Celebrating a Very Successful Joint Council

League members from across Oregon and Washington met in Vancouver, Washington June 3-5. Arrival time coincided with the oil train derailment in Mosier, OR, leading to travel times as much as 12 hours!

Friday evening members enjoyed Dine-Around followed by an Art Nite tour in Vancouver or the excellent play *Cottonwood in the Flood*, a drama based on the experiences of African Americans in Vanport of the 1940s and the rapid fall of the city with the Vanport flood.

A busy day, Saturday saw a variety of workshops and breakout sessions for the two state Leagues. LWVWA, which does not conduct business during Council, met for an update on their 2015 Convention while LWVOR met for a business session. Building on the theme of “Meet at the Columbia River, lunch featured a panel discussion of the Columbia River Treaty. At Saturday evening banquet, Mary Christina Wood, originator of the climate change litigation approach called “Atmospheric Trust Litigation” spearheaded by Our Children’s Trust, provided a somber update on climate change science and why youth are suing the federal and state governments to get action.

On Sunday, LWVWA discussed Advocacy between Legislative Sessions, and LWVOR adopted a budget and elected members of the state board. A final joint session sought suggestions for future joint efforts.
Momentum Builds for Gun Safety Legislation

Marge Easley, Gun Safety Portfolio, LWVOR Action Committee

The tragedy in Orlando, the worst mass shooting in U.S. history, has heightened the urgency to take action on gun safety, and the League is doing its part. The LWVUS Convention included a gun safety caucus entitled “Grassroots: Bringing Gun Safety to America,” with 150 League members in attendance. Patricia Brigham, a League leader from Florida and chair of the LWVUS Gun Safety Committee, was joined by Greg Waples from the Center for American Progress to outline ways that League members can be leaders on the issue of gun violence prevention.

Delegates also unanimously passed three gun safety resolutions, asking the LWVUS and all delegates for a moment of silence for Orlando shooting victims, reinforcing LWVUS strong positions on gun safety, and advocating to overturn the federal ban on gun violence research at the Centers for Disease Control.

A LWV Coalition for Gun Safety Facebook group does a great job keeping followers updated on gun issues. It is closed to the public, but if you would like your name added to the group please contact Marge Easley (marge.easley@frontier.com).

In Oregon, gun safety activists are mobilizing for the November election and laying the groundwork for the 2017 session. Now is the time to let candidates know that strengthening Oregon’s gun laws is a priority issue.

Citizens’ Initiative Review:

Marge Easley, LWV Clackamas County

League members will be offered a unique opportunity to observe the award-winning Citizens’ Initiative Review (CIR), which will be held this year from August 18 to 21 at Western Oregon University in Monmouth.

This innovative process, developed by the Oregon-based nonprofit, Healthy Democracy, was first enacted into law in 2011 with the strong support of the League. It brings together a randomly-selected demographically balanced “jury” of citizens and gives them time and resources to fairly evaluate a statewide ballot measure. Results are then published in the Oregon Voters’ Pamphlet. The process has proven to be so successful that replication efforts are now underway in other states.

Stay tuned for more details as to the best date and time to observe, as well as which ballot measure has been selected for evaluation. Consider organizing a League-sponsored “field trip” to get a firsthand look at the inner workings of a CIR panel.
President's Column / Norman Turrill

This is a version of my message to our Council 2016 meeting in Vancouver in June:

I would just like to plant some ideas for a few minutes as we look forward to an historic election in November and another League year.

Although our member counts have not improved, we have at least stopped their continual decline, and I think the membership program is doing well. I am particularly pleased with the formation of a new Washington County State Unit. During my visits around the state, I have seen great enthusiasm and potential for League programs. An integral part of this is the Membership and Leadership Development (MLD) program. All local Leagues should be participating in the MLD program [http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/sections/membership-and-leadership-development](http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/sections/membership-and-leadership-development) or at least including its methods into everything that you plan to do.

My sense is that the general election this November will be one of the most important ones in decades. We will likely see a historic shift in the electorate as more minority, naturalized and younger voters get involved. The New Motor Voter Law, which the League supported, will help enhance these trends in Oregon. Therefore, it is even more important that we mobilize as many members and supporters to help with all our voter service programs. Becky Gladstone, 1st VP for Voter Education, can use all the help that she can get!

The conversions of local Leagues to 501(c)(3) organizations has gone relatively well with seven Leagues passing the necessary motions at their annual meetings. One other League wanted to go forward, but didn’t bring it up at their annual meeting. I have not yet calculated whether or not it makes sense to go forward with a Group Exemption request to the IRS. So stay tuned on this one.

Your LWVOR has improved finances. This is due in part because the successful consolidation (of our two state organizations) has merged our money, accounts and reserves into one organization. The consolidation may also have improved the receipt of grant money. 501(c)(3) foundations and grantors can only give to other 501(c)(3) organizations, so they are more likely to give us a grant.

Another reason for our improved finances has been our fiscal frugality. We have streamlined our office by not replacing an employee who left, by replacing the phone and internet provider, and removing an unused fax phone line. At the same time, we have invested in a new computer and other office equipment to help our remaining employee be more productive and be better able to support our volunteers.

Finally, I want you to know that your Development Committee is very actively considering a new fundraising campaign. With the League’s 100th birthday approaching, we are beginning to plan a campaign for early next year for members and supporters to leave a "League Legacy" for the next 100 years. You will hear more about this after the November election.

Thank you for listening! You are a great group!
Welcome to the New Washington County Unit

Kathleen Hersh, Membership Chair,
The League is excited to welcome a new state unit! The LWVOR Board has recognized the LWV Unit that has formed in Washington County. There are about 15 members. Two members, Josie Koehn and Virginia Bruce have stepped forward to be co-chairs.

They held their first meeting after acceptance June 20th. The group discussed what voter forums they could sponsor for the November election and what organizations they might work with and how they might increase their visibility.

Another topic of discussion was governance of the unincorporated urban areas in Washington County. Virginia Bruce had published a series of articles in the Cedar Mills Newsletter on this topic. Other members present had some interesting pieces of information on the topic but felt there was a lot to learn. There was a general feeling that this would make a good topic for a study.

Information on some of the ballot measures that have made the ballot or might make it was presented and discussed.

The group agreed to meet again in late July or early August. This was a great start!

Two Members Reflect on Their First LWVUS Convention

Emily Medley, LWV of Clackamas County delegate

I first arrived in Washington, D.C. on the same flight as my Convention roommate. Direct flights across the country are a wonderful thing. I spent five hours crocheting and writing a letter, and then it was time for my roommate and me to catch a cab to the hotel and register ourselves after getting into our room. After a dinner of Chesapeake crab cakes, I finally took a chance to look at our Convention Workbook. Yes, I could have done this before I left. I’d been working two jobs instead.

I was a little disappointed to notice that the theme appeared to be heavily oriented toward voter service. I’d just finished distribution of Voters’ Guides, struggles with the postal service bureaucracy that surrounds bulk mail of large pieces, and the arrangement of three forums in my position at the Portland League office. I was interested in action. This disappointment quickly dissipated as I learned at a caucus that many state leagues don’t use Vote411.org, heard speakers and league members from other states talk about struggles with strict and arbitrary voter ID laws, difficulties with long lines at polling locations, gerrymandering, and proposed laws that would make some of our members felons for registering voters. I had dinner one night with some members of the D.C. League who discussed their struggle of taxation without the representation that is only afforded to states. It became clear very quickly that my desire to focus on action was a privilege of coming from a state that makes registration and informed voting easy.

I learned in a discussion of our definition of “nonpartisan” that we are to use our definition of the word and not the word itself, and that refusing to support or oppose parties or candidates should not prevent us from expressing opinions on hateful rhetoric, money in politics, or tone of campaigns. Having majored in rhetorical analysis, I breathed a sigh of relief. It was fascinating and inspiring to be surrounded by roughly 750 men and women, old and young, all with opinions and enthusiasm for attaining similar ends through a fair process, with civil and (Continued on page 5)
respectful discussion. This is how democracy should work. I left after adjournment proud to be part of the League’s effort toward this goal, at local, state, and national levels.

Later adventures of sightseeing in the general area included a lovely road trip to Monticello, and a walk down an escalator waterfall in a flash flood rain storm to reach the Metro train. I have a picture of a three-foot high "wet floor" warning cone inside the station halfway submerged.

Alice Bartelt, LWVOR Board 2nd Vice President, Action Coordinator

Some 700 League members joined together in Washington DC for the 52nd National Convention. What impressed me the most was how many activities there were. Caucuses and workshops began at 7:15 in the morning, plenary sessions, including the business sessions, went until 5:30, and then evening activities continued until 9:30 pm. There hardly seemed enough time to sleep.

The convention accomplished quite a bit. Bylaws were passed that allow any individual to become a voting member, provided that they are at least 16 years old. PMP will remain the same for the next two years. The delegates also passed the LWVUS budget.

Oregon delegates Claudia Keith and Kathy Frischmann orchestrated three climate change resolutions. They worked tirelessly to perfect the wording to the satisfaction of the Resolutions Committee, and made sure that speakers were ready to speak in favor of the resolutions. Kudos go to them and to President Norman Turrill for getting these resolutions passed.

The convention was also fortunate to have a number of great outside speakers. Jennifer Lawless spoke about engaging millennials in our elections. Amanda Taub’s presentation was called “Understanding American Authoritarianism.” Peter Overby of NPR discussed money in politics. A panel discussed defending the right to vote and expanding the electorate, especially among voters of color. Joe Goldman discussed the forces at play in the 2016 elections. Pollster Celinda Lake spoke about framing issues for women voters. All in all, it was a stimulating convention.

I would recommend that every member attend a national convention at least once. Conventions energize us to continue the important work of the League. They provide tools to help us be more effective in the pursuit of our goals.

**Convention Adopts Climate Change Resolution**

The following three climate change related resolutions passed and were proposed by the LWV of Oregon:

1) The LWVUS consider signing onto an Amicus Brief with the 21 youth plaintiffs from Our Children’s Trust
2) The LWVUS support the ratification of the UN COP 21 Paris Agreement, and
3) The LWVUS should continue working for full implementation of the EPA Clean Power Plan, especially at the state level, as a first step, and should call on the White House to implement an updated science-based Climate Action Plan that stabilizes global warming by bringing CO2 levels down to no more than 350 ppm by 2100.

Oregon delegates to LWVUS Convention
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