Day at the Legislature

On February 22, fifty-five interested members and guests gathered to hear from experts about important legislative issues. Paul Warner, the Legislative Revenue Officer, spoke about revenue reform in Oregon. Many ideas to change both the income tax and the property tax were provided. There were even options related to a consumption tax. Warner answered questions regarding the Earned Income Tax Credit, which is proposed to be increased for some recipients, and the review of tax expenditures, which occurs during each long session. There may also be a rethinking of what proposals require a 3/5 vote for the raising of revenue.

Ben Cannon, the Executive Director of the Higher Education Coordinating Commission (HECC), gave a history and an overview of the new state agency, which was established in 2011. HECC is responsible for all aspects of post-secondary education in the state. They oversee the universities, community colleges, private universities, for-profit schools, certificate programs, state scholarship programs, and work-force training providers. The advisory committee is in the process of doing strategic planning. The agency is also responsible for the distribution of funding that the legislature provides to state schools. The agency must also approve any new programs that a state institution may want to implement. State schools must also get permission to raise tuition more than 5% a year. The HECC is vitally important for all aspects of higher education.

Finally, the coordinators and portfolio chairs, Peggy Lynch, Karen Nibler, Kappy Eaton, Paula Krane, Chris Vogel, Norman Turrill and Marg Easley, shared information about measures that they have been following. The sine die issue of the Legislative Report will provide details of the very busy session.
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VOTER Editor: Karan Kuntz

LWVOR Mission
The League of Women Voters® of Oregon is a grassroots, nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government in order to build better communities statewide. The state League’s purposes are to influence public policy through education and advocacy and to provide support for League members and the League organization.

LWVOR Action Committee at Work

Alice Bartelt, Action Chair, LWVOR 2nd Vice President

Even though the Legislature is in a short session, the Action Committee has been running to just stay keep up. During the first week of the session, and even before it started, testimony regarding at least 20 priority bills was generated. Much more has followed.

The Committee is fortunate to have very experienced coordinators working on important issues. Peggy Lynch is in charge of all natural resource bills, but has the help of Claudia Keith and Cathy Frischmann, who are passionate about climate change. Debbie Aiona represents the League on the Housing Alliance. Theresa Gibney is the energy guru for the League. David Phelps represents the League on the Drinking Water Advisory Commission.

Karen Nibler is responsible for social policy bills and has the help of Chris Vogel, who follows education and early childhood bills. Marge Easley works on gun safety bills. This leaves Karen with all of the healthcare, social services and judiciary bills. She would like assistance from anyone who would like to follow specific bills or specific areas. Paula Krane is the access coordinator. She is concerned with public access to the legislative system.

Finally, Kappy Eaton follows a wide variety of issues as the governance coordinator. She is the expert on voter access, revenue, public records access, campaign finance reform and women’s issues. She has the assistance of Norman Turrill, who works on campaign finance reform and redistricting issues and Jody Wiser, who advises on tax and revenue bills. This group of folks put in many hours, and we are most grateful for their devotion to the League.

Some of the major bills that we followed during this session are gun safety, inclusionary zoning, clean energy, campaign contribution limits, independent expenditure reporting, and anti-poverty legislation. Some of the bills the League wanted to have passed, and some we did not want to see move. The number of bills that were proposed for such a short session was daunting. But, many either had no hearing, or never had a work session. On the Senate floor, a rule that has rarely been used required that all bills that came up for a third reading had to be read in their entirety. This had the effect of slowing down the process in what was generally a hectic short session.
**Being Visible**

*Kathleen Hersh, LWVOR Membership Chair*

2016 is a very important year for the League. Our work in the Making Democracy Work® program is vital. By making our work very visible in our communities we can have the impact we need to have and we can strengthen the League.

We need to make sure that the drumbeat of the presidential election does not drown out the very important state and local races. We want the Oregon electorate to be as broad as possible and we want the voters, when they sit down with their ballots in May and November, to have excellent unbiased information to inform their votes.

How do we make our registration drives, forums and Voters’ Guides reach the most people? How do we find new members and partners to help us carry on this vital work?

Here are some suggestions to consider:

1) When you have a voter registration drive, contact local traditional media (newspapers, TV, radio) not only to announce when and where you will be, but also offer an interview to explain how the new Motor Voter registration works so that everyone will know that they have not all been automatically registered.

2) When the print Voters’ Guides arrive in your area, issue a press release that the Guides have arrived and where they can be picked up, as well as publicize our web resources.

3) If you have an event such as a forum, send special invitations to your local traditional media, as well as any new media sources that you can identify. (Do you have any local political bloggers? Can you find anyone who tweets about city hall or county council meetings?)

4) If you have an event, be sure that you have a League greeter there who has membership information. If you partner with another organization on an event or voter registration drive, be sure that you encourage them to join the League.

5) The most visibility can come from your local advocacy efforts. Voter service is very important this year, but it should not drown out our parallel advocacy efforts.

Please share with me your ideas and your projects and let me know if there is something the LWV of Oregon can do to help you make the League visible in your community. **k.hersh@lwvor.org**

**Voter Service News**

*Becky Gladstone, rebecca.gladstone@gmail.com*

*LWVOR 1st VP Voter Service*

I think League work is the best way to help more voters **actually feel good about voting!** We are already working hard on 2016 LWVOR Voter Service. We are streamlining our print **Voters’ Guides** and want to expand outreach. We’re getting ready for ballot measure researchers, editors, and speakers. Our **VOTEResources** websites are revamping. Our **Civics ED Program** is expanding to support our prize-winning Mock Election. My League, LW VLC (Lane Co.) already has primary debate dates set! We could coordinate to offer debates around the state for our multiple statewide races. Let me know if your League is interested. Please send **Your** event information to **lwvor@lwvor.org** and we’ll share it.

This promises to be a challenging election year. We need you! Voter Service is a team effort and we need a bigger team! Please contact me directly with any questions. We’ll find a comfortable and rewarding job to match your skills and interests!

**ASAP: collecting election information.** Do you have a couple of hours to spare to help get information from our counties (or directly from their websites)?

**Training/hand-holding/cheer-leading** provided personally by Mary Clerks (Continued on page 4.)
Sinclair. You will need to be able to search on a computer and put candidate information into a pre-formatted Excel file we provide. We have 36 counties. If you can contact 1-5 counties in our rural areas WE WOULD APPRECIATE YOU! When the information is entered, voters will be able to go to VOTEResources to:

1. Enter an address and see candidates and ballot measures on the ballot for that address.
2. See all Oregon candidates and ballot measures filed by Name or Race or County.

We anticipate over 1000 candidates in this Oregon Primary. Let me know if you can help. Mary Sinclair, m.sinclair@awvor.org, 541-772-2372

In March, for Voters’ Guides, we need you now for:

- Printing assistant, to help corral documents, Excel and Word skills necessary.
- Order assistant, to help Betty Harry, who has started contacting you.

For Summer & Fall, and we’ll sleep better now, knowing you’re planning to help:

- Civics ED and Mock Election. Anne Emmons can use help, contact her directly.
- Ballot Measure Research team leader. If you are a past researcher and can mentor researchers, know what tools they need, track deadlines, please step forward! Share with a friend!
- Ballot Measure Researchers. We expect the usual large Presidential Year Oregon Ballot Measure list. Ideally, we should have a pair of researchers for each one. Please be thinking about the issues that grab you and come forward, another good one to share with a friend!
Mock Elections  
(Continued from page 4)

groups will also implement our civics education program to provide Oregon residents with information that helps voters become more aware of Oregon’s election process, and procedures. Recently we have given special attention to the various special district positions on the ballots across our state, and are working to include activities that aide in understanding the descriptions and duties of these districts. We are also proud to see civic organizations continue to use our curriculum to assist immigrants on their path to citizenship.

Anyone wanting to help in our curriculum development or mock election contact aemmons@lwvor.org.

President's Column / Norman Turrill

Spring is nearly here, so it must be time to gear up our League voter service programs for the May primary and for this important presidential election year. LWVOR 1st Vice President Becky Gladstone has created a voter service plan for this year that I would like to discuss in some detail.

In the past we have produced several versions of our LWVOR Voters’ Guides: standard, easy-to-read, large print, Spanish, audio and Braille. Each had its constituency and purpose, and all listed statewide candidates and ballot measures. (LWVPDX also produces an insert for their local candidates and measures.) However, printing was quite expensive, and we have fewer print orders. Our VOTEResources webpages featured PDFs of all Voters’ Guide publications, full indices of all Oregon candidates and ballot measures, Vote411 to see your ballot choices by address, an audio version, and a partial video version.

At the same time our audience has been rapidly changing. We have, for example, partnered with the Oregon State Library for many years to serve various disabilities communities. We have supplied our Voters' Guide versions to the state library, and they have created the Braille version and distributed the large print, audio and Braille versions to registered Oregonians in the sight-impaired community. There are now just seven registered Braille users remaining, and we with the state library will continue to serve them. However, modern computers and screen reading software have reduced the number of sight-impaired users who need or prefer these services. So we have decided to not produce the large print version. Because of small print runs, it last cost $6.96 per copy to produce.

Likewise, for general voters, internet access on computers and mobile devices has reduced demand for our print versions. Becky’s plan calls for us to still print the LWVOR standard and Spanish Voters’ Guide versions, somewhat condensed, and designed to encourage voters to use our online VOTEResources for more comprehensive information. We will not create a separate easy-to-read version, in part because Disability Rights Oregon will be printing a similar publication.

I generally like Becky's plan for hybrid, streamlined printed Voters’ Guides. This plan can also provide us with excellent visibility in our communities. We will use this plan for the primary election and we will then evaluate how well it worked.

Driving voters to our online VOTEResources has been part of our plan for many years. More and more voters are getting election information online. We want to promote the League’s inclusive, unbiased, and researched information. Since there are so many other online sources of election information, we also need to increasingly strengthen our online resources in order to compete.

Yours in League, Norman Turrill
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