



Voter

League of
Women Voters of
Bellingham/
Whatcom County

March 2011

From Co-President Jayne Freudenberger

From the Middle East’s increasingly violent bids for freedom to our heartlands battles between governors and unions, the world as we know it is in turmoil. In Christchurch mourners bury their dead while faced with the enormous task of rebuilding. Here at home, each news cycle brings us another horrific shooting or scandal.

It seems at times the world has gone mad and you want to retreat to the bedroom with a good book and a cup of tea and forget it all. But that presupposes you have a bedroom and a cup of tea. Too many in this --the richest nation in the world-- do not.

I spent 7 hours last week in downtown Bellingham-- meeting the people in our community who don’t have a place to retreat to— who are living in their cars or a tent and who were incredibly grateful for the help that Project Homeless Connect offered them. Gathered in one area - the city, the county, the churches, the social service agencies, the grocers, the unions, in other words our community, came together to provide, for at least one day, the services our “guests” needed. Among many things there were dental clinics, pet supplies, clothing, food, legal help, haircuts, medical evaluations and most of all kindness from those of us who happen at this time to be a little luckier and have that warm place to go home to.

I was blessed repeatedly with the thanks and the smiles. I watched as people who had nothing asked politely how many sample
(continued on page 2)

LWV General Meeting
Saturday, March 19, 2011
Bellingham Public Library
Lecture Room

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

9:45 a.m. Program

“Living in a Border Community: The Impacts of Immigration and Border Protection Procedures in Whatcom County.”

Guest Speakers:

Henry Bierlink, Director, Washington Red Raspberry Commission

Rosalinda Guillen, Executive Director, Community to Community

Ken Oplinger, President and CEO of the Bellingham/Whatcom County Chamber of Commerce & Industry

Tim Yeomans, Superintendent of Meridian School District

***Members only—If your last name begins with N through Z, please bring cookies, sweet breads, or fruit/nuts to be served at this event.**

For more information about this program and about the guest speakers, see page 3.

Also , for the last opportunity to tour Customs and Border Patrol in Blaine, see page 2.

From Jayne, cont'd

toothpastes they could have and when I replied as many as you need---they smiled and took only one or two. A young boy came running up to show me the coat he had found after I directed him to a new rack in the back of the room. "It's really warm" he smiled—he had come in out of the 45 degree weather in a tee-shirt. Countless men and women came in clutching their jaws—"Just got that dang tooth pulled" one man mumbled, "Can't talk so good but it doesn't hurt anymore."

One of the volunteers came up to me and said "I love this day. Everyone is happy." And as I drove home I remembered that. I was happy. For this one day I had eschewed the headlines—the dire warnings and predictions and the heartache of feeling helpless in an unfriendly world.

Our community is whole, welcoming and full of heart—our community nurtures and respects all people and our community provides opportunities for all of us to connect. Not just for one day—but for the rest of the days of the year too. So thank you Bellingham for reminding me that most of us want to do what is right –to help our neighbors—to give back... because we all know there but for the grace of God go.....

Last Chance to Register—Tour of Customs & Border Patrol

The Customs and Border Patrol in Blaine is one of the Department of Homeland Security's largest and most complex components, with a priority mission of keeping terrorists and their weapons out of the U.S. Is also has a responsibility for securing and facilitating trade and travel while enforcing hundreds of U.S. regulations, including immigration and drug laws.

Find out how the agency works on our nearby border and learn how they collaborate with local law enforcement agencies. Ask questions and become better informed on this tour.

Wednesday, March 16, 2011: 9:00 am - 11:00 noon

Reservations are required by email or phone.

Email CoPres1@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org

Phone: 360-734-2366

This tour is offered to members only and up to 30 people may participate.

Carpools will be arranged.

Mark Your Calendars for Saturday April 16th

Sustainability is the topic of the month. We hear a lot about what is sustainable, especially in the city of Bellingham. But what does a sustainable life style really mean? How does it work in our economy? You'll find out more from our guest speaker, **Brad Tuininga** at the April 16 meeting which will be held at the Bellingham Public Library.

Living in a Border Community

Our March 19 meeting topic is: **Living in a border community: The impacts of immigration and border protection procedures in Whatcom County.** Perhaps you have read the fiction work, *Border Songs*, which was the Whatcom Reads book for 2011. If so you got an entertaining look at life along the Northern Border. Come to our next meeting to hear some different perspectives and voice your own concerns and questions.

Some background: A few years ago our league participated in a national League study about immigration. If you were not involved, check out the wide range of material our members studied and discussed on the topic on the LWVUS website:

<http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Immigration1&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=168&ContentID=10024>

Members throughout the country came to consensus about how the immigration policy should be improved, but Congress has not taken action yet.

This month we will learn how national border protection and immigration policies impact upon our county's economy and upon the residents of Whatcom County.

Four speakers will share their perspectives about the current situation:

Henry Bierlink is the Executive Director for Whatcom Farm Friends and the Executive Director of Washington Red Raspberry Commission. He has worked in agricultural public policy issues in the county and state for over twenty years.

Rosalinda Guillen is Executive Director of Community to Community Development (C2C) in Bellingham. She is a farm worker and rural justice leader who has worked for social justice in Whatcom County and represented farm workers in their ongoing dialogues concerning immigration issues and labor rights.

Ken Oplinger is President and CEO of Bellingham/Whatcom Chamber of Commerce and Industry and lives in Blaine, Washington. He currently serves as the co-chair of the Business for Economic Security, Tourism and Trade and is also Chair of the Planning Commission in the City of Blaine.

Dr. Timothy S. Yeomans is the Superintendent of Meridian School District. His school district has taken significant steps to involve and assist the parents and students whose native languages are other than English.

Thanks to League members **Margot Larrabee, Sheri Lambert, Rosemary Woodyard, and Rosalinda Guillen** for assisting the board in planning this program.

Here is Your Chance!! —Your Thoughts On Local Program Planning for 2011-2012

As we begin planning for our annual meeting in May, your Board has developed recommendations for our 2011-2012 programs. Below is the preliminary draft of the program plan for next year. We invite you to share your thoughts on these recommendations before they are finalized by the board and presented to the membership for consideration at the annual meeting.

On-going **Membership** activities and our **Observer Corps Program** are two of the categories that we regularly address. If you have suggestions, changes or additions to propose in these areas please let us know.

In **Voter Education** and **Studies** we focus on various topics to address. This can be done in two ways: a.) topics of interest presented and discussed at our monthly member meetings or b.) studies of new program areas where we might want to take a position.

If you recommend a topic for one of our monthly meetings or for a study, please write a brief description of the subject that you would like considered and indicate in which category it belongs.

Here are some questions to consider in selecting an issue for League work:

- Which issues are of such vital concern to our members and our community that they demand attention now?
- Which issues will benefit from the League's special expertise or perspective?
- Is there a real possibility that citizens working on this issue can bring about positive change?
- Will League work on this issue have a measurable impact on our community? How will results be evaluated?

Will working on this issue give the League opportunities to collaborate with other groups and individuals?

Whether you suggest a monthly program topic or a subject for study, please indicate if you are willing to chair or serve on the committee that will develop that program. Both of these activities are the work of our Program Committee and the board members who serve on that committee need the support and involvement of members to carry out these activities.

The final area, **Community Participation**, identifies how we currently interact with other community organizations.

We look forward to hearing from you. Please send your thoughts and suggestions to co-pres2@LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org

Preliminary Draft of Recommended Programs for 2011-2012

1. Voter Education

Sponsor Candidate forums, and forums on election issues, alone or in cooperation with other organizations.

Continue publication and distribution of *They Represent You*.

Continue efforts to communicate League's positions on issues of local/regional concerns.

Explore opportunities to register voters.

Continue interest in social, economic and environmental issues of broad global concern.

Continue to look for ways to mitigate the recent Supreme Court decision on Citizens United.

2. Membership

Increase our membership and membership involvement on committees.

Expand diversity of membership.

3. Observer Corps Program

Continue to encourage League representatives to attend and monitor meetings of the Whatcom County Council, Bellingham City Council and the Port District.

Continue to encourage members to participate with CEAC (Citizens Election Advisory Committee.) Encourage members to train and serve as election observers. Continue to observe elections by trained volunteers.

4. Studies

Participate in approved Local, State and National Studies.

5. Community Participation

League members who are active in other organizations are encouraged to report to the Board when they think the League might be able to take action based on local, state and national positions.

Continue to work with other non-partisan organizations who share our goals.

Save the Date

Our Second Annual March Against
Racism

April 29th 2pm-3pm

Join us as we march from the Taylor Street Dock around Boulevard Park to support the YWCA's Stand Against Racism



April 30, 2010

Coalition Reacts to Planned Mega-Coal Export Operation at Cherry Point

Groups raise major concerns about impact on public health, environment, and economy

Earlier this week, SSA Marine announced a partnership with Peabody Energy to export 24 million tons of coal annually to Asia from a planned facility at Cherry Point in Ferndale, Washington. This announcement raised major concerns for groups who have been working to ensure that a terminal at Cherry Point does not harm our environment.

“As organizations who have been working to protect the health of Washington’s environment for many years, we are deeply concerned by the new proposal to turn Cherry Point into the largest coal export facility on the West Coast,” said **Joan Crooks**, Executive Director of Washington Environmental Council. “Over the past two decades, we have dedicated substantial resources toward ensuring that the proposed export terminal at Cherry Point will not have irrevocable environmental impacts and we are concerned that this work is undermined by the use of the facility to export tens of millions of tons of coal annually to Asia.”

If the proposal went forward, 24 million tons of coal a year would be transported in open train cars from the Powder River Basin in Montana and Wyoming to Cherry Point, held in an open stockyard there, and then exported to Asia to be burnt. To transport the proposed amount, coal trains more than a mile long will pass through downtown Bellingham 18 times each day.

“If this proposal goes through, we will have three hours of coal trains rumbling through downtown Bellingham each day, essentially cutting the waterfront off from the rest of the city,” said **Jayne Freudenberger**, Co-President, League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County. “Transporting millions of tons of coal on thousands of trains through our community will cause increased lung disease and other public health impacts, as well as undermine our economic prospects. This is a bad choice for Washington’s future.”

[Reports from Burlington Northern Santa Fe Railroads](#) show how coal dust flies off open train cars as they travel from the Powder River Basin and explains that 3% of coal is lost in transit. With the proposed 24 million tons each year being exported from Cherry Point, that means 720,000 tons of coal dust would be spread along the 1130 mile route from the Powder River Basin. That means up 240 lbs. of coal dust along every foot of the route each year. Studies from the U.S. Government have shown that coal dust can cause lung diseases from bronchitis to emphysema.

“The coal dust flying from train cars and blowing off stockpiles poses a serious threat to our health and environment,” said **Paul Woodcock** of the North Cascades Audubon Society. “Having worked so long to find a good solution at Cherry Point that protects the environment, this new coal export proposal is like a punch to the gut.”

The scope of the terminal has increased considerably from what was outlined in the original permit application – from 8 million tons to up to 54 million tons of total exports (while the deal for Peabody is currently for 24 million tons of coal, SSA Marine has acknowledged that the facility could handle up to 48 million metric tons of coal annually). In addition, the original permit for the terminal had listed items for export like wheat and wood chips – not coal.

Coalition Reacts to Planned Mega-Coal Export...,cont'd

“Given the expanded scope and impacts of this project, we think there needs to be a new and thorough review of the project,” said **Dave Peeler**, Director of Programs at People For Puget Sound. “Exporting tens of millions of tons of coal through Washington to be burned in China will have a host of environmental impacts not considered in the original process – from coal dust blowing through our communities to increased greenhouse gas emissions to mercury pollution in our water.”

Washington Environmental Council, League of Women Voters, North Cascades Audubon Society, and People for Puget Sound have all participated in litigation to ensure that any dock developed at Cherry Point is done in the best possible way for the environment. A settlement agreement was reached with SSA Marine in 1999 which provides substantial protections for herring and other aquatic resources.

###

Kerry McHugh | Communications Director
Washington Environmental Council
phone 206.631.2605 | mobile 206.902.7555
email kerry@wecprotects.org | web www.wecprotects.org
office 1402 3rd Avenue | Suite 1400 | Seattle, WA 98101

Kudos

The League thanks the City of Bellingham for providing the Council Chamber for our panel presentation on The New Jail Proposal and Incarceration Issues. We also appreciate our panel members for giving up their Saturday morning to provide education and information to the public. A special thanks goes to our moderator **Barbara Ryan** whose thoughtful questions set the tone for our civil discussion.

Toward Local, Inclusive and Interactive Media

Freedom of the press is guaranteed only to those who own one. ~Abbott Joseph Liebling

The continued flow of and access to accurate local news and stories is as important to every citizen as the continued flow of clean water, however today our access to information is slowly being strangled. Not so long ago the media business was considered by owners, investors, and regulators to be a ‘mature’ industry, undergoing little fundamental change and relied upon by millions of users for news, information and entertainment. It was business as usual in a multi-billion dollar industry. However, severe economic trauma, deep recession and an Internet-led digital revolution are pressuring many media organizations in the extreme. It's not clear whether any will survive the emergence of digital news, broadband connectedness, and the fracturing of traditional media forms. Like it or not, the industry is being transformed and even the pithiest of pundits is unsure what it will look like when the process is complete.

(cont'd next page)

Toward Local, Inclusive and Interactive Media, cont'd

What happens when news is purveyed by millions of online producers? How should the FCC react when a cell phone video gets wider viewership than the evening news? When stories from citizens run the gamut from fact to fabrication how do we decide who is a journalist? With the recent merger of Comcast/NBCU and the looming reality of the erosion of the American public's access to accurate information and local stories of critical importance, is there a place for government in insuring its continued delivery? And even if it's prudent and necessary for government to support our failing information and accountability system, amid the sea change in news media is government capable of making choices that will improve anything?

Anyone who remembers civics class can tell you that freedom of the press is guaranteed by the First Amendment. It bars Congress from 'abridging' the right to publish what you want to publish. But does that mean that there's a separation of government and the press? Well, no.

As early as colonial times, American media was being subsidized. Postmasters set steeply discounted rates for publishers who sent their newspapers and magazines through the mail. Local governments began requiring the publication of notices of official actions in newspapers. Both of these actions have been of huge financial importance to publishers and vital to the survival of our media systems for the last 200 years.

News and information is a public good and a necessity for the continuation of our democracy. We invest dollars in public defense, in public works and in public transportation—all of these are rightly considered to be intrinsic to the survival of our communities. The access to and free flow of information is as important as freedom from the threat of attack, the free flow of water and unfettered travel of people and goods across our nation. What is happening in the news and media business is vital to our national interest. The founding fathers knew that the strength of any democracy is directly related to the accessibility of accurate (if sometimes uncomfortable) information regarding that same government, and they were willing to invest in it to insure its continued existence.

In case you're tempted to test the argument that newspapers and other media have simply failed to adapt to the digital age, hold that thought. Ultimately, this isn't just about newspapers. Omnibus newspapers were historical accidents, as Clay Shirky noted in [a talk he gave](#) in September at Harvard's Shorenstein Center. The result of unique circumstances that no longer exist—namely, newspapers made money by selling consumers to advertisers, who had few options for reaching them on a mass scale—and that allowed commercial entities (newspapers) to produce a critical public good (accountability journalism). Media could then charge advertisers inflated rates, and use that revenue to pay for content that by itself wouldn't have attracted enough readers/viewers to satisfy the advertisers. The same holds true for accountability journalism across the television platform. Today, with audiences fracturing on all fronts, it is quickly becoming impossible for any media format to make a go of good, old-fashioned news reporting.

But, if our government has supported the news industry throughout the whole of American history, what's the big deal about subsidizing it now, when the survival of media businesses is in doubt? Perhaps the rub lies with fears about what 'government support' might look like. Are we talking about yet another bailout, a'la Wall Street and Motor City? "We live in an era of profound technological change

(cont'd next page)

Toward Local, Inclusive and Interactive Media, cont'd

that threatens many forms of news media. We do not favor government policies that keep dying media alive. But we do believe government can help to provide support during this period of transition," says David Westphal, USC Annenberg executive-in-residence, CCLP senior fellow and former Washington Editor for newspaper giant McClatchy.

It is clear that creativity on the part of Uncle Sam as well as on part of the businesses themselves will need to be a key ingredient in the transformation of our media. Such support could take the form of funding, tax breaks, or dispensations from archaic regulations. Whatever government support looks like, it should be predicated on the willingness of media businesses to transition into new forms that maintain their traditional and vital contribution to our democracy as well as adapt to the demands of a new century and fulfill the interactive promise of new media. Those efforts should be focused on such things as:

- Encourage innovation
- Strengthen leadership and resources devoted to local news and information
- Promote internal and external partnerships
- Engage communities on all platforms

Media companies willing to transform themselves in order to remain relevant within their communities should be rewarded on the road to sustainability. Local, inclusive and interactive media in the new millennium is possible. For that to happen we don't need to reinvent the wheel. We can follow in the steps of the founders of our country. If we value access to accurate information we, the voters, must protect it.

-article submitted by **Suzanne Blais**

Suzanne Blais is Executive Producer at Black Dog Productions in Bellingham and has been an advocate for community television since the airing *The Corner Garden*, a show she created over 16 years ago. She is currently developing local programming and is involved in efforts to create a comprehensive broadcast intern program in Whatcom County.



**League of Women Voters of
Bellingham/ Whatcom County**

LWV of Bellingham/Whatcom County
P.O. Box 4041
Bellingham, WA 98227-4041

Phone: 360-734-2366

Fax: 360-734-2366

Website: www.LWVbellinghamwhatcom.org

Inside :

- Saturday, March 19, 2011
 "Living in a Border Community"
- Co-President's Message
- Tour of Customs & Border Patrol
- Mark Your Calendars - April 16th
- Living in a Border Community
- Here's Your Chance - Your Thoughts on Local Program Planning
- Kudos
- Preliminary Draft-Recommended Programs for 2011-12
- Annual March Against Racism
- Coalition Reacts to Planned Mega-Coal Export
 at Cherry Point
- Toward Local Inclusive and Interactive Media