
The Voter

A newsletter from



Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Our March Forum on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) will feature panelists from each level of the League (local, state, and national) who will provide insight on how our organization is moving forward on our commitment to DEI and what resources are available to members.

Please join us and add your voice to our discussion.

Thursday, March 3 at 7 p.m.



Liz Bander



Tania Hino



Heather Kelly



Saunatina Sanchez



Julie Sarkissian

This month's features

[March Forum](#)

[We Are Difference Makers!](#)

[Send Your Input for Forum Topics for 2022-2023](#)

[Positions Update - Getting Ready for the Annual Meeting!](#)

[Why You Should Consider Joining Observer Corps](#)

[April Forum Preview](#)

[The 2022 Edition of TRY - In Your Mailbox Soon!](#)

[Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion \(DEI\)](#)

[Connecting With the Community](#)

[Connecting With Our Leadership](#)

[Board Brief](#)

[Units Unite Us](#)

[Three Ideas for Units Revitalize!](#)

[Book Review: An Ugly Truth](#)

[We'd Like to Hear From You!](#)



Did you know you could **increase your tax advantage** by taking the standard deduction for tax year 2021? According to the IRS, "Nearly nine in 10 taxpayers now take the standard deduction and could potentially qualify to claim a limited deduction for cash contributions."

- **What does this mean for you?** The IRS says "These individuals, including married individuals filing separate returns, can claim a deduction of up to \$300 for cash contributions made to qualifying charities during 2021. The maximum deduction is increased to \$600 for married individuals filing joint returns."

For more information on this added benefit to your generous donations, click [here](#).

While we don't yet know the limits for tax year 2022, we expect to see more support for your charitable giving.

- So, please continue to support your local League by clicking [here](#).

March Forum

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) in the League

Thursday, March 3 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm via Zoom

Kathy Sakahara and Lauren Pixley

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) have been a major priority for the League of Women Voters at all levels over the last few years ... but it was not always this way. The League was founded just six months prior to the ratification of the 19th Amendment – the culmination of a fight which included a conscious effort to win the vote for white women at the expense of our sisters of color. While a lot has changed since then, and we have certainly made progress as an organization, there is still work to be done. We must learn to view DEI not as a separate program, but as an integral part of all we do. But what does this mean? How is our organization moving forward?

DEI is not just about LWV as a group; it is really about each of us as individuals. It has been and still is uncomfortable to recognize the obstacles faced in the organization, and even more so to recognize those in ourselves. We know it will take both individual and organizational changes for us to move forward so that everyone feels welcome and fully included, and knows that they can safely be themselves in the League family.

Our March Forum on DEI will include panelists from each level of the League (local, state, and national) who will discuss how diversity, equity, and inclusion are currently being implemented in the League. We will explore the process, accomplishments, and even missteps from an organizational perspective. This forum will challenge us to take an introspective look at where we are as individuals, and where we want to go. How do we recognize our own implicit biases, and what we do about them?

Don't expect this to be like other League forums! It will be different than looking at a societal problem and exploring specific actions we can take as advocates to address the problem. As difficult as looking at those issues in our society can be, turning the focus on ourselves takes courage, authenticity, and vulnerability. It takes listening without defensiveness or judgment.

We ask that you show up with not only an open mind but an open heart. Also, please bring paper and something to write with, as we will be asking you to engage in some reflection before, during, and after the forum!

Panelists will include:

Tania Hino Director-at-Large, League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County

Heather Kelly President, League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County

Julie Sarkissian Director, League of Women Voters of Washington

Liz Bander Director, League of Women Voters of the U.S., DEI committee

Saunatina Sanchez, Member Coordinator, will moderate the forum.

Discussion questions for Units and questions for self-reflection:

- How do we recognize our own implicit biases, and what we do about them?
Resource: <https://implicit.harvard.edu/implicit/takeatest.html>

It can be very difficult to realize that you've said or done something that has had a negative impact on someone else – especially if you had good intentions.

- What strategies do you use to try to resolve interpersonal conflict in a healthy way? An example might be journaling, or taking a walk before approaching the subject again.
- How do we implement these things so we can see measurable progress?
- What are some examples of applying a DEI lens to our work?

We ask that Units **submit their reflections** on these questions, and the additional questions that will be discussed during the forum, to Program Chair Adele Reynolds at program@lwvskc.org. Your thoughts will be gathered and reviewed by both Adele and Julie Sarkissian, and you will see a response in a future issue of *The Voter*.

Additional reading or viewing

Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie: *The danger of a single story* (TED Talk)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D9Ihs241zeg>

Ruby Hamad: *How white women use strategic tears to silence women of colour*

<https://www.theguardian.com/commentisfree/2018/may/08/how-white-women-use-strategic-tears-to-avoid-accountability>

Ava DuVernay: *13th* (2016 American documentary film)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=krfcq5pF8u8>

Layla Saad: *Me and White Supremacy*

<https://www.meandwhitesupremacybook.com>

Autism and neurodiversity inclusion tips:

<https://autisticadvocacy.org/resources/accessibility/>

We also ask that you make an effort to seek perspectives different from your own by following people on social media, or reading media from folks with backgrounds different from your own. A great way to do this is to find a topic in which you are already interested (such as climate change), and look for voices from diverse perspectives who are talking about or writing about this topic.

We Are Difference Makers!

LWVSKC Board

Do you remember why you joined LWVSKC? Probably because you wanted to make a difference! How has your membership helped you create positive change in our community? Perhaps you have directly engaged with local or state government by testifying during a legislative session, or volunteering with our Observer Corps. Or you have been out in the community registering voters, or working in our schools. Maybe you are a member of a team or committee like our City Climate Action Guides. Are you a Unit Leader organizing other members in action or research?

How has the League changed you along the way? Have you made new friends, learned more about local issues, challenged yourself to try something new, or honed your skillset? We hope you have enjoyed connecting with a community which shares your commitment to a

healthy and vibrant democracy. Do you have friends who share your passion for our democracy but are not current LWVSKC members? Why not reach out to them and share a bit about the work we do?

- Increasing our membership will allow us to expand and deepen our local impact.

In addition to your gifts of time and talent, your dues and donations support our work. ***Did you know that dues contribute only about 25% towards our annual operating budget of approximately \$150,000?*** That's why our fundraising appeals are so important. While your dues support the League at every level, donations to LWVSKC maximize your impact on local issues affecting your immediate community.

We make a difference in Seattle and King County because of you, and we have so much more to do. We invite you to consider how you want to empower voters and defend democracy this year and how LWVSKC can support you in that work. What amazing things could we accomplish if we had more funding? Do you have ideas for fundraising?

- Share your ideas with your Units, Board members, [President Heather Kelly](#), and in [The Voter](#).

You are creating positive change with your time, talents and energy! You are making a difference and LWVSKC thanks you!

- Let's continue to expand this work together!

Send Your Input for Forum Topics for 2022-2023

Adele Reynolds, Program Chair

What are our next steps after the January 6 Program Planning Forum?

Our January Program Planning forum identified three areas that look quite sure:

- Updates on Policing or Public Safety,
- Homelessness in King County, and
- Climate Change.

Beyond those, there are many possibilities!

Who will prepare those forums? You will —all of us together! Each forum will need a committee, or team, comprised of people with varied knowledge and interests. Do you, or

did you, work or have other experience in the field? Are you willing to do some research, writing, or organizing? Have you helped with a prior forum or program in any context? All teams need to be actively planning about two to three months prior to the month of the forum itself. If there is an on-going committee, it may take less focused time, simply because the members will share quite a bit of knowledge and experience. For sure, as you plan the forum you will both learn about the issue and get to know the other members. Your forum team may continue, evolving into a committee helping to understand and solve a problem issue. **Want to know more about how this works?** Look [here](#) on our website.

Here is a list of potential forums for this coming year. **What possibility interests you enough that you would like to be on that forum's team?** or at least have some input? To which one would you like to contribute your time and energy? Do you want to suggest another?

- Reply to me, Adele Reynolds, **now** at program@lwvskc.org.

1. Alternatives to Incarceration
2. Improving Our Justice System
3. Current Issues Affecting Tribes
4. Civics Education for Adults in Washington
5. Techniques for Voter Services
6. Interactive Tour of Our Website
7. Get to Know a Part of King County Government
8. Get to Know a Part of League, for example, Voter Services
9. Another of your choice!

I would like to have a really good list (six or seven total topics) for **your vote** at the June 4 Annual Meeting. Send me the numbers of those you would like to attend.

- Reply to me, Adele Reynolds, **now** at program@lwvskc.org.

Positions Update – Getting Ready for the Annual Meeting!

Barb Tengtio

Periodically, LWVSKC reviews its positions to determine if existing positions need updating, or if there are gaps in the positions that could be addressed with new positions.

This past fall, Joanna Cullen and Barb Tengtio reviewed LWVSKC's positions.

- **Four possible updates to existing positions were identified.**
- The Board has reviewed and concurred with the proposed changes.

LWVSKC Members: Please review the proposed changes [here](http://www.lwvskc.org/docs.ashx?id=949974) (<http://www.lwvskc.org/docs.ashx?id=949974>) ahead of the annual meeting in June. At the meeting, you will be asked to vote to concur or not concur with each of these four changes:

1. a new DEI summary statement at the front of the positions;
2. specific DEI language added to certain positions;
3. the word “citizen(s)” replaced with “public”, “the public”, “voter(s)”, “community”, or “people” throughout all positions; and
4. updating the position for Seatac airport to apply to all airports in King County.

In addition to the four proposed changes, other items were identified for possible further action. Perhaps a member or unit would be interested in organizing a small team to pursue one of these items. If an item sparks your interest and you would like to take it further, please contact Action Chair Lev Elson-Schwab at action@lwvskc.org.

Your engagement is welcome on any of the following:

1. Under "Governance - Government Coordination", page 1, a team could revisit this position to consider Native governments.
2. Under "Teens", page 21, a team could revisit this position to update the position to include "support" - "There should be increased - support - and continuing parenting skills training for parents."
3. Under "Drug Abuse and the Community", page 23, a team could revisit this position to review and update it for all substance abuse – legal and illegal forms.
4. Under our current Law Enforcement and Justice Positions section, page 13, we do not have anything on alternatives to imprisonment. We may want to consider adding a position here. The League in Illinois just put out a [new position](#) in 2021 that we could look at to adopt, or use as a basis to write our own.
5. There is nothing in our positions around Rent Control under Housing, page 17. This could be an area to explore, maybe do a study. The LWV San Francisco has a [housing position](#) that speaks to rent control. We could potentially adopt this or use it as a basis to write our own.

6. We could conduct a study on wages and the wealth and income gap. Under the Economy section, page 10, we currently have a reference to providing living wage jobs, but it could be time to explore and possibly strengthen this area. The League in Boulder, Colorado has a [position](#) we might look to.

7. Our positions currently do not cover Violence Prevention and/or Gun Safety. National has positions on both as follows:

- (National page 142) "The League of Women Voters of the United States supports violence prevention programs in all communities and action to support: public and private development and coordination of programs that emphasize the primary prevention of violence; the active role of government and social institutions in preventing violent behavior; and the allocation of public monies in government programs to prevent violence."
- (National page 143) "The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the proliferation of handguns and semiautomatic assault weapons in the United States is a major health and safety threat to its citizens. The League supports strong federal measures to limit the accessibility and regulate the ownership of these weapons by private citizens. The League supports regulating firearms for consumer safety. The League supports licensing procedures for gun ownership by private citizens to include a waiting period for background checks, personal identity verification, gun safety education, and annual license renewal. The license fee should be adequate to bear the cost of education and verification. The League supports a ban on 'Saturday night specials,' enforcement of strict penalties for the improper possession of and crimes committed with handguns and assault weapons, and allocation of resources to better regulate and monitor gun dealers."

We could reference these positions on our website or adopt them. We could also pursue a study in this area if there was interest.

8. Under the Education Policy-Making section, page 26, it was suggested we look at elected school board make up. Specifically, should elected board members represent specific areas, be at-large, and/or a combination of both. We could do a study in this area if there was interest.

9. Under our Air Quality position, page 40, it was suggested we could pursue a study on tree canopies and possibly update this position. The following study was done in 2000. As an option, [this report](#) could be used as a baseline to start the study.

10. Privacy, Security, The Internet is not covered in our existing positions. Our understanding is that Oregon is working on a position in this area, and perhaps other States too. It is suggested that we wait until this and possibly others are published to see if we can adopt a position. A study of this type would require a tremendous amount of resources and we are recommending we build off of the work already completed for this subject matter.

11. There may be interest to do a study or adopt another League's study completed on responsible journalism.

Why You Should Consider Joining Observer Corps

Mary Taylor



Becoming an observer is a great way to actively contribute to the League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County, especially if you're new to the League or if you're short on time. Observer Corps is important to the League and forms the basis of League advocacy and education. The benefits of participation accrue to the observer, the League, and the community. If you've been an observer in the past, consider joining again; several changes such as a new streamlined report are underway.

What does an observer do?

An observer attends local civic meetings and reports back to the League on how the meeting was conducted and what was discussed. Observers monitor both issues and processes of our public agencies.

Observers are also empowered to recommend and/or move into advocacy on issues in conjunction with the advocacy team and in alliance with League positions.

What is the time commitment?

Observers attend an initial 1-hour training and may follow up with Observer Corps coordinators as questions arise. Beyond that, the amount of time a person devotes to Observer Corps is at the discretion of the observer. Depending on how many meetings an observer chooses to attend, the time commitment can be as little as two to three hours per month.

What are the benefits of Observer Corps to the observer, the League, and the community?

As an observer you learn more about issues in your community; witness how decisions are made, and gain insight into local government processes. One observer described Observer Corps as a great educational opportunity. Observers act as the eyes and ears of the League, alerting other members about issues in need of advocacy or attention. League visibility is increased in our communities, as councils, boards, and agencies are made aware that League observers are in attendance, which helps to sustain the reputation of the League as a defender of democracy. Observer Corps benefits the community by promoting open, transparent, and accountable government. According to the League of Women Voters Resource Guide: “Observers act as “watchdog” on behalf of their friends, family, and neighbors, and help to ensure the vitality of their community.” LWV.doc (lwvsa.org p.4)(Page 4, Observing Your Government in Action)

Changes to the Observer Corps model underway!

A group of League members has been working on improvements to the Observer Corps Program. Prior and current Observer Corp members were surveyed to determine what is working and what could be improved. Information gathered led to the following actions:

- Elimination of the focus on specific subject matter. Observers can choose the meetings they want to attend according to their interests.
- A streamlined report form (see [here](#)) with several yes/no answers and request for a focused and brief summary of the meetings.
- The addition of a question empowering observers to recommend that the League take action as warranted and according to League positions.
- A plan for optional twice-monthly meetings to provide support and a forum for discussion for observers.
- The potential to live-tweet the meetings.

The League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County “encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.” Observer Corps is an important public service the League is uniquely suited to deliver. Keeping the public informed about their government is our top priority, but we can't do it alone.

If you have questions, comments or would like to join Observer Corp, please contact Mary Taylor at mary.taylor@lwvskc.org.

April Forum Preview

Claiming The Power of The Classroom

Thursday, April 7 from 7:00 pm to 8:30 pm via Zoom

Joanna Cullen

Many families and students are hurting from a loss of social contacts and classroom time. Teachers are the foundation of family and student connections to the school, and to trusting relationships that can smooth the path to healing this hurt in our schools. How can our community come back stronger than before? Where are the teachers? Why do so many contemplate quitting? What do we need to understand to help?

Do you know a fellow member in need of cheering up?

Perhaps you know someone who is recovering from surgery, struggling with work or family, or just having a trying time at the moment. If so, please [fill out this form](#), and the LWVSKC Bright Light will reach out to the member with a note to cheer them up, and remind them that they're part of our League community.

The 2022 Edition of TRY – In Your Mailbox Soon!

Barb Tengtio



Attention Members!

As an LWVSKC member, your personal copy of the 2022 TRY will be arriving soon in your mailbox – unless you have chosen not to receive it, as it is also available on our website at:

<https://www.lwvskc.org/TRY>.

- Keep an eye out!

What is TRY?

The TRY (They Represent You) is a directory of local elected officials as well as the county council, school boards, Washington State officials, legislative committees, political parties and more. And it is updated annually by LWVSKC!

Open It!

TRY is a resource for you to use to engage with your local officials, school board representatives, etc. and do the work of the League. Check out the TIPS for communicating with elected officials on page 5.

Time for More Engagement!

In this critical time, we need all members to step up and empower voters and defend our democracy. Please check the weekly LWVSKC email and our website for volunteer opportunities, or reach out to your Unit or any Board member to find out how you can do more. Much work can be done from home – observing meetings, conducting research, contributing to committee work, etc.

Thank You!

LWVSKC exists because of you! We are a nonpartisan, grassroots organization and our activities include: advocacy, registering voters, GOTV, sponsoring debates, holding public forums, studying public policy, taking positions based on its fundamental principles, and publishing educational resources like the TRY. Thank you for your work to date and ongoing support!

Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)

Kathy Sakahara



As part of LWV's commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion, we've all been encouraged to look at issues with an equity lens. I must admit that a decade ago when I first heard the term, I didn't understand it. I understood what equity meant, and that it was very different from equality. I understood the need to be conscious to not act on my own implicit biases or stand idly by to by when I saw examples of discrimination.

Then I thought back to when I started my work with the gay rights movement. Almost 50 years ago, I realized the integral connection for me between misogyny and homophobia: I couldn't demand full rights for myself as a woman, and at the same time fail to support full rights for women who love women ... and men who love men ... and all the possible combinations. I couldn't rail against the limitations and injustice of gender roles, and quietly accept limitations on who we choose as our most intimate partners.

So, I got involved in gay rights organizations, made many gay friends, held fundraisers, provided presentation training to gay rights activists who wanted to tell their story. And of

course, in the process I heard those stories — stories of hiding, facing rejection by family and church, living in perpetual fear, and even the suicides of loved ones. As I heard about those who lived these experiences, my perception changed. It went beyond being consciously aware of that gay people were at best entirely invisible, but more often were denigrated and villainized in virtually every area of our culture. Now, I became acutely sensitive to any writing, news story, commercial, and even conversations, that reflected sometimes subtle heteronormative assumptions.

Every day I became more and more aware of my privilege. Then I heard Bishop Gene Robinson say the problem is not that you have privileges. You don't have to feel guilty about that. But you do have a choice. You can either fight to expand those privileges to others, or just accept them. And by inaction, you indicate that you approve of the denial of your privileges to others.

Those years of effort afforded me the incredible honor to represent LVWWA and testify in favor of marriage equality the year it finally passed — in 2012, only ten years ago.

I realized that If I could develop an equity lens around sexual orientation, certainly I could apply that to other areas. Straight privilege is not the only one I have enjoyed. I also have the unearned privileges of being white, financially secure ... and many others. My desire to make a real difference is one of the reasons I got involved in LWV.

But, let's be honest. This is more than benevolence or self-sacrifice. Yes, it is the right thing to do. I want to see justice, yes, and I want to recognize the many wrongs that exist, and do what I can to make a difference for others. But is also a bit more selfish. Simply put, an equitable and inclusive society is better for everyone. Bluntly, it's better for me. Better for my family. And it's certainly better for the League.

So what is your role? I am reminded of a quote often attributed to the civil rights icon Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr:

- *“If I cannot do great things, I can do small things in a great way.”*

Connecting With the Community

This month, President Heather Kelly interviewed Virtual Unit Leader Tami Conrad.

Watch this Zoom interview [here](#).

HEATHER: Okay, so here I am, “take two” with Connecting With Our Leadership, which we're transforming more into a Connecting With the Community column, since we figure

members like to hear about one another, and not just the Board. So today, I'm with Tami Conrad, who is the phenomenal leader of our Virtual Unit, among other things. Tami, tell me, remind me, I know, you've already mentioned this over email, but tell me when you join the League again.



TAMI: It was in the spring of last year. So I've been a member for less than a year. Honestly, Heather, when I got your email chain, if you interview me, I was like, you know, after having watched Adele's interview, Adele Reynolds, I was sort of like, she has such a depth of knowledge and so much wisdom to impart. And it made me wonder why [you chose me]. I haven't been a member for that long.

HEATHER: You know, I have a really good answer to that, I think, which is that we always love to know why people are attracted to the League because it means that we're doing something right. For me, getting a sense of why people are joining, as well as why long-term members are staying, are equally relevant perspectives to informing the work of the Board and the direction of the organization. So yeah, I'm, like, so excited to connect with a fresh perspective. So what caused you to join? There's so many organizations to choose from.

TAMI: Well, so, before the interview, we had been talking and I had mentioned to you that I was an attorney. And I had recently retired. And I retired in the pandemic, which was not how I thought I would retire. I will get to the point about joining the League, but as background, I had originally thought I would retire in July of 2020. And then the pandemic hit. And all of the things that I had planned to do for the first 18 months were no longer possible, so I had to rethink it. But I ended up retiring, actually, in September, the end of September, officially October 1 of 2020. One of the things that was important to me, in retiring, was to get active in the last presidential election. And what I chose to do is, actually, it was not through the League, but very related to the League. I didn't campaign or doorbell for any candidate at all, I worked on a national hotline that helped people get registered to vote, helped people figure out whether they were registered to vote, where they should vote, how they could vote. That was a great way for me to participate. And I really, really enjoyed that. That particular organization wound down after, after the election. I wanted to find another organization to continue with that kind of work. And to be honest, I did not look at the League. Initially, I looked at sort of, you know, newer organizations that have arisen in recent years. I ultimately decided, obviously, I didn't join those organizations, I found the League. They're all doing good work, but what drew me to

the League when I finally took a hard look at it was the depth of knowledge and experience and, you know, organization, and it was really impressive. In a way some of those younger

organizations were not yet ... didn't, you know ... they, they're younger? Yeah, they don't have 100 years of doing this kind of work behind them. And honestly, it was just really impressive when I started looking into the League and talking to people and that experience has carried forward.

I had a just fantastic experience this last fall with the League, an email came around asking for volunteers to work on candidate forums. And it just sounded interesting. And it's a time of year where I have more time. And so I sort of raised my hand. And you know, most of the people involved in that activity did not know me, because I'm so new. So the first thing they asked was, well, but would you be comfortable interrupting a candidate? Solid question, solid question. I was like, after 25 years of legal practice, believe me, I've no problem interrupting anyone. In fact, it may be a problem.

HEATHER: Yeah, they're going to need to keep you at bay. That's so funny.

TAMI: I had such a great time. I mean, I've been a lawyer for a long time. I've been in the courtroom. I still ... I wanted to do it, but I was nervous. Yeah. But I had great training all the way along the way. And I have to do a shout-out to Tony Okada, who's a great mentor. Yeah, and, just, I never felt, you know, I'd never done it before. But I never felt like I was wandering in the wilderness. I always had lots of support. And it turned out to be a really great experience, like I would be so into doing that, again.

HEATHER: I'm so glad to hear that. It's really, I mean, you know, we're trying to provide people with the skills to get over that [feeling of] "I don't know if I can do it. I'm not opposed to it, I'm available, but like, I need to feel like I'm set up for success here."

TAMI: And, and that was exactly my experience. I felt completely supported the whole way. And that is, that relates to the fact that there's such a depth of experience in the

League. So you know, that I was looking for a new organization to continue my, what I had been doing previously, you know, helping get people registered and knowing how to vote is sort of a core activity and value of the League. And then just, when I looked into it and saw just everything the League was doing, and doing well, it just made my decision really easy. And I joined the League. And that's, it's been a really good experience for me. So that's great.

HEATHER: So okay, maybe you have an answer to this. I'm kind of winging it here. Are there other kinds of trainings that you feel like, if they were offered, would help you step into other volunteer roles that you might be interested in? Or, you kind of feel like you found your niche with the candidate forums?

TAMI: Well, I really like ... I mean, I would be so happy to do that kind of work again. But for me, and I know, the League does so many other things. But what I personally find compelling is that core work that the League does, which is voter empowerment. And so I'd like to get more involved in the Voter Services area. And, you know, just learning how to do that work to sign voters up.

HEATHER: Yeah.

TAMI: Oh, that's one thing. That's an area I'd like to go into. And the League may have a lot of trainings already available. I just, I'm not sure yet. You know.

HEATHER: Yeah, we can probably do a better job of making those visible and pushing them out a little bit more. But, you know, it's interesting what you're talking about, because Voter Services is undergoing, I mean, kind of a shift, while still sort of being true to our voter empowerment roots.

I feel like in Washington State, because the state has done a pretty exceptional job of eliminating barriers to the vote and making registration so easy, I won't say we've put ourselves out of a job, because there's still plenty of people who are eligible to vote who aren't registered, but, you know, with all these other organizations popping up it's become necessary, I think, to be a little more focused in our work. Really what we've been trying to do is make ourselves more culturally competent in preparation for partnering with some of the organizations that are already embedded in communities of color, led by people of color, you know, who are really doing the work of registering voters, motivating voters.

And, you know, instead of coming to them and being like, we've been doing this for 100 years, we have a lot to teach you, you know, just coming to learn about their communities,

what the needs are. Because it's not uniform, of course. So it's been really interesting to kind of like, shift into a place of learning as an organization instead of reflexively assuming that we would lead. Having that be okay, you know, not having that feel like we're losing something.

TAMI: Right. Well, that's part of, I mean, I think that's part of the DEI (Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion) work that the League is doing, right? Yeah.

HEATHER: Yeah. So um, so going back to, kind of, the candidate forum piece, was there anything about the forums that surprised you? Or, you know, made you, kind of, more feel like a little more connected to local politics? Anything stand out about that experience? Or was it more or less like what you expected?

TAMI: Well, a lot of it was like what I expected, because, again, the League has so many resources. So I was able to go back and look at videos of a lot of candidate forums. But then it was interesting. So, you know, the way the League breaks down the workload, as the moderator I did not write the questions. There's a whole committee and they gather questions from the community. And then formulate the questions to make sure there's not duplicates. And you know, that's ... and that they're fairly phrased, and those kinds of things.

But one thing that was interesting to me, is someone on the committee with a lot of local knowledge of the area, where I was moderating the forum, said.... You know, the one thing I did have leeway in was setting the time limits. So I could negotiate that a little bit differently, depending on how the timing was going in the forum. And someone with a lot of local knowledge said, I don't know if you can do it, but it would be so good to get to, like, I think, it was question nine. So I just tried to finagle the timing a little bit to get there. And that was the question that seemed to spark the most candidate reaction, right? And that person really knew what was going on in that community. And I have no idea why that particular question was so far down, but I was really glad I listened to that, and really made an effort to get to that question, because clearly that was an issue of major interest in that community.

The only other thing that surprised me—I didn't ever have to, like mute someone, you know—there were rules about when they had to stop. They were all timed. And some of the candidates were quite creative. The rule was if your time ran out, you had to just finish your sentence and stop. And one of the candidates was really creative at adding “and, and ...”. About the third “and”, I was like, “Okay.” I thought, well, that's creative.

HEATHER: Yeah, I guess that goes back to: Are you comfortable interrupting if you have to? That's hilarious. I wonder if that candidate had a legal background also? Probably.

You know, it's, funny how some of the stuff that you have to do on the fly, if you shift into that place of listening to kind of the local expert, or the subject matter expert, the volunteer who kind of has their finger on the pulse of the community, it can really, it injects this energy into the event, you know. I think, I mean, it's definitely more fun to watch those as an audience member, but it's a good test of the candidates, too, right?

So in the Virtual Unit. How is it going? It's another experiment here in the Seattle-King County League.

TAMI: Um, well, it's been an interesting experience. Contrary to the values of the League, I don't think I was ever, like, elected leader.

HEATHER: Right? Totally. Yeah, it was. It was definitely more of a volunteer opportunity.

TAMI: Well, I think I sort of fell into it, because at the time at which the most folks wanted to meet, the League's Zoom account was not available. And I had one.

HEATHER: Yes. It's like the willingness and the subscription come together in the perfect person.

TAMI: Yes. So I sort of fell into it that way. Yeah. It's been an interesting experience. So because I literally knew nothing, right. The one saving grace, and all, of that is that I have had extraordinarily experienced and talented people who've shown up in Virtual Unit who have really helped me. I mean, Linnea Hirst, who knows everything there is to know about the League. I think she was the president of the State League for a period of time. She faithfully shows up. In fact, one of our very early meetings was Linnea and me. It was awesome. Because I learned a lot, just yeah, that meeting, just talking with her, and also Lisa Nelson, who's another Board member, is faithfully showing up. So I have lots and lots of help and guidance from people who actually know what they're doing. I also feel like I'm still definitely getting my feet on the ground as to how to make the Virtual Unit ... the time that people invest there worth their while, so I'm still figuring that out. And, and, and luckily, the other members are helping me to read alongside me. Yeah, so.

HEATHER: That's really cool. Yeah, you guys get to create something together, you know, and figure out, kind of, what your own priorities are. And if you find yourself needing more

structure, I think that Sarah Beth [Miller], or really any other Board member can always offer [help].

TAMI: Oh, oh, my God, Sarah Beth has been a huge support.

HEATHER: Well, um, I think I probably consumed enough of your day. Um, thank you for, like, being willing to volunteer, even though you don't know everything, and just having confidence in the League that we will show up for you and give you what you need.

TAMI: Absolutely. It's been a really great experience. And my decision to join the League is not one I have ever regretted. Yeah, still learning a lot. And it's, it's exciting work we do.

HEATHER: Very cool. Awesome. Well, it's really good to talk to you ... see you like this.

TAMI: Yes. And, and thank you, Heather, for everything you are doing for the League. So you are playing a massive role and doing it well. So thank you.

HEATHER: Thank you. I'm enjoying myself. All right. Take care, Tami.

TAMI: You too, Heather. Bye bye.

Connecting With Our Leadership

Lev Elson-Schwab



Hello everyone! Many of you already know me ... from my constant harassment to join our advocacy team! And for those of you who haven't heard the call yet, we're always looking for passionate people who have an issue they want to tackle, or specific skills they want to share.

I wanted to contribute to the "Connecting With Our Leadership" series and share who I am, and why the work that we do is so important to me. I am an educator, teaching at a small, private university in King County; a husband; and the father of two children. My family is the world to me and I've always felt a strong responsibility to work to leave the world better for my kiddos than I found it. Thankfully, I found the League.

During the summer of 2020, I started working with Kathy Sakahara (LWVSKC's 1st Vice President) on a project aimed to better inform voters on crucial ballot measures, and thereby empower them. I quickly learned, from working under her leadership and guidance, how much of an impact a dedicated group of hard-working people can have, and this of course immediately inspired me to become a League member.

Since then, we've worked together on other projects, and I have been bowled over by the passion and impact that we can have, and by the importance of advocacy at the local level. I was humbled last year to be nominated to the Board, and I consider it an honor to serve. As others have said, I have been able to research, write, learn and interact with people who are all intent on making a difference in their own way, and as a team.

Being so new to the League and to the Board, every day brings me new education on the inner workings of the Board, and the way the League works in general. I consider myself very privileged to be able to work with such a dedicated group of people who are committed to our mission and to growth. And I've been blown away with how far this commitment extends beyond the Board. From individual members, units, and larger committees, every League member is participating in making positive change in the world. I'm grateful and honored to be a part of that.

Board Brief

Heather Kelly, President

Our February board meeting kicked off with a discussion of a *Seattle Times* article published in 1972 on the challenges facing the League and resulting financial woes. Lucy Wilson Benson, President of LWVUS at the time, described the issues:

The women's liberation movement has made us schizoid ... League members like the consciousness-raising and basic ideas of women's lib, but the League is made up of white middle class women who feel put down by the libbers' denigration of housewives and volunteerism. What's happening to volunteers has been going on for a long time and it's going to hit the League harder and harder all the time ... Forty-three per cent of the women now work, and the League is not too convenient for working women. It takes a lot of time. Plus, women have a lot more options than they did 20 years ago and we have a lot more competition.

The author of the article, Mary Russell, observed that "The League, like Congress, finds itself pushed by the technological age. The League has a tradition of carefully studying an issue and reaching a consensus before taking a position and that takes time. Issues come up and go away before the League can respond."

Mrs. Benson concluded, “What’s going on now is a struggle for the soul of the organization. The League has to move, or wither and die. We can get back to a cheaper, less-effective organization but that’s the beginning of the end.”

Fifty years later, we find ourselves at another critical juncture as an organization. At first blush, it feels like history is just repeating itself. We are re-examining our identity as an organization through the lens of another civil rights movement. We are still looking for ways to be more responsive to emerging issues, to engage new members with busy lives, and to distinguish ourselves from other organizations focused on democracy.

But so much has changed, too. As a board, we no longer describe other organizations as “competition”, but potential partners and teachers. Because there are so many opportunities for women, our volunteers have a wide range of skills and interests. We are able to harness technological innovations to dive deeper in our research, attract huge audiences to our forums, and collaborate more effectively across the state and nation.

The board concluded that, with all due respect to Mrs. Benson, this is no time for hand-wringing. Withering and dying is simply not an option. So we will move forward together, an intergenerational force united by a common purpose.

Units Unite Us

Sarah Beth Miller



Our nine small discussion groups (Units) meet once a month to discuss topical issues and connect members to outreach activities.

Any member can attend any Unit meeting.

Check our [website calendar](#) for locations and times — including our virtual-only Unit!

The Enumclaw Unit is back! We will meet on the month’s second Thursday at noon at Frankie’s Pizza in Enumclaw for our Unit meetings.

Three Ideas for *Units Revitalize!*

Tami Conrad, Virtual Unit Leader

As a new-ish unit leader, I feel I am an unlikely author of an article on revitalizing our units! I joined the League less than a year ago, and within a couple of months, found myself leading the League's newest unit – the Virtual Unit. My comparatively brief membership in LWVSKC means my perspective has limits. I am not fully immersed in our history, and lack personal experience of how units worked in the past ... long ago, before the pandemic! Being a newbie, however, also provides certain advantages. Without the softening lens of nostalgia, I can look at the organization with a fresh perspective. All of this is to say that I can offer just one perspective on revitalizing our units. In listening carefully to those with more experience at the *Units Revitalize!* meetings that Unit Liaison Sarah Beth Miller organized at the end of 2021, I understand that there are many other exciting ideas in our community about how to revitalize our units. I look forward to learning about them all at our future meetings on this topic!

Soon after I became a unit leader, I began to think about whether our Virtual Unit meetings provided sufficient value for the time members devoted to them. I started thinking about how we might improve those meetings. When Sarah asked about how to revitalize the units, I sent her an email outlining some of the ideas with which I was already wrestling. That email is the seed that grew into this article, and, well – here it is!

Some of our growing pains in the units stem from the fact that we are experiencing a 21st century technological revolution, while the structure and purpose of our units has remained firmly planted in the 20th century. It's true that most of our units have gone virtual due to the pandemic. Yet this one innovation – born of necessity – has not fundamentally changed or modernized other aspects of our units. In the past, unit meetings filled at least three important roles:

1. Members received needed information and education about what was happening in the League.
2. Members made connections with other members and formed a sense of community.
3. Members organized specific actions. For example, members of the north Seattle unit describe how they engaged in and found purpose together through various voter registration activities.

These important unit functions now need updating, as technology is changing, and the organizational structure and goals of LWVSKC are changing.

First, most of the information about LWV activities that members used to obtain at unit meetings is now readily available online – either through League email, in *The Voter*, or on the League’s local, state, and national websites. When I volunteered to be the leader of the Virtual Unit, the League provided me with a helpful template for meeting agendas. The template, however, includes lots of space for “upcoming events” and “dates to be saved,” and these items can consume a lot of meeting time too. Indeed, as I prepare the agenda each month for the Virtual Unit’s meeting, I find myself simply copying information already available to unit members in their email or on the League’s websites. As I do this, I wonder what value I am offering to unit members as I regurgitate information from elsewhere. I believe that unit meetings instead can and should serve as rich opportunities to process information which members already have, and to discuss issues at the forefront of the League’s work. In the past, unit meetings served effectively as discussion groups for League forums, articles, and books, and I certainly hope that unit meetings will continue to serve in this way in the future. But I see no need to bog meetings down with information to which unit members have ready access on the internet.

Second, we should consider organizing units on a basis other than geography. Although at one time, it may have made sense to connect with one another and create community by forming units in physical neighborhoods, this type of geographical organization is no longer necessary given technologies like Zoom. Indeed, most, if not all, neighborhood units are now meeting virtually anyway due to the pandemic. Even once units begin to meet in person again post-pandemic, I hope they will continue to offer a virtual option in conjunction with their in-person meetings. Providing a virtual option will enhance attendance and allow those who cannot travel or meet in person for whatever reason to participate. Further, given the historical and structural exclusion of minorities from many parts of Seattle and King County, which created a lack of diversity in many neighborhoods that persists today, continuing to organize units predominately by geography may serve to undermine the League’s diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) goals. Thus, although some units may continue to be organized by neighborhood, there may be better ways to organize units going forward. For example, it might make sense to form units simply by the day and time they meet (e.g., a unit for those who would like to meet mid-week at 7:00 p.m. and another for those who need to meet on a weekend afternoon). Another alternative to neighborhood units might be units formed around a specific League activity, like a unit dedicated to organizing creative voter registration drives, lobbying the state legislature for League priorities, or being a part of the League’s Observer Corps.

Third, we should promote the idea of organizing League activity through our units. In our first two meetings on revitalizing units, I heard many members describe how they felt most connected to their units and the League when their units engaged in direct action like voter registration drives. I think we should expand on this idea and encourage all units to select a core League activity, or perhaps two, as their unit's focus. The members of a unit can become League experts in the areas they select and a go-to resource for volunteers related to that activity or activities when unexpected need arises. However, each unit should coordinate their direct-action activities through the relevant LWVSKC committee or Board member to make sure that the unit's work is in sync with the larger organization. This might also serve to rectify another issue that members raised at the first two *Units Revitalize!* Meetings – a disconnect perceived by some unit members between the Board and the units. If units coordinate their direct-action activities through the relevant Board committee or Board member, the result will naturally be a stronger connection between those two bodies.

These are just a few of my ideas for revitalizing our units. I hope that you will continue to attend and engage in Sarah's meetings to revitalize our units and share your ideas too. I look forward to hearing and discussing those ideas at our next meeting and continuing this important work together.

An Ugly Truth

Sheera Frenkel and Cecilia Kang

Book Review

Vicky Downs

Looking for the book review for our March 3 forum on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion? Look [here](#) in the February issue of *The Voter* for Sarah Beth Miller's review of *White Tears, Brown Scars* by Ruby Hamad.



At Exeter, students knew Mark Zuckerberg was extraordinarily smart and very competitive. At Harvard, he “started a blog to rate his female classmates.” Many were “alarmed by the invasion of privacy,” but Zuckerberg said he was surprised by the popularity of the site and apologized “for any harm done.” This style of weak apology, minimizing responsibility and impact, would continue throughout Zuckerberg’s leadership of Facebook. Since then, he has offered apologies many times, but it seems the desire to make technology go further is infinitely more important to him than worrying about possible invasions of privacy, or whatever else is worrying people.

At first, his main idea seemed innocent enough: Facebook would help people to meet and make friends. Unfortunately, it also helped others to pass on lies and deceptions and aid extremists wanting to create chaos.



Frenkel and Kang (*pictured left*) show us how in January 2021, “lawyers gathering evidence from Facebook, Twitter and other social media accounts, laid bare how those organizing and participating in the Capitol storming had used Facebook’s platform.” In the weeks leading to the attack, Oath Keepers had “openly” discussed the logistics of their round trip to Washington D.C. Unfortunately, though

“Facebook’s security and policy teams were aware of the activity,” they had a hard time destroying the multitudes of pages inciting anger and calling for violence.

In 2015, a New York Times exposé wrote about the Russian Internet Research Agency (IRA) that includes a “troll army” to lure people in a particular direction with ads in Facebook and other media. They were sometimes overtly political. It took Facebook weeks just to “locate the facility in which hard drives were stored.” Eventually they learned the Russians had bought more than 3300 advertisements, which cost the IRA “\$100,000 to promote disturbing positions in Facebook.” These ads reached an astonishing 126 million Americans.

“The IRA ran accounts that took extreme positions on issues such as gun control, immigration, race and feminism. Many pages supported Trump, but there were also some supporting Bernie Sanders. Facebook’s security team reported, “We had no idea it was so big.” Apparently, “no one had thought to go looking for a professional disinformation campaign” run by the IRA.

It seems that preventing disasters is not something Facebook can easily do, and perhaps it doesn’t want to do. What DO they want to do? They wanted to make money, and executives said “their best path to make money was through ads.”

To accomplish that, they “would have to pinpoint what Facebook had to offer.” They decided to capitalize on user activity. A middle-aged mother who looked at a Facebook page of a ski resort and showed photos of her ski vacations was “the perfect audience for UGG’s \$150 shearling-lined boots.” Though Facebook users were not necessarily shoppers, Facebook could help turn them into shoppers.

Another big issue deals with employees who want to know more about a single, particular person — perhaps a date. One man learned more than he “could possibly have gotten over the course of a dozen dinners.” While Facebook fired a great many employees for abusing their access, nothing was done to prevent what was clearly a systemic problem.

Throughout Facebook’s history, its enormous financial gains have “repeatedly come at the expense of consumer privacy and safety.” This is a business that could prove too powerful to break up, and that is only part of the ugly truth.

Editor’s note: Does LWVSKC use Facebook? Yes — despite the flaws of Facebook and its corporate parent Meta. Our Facebook account can be found [here](#). The role of social media in our information environment, and its impact on politics, is a roiling debate. For more on Facebook’s culpability in how its platform manipulated the information environment in the 2016 U.S. presidential election, try the exposé *Mindf*ck*, by Christopher Wylie. Another resource is here: <https://www.lawfareblog.com/topic/arbiters-truth>.

LWVSKC Revised Observer Corp Report Form
March 2022

The form is available [here](#), or at <https://forms.gle/en9KZtiYucd9vpxvZ>, to complete on-line.

1. Email
2. Name
3. What board, council, committee, or other entity did you observe?
4. Was the meeting easily accessible?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
5. If not, what improvements would you suggest?
6. Were you able to observe the whole meeting? If not, please indicate what portion you missed.
7. Were a majority of the members present?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
8. What other government or community organizations were represented at the meeting?
9. Did the meeting start on time?
 - a. yes
 - b. no
10. If not, how late did the meeting begin?
 - a. 5 to 10 minutes
 - b. 10 to 15 minutes

c. Over 15 minutes

11. Were you able to get a copy of the agenda at least 24 hours before the meeting?

- a. yes
- b. no

12. Was the agenda followed?

- a. yes
- b. no

13. If no, what items were cut or added?

14. Were the government officials prepared, attentive, and courteous?

- a. yes
- b. no

15. If no, please comment

16. Summary of the Meeting:

Please provide a brief and impartial summary of the meeting - list the key issues discussed, note whether public testimony was provided and record any significant actions, such as votes taken. If a vote on an ordinance or resolution was scheduled for a later date, please note the date. Your summary should include highlights of the meeting. We will link your report to the organization's website, where minutes are posted.

17. Might any pending actions have a positive or negative impact on a demographic group?

- a. yes
- b. no
- c. uncertain or unclear
- d. If yes, please summarize

18. Do you recommend LWVSKC take action on any issues addressed in this meeting?*

- a. yes
- b. no

If yes:

Describe the issue.

Note what state or local position applies.

Check the action for the League to take.

- i. Support
- ii. Oppose
- iii. Monitor
- iv. Other

NEW: To upload your summary as a file, write "see below" in this response box, then scroll down to "add file").

*If you check yes, an email will be sent to the Chair of the Leagues' Advocacy Committee.

We'd Like to Hear From You!

Not sure who to reach? You can always find us at info@lwvskc.org or 206-329-4848!

Membership coordinator Saunatina Sanchez is at 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:

Melbourne Tower
1511 3rd Avenue
Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101

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Board members also serve as the Education Fund Board.

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And if you're looking for the editor of *The Voter*, reach out at votereditor@lwvskc.org!

Find us on the web at lwvskc.org!

