

December 2022

# The Voter

A newsletter from

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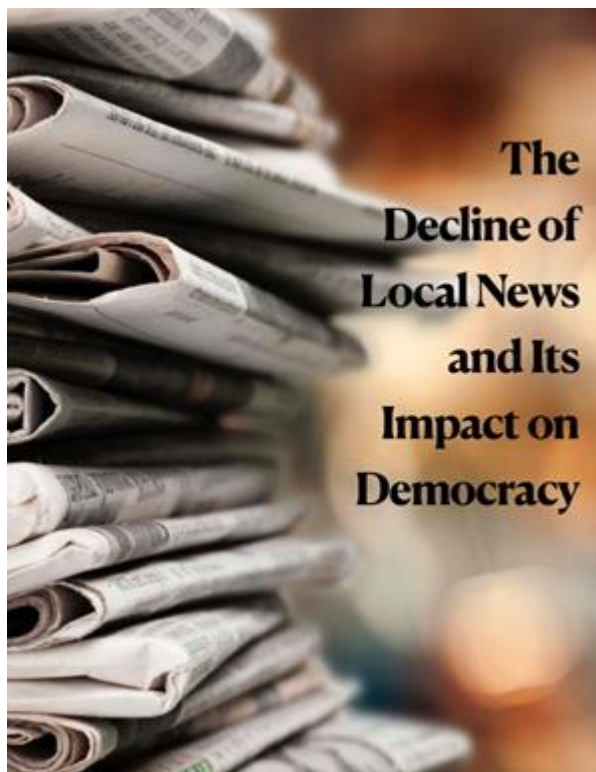
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## Forum For December 1 - The Decline Of Local News

*Barbara Tengtio, Second Vice President*



Tune in to learn how the decline of local news is affecting our communities in Washington. How has the closure of more than two dozen newspapers and the loss of more than two-thirds of our newspaper reporters and editors impacted our civic engagement, political participation and partisanship, public finance and public health?

A 10-member League of Women Voters committee shares highlights of a 20-month study that included interviews with more than 50 stakeholders and the review of more than 500 articles, reports and other documents.

Between 2005 and 2020, one quarter of the nation's newspapers closed, leaving 1,800 communities with no local news outlet.

Several national studies have shown the

impact of these closures on various aspects of our society, particularly those that are fundamental to our democratic system of government.

At the 2021 convention of the League of Women Voters of Washington, delegates authorized a study of the decline of local news in Washington to support League development of a policy position.

The charge of the study committee was to evaluate the condition of news outlets in Washington. Were they disappearing at the same rate as other states? If so, were Washington residents experiencing the same known impacts of lower political participation, less government oversight, higher government costs, reduced community engagement, and a lack of communication about public health? We consider these elements fundamental to our democracy and system of government.

Using standard reporting techniques, committee members gathered information from more than 50 scholars, journalists, elected officials, and government and civic leaders, including public health professionals. The committee also reviewed more than 500 documents, from scholarly studies to articles in the popular press.

Other efforts included tracking circulation and staffing trends within the state, closures of newspapers and the occasional rise of a new outlet. Newspapers with a general population readership as well as those that serve specific ethnic communities were reviewed.

The committee also examined potential measures to protect local news — such as legislation, nonprofit ownership, community partnership, and philanthropy.

The task was not to present solutions. Rather it was to provide information to make readers aware of the significance of the issue with a goal of reaching consensus on a League policy.

**To ask questions of the presenters, register in advance for this meeting by clicking here ("here" should link to:**

**[https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsdO6gqDwoHtWK\\_9A0h7dJDmtx9TvrRIXn](https://us02web.zoom.us/meeting/register/tZwsdO6gqDwoHtWK_9A0h7dJDmtx9TvrRIXn)**).

**After registering, you will receive a confirmation email containing information about joining the meeting. You can also stream the forum live on our YouTube channel by going to <https://www.youtube.com/@lwvskc>.**

**After the forum, video recording will be available on our YouTube channel.**

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## Holidays Through a DEI Lens

*Barbara Tengtio, Second Vice President*

As we drove around our community in late October we saw various homes with lights all around and my husband exclaimed - "Wow it's early for Christmas don't you think?" Later that week I was talking with my daughter and she started laughing, "No those aren't Christmas lights" she said "it's Diwali - the festival of lights, one of the most celebrated festivals in India lasting over five days."

One of the most beautiful things about our Country is the diversity of people that live here. It is this diversity that brings such richness to all that is the USA.

Reminding ourselves of this, **we as individuals and LWVSKC can strive to be more inclusive when we discuss and display holiday imagery and when we calendar meetings and events.**

This does not mean that holidays should not be celebrated, but rather **we should be aware that holidays do not necessarily mean the same thing to everyone** - something that is meaningful to you may or may not have the same meaning to a fellow LWVSKC member, your neighbor, and/or a community partner.

One may think the **4th of July** is an innocuous holiday - not offensive to anyone - but this may not be the case, especially for those whose ancestors did not gain freedom in 1776. Does this mean we should not celebrate Independence Day? No, but it does mean we should respect how others may feel about the day based on their race and cultural background and, we should go further and educate ourselves on what this day means to them.

**Juneteenth** was finally made a Federal holiday just last year - in 2021. It commemorates the emancipation of slaves. It was first started in Texas when emancipation was finally enforced in 1865. (These early celebrations were also used as opportunities to give voting instructions to newly freed slaves!) This certainly is a holiday LWVSKC should lift up and consider when determining its calendar of meetings and events.

**Columbus Day and Indigenous Peoples Day** are two more holidays that need our thought and consideration. Columbus Day originated as a celebration of Italian - American heritage and was first held in San Francisco in 1869. The first state-wide celebration was held in Colorado in 1907 and in 1937, Columbus Day became a holiday across the US. In the early 1990's Native American activists began to protest the idea of Columbus Day and how it centered around "the discovery" of America versus "the colonization" of America. In 1992 Berkely, CA was the first city in the US to rename Columbus Day to "Day of Solidarity with Indigenous People". Columbus Day is still a Federal holiday, but many state and local governments have begun to commemorate it as Indigenous Peoples' Day or Native American Day instead. Many organizations have also begun to refer to it and honor it as Indigenous Peoples' Day, including LWV! How can you honor Indigenous Peoples Day? You can: learn whose land you are on; attend a local or virtual Indigenous Peoples Day event; donate to Indigenous - led organizations; get involved in the anti-mascot movement; and/or amplify indigenous voices.

This past month, many of us celebrated **Thanksgiving**. How were you taught the history of Thanksgiving? What is "traditional" Thanksgiving imagery to you? How can we be more inclusive in how we approach this holiday? The holiday was first celebrated nationally in 1789 and it was proclaimed a federal holiday in 1870. Many, however, accuse the US and European settlers of fabricating the thanksgiving story and whitewashing a genocide and injustice against Native Americans. So, can you be more inclusive in celebrating Thanksgiving? Enjoy your traditions but: consider the imagery of pilgrims and Indians that may be used in decor; share a land acknowledgement at the

start of your meal; and/or promote resources supporting Indigenous voices and causes with friends, family, and your social media network.

Here we are in **December now, celebrating numerous religious and cultural holidays**. So, think about context - how you greet someone or offer a greeting via mail/email/social media. While Christmas may be a federal holiday, it does not mean that LWVSKC and individuals cannot take it upon themselves to respect the importance of all holidays. And remember, honoring another's holiday does not lessen the importance of a specific holiday to you.

Here's a **discussion you can have at your next Unit meeting**, coffee meet-up, etc. . .

### DEI, HOLIDAYS, AND YOUR MEETINGS, EVENTS, CELEBRATIONS

- Meeting dates, times - are you looking at a complete calendar?
- What imagery are you using to reflect holidays in your printed or digital materials? (Is it inclusive? Is it harmful?)
- How do you discuss holidays as a group?
- What assumptions are made about who is celebrating what and how they are celebrating it?
- Are you planning a LWVSKC event? Especially one in which you are hoping to attract new engagers or members? (Check an interfaith calendar, and community groups for cultural or other celebrations you may not be aware of.)

Our Country's strengths come from the richness of its diversity. Let's remember this when celebrating our holidays and be open to honoring others' by learning about them and considering them in personal and LWVSKC planning and communications.

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## **Reviewers Needed: Seattle's Social Housing Initiative, I-135**

*Patrice Griffith, Board Member*

City of Seattle Initiative 135 regarding affordable housing will be on the February ballot, having missed the deadline for the November election. LWVSKC has not yet endorsed or discussed the initiative, but with housing in the spotlight the board hopes to bring this to a vote for potential action at the January 14 board meeting.

But our incredible Action Chair, Lev Elson-Schwab, can't do this alone! He's a busy working dad who needs volunteers to help with an endorsement work-up. If housing is a key issue for you,

please join the endorsement review committee to help us determine what public policy positions might be relevant and what stance we should take, if any.

Some examples of LWVSKC positions that might apply:

**ECONOMIC Development** – Support measures to achieve a healthy economy characterized by services that meet basic human needs, including affordable, accessible, and quality health care; quality jobs that pay a living wage; a wide spectrum of education opportunities; a protected environment that includes open space.

**BUDGET AND FINANCE:** When prioritizing projects, the highest priority should be given to those that meet basic human need.

**HOUSING:** Support the efforts of government at all levels to increase the supply of affordable housing through a variety of programs.

For more complete information about the initiative, visit the campaign's website at <https://www.houseourneighbors.org/>.

To get involved, contact Action Chair Lev Elson-Schwab at [action@lwvskc.org](mailto:action@lwvskc.org).

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## October Actions

*Joanna Cullen, Education Fund Treasurer*

The LWVSKC presented testimony to the Seattle Redistricting Commission and to the Seattle School Board in October.

As a member of the Seattle Redistricting for Justice Coalition (RJS), the LWVSKC advocated for their work and presentations to the Seattle Redistricting Commission and in support of the final map as proposed by the commission. The results of this work can be found as indicated at the following links: Current Seattle City Council Districts: <https://davesredistricting.org/maps#viewmap::3a0dfe27-c577-49d1-866f-898f9ef8f637>

Final Seattle City Council Redistricting Plan: <https://davesredistricting.org/maps#viewmap::4f892594-3e4c-4572-8397-09316e7e97bb>

Transparency of data and process, equitable community input, keeping communities of interest together, and prioritizing people and communities over incumbent politicians

and special interests were the goals of the coalition. The final commission map does a good job of reflecting those values and were heavily influenced by the maps presented by RJS. Thank you to the leadership, staff and members of the coalition for the outstanding outreach work across the City of Seattle and strategy for ensuring a successful, transparent first Seattle redistricting process. Thank you to the Seattle Redistricting Commission members and staff for their transparent and successful work.

The Seattle School Director Districts were also redistricted by the Seattle School Board and again influenced by their observations of the work of RJS and the Seattle Commission. The map work is easily compared since both processes require drawing seven population balanced districts in Seattle. The new Seattle Schools Director District map can be found at <https://www.seattleschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Redistricting-Summary-Statistics-Scenario-7.pdf>

#### The LWVSKC Commented on New Governance Policies for the Seattle School Board

On Oct. 26, the Seattle School Board voted to implement Student Outcomes Focused Governance Model. This also included a motion to pause all non-legally required committees until July 2023. Standing committees are suspended. It calls for the superintendent-Board relationship to be revised, along with policies on the board accountability, board reports, board meeting content and community engagement. The board did decline to implement the proposed temporary prohibition of further policy work during this time, which likely was influenced by our and other community comments of concern regarding the lack of guarantees of transparency and community engagement as they move the new governance policies forward.

The League expressed concerns that the proposal suggested that the board could relinquish much of its direct oversight of operations. Given the budget projection of a \$139 million shortfall for the Seattle School District over the next three years and the possible downturn in the Seattle economy, this is the time that oversight and transparency of operational issues is essential.

Discussions regarding operational items such as nutrition services, transportation, enrollment planning, admissions, and assignment boundaries will be crucial in discussions of budget issues. We will continue to engage and monitor regarding a plan on how the work of the operations committee, for instance, will be accomplished and publicly shared.

It will be important to ensure that transparency and public engagement in all areas are acknowledged as priorities as the new policies are implemented.

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## Voting Measures Endorsed by LWVSKC See Election Success

*Mary Taylor, First Vice President*

Two ballot measures endorsed by the LWVSKC this election season will change our system of voting: on the King County ballot was Charter Amendment 1, or Even Year Elections, and on the City of Seattle ballot was Proposition 1B or Ranked Choice Voting, a voting method which allows voters to rank candidates in order of preference. Both measures have secured a strong showing.

King County Charter Amendment 1, **Even Year Elections, was approved with 69.49% voting yes and 30.51% no.** Approval of the amendment means that elections for assessor, council members, elections director, and executive which are currently held in odd-numbered years, will move to even years. The transition will be gradual.

- The last odd-numbered year election for the assessor, elections director, and council member districts 2, 4, 6 and 8 will be held in 2023 and will be for a three-year term for each office. Elections for four-year terms for these offices occur again in 2026.
- The last odd-numbered year election for the executive and council member districts 1, 3, 5, 7 and 9 will be held in 2025 and will be a three-year term for each office. Elections for four-year terms for these offices will occur again in 2028.

Data indicates that turnout for these positions could as much as double and result in a more diverse electorate making decisions that affect the future of King County.

While the City of Seattle proposition 1B, Ranked Choice Voting is also succeeding, the picture is more complicated. Voters in last week's election were asked two questions: first, did they want to change how they vote for primary races in Seattle, and second, how should the voting change if it did. Interestingly, the ballot measure asked voters to designate which voting method they preferred even if they did not want an alternative method. It could be likened to someone asking you if you would like a salad with dinner and even if you say no, they then ask you which of two salads you prefer.

The question of whether or not voters want an alternative method of voting in primary elections elicited an almost even split of yes and no votes through most of the vote counting. However, as of November 15 (at the time of this writing) additional votes put changing the process ahead, with 50.53% of voters in favor, a lead of 2,924 votes. On the question of which method, Ranked Choice Voting is clearly preferred, with more than 75% approval beating the other alternative approach, Approval Voting which garnered less than 25%.

If Ranked Choice Voting is eventually approved for Seattle's primary races, changes will go into effect in 2027. Ranked Choice Voting has been implemented in over fifty jurisdictions in the United States and has resulted in increased election of people of color, women, and other typically underrepresented communities. By having voters rank multiple candidates, Ranked Choice Voting allows and encourages voter engagement, and decreases the need for tactical or strategic voting.

For more information on the LWVSKC's support for these two ballot measures, please see article in the October 2022 edition of *The Voter: Election Reform is on the Ballot!*

[October Voter](#)

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## Nominating Committee is Coming to Life

*Adele Reynolds, Nominating Committee Chair*

Although the election and Annual Meeting are not until May or June 2023, your LWVSKC Nominating Committee is coming to life now due to some vacancies on the Board. Suggestions for nominations for officers, directors and nominating committee may be sent to the committee ([Nominate@lwvskc.org](mailto:Nominate@lwvskc.org)) by any voting member. This is your opportunity!

The board, the executive committee, units and individual members are encouraged to submit suggestions. This announcement in the Voter tells you the committee has begun the process.

The executive committee or the board may submit in advance to the nominating committee a list of portfolio needs for the coming year. The nominating committee will keep in mind the skills and abilities needed by the board when selecting nominees. Naturally, the discussions and considerations of the nominating committee will be confidential; however, when the slate is complete, it may be announced. Highlight the skills and talents of members you have been admiring. Give your suggestions a leg up, send them this form to fill out and send it to [Nominate@lwvskc.org](mailto:Nominate@lwvskc.org).

Adele Reynolds (Chair), Ellen Barton, Cathy Dormaier, Barbara Erickson, Sarah Beth Miller, LWVSKC's 2022 – 2023 Nominating Committee

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## Board Brief: November 2022 Board Of Directors' C3/C4 Meetings

*Barbara Erickson, Board Secretary*

The board met for the first time since the pandemic in its old home: LWVSKC headquarters in the Melbourne Building. Neither rain nor sleet nor dark of night was a problem in gathering; however, there were challenges with horizontal (Light Rail) and vertical (obstinate elevators) travel. Your dedicated board persevered essentially in person with a few by remote attendance.

Our discussions included the migration of the C3 and C4 bank accounts from the Columbia (Pacific Continental) bank to BECU. Our treasurers' reports reflect steady progress in completing the transition and streamlining several functions like payroll and accounting reconciliations. Among these transitions is retaining a payroll company to handle this complex task, heretofore undertaken by volunteer treasurers. Like many other organizations our brokerage account suffered losses, but is keeping a healthy balance.

Further, we discussed a new Youth Committee convening on November 18 to gather under one umbrella the League's efforts at registering and educating 18-29 year-olds, to enhance our focus and efficiency.

Targeting youth, especially diverse and under-served populations, is a goal for 2022-2023. More detailed information can be found in this newsletter on this topic. A report to the board reflected the first League invitational presence at the Naturalization Center to register new voters. Keep volunteer opportunities in mind.

We learned of new volunteers helping with communications, social media, The Voter and our website. In this regard the board members will be learning new online tools to promote more efficient organizing and communication which will help the current **and** future board members and committee chairs to decide who we want to reach and how to get there. In that regard board members are dedicating themselves to fundraising efforts such as Giving Tuesday and the Spring event, and small party gatherings, more of which will be discussed in articles by the Development Committee.

You will have received emails and the online weekly report about online meetings to review the **Shoreline Management Act**. The Board will be reviewing the outcomes from the two virtual meetings and submitting its summary to the State League.

If you have issues/questions you'd like to see on the board agenda, please submit them promptly to be considered for the next meeting on December 10. Email Heather at [president@lwvskc.org](mailto:president@lwvskc.org).

Perhaps I'll include photos from that meeting if we see ugly sweaters.

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## Gift Membership

*Meg Van Wyk, Development Chair*

Democracy needs you now more than ever. That's why I am so thankful that you've stood with the League as a defender of democracy. Today I'm asking you to help us spread the word and expand our membership. And it's easy. I'm asking you to provide a gift membership to League Women Voters of Seattle - King County to a friend or a loved one.

Here's how it works. You select a friend or family member. It can be anyone. That person doesn't even have to be a woman. You probably already have someone in mind. You click the link below and provide a few details. The League takes it from there. We provide the recipient of your gift with a welcome package, letting them know who sponsored the gift. Your new member will then receive all the valuable information and tools for standing for democracy. The high quality material you've come to expect from the League. It's that simple.

I hope you take great pride in the victories achieved in this last mid-term election. The outcome also showed that our work is not finished. Now is the time to press forward in our community to educate voters and to protect the right to vote. Your gift membership will make a real difference ... a difference that is not matched by any other voting rights organization.

Please [click here](#) to start.

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## Connecting with the Community

*Heather Kelly, President  
in Conversation with Nora Leech, Economics and Taxation Committee Chair*

[Link to Interview on Youtube](#)  
[Airgram Link](#)

Heather Kelly: Okay. Amazing. So last month we took off of Connecting with the Community because we were just so busy with election related stuff. But we're bringing the feature back this month, and I'm here today with the fabulous West Seattleite, Nora Leech, and we're going to cover all of the high epic milestones of her League journey, beginning with her most recent expedition into the community. Nora, do you want to catch me up about your meeting with the Girl Scouts?

Nora Leech: Well, that was just terribly cute. They were eight years old. There are about ten of them, and they were just adorable. And their leaders. They had three leaders. So it was about how women got the vote. So a little bit abstract for eight-year-olds, but they were hanging in there. So at one point, I talked to them about the fact that we narrowly got the vote because the State of Tennessee, approved it. They were the last day, and it was down to one vote in the Senate. And at that point, the Senator, whose name was Burn, he got a note from his mother. Do you know this story?

HK: I don't think I do.

NL: A note from his mother that says, "Son, give women the vote." And he changed his vote because he was a negative at that point, he changed it to a pro, give women the vote. And that made it pass for the whole United States. Amazing. And the thing about the Girl Scouts, these little, young girls, they are really young girls. I wasn't sure they're going to get this, catch what that meaning was. And so I said, "Hooray for Senator Burn! And then this little girl says, "And his mother." She understood it, and it was just a funny she made that comment. And I thought, "Oh my gosh. "It was well worth coming down here. So.

NL: That was precious. That was really precious. It was just this little girl, you know. She got it!

HK: That's amazing. I knew the story about the last-minute vote change and that it was down to one senator, but I didn't know that, I mean, I should have figured there was a woman behind the scenes who, she says to him...

NL: That's right.

HK: That's awesome. Okay, so I think we need to move on to a really important question, which is, did you get any Girl Scout cookies?

NL: They fed me well.

HK: Well. Amazing, because we always want to make sure our volunteers are thanked properly when they go out into the community. And also, if you did have any extra boxes of cookies, I might make a special trip over there.

Were you a Girl Scout growing up, or no?

NL: I was. I was a Girl Scout and a Girl Scout leader. Okay. I'm a big fan of the Girl Scouts.

HK: Okay, so where did you grow up?

NL: I grew up in Ohio.

HK: Oh, whereabouts?

NL: Columbus, Ohio.

HK: Okay. My mom grew up in Akron. That's why I asked. Well, she was born in Akron, and then they moved to Orange County when she was still pretty young. But I always ask when I hear people are from Ohio.

NL: Yeah, it's where big football competitors are.

HK: Yeah, I know. It's a big football state. That whole midwest is just bonkers for football. Okay, so you grew up in Ohio, and eventually you made it out here to Seattle. How long have you been a member with the League of Seattle-King County?

NL: I knew you would ask. Forever, you know. I was actually born in Seattle, lived here the first years of my life, and then there's a big Boeing bust, and then we had to pick up our stuff and go back to Ohio, see if we could make it there. So my formative years were definitely in Ohio, but I came back to Seattle, so that's 50 some years.

HK: So tell me what originally brought you to the League?

NL: The League? Well, turns out, although I did not know this before, that my grandmother was a member of the League of Women Voters in Ohio. My grandmother

HK: Wow! Wait, what was her name?

NL: Her name was Rachel Lynton. Or Godown. So it was just, so that was a surprise. I came to the league because I said, you need to be informed. I need to know what I'm voting on. And I love sitting with other women who are informed and having the discussions and chawing down on what are these issues because they are confusing. And the League was a great venue for that. So I loved being around very politically educated women and having a good discussion. That brought me there.

HK: You know, I've heard one version or another that answer in different contexts, including other interviews with league members for this feature. And one of the things that things that I sort of like have come to realize as a relatively new League member and younger League member is I came to the league to meet people similar to you like to meet people who are politically active and politically engaged and learn more about the political world of my community after I had moved from another state. But after I kind of got my feet under me a little bit, my goal really changed to, like, I guess, serving beyond the League community, serving the voters, which is, of course, like the mission work of the League that League members have always done. But it's just interesting to me, like, how people initial reasons for joining or coming to the League have kind of remained consistent, even though so much of how we do our work has changed. And I think that's there's probably a more outward public facing service element now, but maybe not. I mean, voter registration was always a big focus.

NL: Yeah, yeah. I think it's just wanting to be around people who are very knowledgeable and to have a discussion so you can tell your own intellect, tells you, oh, that's a little off, or this is okay. But having the stimulation of people hashing through the issues is very valuable.

HK: Yeah, and people you trust too, right? That's a piece of it too. Like as we start kind of trying to focus more of our energy on getting out the vote and voter registration is like at Washington State, finding ways to inspire, engage owners where they really feel reassured that the information they're getting is like vetted.

NL: Yes. Very valuable. Plus it gives you, your intellect gets to grapple with all the different nuances. And it's not easy, as this last election showed us in terms of things on the ballot, you don't have any idea, like what? Do you want or that? If you don't want that do you want this anyway. That last, you know, it was very, very confusing. So it really is important function of the lead to develop relationships. Very grassroots to let people grapple in a safe environment. And that you're not going to be ridiculed that you don't know. Women don't do that to each other.

HK: Yeah, amen to that. I feel so strongly about that, actually. I mean, if people can't ask questions because they're afraid or they don't want to look a certain way, then it's really just such a lost opportunity.

NL: You need a safe environment to hash through the issues. Yeah. Makes you much more confident. So that grassroots getting together and discussing the upcoming elections, it's very valuable to what's going on. Besides there's so much trickery, deception, untruths. It's a huge issue now. So you need to be around people trust who will and who will respect you.

HK: Yeah, I really hear that and appreciate that. I was talking to a reporter this past week with Crosscut about, she was doing a piece on the low (again), relatively low youth voter turnout. And we were kind of like hashing through some of the possible explanations for that in our discussion. I realized I thought of this, but not maybe in this exact way. Young people today have, like, an entirely additional task as voters that I don't feel I had when I was new to voting, which is wading through all of the garbage and misinformation

NL: Lies.

HK: On social media. Yeah, lies! Let's just call it what it is on social media. It's not just like, about educating people about the issues. It's about pointing them to reliable resources and helping them get those blinders on or think critically about what is or isn't a reliable resource.

NL: They need to make friends that they trust and then they all can do the same thing. They can talk about issues, what lies they've heard what this, what that. But they need their group that they trust to hash out the issues. I think that's extremely important. And nobody likes to feel like they're stupid

HK: Right.

NL: Most of the assemblies on voting, they really make you feel like you feel like you're stupid, right? And young people they will resist that. They need a trusted group of friends where they can be real about the issues and have a good discussion.

HK: Yeah. And I think that means same-age peers. Yeah, right. I think there's a value in, like, having intergenerational support from experienced voters, certainly. But, like, you know, like, teenagers want to be with teenagers, and beyond teenagers, young adults. We've been trying to meet folks where they are as far as social media platforms, et cetera. But as an organization that skews older in terms of our membership age, we just have a lot of learning to do from the voters that we're trying to serve about what their needs are.

NL: Exactly. Yes. Young people intellectually go wade through all the stuff. They really are probably better than we are at that. But they do like to have their friends, and that is a good thing. They should get together with their friends and discuss the issues. What's going on?

HK: Yeah.

NL: The League should encourage that, for them to get people to get together with their friends. And then if you want to get more people, then that's fine, too. Get together with your friends and talk about the issues.

HK: Absolutely. Have a little voting party.

NL: Exactly. That's what I do. Say, "Hey, what's going on with this?"

HK: Yep, absolutely. We're actually, we have a young lady working for the League through a league national grant, and she is developing a survey for young voters to figure out, like, how the League can facilitate those types of events. And so there's kind of like a checklist of things we know we can offer that we're good at and hopefully we'll get some good data about, like, where our programming should really be strengthened. And I'm so excited to share those results out. Okay, but I have more questions for you. So tell me about the Econ and Taxation Committee.

Was that something that you created or you stepped into an existing committee? How did that come about?

NL: We did create it. And what happens is that as you go through life, is all these great issues, that have to do with poverty and lack of opportunity, well everything boils down to economics.

HK: Right.

NL: So that's what happened. We said everything leads to economics. We need to understand what is being promoted in terms of policies, where is this energy coming from and who benefits? So that's what we did. We started a big study group and we've read so many books. It was fabulous. And the same, it's a very trusting group of women, and we support each other. We didn't start off being very knowledgeable about economics. We learned a lot on the way. But that was a support group, so we can really grapple with that. But we can get people who were experts to come talk to our group, which is really nice too. So people were very willing to help us in our journey to understand economics and taxation. I'll tell you the issue of taxation, I'm just studying King John of England. Everything was about taxation. King in one of the tax the nobles. The nobles didn't want to be taxed without representation. The issue is a very old one.

HK: Yup, yup. It sure is. This is really funny. My kids were sick this last week and they were out of school. And so, of course, we had like, snuggle time on the couch with a movie. And the movie I picked, because I get to pick sometimes, was my favorite movie growing up as a kid, which was *Robin Hood*, which is all about King John and taxation.

NL: I think that's right. And that was my favorite too! I used to love *Robin Hood* stories. I even told someone at church that my name was Robin at some point. How bad is that?

HK: I love it. I love it. So it's so funny because it's true. Everything really does boil down to taxation and the economy. Even in the Disney universe.

NL: Exactly. That's the whole issue. So how much does the King want? What's he spending it on? Yes. Collecting it. No kidding.

HK: So I guess one of the things I wanted to ask you as, like, a standing committee chair, is there anything that the board can do to support your work?

NL: Well, it's a mutual back and forth. So we really like to weigh in on the board. If it's something that we have a position on, like taxation, that we like to weigh in on things that are being proposed and say, well, this is just this position, or it doesn't fit this position, or we don't have a position on that.

So that's really important to follow positions on the issues, and then also to share the back and forth, this is what we are finding about taxation and about the economy. Yes, we would like to work more closely with the board, even get to know them, would like to meet with the board at some point.

HK: Yeah, well, that's just what I was going to propose because it's budget season. I mean, we're starting to think about our own organization's budget, but also just looking around and seeing

kind of like how different elected officials are approaching budget creation. And it makes me think that there's no reason why we couldn't take a stance on budget issues and advocate for more funding here or less funding there. With your input, so hopefully we can join forces a little more.

NL: There you go. Join forces and share what we know. I think the whole issue, well, one thing that I did, my big point of accomplishment at the League of Women Voters was coming to a study on privatization, privatizing government functions and private sector. And we had studies. We had a King County study, we had a state study and it was proposed at the national level to have a study on privatization and what's going on. And, so, this is where the mean mouse made a squeak and shook the whole work. So I stood up at national, you know it's very intimidating, there's women from all over the United States there, and I suggested that we do a study on privatization, privatizing public services and then they said, well, okay, now we'll take a vote. Now, National, never, doesn't like studies coming from grassroots, generally. Okay, so they said take a vote and all those in favor and a loud, "Aye!" went up and I was taken aback. Everyone was taken aback, the board. So then they said, "Well, let's see, maybe have a written vote on there." So they took that. Overwhelming. People wanted to know what in the world was going on with the government using their funding and all of this stuff. So we did. We were tasked with doing a national study that went out all across the United States, and we came up with positions on it. So it is there to be... and one of them is the study shows people do not like the idea of privatizing the tax collection. So the IRS is not to be privatized in private companies. We know it's trouble. And in fact, there was trouble back in King John's time. They got kind of nasty about how they collected those taxes and who they collected from. So it's the same issue. So it needs to be a government in the government purview, not in the private sector or contracted out to the private sector. So we have a position there so we can act on across the United States and we should use it. So that was an amazing person. I had to do the study with five people. That was quite intimidating, very intimidating, but we made it. We did it, so...

HK: Wow. Oh, my gosh. I totally got goosebumps when you were describing that moment at convention. What an experience. And thank you for doing that work. I mean, of course, it's like every time you put your hand up.

NL: You might end up doing it.

HK: I feel like you probably have earned some sort of, like, honorary degree in economics from the University of the League of Women Voters.

NL: Everyone was quite shocked. It was that the time was right.

HK: Yeah.

NL: People were upset. Governments are going broke, and people want to know what in the world is going on.

HK: So unlike today.

NL: Yeah. Right.

HK: Well, I feel like I could talk to you for, like, another hour, but we should probably wrap it up so the transcript isn't like, 70 pages long. Okay, well, I'm going to pose to the board that you are ready, willing, and available to assist with supporting us in taking stances on issues around budget, taxation, and other economic issues. And we will kind of strengthen our communication pathways back and forth and see what good we can do. How about that?

NL: That would be great. And anyone's invited to join in for the meetings. They're monthly. Just zoom in. If anyone on the board wants to just join for one time or becomes interested. In fact we have a number of board members who are joining.

HK: Yay. Good. Okay, awesome. Well, thanks again so much for your time today, for showing up for the Girl Scouts and all the amazing work that you do for the League, past and present. I'm excited to see more of you.

NL: Thank you. Thank you very much. Very kind of you.

HK: Take care. Bye.

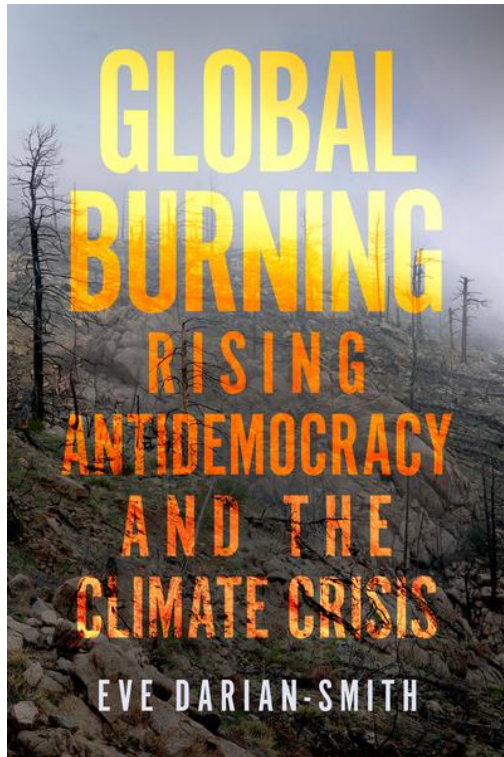
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## **Global Burning, Rising Antidemocracy and The Climate Crisis**

By Eve Darian-Smith

*Review by Vicky Downs*



Darian-Smith shows us how authoritarian politics is connected to wild fires and climate change. We learn that climate changes have been “both caused and exacerbated by corporations involved in a range of loosely regulated and often environmentally risky activities such as energy production, industrial-scale agriculture, mining, drilling and massive extraction of groundwater.”

One example is Pacific Gas & Electric (PG&E), “an enormous power utility company serving most of California”. It is an extractive industry that relies “predominantly on nuclear, large hydro and natural gas for its energy sources,” and profits from people who have little choice regarding their energy provider.

Poorly maintained power lines ignited many wildfires that led to injuries, deaths, and “millions of dollars in property damages” along with law suits and burning down the town of Paradise.

The author says, “escalating catastrophic wildfires and climate change in general are accompanied by a global rise in antidemocratic governance.” She points to practices such as suppressing voting rights, “making it harder to vote by mail and access to in-person poll stations for poor and rural communities.” She says “an increasing number of countries...are tilting toward a concentration of power in a leader or elite group who are not accountable or responsible to all their citizens equally.”

Ultra-nationalism promotes a sense of an exclusive identity often “essentialized in racial, ethnic or religious terms,” or in “falsely [touting] a country’s ability to thrive without having to cooperate with others.” Brexit in the UK or “Trump’s withdrawing the US from the Paris Agreement” are examples of this.

While much of the book deals with the United States, the author shows that meteorologists tell us Australian fires have been detected on the other side of the Pacific Ocean in South America. “Bizarrely, this smoke was merging with thick haze produced by tens of thousands of fires still burning across the Amazon jungle that had displaced many

villagers and Indigenous communities and devastated huge swaths of rainforest throughout 2019”

From outer space, satellites confirmed what was happening in Australia, California and Brazil. The author shows us that the Covid outbreak is “both contributing to and exacerbating” climate change’s unequal impacts on the world.

Darrian-Smith suggests we need to live as global citizens. She is concerned by “far-right leaders who roll back environmental protections and promote extractive industries such as logging, mining, industrial agriculture” – and are thereby “rolling back elements of democracy such as free presses, non-partisan judges, public health programs, public education, the right to vote and to protest injustice and suppression.”

Clearly, “our planet is literally and metaphorically on fire.”

This is not a book that is fun to read, but it is important: perhaps very important.

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## We'd Like to Hear From You!

**Not sure who to reach?** You can always find us at [info@lwvskc.org](mailto:info@lwvskc.org) or 206-329-4848!

**Membership coordinator** Saunatina Sanchez is at [membership@lwvskc.org](mailto:membership@lwvskc.org) and holds in-person and virtual office hours. Check our [events calendar](#)!

**Want to stop by our office?** We have office hours every Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. We're located at:

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## Education Fund of LWVSKC

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And if you're looking for the editor of *The Voter*, reach out to [votereditor@lwvskc.org](mailto:votereditor@lwvskc.org)!

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