



VOTER March 2026

www.lwv-bf.org

President's Message – Polly Parton

A big thank you goes out to Judy Golberg for organizing our election observation and I extend another thank you to our volunteer observers. The February election observation process is complete. I attended the pre-certification noting quantities of rejected ballots for unresolved and missing signatures, disqualification (moved, passed away etc.) and the larger than normal quantity that were postmarked after the election deadline. It's very interesting and worth the time.

The LWVBF 106th birthday lunch was well attended. The local work of the Tri-Cities Immigrant Coalition was featured. Thank you to presenters Glenda Williams, Carol Larkin and new members Sonee Wilson and Donna Kary. All are members of both LWVBF and TCIC. Diane Molleson brought the new TRYs (They Represent You) pamphlets for distribution, also available on our website under *Publications*.

Mark your calendar for Friday April 3 at 1 pm for an informative Table Talk with a local Indivisible leader. Richard Bademente has planned a very timely presentation and discussion about our democracy. Don't miss it.

We've been invited to table and present on Friday March 27 for a high school career morning. We will emphasize voting on local matters, understanding local government and how this benefits the young adult and our community. If you are interested in helping us plan and attend, please contact me.

Do you want to get more involved in something? Email, text or call Polly and let me know what you are interested in. Polly Parton, pparton34@gmail.com or 509-551-3818

LWVWA President's Call – Polly Parton

Notes From the February 16 LWVWA Presidents Call:

From LWVWA

***All Member Town Hall – March 25: what's next for Resisting Threats to Democracy**

- * Unit & Rise 8.5 Partnerships - * Playbook 4: Deepening Electoral Power
- * Resisting Threats to Democracy: Does your League have an RTD Committee and Lead?
- * LWVWA Council Meeting: June 6 & 7, South Puget Sound Community College – Lacey.
- * Participation in America 250 celebrations and events
- * No Kings rallies on March 28.

From LWVUS: Be bold, loud, activist & influential

* Making Democracy Work® by defending remaining democratic institutions and rebuilding into a multi-racial, representative democracy through: ▪ Protecting and restoring voting rights protections; ▪ Opposing anti-voter policies; ▪ Strengthening election administration; ▪ Protecting DC's right to continue governing itself; and ▪ Ensuring a well-funded, full count in the 2030 Census. ▪ Protecting individual liberties, upholding the Constitution, and holding government accountable and responsive to the needs of the people. ▪ Applying a democracy frame to respond strategically to issues like immigration, climate change, gun policy, and health care, including reproductive justice.

* Women's Suffrage National Monument: support efforts to have the League of Women Voters recognized on the Women's Suffrage National Monument to be built on the National Mall in Washington, DC.

* LWV Condemns President Trump's Call to "Nationalize" Elections

* LWV Denounces House Passage of Anti-Voter SAVE America Act (February 11)

* LWV submits testimony opposing Make Elections Great Again Act in US House Committee (February 10)

* LWVUS opposes Equal Representation Act adding citizen question to Census.

Scholarship Committee - Judy Golberg and Peggy Gregory

We are pleased to announce three (3) \$2500 scholarships will be presented this year during our annual meeting in May to graduating students from the public high schools in Benton and Franklin Counties whose 500-or-less word essays will be judged written to the theme: ***Is the Electoral College still relevant? Explain how it works and support your position for or against it.***

The application is ready. Please let your friends and family know if a student meets the criteria above that they should apply. The dollar amount is a tribute to the 250th birthday of our Country. Thanks to John Perkins and many of our generous members and friends, we were able to increase the number of scholarships. Deadline for entry is March 29, 2026.

To access the scholarship application: <https://forms.gle/7HNPfTx9M3rZFGsd7>

Judy - jgolberg@charter.net and Peggy - palfgreg@gmail.com

Election Observers – Judy Golberg

Another election has completed its cycle for our state citizens. Benton County has an official election observers program. League members participate as observers along with members of both the Republican and Democrat parties. This involves training, signing up for shifts and spending time observing the process. If you are interested in learning more, contact Judy Golberg, coordinator, at (509) 627-5347 or jgolberg@charter.net

Advocacy for LWVWA Priority 2026 Legislation – Lora Rathbone

The WA State 2026 Legislative Session ends March 12. By the time you get this, the only bills left to work on likely will be ones necessary to implement the budget or matters that affect state revenue. This includes the following:

[HB 1710](#) - Concerning compliance with the Washington voting rights act of 2018- Pre-Clearance for Proposed Changes to Election Procedures. In Senate Ways & Means, February 25.

[SB 5400](#)/ Supporting local news journalism. Sponsor: Senator Boehnke. In Senate Ways & Means.

[SB 6346](#) - Establish a tax on millionaires. Passed the Senate. All 22 Republicans and 3 Democrats voted no. February 27- in Finance.

To find out action needed on LWVWA priorities go to [League of Women Voters of Washington - Take Action](#) , then look for the yellow triangles for instructions. To learn more about the bill, click on the bill number. To ask your legislators to support these or other bills, call the Hotline: **800-562-6000**. It's easy!

Next month there will be a report on our successes. We will want to thank our legislators when they support a bill. Thank you to everyone who has helped with this effort!

The LWVUS also asks us to speak out. It is not too late to send the letter to “Tell Congress Federal Immigration Enforcement Has Gone Too Far”. Go [HERE](#) and personalize the letter they provide.

Communications Corner – Richard Badalamente

Before We Rewrite the Rules, Understand How They Already Work

Debates over the “SAVE Act”ⁱ are often framed as a simple question: Should voters have to show ID? That framing is misleading. In Washington State, voters already prove who they are—and election officials already verify eligibility. The real question is not whether identification is required, but whether Congress should replace a layered, data-driven system with a rigid documentary gate that risks blocking eligible voters.

Under current Washington law, a person registering to vote must affirm under penalty of perjury that they are a US citizen and provide a Washington driver's license number, state ID number, or the last four digits of their Social Security number. That information is checked against Department of Licensing and other databases before a registration is finalized. Voter rolls are continuously updated using death records, address data, and other list-maintenance tools. When ballots are returned, signatures are verified against those on file. If there's a mismatch, the voter is contacted and given an opportunity to resolve it.

That is not a trust-only system. It is a verification system. The SAVE Act would change the registration process for federal elections by requiring documentary proof of citizenship. In most versions of the bill, acceptable documentation is limited to a US passport; a state-issued Enhanced Driver's License that explicitly shows citizenship (available in only a handful of states, including Washington); or a certified birth certificate paired with a qualifying government-issued photo ID.

That phrase "qualifying ID" is important. It does not mean just any ID used in daily life. A standard driver's license or REAL ID card, by itself, is usually not enough because it proves identity and lawful presence, not citizenship. If the license does not explicitly indicate US citizenship, it must be paired with a certified birth certificate. A Social Security card, utility bill, student ID, or hospital birth record would not suffice.

For many Washingtonians, that may sound manageable. But real life is more complicated. Names change. Records contain errors. Birth certificates may be stored in another state. Certified copies cost money and take time. A married voter whose birth certificate reflects a maiden name may need additional documentation to reconcile the difference. Military families stationed away from their home state may face added hurdles. These are not hypothetical voters; they are ordinary citizens.

Complicating matters further, there are multiple versions of the SAVE legislation. Earlier House versions focus primarily on proof of citizenship at registration. But more expansive versions—sometimes labeled the "SAVE America Act" go further. One House amendment to a Senate bill would require each state to submit its complete voter registration list to the Department of Homeland Security for comparison through the federal SAVE database system.

That is not simply an ID rule. It is a structural change in how voter rolls are monitored, creating an ongoing data-sharing relationship between state election officials and federal immigration databases. Supporters argue this would strengthen verification. Critics raise concerns about matching errors, privacy protections, and federal involvement in what has traditionally been state-administered elections.

Reasonable people can debate the merits of these proposals. But that debate should begin with an accurate understanding of the system we already have.

Washington's elections model combines pre-registration database verification, continuous list maintenance, signature authentication, and post-election auditing. It is designed to catch errors and prevent fraud without making registration contingent on possessing a narrow set of physical documents. When critics suggest that citizenship is not verified today, they overlook these existing safeguards.

Election integrity is not achieved by a single document. It is achieved through redundancy, cross-checking, transparency, and accountability. Before Congress imposes new documentary hurdles or mandates voter-roll submissions to federal immigration systems, voters deserve a clear explanation of what problem is being solved—and whether the cure is proportionate to the risk.

Strong elections require both security and accessibility. Washington’s current system strives to balance those goals. Any proposed federal change should be evaluated against that standard, not against the false premise that we are starting from zero.

LWVBF Treasurer’s Report – Carla Ciotti, Treasurer

As of January 31, 2026:

Checking is	\$6265.82
Savings is	<u>1,857.55</u>
Total	\$8114.37

Income:

Membership dues	\$ 28.61
Savings interest	<u>.01</u>

Total income: \$28.62

Expenses:

MyLO Renewal	\$425.00
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Membership Dues and Donations: In January we received dues for 2 new members. Thank you!

Expenses: We paid \$425 to the LWV of California to renew our MyLO registration. This pays for the maintenance of the LWVBF website.

Education Fund: We received one donation to the Education Fund of \$2000. This brings the balance of our 501(c)3 Education Fund to \$21,894.54. Thank you very much.

A request was submitted to withdraw up to \$8000 from the Education Fund to cover scholarships and the scholarship program expenses. An advance of \$7500 was requested to cover the cost of three \$2500 scholarships. The request must be approved by the LWVWA board at their next meeting.

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. Contact information is below.

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>.

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. If you have questions or need to know when your membership is due for renewal, please contact Carla.

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

Education Fund – Carla Ciotti, Treasurer

Education Fund Usage

Several members have generously contributed to our 501(c)3 Education Fund administered by the League of Women Voters Washington. In fact, our account now is close to \$20,000! This has allowed our local league to give scholarships to many graduates in Benton and Franklin Counties over the last few years. This year our scholarship committee will grant scholarships of \$2,500 to three deserving students!

For the last several years, LWVBF has used the education fund only for Marilyn Perkins Scholarships. But education fund monies can also be used for other educational purposes. For example, education funds can be used to print TRY's (They Represent Us) pamphlets, to purchase tabling supplies, and to cover room costs for Table Talks or presentations. Going forward, if you would like your donation to the education fund to only be used for the scholarship program, please send a note along with your check; your donation will be earmarked for scholarships. You may also notify the treasurer of your intent. Donations that are not designated for the scholarship program may be used for other educational projects. If you have any questions, please contact me. Carla Chiotti, Treasurer cchiotti@gmail.com or (509) 521-2158.

Book Club – Polly Parton

In February we reviewed *James* by Percival Everett. The classic story *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* is reimaged with a highly literate James. This made for a good discussion.

On March 9 we will discuss *The Briar Club* by Kate Quinn. Female friendship intertwines with individual stories in D.C 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.

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. pparton34@gmail.com or 509 -551-3818

Calendar of Events

March

9 – Book Club via Zoom

17 – LWVBF Business and Planning Meeting/Board Meeting via Zoom

April

3 – Table Talk on Indivisible Organization, Location TBD

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)

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