



VOTER

December 2020 &
January 2021

www.lwv-bf.org

President's Message ~ Beverly Johnson-Torelli

2020 will undoubtedly go down in the history books as an unforgettable year. It has convinced even the most skeptical of us that everything really can change in the “blink of an eye.” It has brought economic and educational distress, thrown us into isolation, and caused a host of other challenges. On the other hand, it has brought us some good changes that may remain even after COVID-19 has been brought under control. For example, it has dragged us into using the technology that we have now, even if we were reluctant previously. This has helped us stay in touch with family, friends, business colleagues and fellow volunteers, reducing isolation from what it might have been just a few years ago. It has also allowed employees of many types of organizations to work from home, with an added benefit of reducing the carbon footprint. In the meantime, it has helped children and students of all ages to engage in learning even during quarantine. For our organization, it has helped us continue doing business, even though we miss socializing in the traditional way. The Spokane League will be hosting the 2021 LWV State Convention virtually on June 23rd-27th. This should allow anyone who wishes to attend to do so, as was the case for both State Council and the National Convention last summer.

2020 also marks the 100th anniversary of the passage of the 19th Amendment, affirming the right to vote for women. The League continually encourages all U.S. citizens to exercise this incredible privilege that many people in the world do not have. What better present for this signature year than to have the national voter turnout to be the largest in the last 120 years! In the Tri-Cities, the voter turnout was also high: 82.16% for Benton County and 78.29% for Franklin County. That said, every election season presents new challenges, and we must persevere to encourage everyone not only to register to vote but to take action on election day. Every vote truly does count!

Thanks to all of you who were able to join us for the Table Talk on November 12th. (So named because in normal times, we gather together around tables for a soup dinner.) Our League member, political scientist, and CBC Professor, Miriam Kerzner, did a wonderful job of facilitating the discussion on the election debrief. **Please join us for the next Table Talk on December 17th at 6:00 p.m. The topic will be homelessness.** Chariss Warner, Director of Ministries at the Tri-City Union Gospel Mission, will be our speaker. Her focus will be on homelessness of women and children in particular. Chariss has also written a book entitled: *On a Mission*, which can be ordered on Amazon. A Zoom link will be sent to all League members a couple of days before the Table Talk. Polly Parton (polly.parton@yahoo.com) is the League member organizing this event. In addition, since we aren't able to have a traditional holiday party this year, we are inviting everyone to wear celebratory attire on December 17th befitting of their personal customs. Please join us. Future topics for Table Talks and/or trainings include: Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Legislative issues, speakers from Carbon Washington and Badger Club, Rank Choice Voting, and others as they evolve. Join me in looking forward to exciting adventures in 2021!!!!

Treasurer's Report ~ Shirley Sonnichsen

On October 31, 2020:

Checking is	\$6,005.19
Savings is	\$1,856.58
Total	<u>\$7,861.77</u>

Income: \$675

We received \$525 in dues and \$150 in member contributions.

Expenses: \$987

The National, \$424 and State, \$252 Per Member Payments (PMP's) were made in October for the second quarter. The post office box payment of \$148 was also made. Judy Golberg set up a personal Zoom account for us to use and we reimbursed her \$162.79. Many thanks to Judy.

Membership and dues: We have 72 members including new members Amedee Marx, Amy Hatfield and Diana Ruff. There are 3 students and 6 members who have not paid*.

Education Fund: \$604

We have \$604 to use for TRY's or other projects if needed. If you are interested in making a tax-exempt donation to the Ed Fund for future projects, please make your check out to the **League of Women Voters of Washington Education Fund** and mail the check to me at 1150 Englewood Dr Richland 99352-9484 or League of Women Voters of Benton & Franklin Counties, P.O.Box 765, Richland 99352 and I will fill out the form to direct it toward our League account.

Budget and Audit Committees:

A 2 or 3 person Budget committee is needed to establish a budget for FY 2020-2021 which will be voted on at the Annual Meeting in May. We don't need to meet until February or March. It's a good way to learn and the Treasurer does the work. In the spring or summer, a socially distanced audit should be performed on the books. The Treasurer hosts this meeting since the books and paperwork are here. No expertise is required to be a committee member. Please let me know if you are interested in being on either of these committees or both. Jssonn.dawgs@charter.net or 509-627-1473.

Represent You (TRYs) ~ Diane Molleson

Every January we update and edit our local League's brochure, *They Represent You!* Volunteers will be needed to update information on national, state and local officials, and judges. Please contact Diane Molleson at molleson@frontier.com if you can volunteer. Thank you.

Program Planning in January ~ Marilyn Perkins

2021 means that we would normally have a State League convention, which is held in late spring in odd number years. It was going to be in Spokane, but will be virtual, which does have some advantages. It is cheaper and more people can attend. National conventions are scheduled during even numbered years. In January of each year we have a meeting to discuss program planning for the appropriate level. **On January 23, at 10:00 a.m.** we will have a Zoom meeting to discuss suggestions for programs for State focus, study or updating. We will send our results in, along with other local Leagues in the state. If you want to look at the current State positions, you can go to <https://lwvwa.org/league-positions> to review any position you might be interested in.

The last few years, Leagues at all three levels have been focused on Making Democracy Work through Voter Service activities. Part of our November Table Talk was to discuss what our League might do locally during this very partisan time to help educate and register voters. Living in a red area of a blue state, does have its challenges. We didn't have much time to spend on that part of the discussion, but hopefully we can make it part of this program planning meeting. We will send our recommendations in to State in February, but any decision on what our local League might want to do doesn't need to be decided until the April Board meeting.

If you are a newer member and this all seems a bit overwhelming, don't worry, it will all start to come together after a few more meetings. Of course, our potential activities are limited by pandemic restrictions and it is hard to know how long this may last. We may have to be more creative in our planning and how we carry out any work. We will send more information in January, closer to the meeting. If you have any questions, feel free to contact me at jimperkins.cougs@frontier.com or 783-8610.

(New) Member Orientation ~ Janet Nail

Whether you are a new member or a seasoned member, our new member orientation offers something for all. We will learn:

- What to expect at Voter Registration sessions and the basics of completing a voter registration form.
- What is the best way to contact your senators/representatives and make the strongest impact statement.
- Learn how to be a League of Women Observer at local meetings.
- Find out how to use the League of Women Voters website and decide whether you would like a member handbook or use the website as a guide. Both include bylaws, history, positions, etc. Your choice, digital or paper?
- What the League thinks will be the hot button issues this legislative session.
- What is included in the League of Women civics education classes.

The Zoom meeting will be scheduled in January. Watch for the details. Hope to see you. If you have questions, please contact me. janet@janetnail.com

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) ~ Judy Golberg

The DEI committee held its first meeting to plan a Table Talk discussion this coming February or March on diversity, equity and inclusion. There has been much discussion over the recent months about racism, white privilege, Black Lives Matter and other related topics. We hope to enlighten all of us regarding our own unconscious biases, check our privilege status, and become more aware of the history of our community. Good resources are available to all of us on the LWV website. Here is the direct link to a page worth exploring: <https://www.lwv.org/league-management/diversity-equity-inclusion> If you are interested in joining the committee, please let me know. Judy Golberg, 627-5347, jgolberg@charter.net

Bylaws ~ Judy Golberg

The Bylaws committee will review our local Leagues Bylaws for possible amendments that will be brought before our membership at the annual meeting in May. For those of you who are interested in Bylaws, there is an opportunity to participate as a committee member. Call Judy Golberg if you wish to do so. Our local League Bylaws are posted on our website: <https://my.lwv.org/washington/benton-franklin-counties/member-tools>.

Nominating Committee ~ Judy Golberg

The Nominating Committee will be meeting within the next two months to begin discussions on next year's slate of officers, board members and the following year's nominating committee. We hope you say "yes" when called about serving. Committee members are: Sandra Hendry, Susan Leckband, Marilyn Perkins, Ann Roberts and Judy Golberg.

LWVWA Civics Education Inventory- helping leagues to be Civics educators ~ Lora Rathbone

As part of the BF LWV Civics Ed team, I represented our League on the Civics Education Committee established by the LWVWA State Board.

Our purpose was to create an inventory of adult civics education activities from all the Leagues in Washington state. We also want to encourage Leagues to use the text “The State We’re In” as a resource.

The State Board considers civics education for adults to be critical work in our state; only recently a civics education course been required for high school graduation in Washington. We know that the basic structures and processes of government have not been taught consistently in schools for over 30 years. By creating an inventory of Civics Education activities, we can share ideas and resources with each other. These activities include a wide range of activities from voter education at voter registration events, to informing the public about issues, like during our Table Talks. Hopefully having this list of activities and resources will encourage Leagues to do more in this important role of educating the public to become active and informed citizens.

Our committee reached out to each League by giving a presentation on this project on Zoom. My presentation was to Kitsap county where they have an active Civic Education team and have produced several videos that we hope to use some day! A few members from our League joined in the discussion about how to proceed with civics education at this time. It was reassuring and inspiring to discuss this with another League. Martha, our new member, is a retired teacher from Hanford HS and gave us valuable insight. She advised us to wait to approach teachers because they are currently overwhelmed with the pandemic. But she has some great ideas for what we can do to reach students when the time is right.

Once we hear back from the Leagues around the state, the information will be organized, and hopefully made available to Leagues in time for our program planning meetings. I am excited about the possibilities of what our League can do in the future.

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

November 16th 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-

- “Braver Angels” is highly recommended watching (You Tube) promoting common ground to unite red and blue America.
- I noted Beverly Johnson-Torelli’s interview on Election night (NWPB TV) was informative and positive recognition for the LWV.
- Some local leagues use different companies for their websites, but there are still costs and issues with on-going training.
- A presentation from a state leader on legislative “*how to...*” is available to local leagues. Our own Lora Rathbone has covered much the same materials and she continues to be a great source of information for our league.
- We discussed the DEI Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Policy. At first sight, I thought it was overly extensive, but it highlighted (to me) the many ways I might unconsciously disenfranchise others.
- A portion of our national league dues go to fights such as challenging the ballot drop box reduction in Texas (to one per county).

Richland City Council Meeting November 17, 2020 ~ Carol Larkin

COVID-19 Update, Cindy Reentz, City Manager

- Ms. Reentz described Richland as doing well, especially in comparison to the state, regarding cases, hospitalizations, and deaths. (Her report sounded much rosier than what is reported from the health district in the TCH).
- There are about 1300 utility accounts pending. The city is trying to inform people that there is still money to help with utilities.

Mayor and Council: Comments on Gov. Inslee’s recent new restrictions

- Mayor Ryan Lukson read a letter strongly disagreeing with Gov. Inslee’s recent restrictions. After comments by every council member, the letter was unanimously approved to be sent to Gov. Inslee.
- Major concerns, disagreements:
 - Since local health officials have said that the surge is coming from private gatherings where people aren’t wearing masks and not from interactions at businesses, the new restrictions won’t make that much difference.
 - The letter cited a study done by 3 counties which showed a very low rate of cases from indoor dining. (The state has said that the study painted a misleading picture and incomplete facts).
 - The business community has implemented safety protocols and made significant investments to provide a safe environment. These restrictions disregard their investments and efforts and will ruin many businesses.
 - There has been a lack of partnership and cooperation between the city and state. It seems the city’s input was not considered. The city only learned of the restrictions a couple of hours before they were announced.
 - There should be more customization-not one size fits all.

- While most council members remained fairly civil in their strong disagreements, one council member went on a disrespectful tirade full of false or misleading information for a long time. (I turned off the sound until he finished because I couldn't stand it).
- 2021 Community Development Block Grant Annual Action Plan Project Funding Recommendations, Res. No. 154-20, Kerwin Jensen, Development Services Director.
 - 17,000-Elijah Family Home Project Funding
 - 9,500-Elijah Family Homeschool
 - 9,500-Senior Life Resources (Meals on Wheels)
 - 13,000-ARC
 - 199,000-City of Richland Public Works department-new ADA ramps
- Ordinance No.46-20, approving the 2021-2026 Capital Improvement Plan, Cathleen Koch, Admin. Services Director.
 - RE: Last council's comments and discussion on the animal control shelter to bring it up to the \$2 million commitment required by each city in order to proceed. She said this did not take away from other projects.

SAVE THE DATE

ANNUAL ACTION WORKSHOP

Hear about what to expect this session and the issues from our lobbyist, legislators and our Lobby Team in 2 virtual sessions

Gear Up for the 2021 Legislative Session

Session 1: Saturday, December 5, 2020 9:30 am – 1:00 pm

Introduction to the Session •

Keynote Speakers – Why we need it and how we get it •

Elections/Campaign Finance/ Redistricting

Session 2: Saturday, December 12, 2020 9:30 am – 1:00 pm •

Economic/Social Justice •

Criminal Justice/Gun Safety •

Education •

Climate Change/ Environment/ Transportation

And an opportunity to learn how to use the legislative web site and get involved with the issues you care most about.

Register: <https://lwvwa.org/event-4049956/Registration>

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

December 5 and 12~Annual Action Workshop

December 17. 6:00pm~Zoom Table Talk on Homelessness

January 23, 10:00am ~Zoom Program Planning

January TBD~ New Member Orientation and Try's They Represent You

February or March TBD~ DEI Table Talk

Email us at:

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