



# Voter

League of  
Women Voters of  
Bellingham/  
Whatcom County

February 2011

## Community Conversation on the New Jail Proposals and Who We Are Incarcerating

Panel Discussion moderated by Barbara Ryan  
Former Bellingham City Council person and League member

### Panel

Mayor Dan Pike, Sheriff Bill Elfo, Chief Corrections Deputy Wendy Jones  
Law and Justice Committee, retired Administrator of Juvenile Court Steve Paus,  
and Superior Court Judge Chuck Snyder

Audience will be asked to participate for the last part of the program

**Saturday, February 19<sup>th</sup>, 2011**

**CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**9:30-noon - must be seated by 10 am**

A proposal is on the table to build a new jail to replace and consolidate the two present facilities that are located one downtown and the other off Bakerview Rd. in Irongate. There are many questions in the community on the size, cost, location and lack of public input on the proposal. The League is holding this dialogue as part our ongoing commitment to civil discussion on the issues facing our community. It will be taped for replay on BCTV Channel 10

**Kudos**— Thanks to League member **Michael Jay**, we received a great response to our recent program development surveys. Michael used an online survey program to enable you to fill out the survey with a few clicks of the mouse! Thank you Michael.

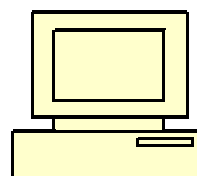
If you missed our thought provoking program on Deliberative Conversations from the Past to the Present, you have another chance to see it thanks to **Robert Clark** and **Suzanne Blais** who taped the program for use in community television. There is a button to access it on our website. Robert and Suzanne are providing a valuable service to the League and the community by making local information accessible to our citizenry.

## Members Only Section Online for LWVWA

The State League now has their “Members Only” site back up and running. The password has been changed, however. It now is:

User Name: lwvwa

Password: Voter1 (that’s a capital V and the number one.



## From Co-President Kay Ingram

### LOOKING AHEAD:

That is exactly what your League board of directors is doing as we begin 2011. As we enter the second half of our current year, which will be filled with interesting and timely discussions and activities, it is time to look to 2011-2012.

As a first step in this process, our nominating committee is focusing on filling the up-coming vacancies on the board. They began this work by reviewing our mission, the current year's goals and objectives and the management resources that it takes to lead our organization.

Members of our nominating committee have given a great deal to our League over the years; one thing they all agree on are the tremendous rewards and exciting challenges of being a board member. Board membership offers the opportunity to develop and hone leadership skills, to help set the direction for the League and to work and make friends with other talented, dedicated, energetic women.

In order to identify potential candidates the committee establishes what officers are needed to lead the board, as well as, what committees and focus areas will be needed.

As this work begins, I want to take this opportunity to ask you to consider your role in our League. We are a membership organization and we operate completely with volunteers. We have no paid staff. Our League is only as strong as we choose to make it. In addition to participating on the board, there are numerous committees that could benefit from your participation. They include: Program, Membership, Advocacy and Voter Services. Each of these has specific goals: I invite you to review below what our committees do and then ask you to put yourself in the picture.

**Program:** assists the board in developing our general meeting programs for the coming year. The committee chooses the format and schedules the presenters and locations. Members choose particular programs to assist with if they have the expertise and/or interest.

**Membership:** Responsible for directing the League's efforts to recruit and retain members. Maintains up to date membership lists and co-ordinates the hospitality efforts and phone trees.

**Advocacy:** Makes recommendations to the board for actions our league should take to further the League's positions. Also responsible for coordinating participation in the following:

- CEAC—the Citizens Election Advisory Committee

- Observer Corps—keeping an eye on local legislative bodies

- Lobbying committees

Advocacy differs from Voter Service as we only advocate for positions the League has adopted whether local, statewide or national.

**Voter Services:** Provides non-partisan, unbiased factual information to help citizens make their own decisions for elections. The committee also heads Voter Registration activities. Our voter service work is often the first thing the public thinks of when they hear mention of the League of Women Voters. It is always separate from advocacy.

In the coming year we will be looking at several opportunities for study groups—the role of the federal government in education and the issue of privatization—should we or shouldn't we privatize government services?

## From Co-President Kay Ingram, cont'd

Often these committees have co-chairs rather than a single chair. Of course, not all chairs or committee members need to be on the board. In fact, we are richer when non-board members participate in these committees and bring their experience, talents and energies to these areas.

I hope you found something in this list that peaks your interest. Your experience and talents may be just what we are looking for. Please let us know. You can reach me at [copres2@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org](mailto:copres2@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org) or call me at 927-2141.

## A Community Conversation Long Overdue

While preparing for our panel discussion February 19<sup>th</sup> on the jail proposal and the issue of just who we are incarcerating, we came across some startling statistics. Per capita law and justice costs in Whatcom County have increased 46% since 1999.

The jail population has increased 70% with most jail inmates suffering from a behavioral health issue and 20% have a serious mental issue.\*

No one is disputing that our jail is an old crumbling building that needs to be replaced. However, this is not only a bricks and mortar issue. It is important to consider the jail proposal in a broader context. Without adequate mental health services, persons with behavioral disorders become a large component of our jail population and a huge drain on our community resources. Too many of them end up in jail because there is no other place for them to get help.

The dozen most frequent offenders in Whatcom County, all have a behavioral disorder, they have been arrested an average of 32 times per offender and have cost taxpayers \$722,611 in jail costs alone.

In the county 2,776 residents who need mental health treatment are unable to get it because they have no insurance and don't qualify for Medicaid. Too many of these people escalate to a severe need status unnecessarily because there are no treatment options open.

When we are talking about the size of the new jail, the location, the funding-- these statistics need to be taken into account. The discussion needs to be broadened to who we are incarcerating and why. We hope you will join us in the City Council Chambers February 19<sup>th</sup>. from 9:30-noon as we address this and other issues concerning the new jail.

\*statistics from the 2008 Whatcom County Behavioral Health Plan



## Whatcom Conservation District (<http://www.whatcomcd.org/home>)

Conservation districts are a special district chartered under RCW 89.08 et seq to develop and implement programs to protect and conserve Soil, Water, Prime and Unique Farmland, Rangeland, Woodland, Wildlife, Energy, and other renewable resources on nonfederal lands. Districts also stabilize local economies and resolve conflicts in land use.

### **Serving Landowners**

Since 1946, Whatcom Conservation district has worked with landowners and farmers to manage natural resources in our County. They are building on their tradition as they meet today's challenges with expanding programs and opportunities to help people protect the land and its resources.

The District has a wealth of information concerning water quality issues, management of small and large farming operations, and implementation of best management practices (BMPs). The District publishes newsletters, hosts educational workshops and tours, and offers opportunities for volunteers to get involved.

### **Local Board of Supervisors**

The Whatcom Conservation District is governed by a board of five supervisors, who are all local residents. The current board is a diverse group, including a beef producer, dairy producer, local small animal veterinarian, a retired forester and a former, state-level public servant.

### ***Board Elections***

The next election to the District Board of Supervisors is scheduled for **March 8, 2011** from **9 am to 6 pm**. There are two positions open this year. One is publicly elected on March 8, 2011 (see above). The other is appointed by the Washington State Conservation Commission through an application process.

### **There are two ways for you to cast your vote:**

- 1. Vote in-person** in the District's conference room at 6975 Hannegan Road, Lynden, WA.
- 2. Vote by mail.** Your [ballot request](#) must be received by **February 24, 2011** at **3:30 pm** in order to vote this way. Ballots must be returned or postmarked by election date to be counted. Please follow the link to request a ballot. (or go to the website)

You will need to make a new request for a mail-in ballot even if you received one last year since the District is not allowed to keep lists from year to year.

## Your Suggestions for State Program Planning

A big thanks to each of our members who took the time to give their opinion about the State League Program recommendations that were published in the January Voter. Thanks also to member, **Michael Jay**, for creating the online survey to facilitate this effort. Almost a third of our local league responded to the survey. The Board reviewed and compiled the responses and will send our recommendation to the LWVWA.

The topic of most importance to our League members is campaign finance and ensuring transparency about donations to political campaigns at every level and promoting transparency in money donated to ballot measures. 89% of the respondents gave this issue a high priority rank.

There was strong support for us to concur with the Seattle League of Women Voters' position on Privatization. If other local leagues in the state support this idea, the state convention may adopt the position for the whole state.

There was also strong support to have the state league update their positions on energy, port districts and transportation and to integrate them with the national global climate change position. By integrating these positions, LWVWA could have a stronger voice about transporting coal across our rails and from our ports. 85% of the respondents gave high or medium ranking to this recommendation.

Finally, members showed interest in having a new study about the methods of selecting our state judges. This new study was not as popular among the respondents as the other recommendations, but the board decided to pass the recommendation on to the state office with our report.

Thank you for helping with this grassroots effort to set the course for our state League.

## How Do You Like our Newsletter?

While looking at Tacoma-Pierce County's newsletter recently, we noticed an article asking this same question. We thought it might be worthwhile to ask the same of you.

How do you like the format? Is the size about right? Is it too short or too long? And, more importantly, are the articles of interest to you?

Are there features you would like to see included on a regular or irregular basis - such as profiles of our members - letters to the editor - reports from our observers who cover the City Council, the County Council or the Port? Would an occasional book review be of interest? Are there some features you think would enrich our version of the Voter?

Finally: Do you have the time, energy, or interest in making submissions regularly, or just occasionally, to the Voter. Would you be willing to interview members for profiles or write a book review once in a while? Contact Margaret Woll at [mhildeb408@aol.com](mailto:mhildeb408@aol.com) or 734-8427 to make your suggestions.

**Note:** If you would like to see examples of what some of the other Leagues publish, you can log on to [http://www.lwvwa.org/local\\_leagues.html](http://www.lwvwa.org/local_leagues.html) and spend a little time looking at their Voters. Some of them have very different focuses, information sources, and formats. which may give you some ideas.

## Our Immigration system is still broken! How does this impact us in Whatcom County?

Three years ago the League of Women Voters did a detailed study of immigration and developed a position in favor of comprehensive immigration reform, but Congress has failed to act. The broken system negatively impacts businesses and residents of Whatcom County and the increased presence of border patrol personnel also has an impact on our community.

Our March program will turn the spotlight on immigration and border issues. On Saturday, March 19, members can participate in a community discussion with guest speakers on this topic. On March 16<sup>th</sup>, members may participate in a behind the scenes tour of the Customs & Border Patrol facilities in Blaine. (*Details are on page 7.*)

But you need not wait until March to get into this timely topic as there are other immigration and border issue opportunities this month!

\* Several (free) films in the Bellingham Human Rights Film Festival have an immigration theme:  
February 23: 7:00 pm. **“Papers”** - A story about 65,000 undocumented youth and the challenges they face and choices they must make as they graduate from high school. Venue: Bellingham High School Library, Time 7:00 pm

February 24: 7:00 pm **“Other Side of Immigration”** - A subtle, thought-provoking film that asks why Mexicans come to the U.S. and tells what happens to the families and communities they leave behind. It challenges audiences to consider more creative and effective immigration solutions.

February 26, Saturday Matinee

**Tony and Janina’s American Wedding Special Preview Screening.** Living in the US for 18 years, with a son and a business, Janina is deported back to Poland, leaving their lives severely disrupted. Their struggle speaks to the federal immigration bureaucracy. This film is the first of several to be shown at Fairhaven College Auditorium starting at noon.

AND

**“Which Way Home “** - Shows immigration through the eyes of children who, with enormous courage and resourcefulness, face harrowing dangers en route to the U.S. on a freight train they call “the beast”.

**James Loucky**, Anthropology professor, WWU will lead the discussion of these films which are shown at the Fairhaven College Auditorium.

\* Take advantage of activities in the Whatcom County Reads Program this month after reading the book, *Border Songs* by **Jim Lynch**. Details can be found at <http://www.whatcomreads.org/index.shtml>

\* Find out what’s true and what’s fiction in *Border Songs* by attending a panel discussion entitled, “Border Songs: Perspectives on Crossing the Line”.

(cont’d next page)

## Our Immigration system... cont'd)

Panelists are: **Tom Jones**, Royal Canadian Mounted Police; **Chief John Bates**, Customs & Border Patrol; **Rosalinda Guillen**, Community to Community; **Eugene Davis**, former Deputy Chief Border Patrol; and **Jim Lynch**, *Border Songs* author.

Wednesday, February 23, 2011 4:30 - 6:00 pm.  
WWU, Wilson Library, Library Presentation Room

### Behind the Scenes Tour \* of the Customs & Border Patrol in Blaine

This is an opportunity to better understand the security threats along the border and how the CBP is carrying out their operations. Learn more about the security threats and ongoing surveillance. Learn how CBP collaborates with local law enforcement and with ICE (Immigration & Customs Enforcement). Find out how the operations have changed over the past few years and raise any concerns that you have.

**Wednesday, March 16, 2011: 9:00 am - 12:00 noon**

Reservations are required by email or phone.  
Email [ProgramChair1@LWVBellinghamwhatcom.org](mailto:ProgramChair1@LWVBellinghamwhatcom.org)

Phone: 360-734-2366

**\*This tour is offered to members only and up to 30 people may participate.  
Carpools will be arranged.**





## League of Women Voters of Bellingham/ Whatcom County

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## We're Still Walkin' and Talkin'



Come join us on Fridays for walkin' and talking'.

We meet at the top of Taylor Street Dock at 2 p.m. where we decide what route to take for the walk.

We end up at 3 p.m. at Book Fare (upstairs at Village Books in Fairhaven) for refreshments and further chit chat. If you can't make the walk, please feel free to join us at Book Fare for the talk.

## New Members

A warm welcome to our newest members:

**Susan Costanzo**  
**Carol Ann Gleaves-Eriksen**  
**Ursula Zvina**