



Voter

League of
Women Voters of
Bellingham/
Whatcom County

March 2008

From Co-President Tanya Baumgart



Greetings Fellow Leaguers ~

Your League is alive and percolating with new exciting programs and interests. Getting involved is easy, fun, and I encourage you to do so. If you were not

able to come to our new member luncheon but would like to have some input, please contact us anytime at 734-2366 or via our website at www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org.

The new member luncheon was a success! Hosted by **Margaret Woll**, with delicious soups & bread by **Joan Airoidi**, wonderful salads by **Phyllis Haberstroh & Elsie Heinrich**, and yummy desserts by **Ingeborg Paulus** - the food was a hit. Following lunch we had a great discussion about league & each new member's ideas and thoughts on what's important and why they became a League member. It was an interesting and fun time!

February 23rd marked the day of our last General Meeting ~ the focus of which was the "State of our Education, with an emphasis on Civics", featuring **Dr. Kenneth Vedra**, our new Bellingham School District Superintendent. The vision for our students is a rich, individual needs based curriculum that will ensure all of our students are "college ready." Vedra reported that there are a series of educational steps to fully prepare our students to be civically involved or at least aware. In addition we were supplied information regarding the upcoming School

(cont'd next page)

LWV General Meeting

Saturday, March 15, 2008

Downtown Public Library

(Lecture Room in Basement)

9:30 a.m. Social Time

(Refreshments will be served)*

10:00 a.m. Program

"World Water Resources"

and a film,

"The Power of Community"

Andy Bach, PhD - Associate Professor of environmental geography in Huxley College of the Environment, at Western Washington University. Dr Bach's areas of interest are in climate change in the western United States but he will also address global water issues.

John Rawlins, PhD - Faculty member, Whatcom Community College, teaching in the areas of ecology, climate change and world energy resources. Dr Rawlins is at the center of activities at WCC to develop awareness of world-wide climate change and peak oil. He will present an inspiring film, "The Power Of Community," which deals with the social, economic and political impact of the sudden cessation of Cuba's oil supply and shows the amazing way the people coped with the crisis.

***For 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.**

From Tanya, cont'd

Levy by **Mike Oswald**, co-chair of the Levy Campaign. The vote comes up on March 11 and we encourage you to cast your ballot.

Saturday, March 15th is our next General Meeting and you won't want to miss it!

March 22nd offers you another terrific public forum, "*County Council – County-Wide or District Only Voting?*" It is co-sponsored by your League, and the Whatcom County Democratic, Libertarian, and Republican parties. It's free and open to the public. See pages 4 and 5 for details.

On April 26, 2008, the LWV of Snohomish County will conduct a public forum entitled, "Universal Health Care – What Should It Be and How Do We Get It?" Your League's Board voted to co-sponsor this event and will be advertising and arranging a carpool to Everett for interested attendees. Stay tuned for more information.

The League of Women Voters of the United States requested input from individual leagues for program planning. Your board has suggested that the position on Arms Control be reviewed and possibly revised.

Our Nominating Committee for the 2008-2009 League year will be meeting soon. If you have nominations that you would like to make, or possibly are interested in being on the board yourself, please contact Lorene Lewis – 734-6301 – our nominating committee Chair.

Our Annual Meeting is scheduled for May 17th. It will start with an open to the public Town Hall Meeting with **Mayor Dan Pike**, after which non-League members will be excused and League members will conduct their annual business meeting. If you are interested in proposing a Local Study at the Annual Meeting, please contact **Jo Morgan @ 756-0730** for more information on how to do this. Following our meeting we will be gathering at a restaurant (to be announced) for a no-host luncheon. More details on this will be forthcoming.

Four Leaguers will be representing us at National Convention in Portland, Oregon. If you would like to relay opinions and/or your positions to your delegate, or if you'd like more information on how you could attend, please email Tanya at baumgarts@surfmk.com or by phone 671-5172.

I look forward to seeing you at our next general meeting!

In League ~Tanya

....Did you Know?

The Whatcom Watch, a monthly newspaper, features local government and environmental issues. It publishes details of important actions taken by the City and County Councils and the Port of Bellingham. **Arlene Beacom** and **JoAnne Feringer** of the League attend meetings and write up reports of County Council actions for the newspaper.

"We can always use help if someone out there is willing to make the commitment", states Jo Anne. Also, the paper is looking for persons willing to report on the weekly City Council votes or attend the Port meetings.

Whatcom Watch is distributed free at some locations or you can make a donation of \$15.00 or more for home delivery. It is a good read!!

Getting to Know You

Sherry Kew

As an Alaskan epidemiologist, nurse Sherry Kew spent 17 years covering territory from Barrow, furthest settlement north, to Ketchikan in the south. She flew to remote villages on overloaded float-planes and tipped from an occasional overturned dogsled as all part of the job—to track and seek to prevent the spread of diseases. On retirement she spent a year in Salem, OR, where she first joined the LWV. There they were involved in a local study of poverty in Marion County. Moving to Bellingham, she has joined our League because of her interest in good government, voting procedures and immigration issues.

She likes having time to read, study foreign affairs, and swim at her nearby aquatic center. She has also taken some time this year to visit warmer climates, Florida and Hawaii, and revels in the early signs of spring in Bellingham. And, as a special geographical bonus, her son lives and works in Seattle. Welcome, Sherry!

Patricia Maden

“It was an exercise in regional cooperation,” says Pat Maden of her experience in helping to bring League organization to a tri-cities area—Kingsport, Delta City, and Bristol, Tennessee. She joined the Kingsport LWV to meet like-minded people and served twice as president and as membership chair in the 80’s and 90’s. She thanks a city leadership training program for developing some of her special skills.

With time out for raising her children, Pat’s career has been in social work with special expertise in teen pregnancy problems. Now with three adult children all firmly settled in the northwest, she and her husband have come here, too. Her current interests lie with protecting the environment, and having lived and traveled in parts of the country where that effort is woefully lacking, she rejoices in our awareness of what we have.

She is active in the Bellingham Unitarian Fellowship, a couple of book clubs, and “walking the dog around Lake Padden,” near her home. Happily for us, she has time for LWV.

Watershed Master / Beach Watchers Program - Now Accepting Applications

The WSU Whatcom County Extension’s Watershed Master / Beach Watcher program provides education on fresh and marine water, and the aquatic resources of Whatcom County.

Participants receive 100 hours of training on:

- Puget Sound, Lake Whatcom, and Groundwater
- Salmon Streams and Shellfish
- Farming and Forestry Issues
- Beaches, Wetlands . . . and more

In exchange, participants educate their fellow citizens, monitor and restore water quality, fisheries, and other aquatic resources.

The program begins April 1! Space is limited. Tuition is \$50. To apply, **contact Cheryl Lovato Niles:** clniles@wsu.edu or 676-6736. Watershed Master / Beach Watcher Program: <http://whatcom.wsu.edu/environ/water/bw.htm>

County Council—County-Wide or District-Only Voting?
What is best for Whatcom County? This issue will be on the ballot in November

Educational Forum: Free and Open to the Public

Saturday, March 22, 2008, 10:00 a.m. – 12:00 noon

**Bellingham Public Library Lecture Room
210 Central Avenue, Bellingham WA 98225**

Moderator: Myra Ramos Timekeeper: Marian Beddill

**Panel: Barbara Brenner, Whatcom County Council member, District 3
 “In Support of County-wide Voting”**

**Sam Crawford, Whatcom County Council member, District 2
 “In Support of District-only Voting”**

**Janet Anderson, League of Women Voters elections activist
 “Representation: A Broader Picture**

Brief break for refreshments

Panelist comments

Audience questions

Brief voting demonstration by Janet Anderson

Forum Co-Sponsors:

- Bellingham-Whatcom League of Women Voters**
- Whatcom County Democratic Party**
- Whatcom County Libertarian Party**
- Whatcom County Republican Party**

Forum Committee members:

- Gerrit Kuiken, chair; Roni Beall, Marian Beddill, Jo Morgan, Larry Nicholas,**
- Myra Ramos, Stephen Schuck, Steven Wolff**

County-Wide or District-Only Voting?, cont'd

Barbara Brenner has served as a county council member representing Council District 3, for more than 16 years. She has been elected 5 times, 4 under countywide voting, and once (unopposed) under district-only voting. Barbara's philosophy about the county voting process is: county issues are directly or indirectly county-wide. She is a strong supporter of county-wide voting for all county council members after the top two candidates from each district in the primary have been forwarded to the general election. A county-wide voting system results in all council members having a stronger incentive to listen to all county constituents and council members who will better represent the whole county instead of pandering to a smaller constituency with less incentive to work for the good of all.

Brenner has lived in Whatcom County for 25 years with her husband, Ed Morris, and children Wesley Brenner & Collin Morris. Barbara owned and operated Heritage Furniture Refinishing. Ed is a captain (pilot) for Netjets Inc. They live on a small farm east of Ferndale in the North Bellingham community.

Sam Crawford has served as a County Council member from Council District 2 for more than 8 years. He has been elected three times, twice under countywide voting, and once under district-only voting. Promoting a philosophy that "the more 'local' your government representation is, the better you are served", Crawford is a strong supporter of district-only voting.

Crawford has lived in Whatcom County for 16 years with his wife Sherri and two daughters. Prior to being elected to the County Council in 1999, Crawford had served on the County Planning Commission. Crawford is the owner and manager of Emerald Lake Consulting, a land-use consulting business, and operates the business from his home office near Toad Lake, just outside the city of Bellingham.

For almost 50 years, Janet Anderson has been actively pursuing her interest in the election process, mostly under the auspices of the League of Women Voters. She has worked on redistricting issues, helped draft the League's second statewide redistricting initiative, participated in related lawsuits and lobbied for a constitutional change to put the redistricting process into the hands of a bipartisan non-legislative commission. Only after the passage of this constitutional change, did she come to the realization that this was not the solution to achieving fair representation for all voters.

Janet has chaired numerous election method studies and teaches about alternative election methods at the state, national and local levels of the League of Women Voters as well as at various schools and universities.

In order to determine the best way to conduct elections such as those for County Council, she suggests it is first necessary to determine who the Council should be representing. If the answer is "everybody", there is a fairer, cheaper, and more consistent election method that is not yet being considered; it is called Proportional Representation. Janet currently chairs Washington Citizens for Proportional Representation and can be reached in Seattle at JanetRAnderson@msn.com.



League of Women Voters of Bellingham/ Whatcom County

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Health Report - by JoAnne (Jo) Pullen

State Health News

- Mike Kreidler, State Insurance Commissioner is again overseeing proposed rate increases in individual health plan insurance with the passage of EB 5261.

- Karen Keiser (D, Normandy Park) introduced a health care plan (SB 6221) working with insurance companies that already are contracted to provide state employee health care. The proposal is based on a Wisconsin plan already in place. Senator Keiser is scheduled to appear at the Health Care forum sponsored by the Snohomish LWV on April 26.

- An interesting read on a dialogue between Sen. Keiser, health care practitioners and insurance industry reps on Health Care Reform on January 22-23, 2008 see <http://www.webdialogues.net/cs/wasen-healthcare-home/view/di/151?x=t=home.view> or go to Sen. Keiser's website.

- Failure of legislation terminating the sale of patient prescription records to drug companies. HB 2664, the prescription privacy bill, would have restricted drug companies from purchasing physicians' prescribing histories for marketing purposes. For interested patient consumers, read the AARP Bulletin, January-February 2008, "Ties that Bind," an article on drugmakers and their relationship with physicians.

Presidential Candidate Positions on Health Care

- None of the candidates is in favor of a single pay plan. However, the Democrats espouse universal health care in a variety of administrative configurations, public/private and insurance payment systems. Barack Obama favors expanded SCHIP for all kids.

- An Open Letter to the Candidates on Single Payer Health Reform written by Don McCanne, MD and sponsored by Physicians for a National Health Program can be reviewed @ <http://pnhp.org/letter.php#form>.