



Voter

League of
Women Voters of
Bellingham/
Whatcom County

August/September 2011

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Bring a friend to ...

Lunch with the League

Thursday, September 8, 2011

11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.

YWCA Ballroom
1026 N. Forest Street

Topic: "Civic Education: What does Citizenship Mean in the 21st Century"

Speakers: Floyd J. McKay, Professor of Journalism Emeritus at Western Washington University
Joan Connell, Executive Producer of Opinions & Communities at MSNBC

Lunch is free—but reservations are required.

Please reply to: CoPres2@lwvbellinghamwhatcom.org or call 734-2366.

Parking is available in the first Presbyterian Church parking lot, Laurel and Garden Streets.

Members only—If your last name begins with **A thru L**, please bring cookies to be served as dessert.

Save the Date September 17th

General Meeting, 9:30am—Noon

Bellingham Public Library

Speaker: Dr. Greg Baker, Superintendent, Bellingham Public Schools

Topic: One Superintendent's Perspective on the Federal Government's Impact on our Local Ability to Prepare all Students.

"In the Bellingham School District we have a commitment to ensure all students graduate prepared for college, career and citizenship." Dr. Baker will share his perspective on the role of the federal government in K-12 education, particularly here in Bellingham, and thoughts about how we ensure a high-quality and equitable education for all our students. Dr. Baker will touch on various programs including those that are part of ESEA, upcoming Common Core, the Common Assessments initiative, and state level data initiatives. There will be time for questions and discussion.

From Co-President Jayne Freudenberger

We are so ineffectual. I can't do anything right. You spend far too much money. I listen too much to people who hold the purse strings. You interfere too much with other people's lives. We hate ourselves.

Hmmm—sound familiar? Substitute the word “government” for “you and I” These statements are about us. By gosh “we” **are** the government.

Yes the debt ceiling so called “crisis” was a fiasco. Polls show that over 80% of Americans were disgusted and mad and blamed everyone involved. But wait a minute.

You know “We the People” isn't a tea party slogan –it is in the preamble to the constitution. Who is letting this happen? Is it Congress' fault? The Presidents'? Special interest money? The media? Or all of the above? Or is it us?

It is true that it is hard to make heads or tails of the words of myriad talking heads, especially when most of them have their own agenda. It is true there is too much money in the game.

But if we hate the government and choose to opt out we only have ourselves to blame as things get worse. What then is the answer –riots? famine? dictatorship? Or would you prefer a vibrant citizenship?

Read, learn, have faith, be pro-active. Come to “Lunch with League” September 8th. and be re-energized.

We have children and grandchildren. Feeling hopeless is not an option.

- Jayne

Pizza Lovers Support the League

On June 14 League members and friends raised \$46 for us when they enjoyed pizza from Pizza/zza in Fairhaven.

Pizza'zza supports local non-profit organizations by donating 15% of their sales on a day selected by the group. All customers have to do is say that they are there to support the organization.

A surprise came when we received \$27 more from our friends at AAUW who not only turned their monthly dinner into a pizza party but also made an additional contribution.

So thanks to Pizza/zza, AAUW and all of our League members and friends who participated. It was a tasty, fun way to support the League.

Remembering JoAn Agnew

Family and friends gathered August 7th in a memorial celebration for **JoAn Agnew**. Only recently diagnosed with primary central nervous system lymphoma, she succumbed to the disease Sunday, July 31st.

JoAn was passionate about peace, politics, women's rights, baseball (or any sport her kids or grandkids were playing). She was a staunch supporter of the League and for the past few years, she and husband **Bill** volunteered for numerous tasks as well as providing name tags and setting up the display table before each meeting. You may recall meeting JoAn and Bill as they graciously welcomed those entering the room.

We will miss JoAn's lively discussions and warm smile.

Coal Export Pier Settlement Talks Fail

Plans to export coal from Cherry Point by SSA Marine have created much fury both for and against the pier in our community. The League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County has long been involved in a Settlement Agreement with the company to ensure that the highest standards of environmental protections for the Cherry Point Aquatic Reserve are maintained. We agreed to a smaller capacity multi-purpose export terminal which would be great for local jobs, and sensitive to the needs of the declining Cherry Point Herring and 108 species of migrating birds that travel through the area.

Over the last year we have been engaged in renegotiating this settlement but despite a good faith effort, we were unable to update the agreement in a way that we felt would protect Puget Sound and the vulnerable Cherry Point herring population.

Because the new proposed terminal would primarily export coal – we have serious concerns regarding impacts on public health, Puget Sound, and climate change. The original agreement is for an 8.2 million metric ton dry-good export facility – a far cry from the new proposal of up to 54 million metric tons annually – an enormous increase for vessel traffic.

Over the past twelve years, SSA Marine has repeatedly failed to follow through on their monitoring and evaluation obligations; because of this we have serious doubts about their commitment to protecting Puget Sound under any new agreement.

We're not willing to gamble Whatcom County's clean air, water, and community health on vague promises from SSA Marine.

More Info: www.lwvbellinghamwhatcom.org & www.coaltrainfacts.org

What About the Federal Government's Role in Public Education?

The LWVUS Education Study is now in full swing and all our members will be able to participate in developing a consensus on this issue in November. Members **Michael Jay** and **Mary LeDonne** are leading the project here in Bellingham.

With the LWV, study and education always precede advocacy and action. This Education Study focuses on two areas: funding and equity issues that are addressed in the Elementary & Secondary Education Act, the last version being 'No Child Left Behind' which is overdue for reauthorization and how the national common core standards and assessments should be used by the federal government. Standards, assessments and equity for all children – public policy issues that the League needs to understand fully and address.

Join the discussion. Members are welcome to come to the study discussion group meetings to learn more. **The next discussion group will be Tuesday, September 6 from 6:00 - 7:30 pm. Contact Mary LeDonne** for details if you wish to come: ledonne@me.com.

It is not necessary to attend all sessions to be part of the study.

Background reports for the study are available from the LWVUS website:

http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=Public_Education&Template=/TaggedPage/TaggedPageDisplay.cfm&TPLID=112&ContentID=16956

Quick Updates

Membership/Award

The LWV of Bellingham Whatcom County won an award at the state convention in May for their 30% increase in membership. Let's keep up the good work.

If you haven't sent in your dues please remember that your support is essential to the work of your local League. Election forums, voter registration, Cherry Point advocacy and the education study are only a few of the important issues we are taking on this fall.

Proposed County Jail Proposals Update

On May 23rd. the County Council, at the request of the County Executive, established a Jail Planning Task Force. The task force was created to provide advice and recommendations regarding the appropriate size and location of a new jail facility. It will be an ad hoc committee of the Law and Justice Council and shall report to and gather input from the public

The County Executive appointed 13 members including the following: Erik Ramstead (Police Chief's Association), Wendy Jones (Sheriff's Office), Caleb Erickson (Corrections Deputy), Marianne Caldwell (County Executive), and Anne Deacon (Mental Health Services). Citizen appointees are Ray Baribeau, Doralee Booth, David Christenson, Peter Dawson, Peter Dworkin, Lisa McShane, Barbara Steinberger and John Wilson.

Education Study

Mary Le Donne and Michael Jay are chairing our meetings on the Federal Role of Education. This is a national study with a consensus meeting for our local league scheduled in November. Contact Mary at LeDonne@me.com

If you would like to attend a discussion—you need not attend all the meetings to be part of the study, but so far the conversations have been fascinating and you may get hooked.

Conservation District

The LWVWA has sent out the Conservation District Study Report and the consensus questions will be posted on our web site. If you are interested in being part of a study group on conservation districts please contact Kay Ingram at kayingram123@comcast.net

LWVWA State Convention

The LWV of Bellingham Whatcom County Co-Presidents, Jayne Freudenberger and Kay Ingram and Program Chairman Annette Holcomb attended the 2011 state convention. Annette, treasurer of the state education board taught a workshop about grants from that fund. Kay led the process to get all the Washington state leagues to concur in the privatization study done by the Seattle League. It was passed unanimously and you will be hearing more about this issue in the spring when we take on the national study. Jayne was on the Resolutions committee, where the contentious issue of national ads targeting particular senators concerning the passage of the clean air act was debated. The convention passed a resolution which reflected the majority's unhappiness with the way National handled this issue.

League of Women Voters of Bellingham/Whatcom County Fall 2011 Calendar

Updated August 22, 2011

Thursday—September 8 Lunch with League—Bring a friend to learn about the League
Topic: “Civic Education: What Does Citizenship Mean in the 21st Century”
11:30 a.m.—1:30 p.m. YWCA

Saturday—September 17 General Meeting—Speaker: Dr. Greg Baker,
Superintendent Bellingham Public Schools
“How do Federal Guidelines Impact Local Education?”
9:30 a.m.—Noon, Bellingham Public Library

Thursday—September 29 Mayoral and City Council Candidates
6 p.m.—8 p.m., Bellingham Municipal Court
(BTV 10 recording)

Saturday—October 15 Ballot Initiatives
9:30 a.m.—Noon, Bellingham Municipal Court
(BTV 10 recording)

Thursday—October 20 County Executive and County Council Candidates
6 p.m.—8 p.m., Bellingham Municipal Court
(BTV 10 recording)

Saturday—November 19 Education Study Consensus Meeting
9:30 a.m.—Noon, Bellingham Public Library

Wednesday—November 30 Conversation with Elected Officials
5:30 p.m. - 7:30 pm, YWCA Ballroom

Civic Education Support Expands

The LWV of Bellingham Whatcom County, with additional monetary support from the Whatcom Education Credit Union and The Rotary Club of Bellingham has expanded their Civic Education Project using “The State We’re in Washington” civics book.

Books have been placed in 3 Whatcom County Middle Schools

- * Lynden Middle School—1 set
- * Ferndale Middle School—2 sets plus 20 copies from the LWVWA Ed Fund
- * Fairhaven Middle School—2 sets

In addition we have expanded our reach into the community by placing the books with these community organizations

- * Whatcom Library System—5 copies to support their programs in Juvenile Justice Detention Center, the Migrant School and the Whatcom County Jail
- * Whatcom Literacy Council—5 books and a teacher’s guide to support their literacy efforts
- * Community to Community—ten books and a teacher’s guide for a workshop and civic education in their C2CRaices Culturales youth group.

The LWV will continue to seek opportunities in the schools and communities to increase civic education through the use of our award winning textbook.



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Kudos

We would like to thank two of our members for their Herculean efforts on the coal terminal port at Cherry Point issue. **Tanya Baumgart** has been involved with this process since the early “90’s when the first Settlement Agreement was signed by our League in an effort to make sure any facility at Cherry Point protected the herring and the fragile eco-system. **Terry Wechsler**, joined Tanya this winter. The two of them have waded through documents, attended meetings and conference calls and kept us informed on the reopening talks throughout the spring and summer. Their conscientious work and attention to detail has been invaluable as this process has played out. Although the talks are ended due to a mutual deadline agreed to by all parties, we know both of them will continue to stay on top of the issue for the League and for Bellingham.

A big thank you goes out to the **Wonderful Members** who **donated** so generously when renewing dues. Thanks to all of you we have an additional \$200 in our educational fund and an additional \$360 in our operating budget. Thank you for recognizing and supporting our mission.

New Members

Welcome to our new members. We hope to personally welcome you all at our September “Lunch with League” meeting.

**Judith Andress, Bill Larrabee,
Janna Palm,
Jal Parakh, Dan Pike and
Margot Schenet**