



# Voter

League of  
Women Voters of  
Bellingham/  
Whatcom County

March 2009

## From Co-President Tanya Baumgart



Dear Leaguers,

Here it is March already! Winter still clings, but the crocuses are peeking out, bringing the promise of spring.

League activities are in full bloom. February brought our Member Potluck, with a celebration of League's 89<sup>th</sup> Birthday, and a hardy discussion of the issues that are near and dear to us. A global look at different health care systems was the topic at our February General Meeting. We will be following this program up with a panel discussion on "Building a Better Health Care System" in April. On March 1<sup>st</sup> the League participated in the **Centennial Celebration of Women's Suffrage in Washington State** at the Whatcom Museum of History and Art Rotunda Room. We will be bringing a portion of that display to our March 21<sup>st</sup> meeting, for those of you who missed it.

Many Americans have vocalized a need to change our system to a National Popular Vote for electing the President of the United States. The League of Women Voters of the United States currently has a position to eliminate the Electoral College. To do so requires an amendment of the US Constitution. There is a proposal afoot for a different method to achieve the same result, without modifying the constitution. This proposal is called the National Popular Vote Compact. The League has published several papers on

## LWV General Meeting

**Saturday, March 21, 2009  
Downtown Public Library**

(Lecture Room in Basement)

**9:45 a.m. Social Time**  
(Refreshments will be served)\*

**10:00 a.m. Program**  
**"The National Popular Vote  
Compact Proposal"**

**Dr. Sara J. Weir**, Chair of the Western Washington University's President of the United States be elected by the popular vote of the people. Come hear about this creative idea, and how it can be implemented. Dr. Weir will share with us the pros and cons of doing so. There will be time for questions after her presentation. The League plans on taking a position on this issue and will be working on consensus questions after the presentation. Several background papers have been written on the subject and are posted on our website at [www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org](http://www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org)

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

the subject which are available on our website at [www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org](http://www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org) Click on "Calendar" and check out the information for our March 21<sup>st</sup> General Meeting. Links to all of the papers are listed there. Our meeting will feature Dr.

*(cont'd on page 2)*

## From Tanya, cont'd

Sarah Weir, Chair of the WWU Political Science Department. After the presentation, League members will be asked to respond to consensus questions. So mark your calendars for the National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Meeting on Saturday, March 21<sup>st</sup>. See more meeting details elsewhere in this newsletter.

The nominating committee for 2009-2011 League board members is now meeting. If you, or someone you know is interested in becoming more involved in the inner workings of this terrific organization, please feel free to call or email **Rosemary Hostetler** ( RD702@aol.com , 676-9456) to find out details about the different positions that are available.

For scintillating conversation, join the weekly "Walk and Talk" group every Friday at 2 PM. The group meets just south of the Chrysalis at the top of Taylor Street Pier. Following the walk, those that wish to meet at the Book Fare, upstairs in Village Books for coffee and more conversation.



## March 29 Dinner Honors Exceptional Whatcom Women

**CONTACTS:** NW Women's Hall of Fame Co-Chairs Grace Phelan, 733-5960 or [gtphelelan@gmail.com](mailto:gtphelelan@gmail.com) and Elaine Lynch, 733-8693 or [elainelynch@comcast.net](mailto:elainelynch@comcast.net).

BELLINGHAM - Five Whatcom County women, who have made exceptional contributions to their community, will be inducted into the YWCA Northwest Women's Hall of Fame during its 11<sup>th</sup> anniversary dinner at 4:30 p.m. Sunday, March 29 in Northwood Hall, 3240 Northwest Avenue.

Dinner reservations, at \$30, and disability accommodation requests are due no later than March 25 by calling the YWCA, 734-4820 or e-mailing [ywca@ywcabellingham.org](mailto:ywca@ywcabellingham.org).

Honorees are:

- Elsie Heinrick, environmental and women's organization leader
- "Coco" Lomas, Red Cross disaster responder and Grange volunteer
- The late Kay Moquin, friend of the arts and cancer patients
- JoAnn Roe, Sister Cities and Assistance League co-founder
- Orphalee Smith, nonprofit advisor and international student "Mom"

Since 2002, the NW Hall has given its Legacy Award to a woman from the early days of Whatcom County whose example inspires those who followed. The 2009 awardee is pioneer Phoebe Judson (1831-1926), often called "Mother of Lynden."

Hall of Fame honorees must live (or have lived, if deceased) in Whatcom County, accomplish something of lasting significance, serve as role models for women and girls, and demonstrate qualities of perseverance and vision. The 2009 inductees join 39 previous honorees.

Nominations can be made throughout the year. Forms are available through the YWCA or [www.ywcabellingham.org](http://www.ywcabellingham.org).

Now in its 102<sup>nd</sup> year, the Bellingham, YWCA offers transitional and emergency housing for women in crisis, the Back to Work Boutique for low-income women, and various other programs based on the YWCA's national mission: eliminating racism, empowering women.

## Amending the Constitution

### 1. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. Action to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.
- b. Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

### 2. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the League continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.
- b. Despite the novelty of the use of the compact approach to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the League should support the NPV Compact as a way of achieving an important goal.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

## Congressional Consent

### 3. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is not of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan.
- b. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtaining such consent.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

## Enforcement

### 4. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

- a. The NPV Compact contains sufficient enforcement provisions to assure smooth operation of the plan.
- b. Although it is not possible to determine whether the enforcement provisions will be sufficient to assure smooth operation of the plan, the plan should be passed anyway.

**Enforcement, cont'd**

- c. Enforcement of the plan is likely to add uncertainty and bring the courts into the presidential election in ways that raise substantial concerns.
- d. The lack of adequate enforcement provisions is sufficient to conclude that the NPV is not a viable plan.
- e. The group could not reach consensus.

**Uniformity**

**5. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**

- a. The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.
- b. The NPV Compact is more important than uniformity of voting systems because it would succeed in achieving the popular election of the President.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

**Popular Election of the President**

**6. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.**

- a. It is more important to achieve the goal of national popular election of the President than it is to achieve the goal of abolition of the electoral college.
- b. It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.
- c. The group could not reach consensus.

**Achievability**

**7. Which statements reflect the views of the group?**

- a. The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states.

Agree    Disagree    No Consensus

- b. A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed.

Agree    Disagree    No Consensus

## Opposition to the National Popular Vote Compact

*(Editor's NOTE: Last month we published a "Support for the NPV Compact." This month we are printing the opposition to this Compact..)*

There is little respect for the Electoral College (EC). The League opposes it and most voters want a direct popular vote. But is the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) an appropriate way to achieve that result?

Evaluating Fairness Voters supporting the candidate who receives the majority of votes in their state want their state's electors to support their choice. Adoption of the NPV Compact may require a state elections official to direct its state's electors to cast their ballots in support of a candidate who was not favored by the voters of that state.

Passage of the NPV Compact will result in the emphasis of presidential campaigns shifting from the battleground states to areas of large concentrations of population. So, while some voters are disenfranchised by the EC, others might be disenfranchised by the NPV Compact. Because the Compact requires entry into a contract with other states which binds state elections officials to direct electors to vote in a certain way, regardless of the outcome of the election in their state, states' rights are diminished.

In addition, one can question the advisability of a method that bypasses the normal constitutional amendment process in this manner.

Constitutional Issues Many constitutional scholars argue that this plan will lead to extensive litigation involving challenges to the NVP Compact on issues such as the scope of constitutional powers, the Compact itself, the need for congressional approval, the concerns of non-compacting states, and constitutional protections of state interests and their role in elections.

Mechanical Issues/Flaws The methods for enforcement of this plan are unclear. Opponents question the power and timing to withdraw from the Compact and the power to enforce compliance.

Others express concern about an onslaught of lawsuits between compacting and non-compacting states, as well as procedures in close elections.

The plan, allowing the election of a president by a plurality of votes, does not improve on the current system; neither the present system nor the NPV Compact requires that the president be elected by a majority.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act requires pre-clearance for legislative changes. This, too, has the capacity to engender lawsuits to ensure compliance.

League Issues This proposal does nothing to achieve the goal of uniform standards of voting. The NPV Compact is effective when passed by states representing 270 electoral votes, effectively negating the impact on presidential elections of the voters in states which represent the other half of electoral votes. A system which assures no voter disenfranchisement is a better way to assure that every person's vote counts.

The League has long supported the abolition of the EC. Although the NPV Compact purports to foster the same result, it creates additional concerns. Amending the U.S. Constitution is a difficult process, and we should seriously consider supporting the normal amendment procedures to abolish the EC versus this specific "work-around."

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

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Proposal"*
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## Photos Taken at Recent League Activities



Georgia MacGregor, Lynne Rein, Terry Parakh, Jal Parakh enjoying the conversation at our member potluck held February 14th.



Our League exhibit at the "Centennial Celebration of Women's Suffrage in Washington State" held March 1st at the Whatcom Museum. Tanya Baumgart put this display together with material gathered by various members.