richard Badalamente

The League of Women Voters of Washington has included Gun Safety as a Position to be addressed for more than three decades! The League's position, in brief, is that "Government should regulate ownership and possession of firearms and limit their accessibility." It's a tall order, but the League has seen at least some of its policy objectives met. One, that met with broad support across the state, was Initiative-1491, establishing Extreme Risk Protection Orders (ERPOs) as one of the civil orders designed to limit the accessibility of firearms to those who shouldn't have them.

ERPOs would take guns out of the hands of those who might do harm to themselves or others. The ERPO law was passed in 2016, but unfortunately, its implementation has been sporadic. Benton and Franklin counties have seldom used the law, and members of the community are woefully unaware of it, and even less conversant with how it works. The LWVBF established a project to raise awareness of the law and promote its usefulness.

LWVBF is currently working with Benton-Franklin Health District (BFHD), Support Advocacy & Resource Center (SARC), Domestic Violence Services of Benton-Franklin (DVS-BF), and the Northwest Justice Project (NJP). A loose collaboration has been established with LWV-S/KC, and through them, with the Senior Deputy Prosecuting Attorney of King County, who was a pioneer in establishing protocols and teams to smooth the implementation of the new ERPO law.

The LWVBF held a Table Talk on ERPOs on June 7, 2024. A member of the Kennewick Police Department participated and spoke to how they see their role. SARC, DVS-BF and NJP also participated. SARC has agreed to be a primary point of contact for those seeking assistance in petitioning for an ERPO. The NJP will undertake a test case with SARC to assess the willingness of the courts to grant ERPO petitions. DVS-BF and BFHD have established links between our ERPO team and members of selected coalition leaders within BFHD.

Recently, DVS-BF won a grant to establish a Domestic Violence High Risk Team (DVHRT) and has proposed partnering with LWVBF to address common goals. This recent development is a giant step forward in our efforts to prevent gun violence and save lives.

If you're interested in participating in the ERPO project, please contact Richard Badalamente at rbad2@charter.net or Diane Molleson at molleson@frontier.com

Communications Committee Report – Kirby Amacker

We are excited to share an update from our newly formed Communications Committee which is comprised of Judy Golberg, Carrie Hallquist, Bree Bowen, Klara Hulick, Karis Alderson and Kirby Amacker. We have been making progress in defining our various audiences and the existing communication channels that LWVBF is leveraging to convey our messages. Our goal is to identify the highest priority groups that we need to reach and then to define a plan to reach them, using either our existing channels or defining new ones. We need your help! We are going to do a test of our social media reach through our [Facebook page](#) to promote information about the Washington State Primary Election.

Our Request: If you have a Facebook account, can you please follow our page and make a concerted effort to like, comment and share the posts over the next two weeks? You can use [this link](#) or search for "League of Women Voters of Benton & Franklin Counties" to find our page.

We want to see if we can broaden our reach through this approach and your engagement will help elevate our posts through the algorithms. We look forward to sharing more as we learn from this experiment. If you have any feedback on how you would like to receive league communication, we would love to hear from you! Share your comments with us by emailing Kirby at steelhead1107@msn.com.

2024 LWVWA Council – Leona Hassing

2024 LWVWA council was a hybrid meeting held Saturday and Sunday, June 1-2 in Lacey, WA. Saturday's theme was diversity. Sunday's theme was League's non-partisan policy.

Squaxin Tribal chief, Kris Peters, was the key note speaker. He was very involved with local government bringing in the Tribal issues. Speaking, at times, in native language added to his story.

During Saturday lunch, the group watched a video of a Reader's Theatre production, based on Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins' book, *The Untold Story of Women of Color in the League of Women Voters*. Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins is a former two term president of LWVUS.

The book tells the true story of the evolution of the National League of Women Voters attitudes and actions regarding civil rights and the inclusion of women of color. The production is an honest accounting of our past and our current efforts to create an inclusive organization representative of all women.

On Sunday, "Staying non-partisan in partisan times" was the topic of a panel discussion. League members from Clark, Spokane, and Thurston units shared their experiences emphasizing local candidate forums and unit activities.

Council workshops included MELD, National convention caucus, Understanding the lobby team, Speaking with one voice and lots more.

2024 LWVUS Convention, June 27-30 – Judy Golberg

Thank you for allowing me to be one of our local League's delegates to Convention. I would far rather be in person for a convention but due to family events that kept

me from traveling, being a “virtual delegate” was my option. It was reasonably inexpensive, as convention registrations go--\$125. I was also able to be home to do the usual cooking, laundry, and other household chores that would have been waiting for me to return had I gone to Washington, D.C. (down side!!)

I did “attend” pre-convention workshops and training that provided any delegate the opportunity to learn more about the business, the proposed issues and how to manage voting as a delegate. My recommendation is for any delegate to participate in these sessions. They are recorded so can be watched at a more convenient time—in other words, no excuse for missing them. It becomes apparent when delegates did not participate or do their homework!

In-person delegates met with Senators and House of Representative members on Thursday. Unfortunately, there was no one to meet with Rep. Newhouse. The main focus of these visits was to promote the John R. Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act. If you would like more information on this, please let me know.

Here are some of the workshops that I participated in during convention:

- How Can We Disagree Better to Build Trust in Our Democracy – ideas for modeling behavior and building a civil community
- Turn Up for One Person, One Vote – discussed the Electoral College and popular vote
- Book Banning – how to fight against it, censorship and becoming a library advocate
- Meet the Candidates
- Rethinking Your Webpage – learning as you go
- DEI in the Work: building a more diverse league

There was a very moving tribute to the late Dr. Deborah Turner, our LWV president who died this January. I knew Dr. T for about 12 years and she was a friend to all who met her. She would end her remarks with “keep on keeping on” and that is what we do as an organization!

The big announcement on Saturday was that Celina Stewart has been appointed as the new CEO. Celina has been a part of LWV for several years, starting as a staff attorney. Another announcement on Sunday was the partnership with the Girl Scouts to work on a voting project. More on this program to be announced.

Plenary sessions, the business sessions, are challenging, frustrating, and eventually finished! The challenge is handling virtual delegates at the same time as in-person delegates. Our skills at dealing with the virtual platforms will improve over time but right now it was the cause of much delay and loss of time that should have been

used for debate. Frustrations—on my part—are the fact that we have delegates who have not kept up with the resources available. All information is submitted early enough for delegates to review and know what is being discussed. We spent time dealing with Motions to close debate or extend debate that added to the shortening of the actual debate time. Nevertheless, we did accomplish the business of convention. Out of 1754 possible delegates, there were 1,279 with 50 states represented along with DC and the Virgin Islands!

Dr. Sania Irwin, President, handled the business with grace while we:

- Elected the new board and nominating committee- not as simple as it sounds since there was a vacancy in the slate for nominating committee. That required nominations and a vote but it was completed.
- Bylaws – what changes will be shared with all Leagues. Most proposed amendments were postponed indefinitely.
- Programs approved included continuation of the Make Democracy Work campaign and a new one-year study regarding the federal judiciary system.*** (Note—new study) Decline of Local News study forwarded by the LWV of Washington State was approved by concurrence.
- Other topics discussed had to do with privatization, gun safety, reproductive rights, climate change, and money system.
- The motion to continue the \$32 PMP (per member payment) was approved. This will change once the new membership dues structure is in place.
- Motion to approve the Budget passed.
- Resolutions approved. DC Statehood, reproductive rights, ethics in government, public libraries, immigration, discrimination against women.

There were other resolutions and concurrences that did not pass. Also added was a half hour of directions to the board on a wide range of topics.

New CEO Celina Stewart and newly elected president Dianna Wynn held a “fireside” chat. One quote Celina shared and I feel is worth sharing with everyone is “Go have a good day. If you can’t, don’t mess up someone else’s day!” Good one to think about it.

Treasurer’s Report – Shirley Sonnichsen

As of June 30, 2024:

Checking is	\$6,121.41
Savings is	<u>\$1,857.26</u>
Total	<u>\$ 7,978.67</u>

Income: \$60.52 – We received \$60.52 from Peggy Gregory. We accidentally paid for her, Larry and John Perkin’s meals at the annual meeting. They reimbursed us for all 3 meals so paid for John’s dinner as well. Thanks Peggy 😊.

Expenses: None

Membership and Dues: Our membership is stable at 105.

Audit: The Treasurer’s duties will be turned over to Carla Chiotti after a final audit is performed in late July. I will be available for the gradual upgrade to the new system. The incoming Treasurer, President and past Treasurer will meet at our “home” Umpqua bank July 19th to change signatures for checks, credit card, etc.

Ed Fund: \$8140.42 – Remains the same as May final. As always if you would like to donate to the State Education fund for scholarships, please make your check out to *LWV-WA Education Fund, attention Ed Fund Treasurer*. Their address is 1511 Third Avenue, Suite 900, Seattle, WA 98101. Earmark it for our Benton-Franklin League scholarship fund. Thank you, Lora, Shari and Barb for your generous contributions.

Thanks: I would like to thank everyone for the best wishes in my non-treasurer mode, congratulations, and the generous gift cards to my Trap Neuter Return (TNR) cat group and Prevent Homeless Pets, the organization who spay/neuters feral cats at low cost and gives them shots. It’s been a 25-year adventure.

LWVBF Book Club – Polly Parton

Our August book club pick will be *The Lincoln Highway* by Amor Towles.

In July we discussed *Endurance: Shackleton’s Incredible Voyage* by Alfred Lansing. It was a good discussion of this historical event.

Join us the 2nd Monday each month, 6 pm via Zoom by emailing or texting Polly Parton to be added to the link. We keep discussion to one hour. Please join in even if you did not read the book

Polly.parton@yahoo.com or 509 -551-3818

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

August 12, 6:00pm ~ Book club via Zoom

August 21, 6:00 pm ~ Business Meeting via Zoom

August 29, 6:00 pm ~ Table Talk, Richland Public Library, Gallery Room

Sept. 5 ~ Voter Registration, Kamiakin HS

Sept. 7 ~ Voter Registration, Celebration of Community, Diversity and Culture
Sept. 17 ~ Naturalization Ceremony, Federal Building, Richland
Sept. 17 ~ Voter Registration, Seattle Childrens Tri-Cities Clinic
Sept. 19 ~ Voter Registration, WSU-TC

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