



Voter

League of
Women Voters of
Bellingham/
Whatcom County
February 2009

Health Care Meetings

At the LWV National Convention in June, the delegates voted to make Health Care a top priority and to have programs to educate members and communities about reform proposals. Since the 1990s League, both nationally and in Washington, has had positions advocating universal access to quality, affordable health services. Details of these positions can be found at our web site www.lwvbellinghamwhatcom.org

Our League will be presenting two meetings on Health Care. At our February 21st meeting, Global Health Care, we will be looking at how other countries provide health care to their citizens. It will feature a very informative film "Sick Around the World" from PBS's Frontline Program. The Health Care Committee will also present data that shows how the US stacks up to other countries in costs and outcomes. You will

LWV General Meeting

Saturday, February 21, 2009

Downtown Public Library

(Lecture Room in Basement)

9:30 a.m. Social Time
(Refreshments will be served)*

10:00 a.m. Program

"Global Health Care"

***Members Only—If your last name begins with A through M, please bring cookies, sweet breads, or fruit/nuts to be served at this meeting.**

You're invited to an all-member

"Potluck for the New and the Old"

Saturday, February 14th

12:30 to 2:30 p.m.

**Whatcom Educational Credit Union
Meeting Room**

511 East Holly Street, Bellingham, WA

Members with last names A-L, please bring a salad for 6 to share. Members with last names M-Z, please bring a dessert for 6 to share. Bread & drinks will be provided.

**Please RSVP—to the League @ 734-2366
or to Tanya**

CoPres1@lwvbellinghamwhatcom.org

be amazed at how much we spend and how poorly we rate when it comes to life expectancy and infant mortality. And of course, there will be time for questions.

For your information, this Voter has an explanation about the 4 general health care models that different countries are using. Learning about what other countries do will prepare us for our 2nd meeting.

At our General Meeting on April 18th we will examine the various proposals for health care reform in the US and in our State. We hope to have a panel discussion at that time to discuss the pros and cons of the health care plans.

Hope you can attend both the February 21st and April 18th meetings.

-Judy Corliss.

From Co-President Elsie Heinrick

Greetings Leaguers.

The first month of the New Year is at an end and now Congress and State Legislatures are grappling with many issues related to the economy. The League Lobby Day on Thursday March 12 is an opportunity for all of us to meet with our State Legislators to discuss the League's legislative agenda and biennium budgetary issues. The meeting will be in the Columbia Room, Capitol Building in Olympia starting at 8:30 am. A registration form can be found at <http://www.lwvwa.org/lobby%20day%2009.pdf>

Many of us had an opportunity to talk with our elected officials at the Wine & Cheese on January 3. In spite of the weather we had a good turnout and found the relaxed atmosphere conducive to conversation and an exchange of ideas. Thanks to all of the members who helped—the spouses, Tanya's three daughters and my great niece for making this event successful. Thanks are also due to **Trader Joe's** – they provided much of the cheese and crackers as a donation. The YWCA ballroom looked beautiful and festive and the food, wine and punch were enjoyed by all.

We have learned that member **Edie Norton** has been appointed to the City of Bellingham Planning Commission. Congratulations Edie.! We would also

like to welcome new members **Kathy Gablehouse** and **Karen Larson** who joined late in 2008 and this month we have added **Rick and Lynne Rein**. Welcome and we hope to see you at our Pot Luck on February 14. This lunch will be held at 12:30 pm in the WECU meeting space on Holly Street and you will find more information elsewhere in this Voter. It will be an opportunity to learn more about League Program Planning and to socialize with the new and the old (longer term) members. Please come and participate!

February will also bring our meeting on Global Health Care on February 21. On March 21 we hope to learn more about the National Popular Vote Compact. This is a national study and you will find an article elsewhere in this Voter. For further information please go to www.lwv.org for a background paper. You can also find a great deal of information at www.nationalpopularvote.com.

As spring approaches we have a busy schedule ahead for the League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County. To keep up with happenings in the State Legislature please go to "The Capitol Record". It is is TVW's (Washington State Public Affairs TV Network) blog about state government. A link can be found on our own website -www.lwvbellinghamwhatcom.org/.

Kind Regards, Elsie

FOUR BASIC HEALTH CARE MODELS

From PBS Frontline Website

There are about 200 countries on our planet, and each country devises its own set of arrangements for meeting the three basic goals of a health care system: keeping people healthy, treating the sick, and protecting families against financial ruin from medical bills.

But we don't have to study 200 different systems to get a picture of how other countries manage health care. For all the local variations, health care systems tend to follow general patterns. There are four basic systems:

THE BEVERIDGE MODEL

Named after William Beveridge, the daring social reformer who designed Britain's National Health Service. In this system, health care is provided and financed by the government through tax payments, just like the police force or the public library.

Many, but not all, hospitals and clinics are owned by the government; some doctors are government employees, but there are also private doctors who collect their fees from the government. In Britain, you never get a doctor

bill. These systems tend to have low costs per capita, because the government, as the sole payer, controls what doctors can do and what they can charge.

Countries using the Beveridge plan or variations on it include its birthplace Great Britain, Spain, most of Scandinavia and New Zealand. Hong Kong still has its own Beveridge-style health care, because the populace simply refused to give it up when the Chinese took over that former British colony in 1997. Cuba represents the extreme application of the Beveridge approach; it is probably the world's purest example of total government control.

THE BISMARCK MODEL

Named for the Prussian Chancellor Otto von Bismarck, who invented the welfare state as part of the unification of Germany in the 19th century. Despite its European heritage, this system of providing health care would look fairly familiar to Americans. It uses an insurance system -- the insurers are called "sickness funds" -- usually financed jointly by employers and employees through payroll deduction.

Unlike the U.S. insurance industry, though, Bismarck-type health insurance plans have to cover everybody, and they don't make a profit. Doctors and hospitals tend to be private in Bismarck countries; Japan has more private hospitals than the U.S. Although this is a multi-payer model -- Germany has about 240 different funds -- tight regulation gives government much of the cost-control clout that the single-payer Beveridge Model provides.

The Bismarck model is found in Germany, of course, and France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Japan, Switzerland, and, to a degree, in Latin America.

THE NATIONAL HEALTH INSURANCE MODEL

This system has elements of both Beveridge and Bismarck. It uses private-sector providers, but payment comes from a government-run insurance program that every citizen pays into. Since there's no need for marketing, no financial motive to deny claims and no profit, these universal insurance programs tend to be cheaper and much simpler administratively than American-style for-profit insurance.

The single payer tends to have considerable market power to negotiate for lower prices; Canada's system, for example, has negotiated such low prices from pharmaceutical companies that Americans have spurned their own drug stores to buy pills north of the border. National Health Insurance plans also control costs by limiting the medical services they will pay for, or by making patients wait to be treated.

The classic NHI system is found in Canada, but some newly industrialized countries -- Taiwan and South Korea, for example -- have also adopted the NHI model.

THE OUT-OF-POCKET MODEL

Only the developed, industrialized countries -- perhaps 40 of the world's 200 countries -- have established health care systems. Most of the nations on the planet are too poor and too disorganized to provide any kind of mass medical care. The basic rule in such countries is that the rich get medical care; the poor stay sick or die.

In rural regions of Africa, India, China and South America, hundreds of millions of people go their whole lives without ever seeing a doctor. They may have access, though, to a village healer using home-brewed remedies that may or not be effective against disease.

In the poor world, patients can sometimes scratch together enough money to pay a doctor bill; otherwise, they pay in potatoes or goat's milk or child care or whatever else they may have to give. If they have nothing, they
(cont'd next page)

(Out-of-Pocket-Model, cont'd)

don't get medical care.

These four models should be fairly easy for Americans to understand because we have elements of all of them in our fragmented national health care apparatus. When it comes to treating veterans, we're Britain or Cuba. For Americans over the age of 65 on Medicare, we're Canada. For working Americans who get insurance on the job, we're Germany.

For the 15 percent of the population who have no health insurance, the United States is Cambodia or Burkina Faso or rural India, with access to a doctor available if you can pay the bill out-of-pocket at the time of treatment or if you're sick enough to be admitted to the emergency ward at the public hospital.

The United States is unlike every other country because it maintains so many separate systems for separate classes of people. All the other countries have settled on one model for everybody. This is much simpler than the U.S. system; it's fairer and cheaper, too.

CEAC Report, by Jo Morgan

I am the League representative to the CEAC—the Citizens Elections Advisory Council—to the County Auditor. This group was started by League members and others (Whatcom Fair Voting) but now includes members of all of the parties, a representative from the sight impaired, and interested members of the community.

We met Dec. 11th to hear about the results of the election and concerns. The Auditor and her staff were thrilled with the 88% turnout in our county. Statewide—84%. Some small counties like San Juan had over 90%. Ballots came in early which helped with the preparation for the actual count on election day. The party representatives who were involved with being observers had nothing but praise for the election process in the Auditor's office.

It took many hours to program the electronic voting machine that is used at the Auditor's office for those who are handicapped and/or sight impaired. Only three people used it—"the same three", said the Auditor. Interestingly, the sight impaired person on the advisory council did not want to have this machine but it is required by HAVA.

The Auditors will be pushing for legislation to have "SPECIAL" elections on the 2nd Tuesday of Feb. and the 1st Tues of April so that their offices are not impacted with overlapping elections.

WSU Beach Watchers Program

The WSU Beach Watchers program invites you to celebrate spring in Whatcom County by getting out, getting informed, and getting involved!

Join us as we explore our beaches, streams, forests, and agricultural lands. You'll learn about our coastal geology, wildlife, marine biology, urban growth, and other local issues.

Beach Watchers receive an extensive FREE Training and contribute 100 hours enhancing our community with volunteer projects of their choice.

Classes take place in Bellingham with field trips throughout Whatcom County

Beach Watchers 2009 Training
March 17 – May 8
Tuesdays 6pm – 9pm & Fridays 9am – 4:30 pm
(no class April 7 & 10)

Space is limited. To apply, contact Cheryl Lovato Niles at 676-6736, or clniles@wsu.edu. <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/envirom/water/beachwatchers.html>



Support for the National Popular Vote Compact

Because the League already supports direct election of the president, arguments against the Electoral College (EC) are not included in the material supporting the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact).

Constitutional Issues The NPV Compact is a way to assure that every person's vote counts equally and that the person receiving the most votes is the winner of the presidency. The same result would be achieved by constitutional amendment but the U.S. Constitution is difficult to amend. The NPV Compact is a viable way to attain the same goal as amending the Constitution to eliminate the EC.

A constitutional amendment is not needed to effectuate the NPV Compact because states already have the right to implement changes in how electors are appointed.

The NPV Compact is a compact between states – a method of concerted state action that has long been sanctioned by the Constitution and the courts.

Evaluating Fairness A candidate can be elected president by receiving the most electoral votes even though he or she did not receive the most popular votes. This is not a result voters expect or desire. As election campaigns are now waged, major emphasis and resources are concentrated in key EC battleground states because that is where elections are won or lost. The NPV Compact would eliminate the emphasis on battleground states and would be more apt to assure campaign strategies that appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate which would foster greater voter participation.

The argument that the plan would negatively impact states' rights is countered by poll results showing that most voters want their individual vote to count, rather than allotting them to electors representing the state as a whole.

Any claim that the NPV Compact is an unprecedented disregard for the U.S. Constitution ignores the reality that voting rights have been changed through state action many times. Women's suffrage, for example, was instituted by twenty states before passage of the constitutional amendment that made the right universal.

Mechanical Considerations Those opposed to the NPV Compact cite mechanical issues that might lead the NPV to fail, but the Compact includes provisions that address issues of enforcement, winning levels and recounts.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act and the NPV Compact are in harmony, assuring equality of votes throughout the United States.

League Issues Opponents say that the NPV Compact conflicts with the League's support of uniform voting standards. Supporters of the Compact advocate its passage in all states, which would result in uniform voting standards. It is true that the NPV Compact could be in effect for an interlude when not all states had signed on to it. The same could be demonstrated for other laws, such as the Equal Rights Amendment. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that uniform voting standards are not now in effect. The NPV Compact could help assure that every vote would be counted equally.

Further, implementation of a method which assures direct election of the president by popular vote is in keeping with the League's long-held position.

To prepare for the consensus meeting, please read the complete version of this paper (available at www.lwv.org) by the LWVUS National Popular Voter Compact Study Committee.

2007 – 2009 State Program: Positions in Brief

-- Government --

Education Action to support in principle the Basic Education Act (1977) and the Levy Lid Act. Action to obtain a balanced tax structure and to maintain uniform assessment practices to ensure equitable and sufficient financing. Action to support adequate and stable state funding of common schools in Washington including the costs of in-service training. Action to increase visibility, accessibility and accountability of the office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction and the State Board of Education. Action to support closer links between schools and social services, so that every child is ready to learn. Action to support greater involvement of parents, an increased role in decision making for teachers, and more flexible state education requirements. Action to provide greater access to public higher education to all, at whatever point in life it can be beneficial.

Port Districts Action to encourage cooperation among port districts, but with local options for voter control over major policy and expenditure decisions.

Representative Government Action to facilitate changes in the state constitution to achieve a representative and effective state legislature. Action to promote an informed electorate. Action to limit methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the election process. Action to support the initiative and referendum process, adopt improvements to the process and require additional information for voters. Action to protect the interests of all affected parties in considering the formation of new counties. Action to clarify in legislation the processes in county formation and to require that the entire county have the ability to vote on separation. Action to support election methods that promote "representative-ness," citizen participation and accountability and that produce proportional representation. Action to support a majority vote requirement if achieved through a mechanism such as Instant Runoff Voting (IRV). Action to support a primary that is "open" and encourages minor party participation if a primary continues to be used.

State Tax Policy Action to obtain a balanced tax structure that is fair, adequate, flexible and has a sound economic effect.

Washington State and Indian Treaty Rights Action to enhance salmon resources, establish a procedure for retrocession of jurisdiction and support tribal land use planning of trust lands.

– Transportation –

Transportation The League supports a balanced state transportation policy that defines the role of the state and supports increases in funding to provide adequate revenue and flexibility for a multi-modal system of transportation.

– Natural Resources –

Energy Action to support an energy policy within Washington State. Action to educate the public on energy conservation. Action to establish incentives for efficient use of current energy sources and the greater use of alternative energy sources.

Global Climate Change See LWVUS *Impact on Issues*.

Resource Management Action to obtain coordinated planning and ensure environmental quality in the use of water, air and land resources. Action to insure that forest management is carried out in a manner that will sustain healthy forests, streams and habitats.

Waste Management Action for coordinated control and reduction of solid waste. Action to reduce the amount of hazardous waste generated in Washington and action to promote safe management of that waste which is produced, including toxics in the home.

2007-2009 State Program: Positions in Brief, cont'd

– **Social Policy** –

Administration of Justice Action to ensure that our courts are fair, efficient, accessible and staffed with qualified personnel. Action to maintain a separate court system and facilities for youths that will balance the procedural rights of the adversary system with the protection of youth's basic rights. Action to realize equity in sentencing standards. Action to obtain alternatives to incarceration is of prime importance.

Children's Programs

Child Support and Custody: The League of Women Voters supports vigorous, efficient and innovative child support enforcement methods and broad education regarding the responsibilities and consequences of parenthood. The best interest of the child should be the overriding consideration in determining custody, visitation and an appropriate level of child support. The physical and emotional security of the child should be paramount. Children are entitled to support adequate to meet basic needs commensurate with the parents' income, resources, and standard of living. Courts should have the discretion to order post secondary educational support in appropriate circumstances.

Children's Services: Action to support stable and adequate funding for children at risk, with priority given to prevention, early identification and intervention services, community based treatment programs, day treatment programs and residential care.

Day Care for Children: Action to provide for the general welfare of children in day care centers. Action to ensure that the state enforce minimum standards that include provision for a safe, healthy, clean environment. Action to support sufficient staff with emphasis on competence and ability to provide a creative, challenging and caring environment.

Economic Diversification Action to ensure a balanced state economy with a strong mixture of large and small businesses. Measures to contribute to long-range planning and cooperation between all levels of government with local initiatives wherever possible.

Gun Control Action to provide governmental regulation of ownership and possession of firearms, and measures to limit their accessibility.

Health Care Action to provide universal access to affordable health services for all residents of the state of Washington and to control total system expenditures with seamless coverage regardless of ones health status.

Human Resources Action to achieve equal rights for all. Action to achieve equality of opportunity for education, employment and housing regardless of race, color, gender, national origin, age, sexual orientation or disability. Action to obtain measures that provide basic human needs for those unable to provide for themselves. Action to ensure that there are emergency support services for those involved in physical and/or mental violence.



League of Women Voters of Bellingham/ Whatcom County

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Check Out These Events

Bellingham City Club presents

Mike Kreidler, Washington State Insurance Commissioner, will discuss possible "Transformational Change" in our health care system, both in our state and in the nation. He will review current proposals before the state legislature and congress.

Bellingham City Club will meet **February 25th** at Northwood Hall, 3240 Northwest Avenue. Lunch begins at 11:45 a.m., program begins at 12:20 p.m. Cost: \$11 members, \$16 non-members.

* **Note:** Since our League is featuring Health Care at both our February and April meetings, we thought this program would be of interest.

COME WALK AND TALK WITH US

Every Friday afternoon at 2 p.m. join us at the Taylor Street Dock to walk to Boulevard Park and then back to Fairhaven for coffee and conversation at Book Fare restaurant, 2nd floor of Village Books.

