



## VOTER

February 2024

### President's Message ~ Diane Molleson

Happy 2024 to all! And Happy 104<sup>th</sup> Birthday to League on February 14th!

February 14 is Valentine's Day, and the date League was established in 1920. We would love for you to join us at the **League's Birthday Lunch at Noon** on Friday, **February 16** at **CG Public House** (9221 W. Clearwater Ave. in Kennewick). Orders will be taken off the menu. If you have dietary restrictions, you can call Fran by February 13 at CG Public House to preorder. Her number is 509-783-0128, extension 205. Our guest speaker will be Andy Miller, who will talk about the changes he observed in the criminal justice system during his 36 years as Benton County's Prosecuting Attorney. **Please RSVP to Diane at [molleson@frontier.com](mailto:molleson@frontier.com) or 509-554-7317 by February 13.**

### The Month in Review:

Our League ended 2023 with a Holiday Party at the East Benton County Historical Society and Museum. We welcomed guest speaker Matt Truman, the Coordinator of the Benton-Franklin Housing Consortium and Executive Director of Franklin County's Housing Authority, who discussed the various types of housing programs available in the Tri-Cities. His informative talk noted that preventing homelessness is much easier than fixing it when it happens, homelessness is more of an economic issue than a mental health issue, and family and relationship problems are often contributing factors. For more information, see <https://www.hacpfc.org>

Eighteen members braved single-digit temperatures to attend our annual **Program Planning** meeting on January 13. The first order of business was a discussion regarding the LWVWA new Position on Local News and Democracy. LWVWA plans to ask for concurrence with this Position at the LWVUS convention in June, so it becomes a national Position. All members in attendance agreed with this request for concurrence.

Although we did not adopt a local study, our League showed the greatest interest in focusing on the youth vote in the coming year. This would involve reaching out to youth groups to encourage their members to vote, providing voter education, finding

out where they get their news, and above all listening to what is important to them. We will elicit advice from our student members and begin with groups where our members have contacts, such as the Boys and Girls Club and the Key Club, among others.

January 22-26 was **Lobby Week**. Five League members from the 8<sup>th</sup> legislative district met on Zoom in sessions with Representative Stephanie Bernard, Representative April Connors's aide and Senator Matt Boehnke. Many thanks to our Advocacy Chair Lora Rathbone for arranging these meetings and all her work on legislative issues.

A big welcome to all our new members. We are delighted to have you!

### **From LWWA: Communications Affinity Group**

Would you like to meet League members from across the state? Delores Irwin from LWV Mason City is reviving the Communications Affinity Group, which would meet monthly on Zoom. Their purpose is to share and discuss effective communication methods for local league groups. If there is enough interest, she will solicit suggestions for meeting days and times as well as topics. Please let Diane at [molleson@frontier.com](mailto:molleson@frontier.com) know if you are interested in joining this group as our local representative.

### **Treasurer's Report ~ Shirley Sonnichsen**

On December 31, 2023:

<b>Checking is:</b>	\$7,300.34
<b>Savings is:</b>	\$1,857.17
<b>Total:</b>	\$9,157.51

**Income:** \$675.00  
\$675.00 was received for dues.

**Expenses:** \$1,635.00  
\$425.00 was paid to the California League for website maintenance. \$1,104.00-third and fourth quarter Per Member Payment (PMP) was made to National; and \$6.22 in PayPal fees. \$100.00 to reimburse Beverly Johnson-Torelli for the Christmas party donation to East Benton County Historical Society.

### **Membership and Dues:**

Please welcome Mary Jo Coblentz, Khadija Khawaja, Joyce McMurphy, Jim Millbauer, Kendell Millbauer, and Glenda Willaims to our local league. We have 11

students and 12 second-in-household. The National database is due to be updated by January 31. Those who have not paid their dues will be taken off the rolls at that time.

**Education Fund:** \$10,590.00

I have asked for an accounting from the new Education Fund LWVWA Treasurer.

**Budget:** Two people are needed to help draft a new budget for FY2024-2025 in February-March. Those interested in volunteering please contact me at [jsson.dawgs@charter.net](mailto:jsson.dawgs@charter.net)

## League Advocacy ~ Lora Rathbone

### 2024 Washington State Legislative Session Ends March 7

There is only one week left for bills to pass out of their committees. They will then proceed to the House and Senate for full chamber votes on bills for final passage, so there is not much time to get key legislation through. The exception is the budget which is the last action before the session ends on March 7. Don't miss your chance to be heard! It is easy to participate if you sign up for the weekly Legislative Newsletter at <https://lwvwa.org/action-alerts>

**LWVWA Action Workshop** was held on Zoom December 2. Attendees heard from league Lobby Team members about the issues coming up in the 2024 legislative session.

### Democracy Lobby Week -January 22 through 26

- **Evening Sessions:** The LWVWA provided a wealth of information including the process of how a bill becomes law, environmental priorities, achieving better representation with an overview of redistricting, and the LWVWA social and economic policy program.
- **Meeting with our legislators:** During the day, meetings were set up by the legislative district on Zoom. In our league, only 8<sup>th</sup> legislative district members participated, but we were able to meet with both our representatives and our senator in separate meetings. Thank you, Carol Larkin, Carla Chiotti, Dianne Molleson, Katie Larson, and Lora Rathbone. This was quite a commitment: planning and practicing on Zoom ahead of time, preparing by learning about the bills and providing their descriptions to our legislators, and reporting back to the LWVWA.

We decided to discuss primarily Democracy bills. We started each meeting by explaining the way league chooses the bills to prioritize (through league positions) and reviewed the LWV mission as supporters of voting rights, fair elections, and citizen participation. Knowing this made a difference to our legislators.

I think we all agree it was a worthwhile experience. And we are not done! All our legislators asked us to continue to give them guidance on the bills we are supporting and to meet with them after the session. If you would like to read the summaries of our meetings (we are good note takers!), let Lora know at [ldrathbone@outlook.com](mailto:ldrathbone@outlook.com)

## 2024 Scholarship Committee ~ Judy Golberg and Peggy Gregory

The committee working on the second year of a five-year Scholarship program is finalizing this year's application, planning distribution of the application link and updating our contact information. The criteria will remain the same-students from Benton and Franklin Counties public high schools who are graduating this year may apply. Along with the application, up to 500-word essay is to be required from all students. This year's theme is: **What does it mean to you to *Be an Informed Voter?***

We are very fortunate to have an anonymous donor add \$2,000 to this year's scholarship fund so we will be awarding two \$2,000 scholarships! This is in addition to the money donated by John Perkins in memory of Marilyn Perkins.

With that donation, our challenge to our League members is to consider donating to this Scholarship Fund so future awards can remain at the \$2,000 level or higher! Are you willing? If so, donations are tax exempt if you write a check to the League of Women Voters of Washington Education Fund on behalf of the LWV of Benton and Franklin Counties Scholarship Fund. Donations can be mailed to: 1511 Third Avenue, Suite 900, Seattle, WA 98101. Thank you for supporting our scholarship fund.

## LWVBF Book Club ~ Polly Parton

*Mad Honey* by Jennifer Finley Boulanger & Jodi Picoult was our January club pick. It was entertaining and a fast read. Our February choice will be *How the Penguins Saved Veronica* by Hazel Prior. Can we be thoroughly entertained while learning something to improve ourselves? We will see (or read or listen). Our upcoming choices are March- *Hello Beautiful* by Ann Napolitano, April- *Major Pettigrew's Last Stand* by Helen Simonson, May- *The Gentleman in Moscow* by Amor Towles

and June- *The 100-Year-Old Man Who Climbed Out the Window and Disappeared* by Jonas Jonasson. Let's get reading!

Join us Monday, February 12th, 6:00pm via Zoom by emailing or texting Polly Parton to be added to the link. We keep the discussion to one hour.

[Polly.parton@yahoo.com](mailto:Polly.parton@yahoo.com) or 509-551-3818

## CALENDAR OF EVENTS

**February 12, 6:00pm** ~ Book club via Zoom

**February 16, noon** ~ League's Birthday Lunch at DG Public House

**February 20, 6:00pm** ~ Business/Board Meeting via Zoom

**March 11, 6:00pm** ~ Book club via Zoom

**March 19, 6:00pm** ~ Business/Board Meeting via Zoom

### **Email us at:**

[lwv.of.bf@gmail.com](mailto:lwv.of.bf@gmail.com)

### **Mailing Address:**

League of Women Voters of Benton and Franklin Counties  
P.O. Box 765  
Richland, WA 99352

### **League Webpage:**

<http://www.lwv-bf.org/washington/benton/franklin-counties>

**OFFICERS:**

President: Diane Molleson  
1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: Peggy Gregory  
2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Sue Thornton  
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