



WASHINGTON STATE VOTER

Spring 2008
Vol. 49 No. 4

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Barbara Seittle, President
Betsy Greene, Editor

CIVICS EDUCATION VIA THE NEWSPAPER

LWV Washington and LWV Seattle Education Funds have joined together to provide 16 lessons (6 in late spring, 10 in the fall) on civics via The Seattle Times distribution network. The Newspapers in Education program currently reaches out to 102 school districts in 25 counties around the state. Private and independent schools, community colleges and universities also participate. The curriculum material will be seen/can be used by anyone who receives The Seattle Times from a home delivery subscriber to a single copy buyer at a coffee shop; currently, that numbers 216,000 people each weekday. The e-Edition is available via computer.

By participating in this program, we will make a difference to a lot of teachers who are struggling with our state legislature's unfunded mandate to include civics education in the curriculum. We also will help to educate a new generation of kids about civics, laying some groundwork for the future. Because the lesson is put in different parts of the paper, it will attract attention from adults who ordinarily would not go looking for this sort of information - another win. In addition, this program will give the League visibility and help a new group of people to think of the League as a trusted provider of civics education. Keep an eye out for the first lesson on April 30th.

U. S. Supreme Court Has Decided Top-Two Primary Is In

**Refer to Winter VOTER 2008 for
background on I-872. Check our website
for new developments as we get them.
www.lwwa.org**

LOBBYING EFFORTS CAUSE FOR CELEBRATION

LWVWA had much to celebrate as the 2008 legislative session came to a close, March 13.

The Local Option Public Campaign Financing bill – our #1 priority – passed both houses and was signed by the Governor on March 17. President Barbara Seittle, Portfolio Chair Chris Chamberlin, and Action Chair Barbara Bush attended the signing ceremony.

Other successes included passage of:

HB 2647 Children's Safe Products Act

HB 2815 Global Climate Action and Green Jobs

HB 2844 Evergreen Cities

HB 1773 Tolling for mega roads projects

HB 3096 Financing 520 bridge replacement project

SB 6809 Working Families Tax Credit

SB 6483 Local Farms, Healthy Kids, Local Solutions to global warming

Another cause for celebration was the increased number of members who responded to action calls to contact legislators, and who reported those contacts to the Lobby Team. We hope to continue to grow this part of our lobbying work.

We made progress on a number of LWVWA objectives that didn't get through this short session, but have a good start for the 2009 session. As Lobby Team member John Roberts remarked, "We might not succeed in a given session, but LWVWA is like a glacier; it moves slowly with our thorough process of study, consensus, and action, and you cannot stop it!"

As this goes to press the Governor has not signed all of our bills. A wrap-up Newsletter will be published around April 25 after her signing deadline. The Lobby Team wishes to give special recognition to Laura McCarty, Editor of the newsletter. Her creativity and skill have made the newsletter an outstanding piece of our Action effort.

**WHO'S TALKING
WHO'S LISTENING,
WHO CARES?**

LWVWA Council 2008 will be held at the Clarion Hotel in Yakima, Washington May 31-June 1, from 10:00 a.m. Saturday to its adjournment at noon on Sunday.

"The purpose of Council is to give guidance to the state board on program and methods of work and transact other business as presented by the state board." From LWVWA Bylaws

This year the delegates will look at reworded positions on Election Methods:

"League of Women Voters of Washington believes that: The Voter Registration State Database (VRSD) should not be used to deny people the right to vote..."

And the Ferry Study proposed position:

"League of Women Voters of Washington believes that: Ferries in Washington State are part of the highway system and should be funded as such. Passenger-only ferries should be funded as are other modes of public transportation. The fare box should not be expected to totally fund ferry operations in Washington State."

Observers are welcome along with delegates to attend the state board meeting on Friday evening from 7:00-9:00 p.m. as well as the Council itself.

There will be sessions on Parliamentary Procedure, action and communication among various League bodies, and caucus for National Convention delegates. LWV Yakima County is arranging a panel discussion – ***Immigration with emphasis on Eastern Washington Issues.***

Council registration information is on Leagues' website www.lwvwa.org in the members only section: Users Name: lwvwa; Password: voter.

It is possible to order a day package and/or separate meals.

INITIATIVES

"THINK BEFORE YOU INK"

Voters will be asked to sign a variety of initiative petitions "just to get it on the ballot so people can vote on it". **Your signature is valuable**, more valuable than your vote when it comes to getting a petition on the ballot. Consider that far fewer signatures are required to qualify a petition for the ballot than votes needed to pass it on the ballot. Only sign an initiative petition that you believe belongs on the ballot.

Six questions voters can ask themselves to help them determine whether or not to sign an initiative petition:

- **Is it a single issue?** Only an initiative that addresses one issue is considered legally binding, if passed by the voters.
- **Is it complex?** Some issues can be decided by a simple yes or no vote. Complex issues may need to be thoroughly examined and debated in a legislative arena.
- **Is it confusing?** Some initiatives are not well written or contain conflicts that may require court resolution or interpretation
- **Does it belong in the Constitution?** The constitution can not be changed/amended by initiative. Such changes can be initiated by the people only by calling a constitutional convention by initiative.
- **How will it be funded?** Is it an "unfunded mandate" that would require the Legislature to take funds from other essential programs? Consider the effect on the overall flexibility of a government budget with already limited revenue. An initiative should generally create its own revenue source, and not earmark, restrict, or obligate a specific percentage of the General Fund revenues.
- **Who is behind it?** You can find out who are the real sponsors and opponents of a petition. Contribution and expenditure reports are available through the Public Disclosure Commission, <http://web.pdc.wa.gov>, 1-877-601-2828.

From LWV Clallam County press release and *Direct Democracy: The Initiative and Referendum Process in Washington*, LWVWA 2002.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring is here! The 2008 Legislative session is over! The Good in Government Brunch held on International Women's Day, March 8, was good indeed. In fact, it was excellent.

However, now it is time to look forward. We begin with Council. It will be held in Yakima this year, the last weekend in May. The council is made up of the president of each local League or MAL unit, one other delegate from each League, and the state board. There is no limit to observers or to their participation in discussions.

Council provides a time to share ideas for building a stronger League from the grassroots up. We will have participatory sessions on parliamentary procedure, the meaning of non-partisanship, action and action communication and other frequently asked questions. The Yakima League is planning a dynamite program on local immigration issues, and a caucus will be held Saturday evening for anyone going to Convention in Portland in June.

Ah, Convention! Portland, in mid-June. What could be better? Only that we have a very special reason for going this year. **Nancy Eitreim** immediate past president of the Seattle League has been nominated and placed on the slate for the LWVUS Board of Directors. It has been a long time since Washington was represented on the national board. We need a full delegation there to cheer.

Convention also presents an opportunity for state and local Leagues to get their issues in front of national League. This year, I know our International Relations Committee and the Kitsap League are planning to present resolutions for nuclear disarmament and peace. They need your support. It is also an opportunity to hear about other Leagues around the country – how they are doing, share successful ideas for membership and public participation. Once again, every League has at least two delegate positions, and observers are encouraged. Come, share the excitement and be part of the Washington delegation. Portland is close enough to come for a day or the weekend if you can't stay the full time.

Then, come the elections. This year they will seem to come up fast. Candidates must file the first full week in June, and the general Primary will be in late August. Not much time! Forums will have to be held at least 21 days prior to the Primary to be relevant to those who use mail-in ballots. And, it all happens over the summer when League is usually pretty quiet.

As for the state League, LWVUS has awarded us a grant to print a voter's pamphlet for the candidates for Supreme Court and to hold a major forum. We hope to have the pamphlets to you in time to distribute them at your own voter forums and other public places. We will also be doing our other voter service projects such as ballot measure pros and cons and getting as much voter information as possible on-line. We will do our very best to keep you all informed about state activities over the summer months. Stay tuned!

In League, Barbara

GOOD IN GOVERNMENT BRUNCH



Keynote speaker Margaret Larson, "Women Helping Women Build a Better World".

GIG award recipient, Kristin Rowe-Finkbeiner, Co-founder of MomsRising.org, and Ms. Larson spoke of women's lives here and in developing countries and the ways those lives are being changed. An especially interesting program and a fitting reminder of International Women's Day!

Washington State's VOTER REGISTRATION DATA BASE

In the coming months great efforts will be made to register many people as voters. This article is an attempt to explain what the Voter Registration Data Base (VRDB) is, what it actually does and why we have it.

Congress passed the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) in 2002, in response to the chaos that occurred in Florida during the 2000 presidential election. Among other things that legislation required states to create a statewide voter registration database and county election management systems compatible with the new state systems. Washington State received more than \$60M in HAVA funds, of which the Office of the Secretary of State (OSOS) used \$5M to build the system launched in January of 2006. Since that time additional features have been added to allow counties to provide more public information from the state database via their websites, including online voter registration. The total cost to date is \$12M.

In June of 2006, the Brennan Center for Justice at New York University's School of Law filed a lawsuit in Washington State against the Secretary of State on behalf of a coalition of citizens and groups concerned about voting rights. HAVA requires states to match registrations against other state databases, especially the Department of Motor Vehicles and the Social Security Administration, prior to registration. In August of 2006 a federal judge required the state to register applicants as active even when the DMV or social security numbers provided by the applicant do not match. HAVA still requires the state to obtain a valid ID from those applicants before counting their ballots.

Those applicant records are now flagged so that a valid ID can be obtained before counting the ballots. According to Paul Miller of the Secretary of State's office, no one has ever been removed from the database without doing a thorough check into eligibility. The impact of the Brennan Center decision was that the state is required to add people onto the voter rolls without doing this check that the office understood to be required by HAVA.

Determining eligibility can be a painstaking process. According to then Assistant Elections Director Pamela Floyd, when the VRDB was started in 2006 more than 200 people were found who had the same name and same date of birth, but were different people.

Several methods are used to figure out if these are, in fact, different individuals: 1) the Secretary of State's office checks with the Department of Licensing, as most of them have drivers' licenses or ID cards with unique numbers; 2) when possible the last four digits of social security numbers are compared; 3) signatures are compared; 4) outside tools are used such as Lexis Nexis, a company that compiles public records. This allows them to see that Jane Doe who lives in King County is an entirely different person from Jane Doe from Spokane County with an entirely different history of public records, such as address history, marriage, deeds, etc.

The statewide database has enabled counties to clean up their voter registration rolls. For example, if a person moves from Grant County to Pierce County, and the original registration isn't cancelled, the VRDB catches it. Voters who have died are removed by comparing registered voters with death records. Felons on the rolls who have not had their voting rights restored can be removed by comparing names of registered voters against a list of felons provided by the State Department of Corrections. Any registered voter who receives a notification under this process has 30 days to appeal before their name is removed.

Even with all this effort, sometimes a registration is cancelled incorrectly. Washington has a long history of liberally providing provisional ballots, so anyone whose name is wrongly removed is able to vote a provisional ballot and can get the error corrected in time to have their ballot counted.

More information on Washington's Voter Registration Database can be found in *Election Reform in Washington State: A Continuation of the League's 2003-2004 Election Reform Study* or online at www.lwvwa.org. Other election reform publications are available there, as well.

PUGET SOUND PARTNERSHIP

The Puget Sound Partnership's priority (PSP) is the development of an Action Agenda by September 2008. The Action Agenda will address:

- What is a healthy Puget Sound?
- What is the current status of Puget Sound health and what are the biggest threats to it?
- What actions must be taken to move us from where we are today to a healthy Puget Sound by 2020?
- Where should we start?

The PSP completed a series of ten Action Workshops throughout the Puget Sound Area to engage the public in the development of the Action Agenda. The daytime workshops were better attended and included the public as well as local and agency staff. The PSP heard lots of excellent local information on status and threats to the 6 key topic areas. Main themes were: storm water, land use changes and more people leading to more changes. The evening Community conversations posed the key question-- What resources are most important to you? League members were informed of all the meetings. Notice being given through the local Presidents in all the action areas. The next workshops will be in May.

In late March and April Topic Forums will be held on the six topic goals of the Partnership that define a healthy Puget Sound: human health; human quality of life; species, food-webs, and biodiversity; habitats and land use; water quality and water quantity.

These topic forums will provide scientific and policy information that can help us answer the overarching questions of the Action Agenda. These forums are open to the public and are intended to be both efficient and inclusive. Each topic forum will be led by an expert in the respective field selected by the Partnership to develop short formatted papers addressing the key issues (with help from scientists and policy experts). League representative Ann Aagaard is working with the environmental caucus group on habitat and land use for the topic forum.

The schedule will be posted on the Puget Sound Partnership website: www.psp.wa.gov.

Washington News Service

A recent radio news story produced by Washington News Service (WNS), under the title **Washington Rethinks Money in Politics - and Who Pays**, reported on the passage of the Local Option Public Campaign Financing bill, a bill supported vigorously by League. Chris Chamberlin, LWVWA portfolio chair, was interviewed and quoted.

Washington News Service produces a variety of issues oriented "news in the public interest", stories. They are sent cost-free to 65-70 radio stations in Washington, thereby covering most of the state. One hundred fifty seven stories were aired in 2006. Sometimes stories go nationwide when they are picked up by ClearChannel and then broadcast by all 460 ClearChannel news talk stations.

Contributions from many local Leagues and the LWVWA/EF make possible Leagues' membership in this expanding public radio news service, also supported by many other non-government organizations. It gives League an opportunity to enter the mainstream media something it can't do by itself, getting its issues and name before the public.

CALENDAR

May 8 LWVWA Ed Fund Board meeting
May 9 LWVWA Board meeting
May 31-June 1 LWVWA Council, Yakima
June 13-17 LWVUS Convention, Portland, OR

BOARD SPLINTERS

March 7, 2008

Adopted as policy: Incumbents who file for office may not speak at League events until after certification of the election. (Candidate events excluded.)

Voted to submit the *Legislative Newsletter* for an award at National Convention

SPOTLIGHT ON LOCAL LEAGUES

LWV Clallam County celebrated Women's History Month with a tribute to Hazel Wolf, an activist in the environmental, civil and racial justice movements.

LWV King County South printed 1000 wallet sized, laminated cards promoting the telephone number 211, Washington State's state wide assistance line. The people answering the calls can make referrals and suggestion for assistance immediately: income tax help, help in finding support for an older parent to continue living independently, an English/Afghan interpreter for a KCS member. The cards were given to social service agencies, community centers, health centers, etc.

LWV Kitsap County celebrated Women's History Month by exploring the lives of native and pioneer women at a general meeting.

LWV Pullman with the Foley Institute and the Neill Public Library hosted Secretary of State Sam Reed March 3rd and 4th. He lectured publicly on the responsibilities of his office, met with citizens at an open house held at the library and League members at the Old Post Office.

LWV Snohomish County continues its 16 year-old radio program the second Monday of every month at 4:30 p.m. on KSER 90.7 FM, Everett, WA.

LWV Tacoma-Pierce County with Fair Vote, Citizens for a Better Ballot and of the Social Justice Team from the Tahoma Unitarian Universalist Congregation presented a forum on Ranked Choice Voting which Pierce County will use for the first time in November.

LWV Yakima County will again monitor the Associated Body Elections at Yakima County Community College.

CONGRATULATIONS TO MEMBERS

Catherine Ahl, LWV Kitsap County, who was presented the **Outstanding Advocate Award** for her life's work of student advocacy by the North Kitsap Parent Teacher Association Council.

Nancy Lillquist, LWV Kittitas Valley, on her election as **Mayor of Ellensburg**.

John Roberts, LWV Seattle received the **Outstanding Civic Educator Award** in the Rotunda, Legislative Building, on Washington State Civic Education Day. Senator Kohl-Welles nominated him because of his advocacy for the health and well-being of children and for vulnerable adults for a number of years.



Senator Harriet Spanel presenting the award to John Roberts

Leave a Legacy for League Associates

This box contains the name/s of members who have put the League of Women Voters of Washington in their wills or estate plans

Nancy Pearson

_____ Should your name be here?
 _____ or here?

Please, notify the state office if you have included the League in your will.

Lobby Day 2008

More than 80 League members from 10 different Leagues convened in Olympia for LWVWA Lobby Day, February 8.

Leaguers visited 48 different legislative offices, meeting with legislators or their staffs, attended hearings, and observed floor action in the House and Senate. Attendees wore brightly colored pins with the LWV logo and “Strengthening Democracy” so that they were immediately recognizable as League members.

To prepare for the visits with legislators, Lobby Team members distributed “talking point” papers and briefed the group on the status of priority legislation in a number of our issue areas. LWVWA Legislative Priority Cards were also distributed and were reported to be popular with legislators.

LWVWA President Barbara Seitle welcomed the group and reported on the progress of the Local Option Public Financing bill. Senate Republican Leader Mike Hewitt (R-16th) addressed the group about his party’s priorities for the session, emphasizing their concern about the deteriorating economic situation and their efforts to put as much money as possible into reserves for the next biennium. Senator Tim Sheldon (D-35th) discussed Hood Canal water quality concerns.

Attendees also enjoyed an informal morning coffee with invited legislators, delicious lunches, and a fascinating display of women in Washington history by Sue Lean. Special thanks to LWV Thurston County members, who handled all the arrangements.

“I enjoyed ...getting to know ...ladies from other areas and found the entire experience enlightening. Thank you for all the time and effort it took to put on such a day and (for) the opportunity to meet with my legislators – Lobby Day is a very worth while endeavor.” Robin H. Pestarino, LWV Skagit County

Members’ generous response to the Action Letter makes possible LWVWA lobby efforts. Thank you all.

Martha Anamosa
Anonymous
Margaret & Barrie Austin
Doris Ayyoub
Nadine Baker
Helen Baker St. John
Patricia Ball
Pam Behring
Mary and William Black
Lael Braymer
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Dave & Dorothy Lilly
Melissa Lund
LWV Kittitas Valley
Patricia MacRobbie
Luana Marshall
Dorris & Wayne Martin
Vivan McLean
Theresa McLean
Linda Milsow
Laina Molbak
Bradley Nelson
Betty Ann Newell
Barbara Norby
Jan O’Connor
Judy Pigott
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John Roberts
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Peggy Saari
Allan Saunders
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Hazel Schiffer
Hilda Skolnick
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Olive Spannaus
Janet Steputis Perry
John & Alice Stolz
Phyllis Summers
Joan Thomas
Peggy Tlapak
Peggy Toepel
Andrea Tryon
Katherine Tucker
Doris Van Alen
Connie Waddington
Kenneth Westman
Agnes Wicknick
Karla Wight
Josephine Wilson

As of March 21, 2008

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2007-2009**

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

The *Washington State VOTER* is published quarterly by the League of Women Voters of Washington, 4710 University Way N.E., Suite #214, Seattle, WA 98105. Yearly subscription is \$10.00. Members of the League of Women Voters of Washington subscribe through their annual dues. Call 206-622-8961 for a local League in your area or go online at www.lwwa.org.

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