March 16, 2020 - Update from LWVOR President Becky Gladstone

LWVOR President’s Letter March 2020

This is a follow up to our state board meeting on Friday March 13th, to all Oregon League members. I hope everyone is taking good care. I am seeing a divide as those who use social media are getting timely reports that are delayed for others. Please do connect (Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, YouTube) and keep in touch for our frequent updates and please share the advice in this message. Pace yourselves because this coronavirus will not be providing quick solutions. Our state board discussed the quickly evolving coronavirus news. It is important to consider that the COVID-19 disease spreading globally affects everything the League works on.

This is just from LWVUS President, Chris Carson:

- **Voting in the time of Coronavirus** is a public-facing blog post sharing tips to help voters safely cast their ballots in upcoming elections
- **Member resources** on the League Management Site are now available for League guidance
Governor Brown’s March 12 mitigation response has a detailed recommendations list that applies to the kind of meetings we conduct. Her statement on the 14th is clear:

"We must do all that we can to slow the spread of this disease: avoid large events, follow social distancing protocols, and, above all, stay home when sick. These steps will help to ensure those who are older and have underlying health conditions can avoid becoming ill, and can receive the best available medical treatment when necessary. I have every confidence in the health professionals who are working day and night to contain the coronavirus in Oregon, and I will do everything within my power to ensure they have the resources they need to continue their work with all available speed."

Our VOTER coming out in early April will be comprehensive. Kathleen Hersh asked for virtual event guidelines. Amelia Nestler asked for advice on distance meetings. Debbie Kaye asked about Council. Read this message for:

- Coronavirus advice
- Census 2020
- LWVOR Council 2020 will be a Distance Meeting
- Privacy and Cybersecurity study news, printing and presentations
- Civil Rights, elections, and coronavirus

The Board asked for guidance in these areas. We have posted relevant resources on our website for the following:

- VIRTUAL MEETINGS: Online and Phone
- VIDEO BROADCASTS & LIVE-STREAMING: Debates
- FILE and DOCUMENT SHARING: Working Remotely

Let’s wrap up on a happy note at the end of this letter, our 100th Anniversary events! See below and please keep reading. Thank you! Becky

Coronavirus: COVID-19

You cannot become immune to COVID-19 by drinking water, but it looks like legitimate advice on social media. Advice seems to be everywhere; beware of unreliable sources. Be sure to use and share trustworthy sources.

- OHA (Oregon Health Authority) Updates, reports, and advice.
- This links to helpful videos, the Governor’s Executive orders, global, US, and local conditions, and more.
- CDC on Coronavirus (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention) What we need to know: symptoms, older adults with medical conditions, and prepare your family. Also community resources, and tracking.
- WHO Q&A on coronaviruses (COVID-19) (World Health Organization) This is a great FAQ resource.
- Governor Brown’s Newsroom Press releases by date, many linking to more information.
Census 2020

Forms are in the USPS and ours arrived! Our League/Library collaboration is either in flux or on hold since many of our libraries have closed for the time being. Our widely anticipated Sixth Congressional District may be in peril if census turnout is suppressed for lack of encouragement and assistance. We should have updates in the VOTER.

LWVOR Council and Distance Meetings

Our state board reviewed the necessary business for Council and decided to conduct that as a virtual meeting. It will be planned for/near the scheduled time we were to have met in Newport, between May 15-17. We must ratify the FY 2020-2020 budget and the nominating committee will present a slate for elections for these positions: Treasurer, Second Vice President, and two Directors. We have postponed rescheduling decisions with so much unknown. The hotel has been gracious in extending leniency.

Privacy and Cybersecurity Today News

Our Privacy and Cybersecurity Today study is posted with a glossary, recommended reading, consensus questions, Cyber Hygiene Guidelines, and now, with a video presentation, with many thanks to LWVPDX! The board discussed printing and approved printing paper copies for LWVOR members. We will send an email to all members announcing this, with links to the materials, including the option to reply to the message and opt not to receive a paper copy (go paperless!—for the environment’s sake).

Cybersecurity and privacy are civil rights issues; Coronavirus is another example. When you read the study, think of how “contact tracing” is necessary to track Covid-19 exposure. It would be helpful, yet intrusive, to use cell phone geo-location tracking for coronavirus. Privacy is a fundamental concern: should it be an absolute right? The study committee looks forward to getting your consensus replies.
Elections and Debates, Coronavirus and Civil Rights

Public health declarations are already affecting our elections. Vote by mail will become more important and our public candidate events are already being revised or cancelled. We are looking at the challenge of collecting initiative signatures.

Vote by Mail Senator Wyden is proposing to mandate national emergency vote-by-mail. The need for it is clear as two states, Louisiana and now Georgia, have delayed their presidential primaries. Oregon has vote-by-mail, with ballot return envelope postage now pre-paid. The League still strongly recommends using the ballot dropboxes instead, as many already do, to keep costs down.

Debates and Events LWVOR Voter Service is adapting by trying to change to virtual debates with distance audiences, looking for ways to give audiences the opportunity to ask questions and listen to candidates remotely. This is challenging as public meeting size limits are getting smaller. The studios we are working with are concerned about how they will sanitize their equipment and some candidates are already cancelling for these much smaller events. Please see our recommendations on Broadcasts and Live-streaming.

Our challenge, to inform our voters, still needs to be addressed. We are actively searching for the best solutions, even as our options are changing. This is a dynamic situation and we will need to be patient and also alert to rapid developments.

“Social Distancing” and Initiative Petitions There is no clear initiative process guidance to observe public health declarations. Signature gatherers would be passing clipboards and pens from hand to hand. Using e-petitions that could be downloaded, printed, signed, and mailed in could be a solution but it needs clarification. The League has submitted formal comments to the state Elections Division about potential confusion regarding e-petitions.

LWVOR opposed SB 761 Enrolled (2019); see our testimony here. The League is still concerned the bill could be interpreted to require that each signature sheet be accompanied by the fully reprinted initiative, which could run to dozens of pages.

Video Broadcasts and Livestreaming Debates

View our guidelines for videos and livestreaming.
What do we do for public events like debates that should not be in-person gatherings now? We have assembled help! Our Facebook state League Leaders and New Media groups have been asking for help and you can find our assembled advice here. This includes tutorial links, apps you can use and how to find them, accessories you will need, with advice, policy and disclaimer examples, and more.

**Update:** Since information was collected on Saturday, as mentioned above, we are looking at how to meet entirely separately, a technological challenge. Your input is welcome. Please see the discussions in Facebook League New Media and State League Leaders Groups if you have expertise to share.

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**Distance Meetings**

View our guidelines for virtual meetings.

Leagues nationally are facing how to keep in touch but not meet in person! We have been comparing notes with other League leaders. Please see our recommendations for local Leagues here.

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**Working Remotely**

View our guidelines for file and document sharing.

League volunteers clearly need to consider meeting remotely, sharing screens and documents. This is more environmentally friendly, prudent, and now critically necessary with health concerns. View our recommendations, with input from League leaders around the country—especially LWVUS, thanks to Christina Davis. Your updates and input are welcome for all of these! We hope to revise them to include good advice as we receive it and programs continue to improve.

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**Our 100th Anniversary and March 7th Century Celebration**

Please join our board in extending hearty Congratulations and warmest gratitude to our “Century Celebration” Committee! There will be more on this in the VOTER and photographs will be shared online. There may now be some uncertainty for our upcoming local
League events. Please let’s keep each other posted!

Thank you for reading and please keep in touch! Warmly, sharing a virtual cup of tea, wishing resilience for all of us!

Becky Gladstone
President, LWVOR

Connect with us

A printable version of this newsletter can be found on our website here.