



Voter

League of
Women Voters of
Bellingham/
Whatcom County

February 2008

From Co-President Judy Corliss



What a great meeting on Immigration in January! Over 80 people attended to hear the excellent speakers. Many thanks to **Rosalinda Guillen, Paul Grey, Hannah Stone** and **Dr. James Loucky** for sharing their expertise with us.

Thirty-two members stayed in the afternoon to take part in answering the consensus questions. Our local results have been sent to LWVUS where they will be compiled into a national league position on Immigration. As soon as it is published, it will be sent to you.

HUGE kudos go to the Immigration Committee members: **Tanya Baumgart, Elsie Heinrick, Rosemary Hostetler, Rosemary Woodyard, Jayne Freudenberger, Jo Morgan, Dorothy Davis, and Sheri Lambert.** In addition, **Phyllis Haberstroh and Rosemary Hostetler** led a phone tree to contact members about the program. They all worked hard to put together this very successful meeting on a complex and controversial issue.

For our next general meeting on February 23rd **Phyllis Haberstroh and Rosemary Hostetler** have put together a very informative program on Education. See the details on page two of this Voter.

We have had 15 new members so far this League year, and are so pleased to welcome our newest members: **Lynne Bellinger, Susan Costanzo, Rosalinda Guillen, Patricia Maden, and Anna Pilon.** Please

LWV General Meeting

Saturday, February 23, 2008

9:30 a.m. Social Time

(Refreshments will be served)*

10:00 a.m. Program

“State of the Bellingham Schools”

with emphasis on Civic Education

Dr. Kenneth Vedra, Superintendent

Bellingham Public School District

“What are School Levies”

Nancy Oswald, Co-Chair

2008 BSD Levy Campaign

Downtown Public Library

(Lecture Room in Basement)

***For Members Only—If your last name begins with N through Z, please bring cookies, sweet breads, fruit or nuts to be served at the meeting.**

give them a warm welcome when you see them.

In addition to our regular programs we are co-sponsoring a forum on District Only or County-wide Voting for County Council members on **March 22nd. Be sure to add this date to your calendar.**

It has been a busy League year so far but we still have some great programs ahead on February 23, March 15, April 19, and ending our year with Mayor Pike speaking at our annual meeting on May 17th. Hope to see you at them.

About the February 23rd Program

Civic Education used to be called “Social Studies” or “American Government”. There was an overlap with American History. Over the years, with the emphasis on the “3 R’s” and Science, our schools have done less and less to make certain that we are graduating students who are ready to be active in the political process – becoming informed about society’s issues and eager to be active, especially, voted.

Dr. Kenneth Vedra will speak about the “State of the Bellingham Schools” with emphasis on the civics education component.

Dr. Vedra became superintendent of the Bellingham School District on July 1, 2007. Prior to coming to Bellingham, Dr. Vedra was superintendent of Academy School District 20 in Colorado Springs. Under his leadership, student achievement for all students in District 20

reached the highest level in the state among similar-size districts in Colorado. In 2004, he was named Colorado Superintendent of the Year.

He is currently a member of the National School Boards Association. He is the secretary/treasurer of the International Baccalaureate North America Board of Directors and serves on that organization’s Finance Committee.

Nancy Oswald has been an involved parent in the school district, having served many times as a PTA officer. She is recognized as a successful fundraiser, having chaired middle school magazine sales, walk-a-thons, and various auctions. She has served as a site council representative and as the high school wrestling booster club president. She is a personal trainer and now instructs the YMCA’s SilverSneakers courses. She will explain the issues involved in the tax levy for March 11.

Trafficking of Women: U.S. Policy and International Law

The League of Women Voters in cooperation with the Center for Women Policy Studies and Women’s Environment and Development Organization developed a collaborative project in 2004 which resulted in a series of papers covering major issues concerning women internationally: Trafficking of Women was one of those issues.

Seventy percent of the 600,000 – 800,000 people trafficked across international border every year are women. And while the complex issue of trafficking occurs in different forms and affects both women and men around the world, it is women and girls who suffer most acutely. Women are particularly vulnerable to trafficking, largely do to gender inequalities that affect their economic and social status.

In addition, trafficking in all its forms uses coercive tactics, including deception, fraud, intimidation, isolation, threat and use of physical force, or debt bondage, as a way to control

women. There are also increasing problems of corrupt government officials facilitating the trafficking, and treating the victims as criminals.

The US has taken specific steps to address trafficking and its effect on women through federal and state legislation and international policy. Yet, the focus of U.S. anti-trafficking efforts has been primarily on the **prosecution of traffickers, rather than protecting and advancing the victim’s human rights.**

The US Senate must ratify the UN Trafficking in Persons Protocol. The protocol establishes a global standard for government action and offers an opportunity for countries of origin, transit, and destination to work together in combating trafficking.

Further up to date information can be found on the website of the Coalition Against Trafficking in Women (CATW Coalition).

-Ruth Norman

League Action Made a Difference –Voter Owned Elections, Closer to Reality in Washington State

During the last week of January, due to an outpouring of grassroots action, the State House voted 56-38 for the Local Choice/Local Option bill (EHB 1551).

Initially, a majority of legislators and the leadership did NOT favor these bills this session; it was OUR VOICES that made this happen along with massive work by www.washclean.org members.

NOW, the Senate vote on companion bill SSB 5278, sponsored by Sen. Rosa Franklin may occur as early as the week of February 11. The vote will be close, so please contact your senator. The Legislative Hotline is 1-800-562-6000. Operators will deliver your message. This takes just a minute or two, and could tip the scales in favor of passing this legislation. You can also email your legislator at: <http://apps.leg.wa.gov/districtfinder/>

Ask them to approve the Local Choice/Local Option bill, SSB 5278, and forward copies of your

letters and any replies to wpc@washclean.org. If your legislators have indicated previous support for Local Choice, thank them and tell them, now that it is now time for them to prove their support, with a YES vote FOR SSB 5278 in the State Senate.

Key points: This bill is only about giving cities, counties, towns and local districts control over their own affairs - Local Choice. It is not a mandate. No state funds are involved. It simply gives permission to local officials and voters, to design programs of public financing for campaigns for local office - if they want to. In fact, the bill says any proposed program must first be approved by local voters, in a local referendum. Clearly, any program would need plenty of local support, or it would not happen.

- Roni Beall

Meet Sheri Lambert



New LWV member **Sheri Lambert**, who introduced the January general Meeting and prepared those informative timeline posters, had earlier taken a class through Leadership Whatcom and

her small group chose a project about immigration to present to community leaders. This experience immersed her in a very complicated, important subject and reminded her of the sad conditions people have had to endure through the generations..

Sheri has served two terms on the Meridian School board and to continue her commitment to the needs of young people in the community she

volunteers as a board member for Blue Skies for Children. She has nearly forty years experience working as an x-ray technologist in Bellingham and, acting as clinical coordinator, helped to develop the much needed Radiology program at Bellingham Technical College in 2002.

Gardening is a passion with Sheri. She also enjoys reading, jogging, skiing and mountain biking with her husband, Russ.

LWV Friday Walking Group –Join the Walking Group on Fridays at 2 p.m. Meet at Taylor Street Dock and walk to Boulevard Park and back. Then join us a BookFare in Village Books for coffee and conversation.

- Phyllis Haberstroh



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Excerpts from Southside Civic Activities Report From Pam Went, Off-Board Chair

On Monday, February 4th, the **Coalition of Southside Neighborhoods Chuckanut Ridge Committee** along with the neighborhood presidents, met with Mayor Dan Pike to discuss the concerns shared by many citizens in the five southside neighborhoods concerning this proposed development. The intention is to have an ongoing dialog with the Mayor on this subject.

The proposed **Chuckanut Mountains Park District’s Advisory Committee** made a decision to legally “intervene” in the lawsuit by the “North Sound Conservancy” group against the Auditors in both Whatcom and Skagit Counties. This means that they will have standing to contribute to the legal considerations. The next Boundary Review Board Hearing to consider the CMPD proposal is scheduled for February 21st.

Detention Vigils

Rosalinda Guillen and I noted interest on the part of several audience members (*at last month’s Immigration meeting*) in the monthly vigils sponsored by Community to Community at the private, corporate-run Detention Center in Tacoma, where immigrants are being held – some for long periods of time. We thought you might appreciate receiving information on the vigils so that League members who wish to do so might participate.

Vigils are normally held on the second Saturday of each month. From 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 .m., at the Northwest Detention Center, 1623 East J Street, Tacoma, WA 98421. Call 360-738-0893 or write notinmycounty@qwest.net for carpooling or more information. Dates for the next two months: Saturday, March 8 there will be a celebration of International Women’s Day in Bellingham instead of the vigil.

Saturday April 12, vigil at the Detention Center.

-excerpts from a letter sent in by Myra Ramous