



Listening Session – Thursday, March 10, 11:30 AM

League of Women Voters is a grassroots organization, and at the March meeting we want to hear what you think. The Board hopes you can join us for an open, informal conversation and share your perspectives, questions, comments, and feedback. As we emerge from several disruptive years, we would like to take stock of what's working or not working, and how we move forward together. Please give us your ideas about our successes, challenges, and priorities. Join us via Zoom on Thursday, March 10. If you cannot attend, a video link to the meeting will be posted on our website.

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President's Pen

We have switched up the events calendar again (just to keep you on your toes!):

1) The March meeting will be a "listening & inspire" meeting on 3/10 at 11:30, where we will hear from members about their ideas for advocacy.

2) On 3/31 at 6 PM, we will have an evening program where Jim Crary will present his vision for ECF, the Electronic Candidates' Forum.

3) The water panel presentation will now be on 4/14.

Marylou Schnoes brought the relocation of Afghan refugees to my attention. Oregon is sponsoring refugees and we could all be of some help. Here is the website where you can learn more and become a sponsor:

<https://www.state.gov/launch-of-the-sponsor-circle-program-for-afghans/>

Now we must also keep the Ukrainians in our hearts as they fight for the liberties we hold dear.

I'm about to embark on hip joint replacement on March 3rd and John, my mother, and I are sorting and packing for the move to Pennsylvania. I am lucky to have a very supportive Board who are stepping up as I must begin stepping back. Now is a great time to think about becoming a nominee for an office or a position on the Board. I have never regretted my choice to be more active.

The League of Women Voters Rogue Valley welcomes submissions to the newsletter, *The Voters' Voice*. Editor Jim Buck can be reached at 541-830-0602 and newsletter@lwvroguevalley.org

LWVRV
P.O. Box 8555
Medford OR 97501
541-479-4486

Contact the webmaster:
webadmin@lwvroguevalley.org

Website: <https://lwvroguevalley.org/wp/>

Facebook page: <https://www.facebook.com/lwvrv/>

Email: pres@lwvroguevalley.org

Beyond LWV Membership - Why Serve on LWVRV's Board?

Here are the experiences of two more current board members. Please consider joining the board. It's work, but you spend time with, and get to know, the nicest people. Be forewarned - we laugh a lot!

1. Being President – Margie Petersen

I have only been a League member for five years. During that time, I have spent 2 years as President, 2 years as Co-President with Jackie Clary (my mentor), time on one local study, and a myriad of committees. Before I moved to Ashland in 2014, the only organization I had been truly committed to was the Sitka Teenage Club during high school. All my energy had been put to achieving multiple degrees, multiple careers, and my family. Suddenly I had 'retirement time' on my hands and a need to save the world.

The duties of the President are many and ever-changing. I have found that the most important skills are delegating responsibilities to others and asking advice from the many experienced people in our League. (On our Board alone, we have 3 ex-presidents and one is an ex-state-president.) The one principle which runs deep is 'acting as one' which really means being a good listener. That is what we do at all levels of the League. People have been forgiving of my lack of experience and the mental block I have over Robert's Rules of Order. I am happy that I stepped forward because with the experience has come a wealth of knowledge and lifelong friendships.

Perhaps you feel you are not ready or knowledgeable enough to volunteer at this level. I say volunteer for something where you will be in contact with members who have experience. You won't learn if you don't act and having good teachers surrounding you is everything.

2. Beyond Membership – Jackie Clary

A Note from a member of the LWVRV Nominating Committee Seeking Candidates for Next Term's LWVRV Board. Why would someone want to be on a board? Perhaps they were bribed (as I once was, with a scone); perhaps they wanted out of the house (as I did more than once). Maybe they wanted to know more about, or have a say in, the bigger decisions that got made (bingo!).

So, why am I on the LWVRV Board? Because someone asked me. After being an ardent dues paying League member for decades, I now get to be involved and participate in all kinds of ways. For me, I have always been drawn to where the bigger decisions get made (such as school district committees rather than PTA) and I get to do that as a member of both the LWVRV and LWVOR boards. There is also a bonus: new friends and fun!

To quote a current member and past LWVOR and LWVRV board member, “So, when someone asks you to serve, think carefully, and then say, ‘YES’.”

For information, to be on the nominating committee, or to recommend someone, or to say YES, please contact: Jackie Clary, Nominating Committee Member, jackieclary@gmail.com, 541-479-4486

Observers

Who Needs Them – We Do!

Rick Bennett, Observer Corps Co-Coordinator

Some of you may not be familiar with LWVRV’s Observer Corps (OC) - why it exists, and what observers do.

Why the Observers Corps exists is best described in LWVUS’s publication, **Observing Your Government in Action: Protecting Your Right to Know (2007)**:

“Protecting our right to know is integral to the health of our democracy. Decisions that determine how our schools will be run, at what level community safety programs will be funded, and how land in our towns will be used impact our lives and are vital to our well-being. These kinds of decisions need to be made with public input and oversight. One important way to ensure that is to observe government meetings.”

The League has been a champion of government transparency since our founding in 1920. It is one of our core principles and a vital part of our mission. Our efforts in this area reinforce our reputation of fairness, nonpartisanship, and trust. League members attend governmental meetings to learn what their government is doing and to monitor whether those meetings are conducted in an open and transparent way. Experience has shown the importance of the League being present to watch—and to take action when necessary.

The organization’s principles include the requisite that “government bodies protect the citizen’s right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.”.

Our nation’s access laws are only as good as we, the people, demand that they be. Protecting the public’s access to information—either written public documents or access to governmental meetings—is fundamental to the League’s mission and, we believe, is fundamental to the health of our democracy.

Often called “Observer Corps,” these programs have given Leagues a very effective way to protect and strengthen the citizen’s right to know.

For LWVRV, observing government meetings means attending of local government entities such as county commissions, city councils, and other governing bodies such as school boards. Some, like the Jackson County Board of Commissioners meet every week, city councils might meet twice a month, while other boards might meet once a month or less. In the past, government meetings were attended in person but, in the age of the pandemic, government entities come to rely on Zoom and other communication software to provide public access ... and made it very easy for all of us to observe meetings from the comfort of our homes.

To prepare for upcoming meetings, observers often review posted agendas (and any attached background materials). In reviewing agendas, attention should be given to agenda items that might be related to **League advocacy positions**. Also, observers should take notice of whether Oregon's Public Records and Open Meeting statutes are being followed (Observers are provided access to advocacy positions and Oregon statutes.)

As a rule, observers do not speak at public meetings when observing for LWVRV. Nor should observers "change hats" to speak for other groups or for themselves during the same meeting. These rules ensure the appearance of neutrality at later meetings.

After attending the governing entity's meeting, the observer writes up a brief report making note of any key actions or other concerns and forwards it the OC co-coordinator. Sometimes reports noting actions of interest to the membership may be published in our monthly newsletter. Please note: if an observer believes further action from LWVRV is needed – testimony, letter to the editor, action by members – the observer needs to bring that to attention of the co-coordinator or action chair as well.

So, I hope I haven't scared you with this brief description of what observers do. It is a relatively easy process and requires only a few hours of your time each month. But as explained above, observers can play an integral role in the League's mission of access and transparency. If you would like additional information about being an observer, please contact me at rbennett6662@yahoo.com.



Many hands make light work. Say YES when asked to contribute your time and talents.

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion – LWVRV – Our Ongoing Challenge

By Joyce Puccini Chapman

How many of you receive emails from the LWV? Do you read them? Even the fundraising emails, or do you just delete them and move on? This month I received LWV fundraising emails and instead of deleting them, decided to read them.

At the risk of being accused of taking the easy way out (I plead guilty, Ukraine has my full attention), below is part of a recent LWV email with links added to provide additional opportunities to learn about brave black women who fought for their rights and continue to fight today. I hope we all take these rights as seriously as these brave black women, and today's brave Ukrainians, and take advantage of the many opportunities to fight as hard for our democracy.

“From early in the suffrage movement, many formerly enslaved and free Black women like [Sojourner Truth](#), Harriet Tubman, and [Maria W. Stewart](#) were active in women's rights circles. [Frances Ellen Watkins Harper](#), a poet and essayist, went on speaking tours to discuss slavery, civil rights, and suffrage. And prominent journalist and activist [Ida B. Wells](#), one of the founders of the NAACP, was a strident supporter of women's voting rights.

When they were pushed out of the mainstream suffrage movement, Black women formed their own clubs across the US. Mary Church Terrell (one of the first Black women to earn a college degree) and Josephine St. Pierre Ruffin founded the [National Association of Colored Women](#) and were instrumental in consolidating Black suffrage groups around the country.

As the movement came into its final phase in the early 20th century, suffrage organizations claimed African American women as active members, but their [actions reflected a different reality](#).

Even now in 2022, we are still fighting lawmakers who want to restrict Black communities' right to vote and are using racial gerrymandering to stack their votes against them. [Our People Powered Fair Maps™](#) program advocates for the creation of equitable maps, and through education about redistricting, we seek to increase public engagement in the map-drawing process. And we're also counteracting voter suppression through the judicial system, while we enroll, inform, and empower more voters through [VOTE411.org](#).

The [LWV](#) has a plethora of resources if you would like to learn more about Black History, voting rights, gerrymandering, and many more topics important to the development, protection and continuation of our democracy. I hope I made it a bit easier for you to do that.

Childcare Study—My Experience..... Kathleen Donham

The League of Women Voters of Oregon has initiated a restudy of the Childcare Study from the 1980's. This time the results may be more discouraging than before. Childcare in Ashland and Medford is very hard to find—ask any parent. Under these conditions, we are asking facilities to participate in our survey. I am completing one survey for the Rogue Valley YMCA, and am looking for someone to do a phone survey of another one.

When I joined the League in 1983, I was a new mother trying to work part-time on an irregular schedule with a husband who worked extremely long hours weekends and nights. We pieced together a childcare schedule that was precarious. (I had to bring my children to a League Consensus meeting!) However, it was worth it to me to address this problem as I interviewed childcare facilities and collected data that was published in our final report. Years later, I was still being asked for that data by social service groups hoping to address the problem. No group had systematically gathered data locally before .

What happened is what always happens with childcare—the kids grow up and childcare difficulties pass, and the issue gets ignored until the next generation passes through. This generation also has COVID to deal with, and some childcare operations have closed completely. The local Childcare Resource Network contracts out referrals to a website called [Find Child Care Oregon](#). You won't find any openings.

I believe that childcare issues are very important, and the League of Women Voters, of all groups, must take it seriously, even if our own childcare problems are far in the past. I hope you will help.



WHAT IS ECF?

Come and find out: Zoom special presentation March 31st @ 6:00 PM

Answer: Electronic Candidates' Forum!

Many voters see politics as a rigged game that favors the rich, special interests (and their lobbyists) but leaves them, the common citizens, out. Many voters feel their vote means nothing and, consequently, they do not vote. The ECF would be a website that would allow voters to question the candidate(s) and, in doing so, would address voter apathy and cynicism by making candidates run campaigns that are: responsive, informative, substantive, interactive, and empowering (to voters).

Please come and hear our fellow member, Jim Crary, as he suggests a new way to make candidates more responsive to the needs of their constituents. Q & A will follow. Look for your Zoom invitation on the Monday before the meeting and again on the day. See you there!

Could You Pass the Naturalization Test for U.S. Citizenship? Kathleen Donham

According to US News & World Report, 2 out of 3 Americans wouldn't pass. (The 65 and older group do better.) So, whose job is teaching civics engaging the public in informed discussion? I'd argue that it is the League of Women Voters. WHEN THE NOMINATING COMMITTEE CALLS YOU THIS MONTH FOR YOUR COMMITMENT TO WORKING WITH THE LEAGUE, SAY "YES" AND DO YOUR PART TO **MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK.**

Take the quiz: (answers on [our website](#) and answers to [100 Naturalization Test Questions](#))

Questions:

- #1 What is the supreme law of the land?
- #2 What do we call the first ten amendments to the Constitution?
- #3 The idea of self-government is in the first three words of the Constitution. What are these words?
- #4 What are two rights in the Declaration of Independence?
- #5 We elect a U.S. Senator for how many years?
- #6 How many justices are on the Supreme Court?
- #7 The Federalist Papers supported the passage of the U.S Constitution. Name one of the writers.
- #8 Name one U.S. territory
- #9 What is one responsibility that is only for U.S. citizens
- #10 The House of Representatives has how many voting members?

LWVRV Calendar

March

- Monday 7 Oregon Legislature ends
- Thursday 10 Membership meeting, 11:30 – Listening Session, Zoom
- Thursday 17 Board meeting, 10:30 – Zoom
- Sunday 27 Newsletter submissions due
- Thursday 31 Electronic Candidates' Forum, 6:00 PM, Zoom

April

- Thursday 14 Membership meeting, 11:30 – Water Panel, Zoom
- Thursday 21 Board meeting, 10:30 – Zoom
- Wednesday 27 Newsletter submissions due

- If you must have a mailed paper copy of this newsletter, please call Jim at 541-830-0602 or email newsletter@lvrvalley.org
- You should also be receiving newsletters by email from State and National.
- **For a membership application**, go to <http://lvrvalley.org/wp/wp-content/uploads/2019/07/MembershipApplication501c3AsOf20190725.pdf>