



## VOTER May 2026

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

### President's Message – Polly Parton

Our Annual Member Meeting is on May 21. This year the Scholarship Committee has chosen three winners of the Marilyn Perkins Scholarship essay contest. The scholarship program is meaningful to both the past and the future. We celebrate the impact Marilyn had on our members, our League and community, and also the future as represented by our young essay winners. We will also have the yearly business meeting where we adopt the 2026-2027 budget, program, and vote on the new slate of officers, board members and nominating committee. Please see the Annual Member Meeting article for details. This is your member meeting so please RSVP and I hope to see you there.

**LWWWA Washington State Council: June 6 & 7 (the 5 evening 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.** I (Polly) am attending in person and welcome others to ride with me. We have three members who are planning to attend virtually. Below are the registration fees and QR code to access the 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)



## **Annual Meeting May 21, 2026**

Our Annual Member Meeting is in person and a wonderful time to meet new members, catch up with old friends and conduct the business to start our new year. The Marilyn Perkins Scholarship Awards will be presented to the winners of our annual essay contest. The winners and two family members are invited.

At the Annual Meeting we elect new officers, board members, nominating committee members, adopt a budget and a program of work for the coming year. Your Annual Meeting Packet will be emailed in advance and includes some great summaries of the year. Please bring your copy electronically or you may choose to print it. I have referred to this packet often throughout the year.

The Annual Meeting is 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. Please put this in your calendar and join us.

Please RSVP to Polly by May 10, we are looking forward to seeing our long-time members as well as meeting our new members. [pparton34@gmail.com](mailto: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. We will never ask you to buy gift certificates or gift cards, and we will never ask you to share our member directory. Also, take care to note the actual email address on messages. If in doubt, please call a board member.

## **LWVWA President's Call – Polly Parton**

Washington State Council June 7-8 – register on LWVWA website

Keynote speaker – Washington Supreme Court Justice G. Helen Whitener

Sunday- Braver Angels, How to Disagree Better

LWVBF has 5 delegates, notify LWVWA by May 19 of delegates, the board assigns delegates

**Notify Polly if you are attending or interested in person or virtual, Polly is driving.**

May 6, 6 pm on State Website -Register for *Introduction to Council, Meet the Candidates*. If you want to learn more about council in advance- this is the place!

Our league signed onto a LWVUS letter to Dan Newhouse against fast tracking reconciliation (with a simple majority vs 2/3) to avoid debating funding ICE CDB in the Senate.

LWVUS action (with support of state and local leagues/members) has impacted and slowed the SAVE Act.

LWV continues to join others challenging against mail-in voting and voting interference. August 8 is our Day of Action, the anniversary of 1965 Voting Rights. It is anchored by planned events in five cities based on various historic events.

Various tools are available on state website – check it out: observer corps toolkit, election observer toolkit, election preparation toolkit, learning center and others.

LWVWA is finalizing Strategic Priorities – will present at Council.

LWVWA first Book Club meeting with Heather Cox Richardson, author of *How the South Won the Civil War*. This is part of America's 250<sup>th</sup> Celebration on July 29 at noon.

## **Communications Corner: Annual Dinner Reminder – Bree Bowen**

Hello League members! For this month's Communications Corner topic, we're going back to basics and inviting you to join us at the Annual Meeting. We're at a new place this year: La Bella Vita Kitchen & Bar. 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. Check out their menu at <https://labellavitakitchenbar.com/menu/>.

At the Annual Meeting, we elect new officers, board members and nominating committee, adopt a budget, and a program of work for the coming year. If you're a newer member, it's a great chance to see the inner workings of how we plan our year.

The Marilyn Perkins Scholarship Awards will be presented to the winners of our annual essay contest. The winners are invited along with two family members and will read their essays for us. This year, we have **three** \$2500 scholarships to hand out. Special thanks to those League members who have made donations to the Education Fund to add to the gift honoring our fearless former leader, Marilyn Perkins, who passed in 2021. Her husband, John Perkins, donated the original funding that started this program and we are forever grateful. For newer members' information, Marilyn was a long-time member who served as our president for several years, was a facilitator for many of the candidate forums, was passionate about civic education, and helped teach civic-ed programs in local high schools. She was a very special lady, whom we miss very much. (She also had a voracious sweet tooth, and you could always count on her to bring a sweet treat to meetings!)

If you'd like to attend, please RSVP **as soon as possible** to Polly Parton at [Polly.parton@yahoo.com](mailto:Polly.parton@yahoo.com) or 509.551.3818.

## Table Talk – Defending Democracy

On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Indivisible Tri-Cities joined LWVBF to present and discuss issues relating to “Defending Democracy”. It was a great opportunity to learn about the growing and impactful *Indivisible*. Both organizations (LWV and Indivisible) are actively standing up for our democracy. Table Talk is an excellent time to learn and have civil discussions with others in our community.

Loren Malone, Co-Founder of Indivisible Tri-Cities presented “Defending Democracy”. Their mission is – “*We are a non-partisan grassroots movement powered by people in the Tri-Cities community who have stepped up to protect and strengthen our democracy. We are committed to electing progressive leaders and advocating for our inclusive, just, and sustainable policies that reflect the values and needs for our diverse community*”. Much of their mission and goals matches with LWV.

Loren stressed where our democracy was being threatened such as First Amendment rights (speech, restricting press access, suing the press, and petition). Fourth and Fifth Amendment abuses from ICE, illegal tariffs, illegal appropriations not approved by congress, the shift toward authoritarianism, threats to nationalize Federal elections, overreaching executive power with failure of congressional oversight, weaponization of the DOJ, government misinformation and disinformation, attacks on education, illegal boat strikes, and others. She stressed we can do something! Use our platforms to inform, use Substack and [5calls.org](https://5calls.org) (for great scripts and numbers to contact), and join in your community. An engaged discussion followed and questions were noted. Where are the young protesters? Can offensive protest signs be restricted? Should protest marches have better targeting of purpose?

Thanks to Richard Badamente who provided *Defending Democracy* pamphlets (available for our use) and the booklet *On Tyranny, Twenty Lessons from the Twentieth Century* by Timothy Snyder. The booklets can be offered for future Table Talks and events. Contact Polly if you want the pamphlet or booklet.

## LWVBF Treasurer’s Report – Carla Ciotti, Treasurer

As of March 31, 2026:

Checking is	\$13,843.12
<u>Savings is</u>	<u>1,857.58</u>
Total	\$15,700.70

### Income:

Shortfall mitigation	\$ 622.00
Membership dues	54.95
Donations	23.52
Savings interest	<u>.01</u>
<b>Total income:</b>	<b>\$700.48</b>

**Expenses:** There were no expenses in March.

**Membership Dues and Donations:** In March we received dues from two new members and two renewing members. We also received one donation.

**Education Fund:** The Education Fund Balance is \$14,394.54. We have received \$7500 for the three Marilyn Perkins scholarships in advance.

**Budget Committee:** The Budget Committee met on 3/11/26 at Janet Nail's house and developed a draft budget for 2026-2027. The budget will be presented for the board's approval at the April 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. We received this amount from LWVUS on March 13th.

**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 online you need to use the email address that is associated with your LWV 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. If you don't know which email address to use, please contact Carla, Treasurer (509-521-2158) or Shirley, Roster Manager (509-392-1808)

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 or Shirley (phone numbers above).

**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](mailto:cchiotti@gmail.com)  
(509) 521-2158 (text is fine)

## **Medicare – Richard Badalamente**

### **When “Savings” Cost More: What WISeR May Be Missing**

Beginning in 2026, the Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS) launched the WISeR pilot, using AI-driven prior authorization to reduce spending on certain high-cost procedures. On paper, the goal is straightforward: deny unnecessary care and save taxpayer dollars.

But from where many of us sit—older Americans relying on Medicare—the picture is more complicated.

I recently experienced a denial for an epidural injection to treat severe back pain from ruptured discs. For CMS, that denial counts as “savings”. Yet the broader consequences are harder to measure: increased pain, reduced mobility, and diminished ability to function day-to-day. For caregivers and spouses, those effects multiply.

For organizations like the League of Women Voters, the stakes extend even further. Our work—supporting elections, educating voters, and strengthening democratic participation—depends heavily on the health, energy, and engagement of our members, many of whom are on Medicare. When access to care is delayed or denied, it doesn’t just affect individuals; it can weaken the capacity of civic institutions that rely on volunteer time and leadership.

CMS has indicated it will evaluate WISeR based on “total cost of care” including downstream medical impacts like hospitalizations or alternative treatments. But there is little evidence that it will fully account for broader societal costs: lost productivity, caregiver strain, or the diminished contributions of older Americans to their communities.

In short, WISeR may save money within Medicare’s accounting system while shifting costs elsewhere—onto patients, families, and the civic organizations that help sustain our democracy.

As this pilot unfolds, it will be essential to ask not just whether it reduces spending, but whether it preserves the health, dignity, and civic engagement of the people it serves.

### **Sources**

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). WISeR Model Request for Applications (RFA).

<https://www.cms.gov/files/document/wiser-model-rfa.pdf>

Centers for Medicare & Medicaid Services (CMS). WISeR Model Frequently Asked Questions.  
<https://www.cms.gov/priorities/innovation/files/document/wiser-model-frequently-asked-questions>

Noridian Medicare. WISeR Model Overview and Services.

<https://med.noridianmedicare.com/web/jfb/cert-reviews/pre-claim/wiser-model>

## **Book Club – Polly Parton**

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. Its great non-fiction peppered with history.

*Playground* by Richard Powers was our April read. Four characters at the intersection of technology, AI and nature with environmental challenges are followed and have intertwined lives. After discussion we felt there was too much misinterpretation within the storylines. Maybe that's the point as it connects to AI? Our June book is *Untamed* by Glennon Doyle.

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 is starting a book club (estimated 3 books per year) in late July. The first book will be *How the South Won the Civil War* by Heather Cox Richardson. If you're a fan like I am, take this opportunity as the author will attend the first discussion (on Zoom). Watch for more information. [pparton34@gmail.com](mailto:pparton34@gmail.com) or 509 -551-3818

## **Calendar of Events**

### **May**

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

Email: [lwv.of.bf@gmail.com](mailto: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/LeagueofWomenVotersofBenton&FranklinCounties)

### **Mailing Address:**

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

**OFFICERS:**

President: Polly Parton

1<sup>st</sup> Vice President: Ruvine Jimenez

2<sup>nd</sup> Vice President: Michelle Pirotte

Secretary: Diane Molleson

Treasurer: Carla Chiotti

**ELECTED DIRECTORS:**

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Brianna Harty

Marci Palmer

Mary Shaw

Glenda Williams

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**APPOINTED DIRECTORS:**

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Leona Hassing

Beverly Johnson-Torelli

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