

# The Voter

*A Publication of the League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County*

Summer 2021  
Vol. 63, No. 1



## Remaining Nonpartisan in Hyper-partisan Times

*by Virginia Kase Solomón, CEO of LWVUS*

*Note: This is a reprint of a post on the national League website.*

*The League of Women Voters of the United States is proud to be nonpartisan, neither supporting nor opposing candidates or political parties at any level of government, but always working on vital issues of concern to members and the public.*

So many issues today are framed in partisan terms that it can feel impossible to communicate at all without being accused of taking a side. "If you believe this, then you must be a progressive." "If you oppose that, then you align with conservatives." Being painted into ideological corners because of a stance our organization takes is not a new phenomenon, but it continues to be one that undermines a vibrant democracy: discussion, discourse, and listening to other points of view are what makes democracy work.

More than 100 years ago, the League of Women Voters of the U.S. was founded to be a nonpartisan voice for American women who wanted free, fair, and open elections, above all else. Our founders believed that voters must always have the facts, no matter how difficult those facts could be to accept, especially when it challenges one's deeply held beliefs about a candidate or political party. Our founders were attacked for taking positions rooted in fact back then, and today, not much has changed. League leaders continue to face this challenge and often stand accused of being partisan for our efforts to advance democracy.

### ISSUES ARE NOT PARTISAN

The League's advocacy work is issued based, and we arrive at our positions based on careful study and input from our members in communities across the country. We never derive our positions from politicians, and even when candidates or parties support the same issue, we never endorse them. Issues may evolve over the years, but our allegiance will always be first and foremost to the voters. If a party changes their position on an issue, that doesn't mean the League has to change our position to remain neutral. And one politician taking a similar position to the League on any one issue does not make the issue or the League partisan.

However, in this hyper-partisan environment, political connections and assumption are made that simply aren't accurate. Supporting the democratic processes of registering eligible voters and casting and counting ballots is seen by some as subverting one political party, even though these are sacred tools of our democracy. Likewise, empowering voters who previously have been left out of the process and supporting the anti-racism movement does not mean we are in alliance with one ideological segment of American government; rather, it means we are doing what we were founded to do: stand up for what is right.

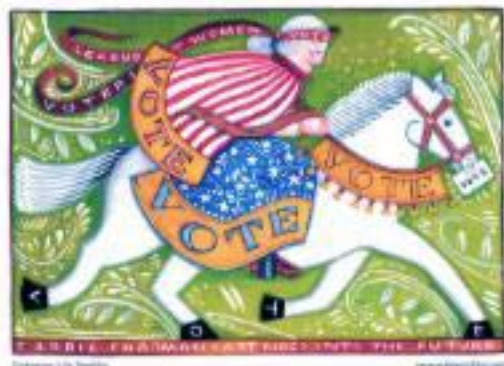
Wanting every eligible voter to have equal access to the ballot box is not partisan. Wanting a robust democracy in which everyone has

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*August 26 is Women's Equality Day celebrating women's suffrage. 101 years later we continue the work for universal suffrage and assure everyone's ability to exercise their right to vote.*



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## Contact Information

President: Heather Kelly  
The Voter Editor: Allison Feher

League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County  
1511 3rd Avenue, Suite 900  
Seattle, WA 98101

Phone: 206-329-4848  
info@seattlelww.org  
www.lwvskc.org

Online Office Hours: Weekdays, 9:30 a.m. – 3:30 p.m. Please call in advance if you need to visit the office.

League of Women Voters of Washington  
1511 3rd Avenue, Suite 900  
Seattle, WA 98101  
206-622-8961  
lwvwa@lwvwa.org  
www.lwvwa.org

League of Women Voters of the United States  
202-429-1965  
lwv@lwv.org  
www.lwv.org

### Postal Regulations

The Voter is published monthly except June and August by the League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County.

Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, WA.

Postmaster:  
Send address changes to The Voter:  
1511 3rd Avenue, Suite 900  
Seattle, WA 98101  
The Voter (ISSN 0888-8841)

### MISSION STATEMENT

The League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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## Connecting with LWV Leadership

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*by Heather Kelly, President*

And we're off! It's July, which means we have a new Board, a new election cycle ahead, and a new set of opportunities to embrace. As you'll see throughout this edition of *The Voter*, our Board has jumped in with two feet, tackling an endorsement decision and voter registration in just the first two weeks of July! I really appreciate the chance to work with this thoughtful and talented group.



As we build relationships on the Board, some of our wise members have suggested we reflect on the question, "Why should people join the League?" There are several tried and true answers, from our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy to our reputation for providing balanced nonpartisan voter education for over 100 years.


However, the League faces challenges to recruiting new members. For starters, organizations engaged in voter education and outreach are abundant (thank goodness!). People who want speak out against urgent issues like climate change and racial justice may gravitate towards advocacy groups specializing in those topics. Our 100-year history may hold less interest for people than a statement of who we are now. In short, it's time to refine our pitch.

So who are we now? I see a community of passionately opinionated, highly skilled political activists spanning multiple generations, united behind a common cause. But a more discerning prospective member might ask who we are to one another. Are we friends? Colleagues? Mentors? Students? Are we cheerleaders or competitors? Do we find ways to teach instead of criticize? Do we give others a chance to lead, even when we think we could do it better ourselves?

Our organization is strongest when we nurture our relationships with one another. As the threat of COVID wanes and we can gather together safely, let's find new ways to lift each other up! Stay tuned for new opportunities to cultivate camaraderie, and please send along your ideas too. I don't know about you, but I am so ready to be together again!

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## STAY HEALTHY, STAY STRONG, STAY INFORMED!

As the League does its part to help manage the spread of COVID-19, *The Voter* will be distributed in digital format only—all print production and mailing of the newsletter is suspended except to those without email. This is an interactive PDF, meaning you can click on hyperlinks (in **bold blue font**) and page numbers to navigate the document. The  symbol at the bottom of each page will take you to the top of the newsletter.

## Remaining Nonpartisan, cont'd from p. 1

an equal voice and equal representation is not partisan. Wanting to see more elected officials that reflect the diverse makeup of our country is not partisan – it is American.

No party has a claim on any particular issue. Sometimes a candidate or political party agrees with our position—they may even champion them—but that doesn't make the issue or the League partisan. We have seen an evolution of popular support and public opinion shift on issues over time, and the League has reevaluated and shifted priorities—but we have never compromised our values.

### NONPARTISAN DOES NOT MEAN APOLITICAL

In the hundred years of the League's existence, we have endured challenges to our democratic principles, policies, and practices. We witnessed in live video the violation and prevention of rights to

*There shall be no barriers to full participation in [the League of Women Voters of the United States] on the basis of gender, gender identity, ethnicity, race, native or indigenous origin, age, generation, sexual orientation, culture, religion, belief system, marital status, parental status, socioeconomic status, language, accent, ability status, mental health, educational level or background, geography, nationality, work style, work experience, job role function, thinking style, personality type, physical appearance, political perspective or affiliation and/or any other characteristic that can be identified as recognizing or illustrating diversity.*

*—Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy, passed by LWVUS members in 2020*

American citizens due to racial and structural inequities, and the growing anti-racism movement responding to it. We've observed

the pandemic obstacles faced and overcome by our election processes, resulting in the secure, effective elections across the country.

League members are not a monolith. We represent opinions and positions that can be found across the American political spectrum. What brings us together is our commitment to voter empowerment—especially empowering women voters—and defending democracy. Standing up for these values is not a partisan narrative but a way to advance inclusion.

As we do this, we must ask ourselves and others within our election and democratic systems if we are walking the talk and prioritizing diversity, equity and inclusion within our own organizations. Are we living our values, and are those values aligned with the ideals that we have as a country?

This self-reflection may be painful. It's difficult to acknowledge that actions taken in the past with the best of intentions may have been hurtful or undermined the values we claim to honor. It will require us to be open, transparent, and willing to admit when we are wrong.

### DEMOCRACY IS A CIVIL RIGHTS ISSUE

Webster's definition of democracy:

a: government by the people

especially: rule of the majority

b: a government in which the supreme power is vested in the people and exercised by them directly or indirectly through a system of representation usually involving periodically held free elections.

Our mission to 'empower voters and defend democracy' has not changed in our 100 years. What has changed is the need to defend democracy, especially in the face of voter suppression. There is a wealth of misinformation out there that is aimed to

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## Remaining Nonpartisan, cont'd from p. 4

divide us as a nation and undermine our democracy. We have to stand up to this attack on our democratic ideals, regardless of what some may say.

While it may be a challenge, especially at the state and local level, to avoid the appearance of partisanship when publicly addressing racial injustice in this heightened climate, we must. We may be accused of being partisan in those moments, but we must stand on the side of justice. It is our moral obligation to demand a more just and equitable world for people of color in our communities.

We will continue to uphold our nonpartisan values for fairness, justice, and equity because they form the foundation of a representative democracy. If we don't strive to dismantle and improve the systems and structures that exclude individuals from their democratic rights to vote and participate, we will never be able to achieve a "democracy where every person has the desire, the right, the knowledge and the confidence to participate."

Whether you identify politically as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, Libertarian, conservative, liberal, moderate, progressive or another political perspective, you have a place in this democracy and a place within the League, as long as you are committed to our belief in an inclusive democracy. While we may disagree on how we accomplish it, if you value democracy, then you must also value human rights, social

justice, and equity.

## WE CAN BRIDGE THE PARTISAN DIVIDE

In 2020, we marked the 100th anniversary of the 19th Amendment, which afforded women in the United States the right to vote. However, even then, women of color were largely excluded from the movement that brought about the amendment. It wasn't until the passage of the 1965 Voting Rights Act that people of color could fully exercise their right to vote and our country began to reflect the values of all its people. We've made strides in the past 100 years, but we have so much more work to do, especially when it comes to fairness, justice, and equity for all.

The League will continue to fight for the nonpartisan, anti-racism issues and policies we have worked to advance for a century. We will work to elevate more diverse voices from within our membership and our communities. With our partners, the League will strive to create a stronger, more inclusive, just, and equitable democracy for American voters—a place where everyone has a voice.

As we move forward, we remain open to conversations about our history and the ways we can improve our democracy. Let's do this work together and make the next 100 years a century of real diversity, inclusion, and equity in American elections and democracy.

[https://www.lvv.org/blog/remaining-nonpartisan-hyper-partisan-times?utm\\_source=MonthlyHighlights&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_campaign=0282021](https://www.lvv.org/blog/remaining-nonpartisan-hyper-partisan-times?utm_source=MonthlyHighlights&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=0282021).



# Summer Action Update

by Heather Kelly and Mary Taylor

## **Best Starts for Kids Endorsement**

The changing over of the Board has not slowed down our advocacy one bit! Our new Action Chair, Lev Elson-Schwab, formed a subcommittee with the mighty Dianne Ramsey, Mary Taylor, and Heather Kelly to compile an endorsement packet for the Best Starts for Kids ("BSK") levy renewal on the August ballot.

Formally known as King County Proposition No. 1, the levy renewal requests renewed funding for support of children, youth, families, and communities. If approved, the proposition would fund prevention and early intervention services and capital investments to promote health and well-being, including childcare; prenatal and newborn family services; youth development programs; social, emotional, and mental health supports; and homelessness prevention.

The original Best Starts levy, approved in 2015, imposed a first-year levy rate of \$0.14 per \$1,000 of a property's assessed value. The proposed renewal increases that rate to \$0.19, which is expected to more than double the current BSK funding from \$400M to \$873M.

2015 Endorsement: The LWV-SKC endorsed the BSK levy in 2015 with 2 concerns noted:

1. *Adequate oversight. There is not yet a provision for auditing the service providers other than an annual reporting.*
2. *Privacy Concerns. Some of the levy money is to be spent on data collection and research on children and their parents. It is important that this research be done with informed consent and that the data be kept confidential.*

2021 Endorsement Process: The endorsement subcommittee reviewed all information on BSK available on the King County website and King County Auditor reports, (2017, 2018, 2020). Members also exchanged emails with BSK staff. The subcommittee identified several key LWV-SKC Positions that both supported the levy, such as positions on Children, Children at Risk, Early Childhood Programs, and those that challenged support such as the requirements for sound Public/Private Partnerships, Government Coordination and Capital Improvement Projects.

Most of the information publicly available on BSK, was prepared by BSK staff or staff from County Departments tasked with administering the programs. Reports provide positive information on BSK accomplishments.

Subcommittee members found the data contained in the reports difficult to decipher. Linkage of expenditures to program outcomes was largely nonexistent. Also concerning to the subcommittee was the oversight of BSK strategies which appears to be the responsibility of the Children and Youth Advisory Board Regional Policy Committee (CYAB). Several members of the CYAB are employees or stakeholders of programs that receive levy funds creating possible conflicts of interest. A sampling of agenda and minutes did not reflect robust oversight of the programs by the CYAB.

The subcommittee provided a report to the Board outlining the pros and cons of an endorsement. Concerns about lack of transparency and lax oversight combined with potential hardship for homeowners associated with another increase in property taxes led the subcommittee to recommend that the Board take a neutral stance.

## Best Starts, cont'd from p. 6

### July 3, 2021, Board Meeting Outcome

At the meeting, subcommittee members summarized their research, and all Board members in attendance expressed their views. Some were conflicted because of the burden of increased taxes while others noted that property taxes were relatively progressive. Several voiced their support for the levy conditioned on greater transparency, oversight, and increased availability of data. Overall, the Board focused on the good work being done with levy dollars and felt that, on the balance, the League should "not let the perfect be the enemy of the good." Several members opined that passing the levy would best meet the needs of society overall under our positions. After this robust and thoughtful discussion, the Board voted to endorse the levy renewal (all but one vote in favor). The League is forming a standing committee to support oversight of levy dollars. Please reach out to [action@seattlelww.org](mailto:action@seattlelww.org) to join!

### Testimony Supporting Ranked Choice Voting

Our current single-member, winner-take-all election system rewards the candidate with the most votes regardless of how well they represent their electorate. This system has led to problems like lack of representation for minority groups and winners who lack majority support. Ranked-choice voting ("RCV") is an alternate election method supported by LWVWA that reduces these issues while promoting voter turnout.

Thanks to the ever-watchful Kathy Sakahara, the League was able to join forces with other pro-democracy organizations to comment in support of RCV, which the King County Councilmembers proposed to put on the November ballot. Lev Elson-Schwab testified before the Committee of the Whole on June 16, 2021, followed by Heather Kelly at their July 7 meeting. To hear Lev's testimony,

click [here](#) and fast forward to 4:52. To listen to Heather, click [here](#) and fast forward to 23:53. While the Council ultimately opted not to put the issue to the voters this year, we strengthened our relationships with other organizations through our advocacy.

### Rally "For the People"

On July 12, the League responded to a call to action from LWVUS by co-sponsoring Deadline for Democracy, a rally in support of the For the People Act. After so many months apart, it was a joy to come together to speak out against voter suppression and gerrymandering. A dozen League members braved the heat to register voters and connect with the community in City Hall Plaza. Heather Kelly was honored to share the stage with Representative Pramila Jayapal and a host of talented musicians and activists.

Rally participants heard speakers' personal stories of voting, fighting for civil rights, and holding their elected officials accountable. It was a powerful reminder that every voter has something to teach us about how best to fulfill our mission. The League thanks co-sponsors Black Lives Matter Seattle and Seattle Indivisible for including us in this event.



Photo credit: Lupe Carlos III

## City Climate Action Committee Update: A Breakthrough on Climate Emissions Inventories

by MAK Mitchell, CCAC Chair

### Context:

The Environmental Committee has been appropriately renamed "The City Climate Action Committee" (CCAC) with a new webpage (<https://www.seattlelwv.org/city-climate-action-committee.html>). We now have a more targeted mission aligned with League values: *"We are working to increase the democratic engagement of residents of King County in order to successfully implement each city's climate action goals."*

All of our members now are trained Climate Action Guides or co-guides attached to one of 20 cities where the League has resident members. These 20 cities account for 75% of the county's carbon emissions.

We formed this committee last April, partnered and trained with King County Climate Initiatives Office last summer. We influenced the content of the county's Strategic Climate Action Plan and Climate Action Toolkit, resulting in a rich, expanded section on equity. Our partnership with King County was recently recognized by Council Chair, Claudia Balducci:

*The LWV Environmental Committee has been deeply involved in the promotion of the Toolkit. The LWV EC sees the Toolkit's emphasis on resident and stakeholder input resonating strongly with the League's focus on democracy through informed participation in government. [Executive staff] have met with the LWV EC multiple times for trainings on the Toolkit and Return on Climate Tool as they seek to deploy "Climate Guides" for King County cities. These climate guides offer to support cities' efforts to develop a climate action plan. This partnership was an unplanned, but very positive development that supports the education and use of the Toolkit. [Executive staff] also presented the*

*Toolkit as part of an online forum hosted by the LWV on December 3. The video is available online: ([https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=wxHhXxXeQ\\_A](https://www.youtube.com/watch?app=desktop&v=wxHhXxXeQ_A)).*

We have spent the pandemic year in weekly meetings focused on developing city climate action. Early months were spent "negotiating entry" with city councils as LWVS-KC Climate Action guides. Recent months have been spent customizing to the needs of these 20 cities with very different starting points and needs, and then creating events to engage and educate the public. We meet weekly as a committee of the whole for cross-city sharing and meet alternately as five small teams (organized by county council district geography) focused on collaborative troubleshooting for our cities.

### Breakthrough News:

A necessary first step of the Climate Action Toolkit is conducting a "climate emissions inventory" for each city to understand the source of its emissions, prioritize goals, and measure their progress. About a dozen cities have not conducted an inventory, typically because of lack of funding and lack of understanding about the process. As we educated officials about the importance of this step, cities asked for our help in securing free public contracts or grants with organizations who conduct such inventories.

Over the past six months, we encouraged our cities to let the county administration know about their search for resources to conduct these emissions inventories. The county listened, asked questions, and reached out to some of the council members we identified. The county shared our desire to create a solution for these cities and promised they would experiment by requesting

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## Climate, cont'd from p. 8

proposals in multiple cities at a reduced price. A consultant was selected to work on inventories for any of the 39 cities in King County with a delivery date of January 2022.

The King County-Cities Climate Collaboration (K4C) partner recently agreed to join the county in funding all emission inventories. This means that any city wanting such an inventory conducted in their city can secure a top-notch climate inventory free of charge. We are grateful to have a county partner who listens to grassroots voices and responds so proactively!

### Our Seattle-Roll Out:

Sometimes in life, we need to go slow to later go fast. That is the case with our plan to open Seattle to our climate action work by city council districts. We have interviewed LWVS-KC members who have expressed interest in joining the work in Seattle and plan to invite them to join us in the fall to work on three pilot climate projects led by city council members.

Alexis-Juday-Marshall is Deputy Chair of the Committee and the team leader of the Seattle project. She is meeting with each council member to hear how their goals for their district can be met proactively by democratically engaging the public. So far, all council members she has met with are leaning heavily towards transportation projects, with building codes coming in as a close second.

Once we reach clear agreements about high priority, grassroots projects with three council members and their key staff, we will be soliciting LWV members who reside in Seattle to join us.

We also have had other non-profits express interest in joining our effort—we are working on setting criteria for those partnerships since we can't do this work alone. We



will ultimately be open to all interested city residents because of our democratic engagement goals and equity values.

We will report in the fall *Voter* on our amazing progress in Lake Forest Park with a full day Climate Town Hall, Federal Way with adoption of the K4C agreement and the beginning of a climate action plan, and Mercer Island, with a productive website, poster campaign and organized team working towards a climate plan.

### Join?

If you reside in one of these county districts and would like to join our effort, contact the Team Lead:

North End Cities – County District # 1  
Lee Keim, leekeim@icloud.com

Northeast End Cities – County District # 3  
Marty Gibbons, mgibbins@lwvwa.org

Seattle Central Cities – County District # 2, 4  
Callie Ridolphi, callie@ridolfi.com

East Side Cities – County District # 6  
Susan Vossler, vosslers66@gmail.com

South End Cities – County Districts #5, 7, 8, 9  
Cathy Dormaier, clcathy@skynetbb.com

# DEI – Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

## DEI Learning Lab – Critical Race Theory and New Leadership Course

*by Heather Kelly, President*

After a brief hiatus during which I moved to a new home and assumed the presidency of the League (gulp!), our discussion group has shifted its structure a bit. First, we have been communicating more frequently by email, including having robust discussions and debates on complex issues like critical race theory. Our group is in the nascent stages of researching laws and state-level regulations popping up around the country that either ban or limit teachers' ability to discuss racism and/or sexism in the classroom.

When the discussion group met in May, there were five states that passed laws banning or restricting how teachers can discuss racism and/or sexism in the classroom. That number is now eleven, and there are 26 states that have introduced/enacted such laws ([source](#)). This is an area where local and state Leagues can coordinate in opposition to these bills, which are grounded in fear-mongering and misinformation.

Perhaps we can help inspire this effort? I'm hoping to get volunteers to pick a state and research:

- 1) What content does the law actually ban/restrict in the classroom? Click link above, then scroll down to state for a link to the bill. Tell us what you think it says!
- 2) Does the bill specify grounds for the ban/restriction? If so, what are they?
- 3) Has the League in that state taken any steps to oppose the law, or do they plan to? If so, how can we support that effort? If not, would they be open to a friendly exchange where we share what we've learned about CRT in their state and hear from them too?

So far the following states are claimed:

Lisa Nelson - Texas, Heather Kelly - Idaho, Lauren Pixley - Oklahoma, Grace Popoff - North Carolina

Still available are the following:

- States that have enacted laws: Arizona, Tennessee, South Carolina, New Hampshire, Iowa
- States where bills are pre-filed: Alabama, Kentucky
- States with bills moving through the legislature: Wisconsin, Michigan, Ohio, Pennsylvania

Email me at [president@seattlelwv.org](mailto:president@seattlelwv.org) if you want in on this research project! We will determine a timeframe after I get a better sense of the group's interest level.



# Summer Voter Services Update

## August 3 Primary Election

Ballots were mailed on July 14 and you should have received yours. If you didn't receive it or the Voters' Pamphlet produced by King County Elections, contact them at [elections@kingcounty.gov](mailto:elections@kingcounty.gov) or 206-296-VOTE (8683). You can also find lots of information about what's on and how to prepare and return your ballot on the website: [KingCounty.gov/elections](http://KingCounty.gov/elections)

## Candidate Forums

The First Hill unit has partnered with the Residents' Council of Horizon House for many years to present candidate forums for races that voters in Captiol Hill neighborhood want to hear about. Unfortunately, being held in person meant that there wasn't room to open up the audience beyond the residents of Horizon House. However, the silver lining of the pandemic requirement to switch to online format means that the audience is now open to all who can watch the YouTube videos!

The sessions below may have been held already, but the links still allow viewing of the recording at any time.

Seattle City Council Positions 8 and 9

Thursday, July 8 at 7:30 p.m. <https://youtu.be/uB2Vpzo9VCc>

King County Executive Candidates, King County Proposition 1 – "Best Start for Kids", and Seattle School Board Candidates for District 5

Monday, July 12 at 7:30 p.m. <https://youtu.be/m9sgZBpbQJ0>

Candidates Forum for Seattle Mayor

Monday, July 19 at 7:30 p.m. <https://youtu.be/pAjfp9qvX0c>

Looking for good information about your ballot?  
**Go to [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org)!**

This League run website allows you to customize your ballot guide and compare candidates you select side-by-side. Primary election information will be available starting July 11.



## Redistricting

We have been following the actions of the census and redistricting over the past two years; the changes to the maps for state legislative and national congressional districts are being discussed avidly. Sessions organized by Alison McCaffree of LWVWA have been fascinating and incredible. Voters are encouraged to share their thoughts on how lines should be changed. If you are interested do be sure to check out more info and videos on the state League's website: <https://lwvwa.org/speakup>.

But did you know (or remember) that we need to redraw the lines in King County and the City of Seattle too? **We co-sponsored a listening session with King County's Districting Committee on July 21. Details on the site: [KingCounty.gov/districting](https://kingcounty.gov/districting).**

Then Seattle will also do it's first needed redistricting next year. When the City Council was changed in 2015 from all at-large seats to 7 districts (plus 2 at large). Do you like how those districts got drawn for the initial proposal? Voters couldn't change them then, it was just a yes/no vote. So starting this fall the city plans to gather public input. We will publish more info as it becomes available.



*Speak Up School introduced us to Redistricting and how to testify at public hearings. If you didn't get a chance to attend you can watch videos of portions of the sessions. See our past events page and the state League's site.*

## Registering high school students virtually

by Sarah Phillips

Voter Services has a slide presentation to register and pre-register new voters. North King County Unit has developed and refined a virtual registration process. A Northshore and a Lake Washington school district high school have used it, registering about 25 students total.



The presentation has six parts:

- Who votes and why voting is important
- The process of registration online, step by step
- Resources to help decide who to vote for
- Ballots
- Returning the ballot
- An invitation to join the LWV Youth Voting Ambassador program

It is interesting to register students via Zoom or Teams. They turn off their video and engaging them is a challenge. Hats off to

the teachers and students who have been teaching and learning online this year!

We did run into a pandemic specific issue. Students who got their permit, license, or WA ID during the pandemic don't have a signature on file. They have to use a paper form to register. However, the King County Elections Office allows the student to scan or photograph their completed voter registration form and email it to the Elections Office or the Secretary of State.

For a copy of the presentation contact [voterservices@seattlelwv.org](mailto:voterservices@seattlelwv.org).



# Membership

## Meet the New Board Members!

Please give a warm welcome to our incoming Seattle-King County Board Members. Some have already jumped in; other are developing their focus. You can read more about them in their Annual Meeting bios and we will share more as the summer progresses.

They join now President Heather Kelly, Treasurer Marilee Fuller; Education Fund Treasurer Katie Dudley and Directors Chelsea Jordan - Voter Services Chair, Lauren Pixley - Volunteer Coordinator, and Adele Reynolds - Program Chair.



Top row, left to right:

Kathy Sakahara, Mary Taylor, Sarah Beth Miller, Meg Van Wyk,

Bottom row:

Lisa Nelson, Tania Hino (above), Barbara Tengtio (below), Lev Elson-Schwab,

Sara Thein (above), Barbara Erickson (below)

## Units Unite Us

by Sarah Beth Miller

Hello, everyone!

I'm Sarah Beth Miller, and I am going to be the new Unit Liaison for the League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County. I'm taking over from the exuberant and irreplaceable Roslyn Duffy (whose shoes will never be filled!). Incoming Board President Heather Kelly proposed that I introduce myself through this short piece in the Voter, and she suggested that I reflect on what my Unit means to me.

Though I'm a long-time Seattle resident, I've been a League member for only 3 years now, and I still have lots of things to figure out. My South Seattle Unit has provided a solid support for learning, exploring and trying out ideas. Some in our Unit are very experienced, having been Leaguers since the early '70s. Some, like me, are neophytes. When we come together as a group, we are feisty, friendly, funny, smart, and vocal. All of us care deeply about our dynamic, diverse South Seattle community. And I think that we have been "walking the walk" in practicing the LWV Mission of empowering voters and defending democracy in that community.

Our South Seattle Unit made Voter Registration our focus in the fall of 2019. We learned the ins & outs of voter registration in Washington State. When Covid hit, we collaborated with other Units (shout out to the North Seattle Unit!) and learned to adapt to on-line voter registration. Through Zoom, we trained South Seattle community members to register more voters on-line. Like many other League Units, we got used to holding our meetings on Zoom, while tolerating internet freezes and unreliable audio. But in addition to conducting our

LWV business remotely, we also celebrated remotely: for Halloween we came as witches and for the winter holidays, we toasted one another with mugs of Christmas cheer.

Last Saturday, however, came the REAL celebration: the South Seattle Unit met IN PERSON for our traditional, year-end pot-luck brunch, fondly referred to as "The Fracas". As usual, the Fracas was held on Hilke Faber's glorious tree-top deck. Also as usual, the day was sunny, the birds were singing, and the brunch was delicious. But this year the Fracas was more than just a celebration. After a year of Covid, lockdowns, and uncertainty, this spring's Fracas was a (laid-back) ceremony of renewal. The Fracas is always delightful, but this year there was an undeniable undercurrent of joy. Joy in seeing one another whole and in real time, and joy in knowing that:



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## Units Unite Us, cont'd from p. 14

- we're still here
- we're vital, in ourselves and in our purpose.
- we are justly proud of our contributions, past and present, to our mission of empowering voters and defending democracy
- we are open to learning, experimenting and exploring
- we are rich in knowledge, experience, creativity and probity
- we are connected and interdependent.

As this year ends and a new one begins, I hope that we can continue to cherish and tend our Units and keep them vital.

To paraphrase Roslyn: Through our units, we are the grassroots of the League and its mission. Our future depends on all of US, united – as we continue to help make democracy work.

I look forward to working with you all!

## Annual Meeting Recap

Zoom meetings are getting to be old, and many of us want to be in-person! Hopefully next year we will be able to run a hybrid meeting that has the best of both worlds.

We kicked off with special recognition for Carrie Chapman Catt award winner Stephanie Cirkovich and Alice Paul award winner MAK Mitchell. We give warm thanks to these members for their amazing work for League.

Then participants considered the slate of Board nominees, the coming year's proposed program and budget, and an amendment to the bylaws permitting virtual meetings. All motions passed, and just like that, we're on to another year! Thanks to all of you who braved technical hurdles to join us.

## Call for Member Feedback

League Members,

We need your feedback! The Seattle-King County League of Women Voters has been asked to endorse Charter Amendment 29, "Compassion Seattle" (<https://compassionseattle.org>), a campaign to change Seattle's city charter in response to homelessness. We have also been encouraged to take a position in opposition.

This amendment has received significant support and will likely be on the ballot this November. However, it has garnered significant opposition as well (<https://www.aclu-wa.org/news/statement-aclu-washington-proposed-seattle-charter-amendment-29>).

To help determine whether the Seattle-King County League will endorse, stay neutral or oppose "Compassion Seattle", we are requesting that members weigh in with their thoughts. Feedback that cites one or more local, state and/or national League public policy positions, considers the DEI impact, shares personal experiences, and/or includes citations to evidence-based publications from reputable sources are particularly appreciated. Local, state and national league positions can be found here (<https://www.seattlelwv.org/advocacy.html>).

Please submit your feedback to [action@seattlelwv.org](mailto:action@seattlelwv.org) by Wednesday, 4 August, 2021.

Thank you very much!

Lev Elson-Schwab, Action Chair

## Welcome to ClubExpress!

Look for our new website to arrive this summer!

LWVS-KC is transitioning to a website and member management system called ClubExpress. This platform will allow us to consolidate administration of our website, member and donor databases, communications, events, finances, volunteering, and more into one program.

As a League member you'll see:

- A new, easy-to-navigate website
- Clear pathways for visitors to join, donate, and register for events
- Updated news and content designed to inform and engage our community
- Increased visibility for the vital work of our Committees and Units
- A members-only area of the website with new opportunities to connect and engage with other League members

Future integration with the LWVUS Roster and Per-Member-Payment systems will save our local League time and money. We are already benefiting from the power of Leagues working together as we implement best practices identified by other Leagues participating in the LWV|ClubExpress Roundtable.

Our new website will come with a new address to emphasize that we are the League for all of King County: <https://www.lwvskc.org>. Once the site is up and running, you'll receive an email welcoming you to ClubExpress and letting you know that you now have a member account on the new system. It will also ask you to reset your password and select a username.

We are so looking forward to sharing this new platform with you. Development of the new website is underway and we plan to launch later this summer. Look for updates in weekly emails and on social media as we get closer. Please rest assured that we will be here to help you make the most of the new site. If you have any questions or suggestions, please don't hesitate to reach out to Lisa Nelson at [webmaster@lwvskc.org](mailto:webmaster@lwvskc.org).

Allison Feher, Heather Kelly, Lisa Nelson

ClubExpress Transition Team

### We Want Your Input!

We'd love to hear your ideas on what to include in our new website. If you have suggestions, please complete this brief questionnaire. Thank you!

<https://forms.gle/5VtQ8qkncaNM9HFD7>



## Summer Book Club Selections

by Roslyn Duffy, Kay Kite, and Sarah Miller

We are suggesting two important books for summer '21.

### Summer Book Club Selection #1

*The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Profit Together* by Heather McGhee

Many white Americans view race as a zero-sum game. There's an us and a them and what's good for them is bad for us. This rationale animates our public policies even today, when those who benefit from our country's drastic economic inequality sell the zero-sum story to block public policies even today, when those who benefit from our country's drastic economic inequality sell the zero-sum story to block public support for any collective action that benefits us all, from universal healthcare to living wages.

1. Discuss Heather McGhee's definition of zero-sum theory. Why is this a harmful-and false-way of looking at race and public policy?
2. How does McGhee's background in economics influence her thinking about matters of race? How does she use this to show us a new way into, and out of, a centuries-long problem?
3. McGhee uses the example of public pools to illustrate how racism caused people to destroy something that could have benefited us all. Can you identify other "pools"-public goods that you see America going without-and how do you now think differently about the role racism might have played in this dynamic?
4. Why would laborers like the white auto workers McGhee describes refuse to unionize? How does this enhance your understanding of the "mystery" of people who vote against their own interests? What could we do today that would not only honor those women

from 100 years ago, but would be likely to make them feel honored?

Let's talk about the way McGhee's metaphor of "the drained pool" has led to the student debt crisis-and how it is influencing generations of Black and white college graduates.

1. What role did racism play in the housing crisis that led to the Great Recession? How could the subprime mortgage crisis and ensuing financial collapse have been stopped?
2. McGhee writes that white people are the most segregated people in America. What are some of the costs of continuing to segregate like this? What are some of the benefits of integration - both culturally and economically?
3. McGhee coined the phrase "The Solidarity Dividend" to describe Americans reaching across racial lines to work together for the common goods-and securing better lives for us all. Discuss some of the examples she shares where such solidarity has been achieved.
4. What women's issues show up in the lives of the various characters? Are those same issues part of today's landscape? How have they changed?
5. What's one thing you can do this week to work toward solidarity?
6. McGhee shares a memory of white classmates proudly stating that they are fiscally conservative and socially liberal but challenges the morality of fiscal conservatism when we can afford to eliminate poverty. Do you agree with McGhee? Why or why not? How can you best explain this concept to peers or family members who might also think of themselves as "fiscally conservative but socially liberal"? What moved you most in reading this?
7. What are some ways white people can work to challenge zero-sum thinking?

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## Summer Book, cont'd from p. 17

### Summer Book Club Selection #2

*How Democracies Die* by Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt

In *How Democracies Die*, Levitsky and Ziblatt detail the ways in which the demise of Latin American and European democracies throughout the twentieth century can help readers understand that the United States is not immune to the threat of a democratic collapse.

1. After reading the book, what do you think is the greatest danger facing democracy today? Which example do you think most closely models the trajectory the United States is on? Why?
2. How does each of the authors' "Four Key Indicators of Authoritarian Behavior" (23) conflict with the premise of a democratic government?
3. The rise to power of authoritarian leaders such as Mussolini, Chavez and Hitler was made possible "because establishment politicians overlooked the warning signs and either handed over power to them (Hitler and Mussolini) or opened the door for them." (19) Why might politicians partner with those whom they see as a threat? How does the failure of establishment politicians to distance themselves from extremist influence the opinions of the electorate?
4. How do the examples of authoritarian rulers' paths to power compare to that of Donald Trump? How are they different?
5. The United States has had popular demagogues before in figures such as Charles Lindbergh, Joseph McCarthy and George Wallace, yet none were able to become president. What was different in America in 2016 that allowed a populist outsider to succeed?
6. Within the party system, elected officials necessarily act as gatekeepers. Though the cases of Chavez and Hitler show how they can fail in this role, the authors also caution against relying on "the collective wisdom of voters" to preserve democracy, as they claim that this "assumes too much of democracy—that 'the people' can shape at will the kind of government they possess" (19). Do citizens in a democracy overestimate their influence? How has the rise of superdelegates changed the primary system? How, outside of elections, can the average citizen aid the gatekeeping process?
7. At what point in modern American history did the degradation of our democratic norms begin? Is it important for a political system to change and adapt as society evolves? Can (and should) new norms be established?
8. The authors argue that racial and religious realignment and growing economic inequality are the major forces driving the extreme political polarization in American. Do you agree?
9. Should future political leaders use social media as a platform for sharing ideas and opinions? Why or why not? What impact does this have on their party as a whole?
10. What are the lasting effects of the Trump presidency on the future of American democracy?
11. Were you surprised by anything you learned reading *How Democracies Die*? Did your opinions change after reading the book? Why or why not?

## Book Review by Vicky Downs



### **A Good Provider is One Who Leaves: One Family and Migration in the 21st Century**

*by Jason DeParle*

Thirty years ago DeParle was a “young journalist in Manila with an interest in shanty-towns.” He found a nun who helped him meet someone in the slums who would rent him floor space. He wanted to know what it was like to live in poverty and how did people survive?

Tita Comedas was sitting in her window selling sugar and eggs. Though Tita was silent, Sister Christine knew her, and spoke up: “He’ll pay to live with you. If you don’t want him, pass him on. Don’t cook anything special.” Though a little scared, as neither spoke more than a few words in the other’s language, Tita allowed DeParle to move in. He “stayed on and off for eight months and made a lifelong friend.”

Tita had quit school after sixth grade, moved to Manila as a teen, and found work in a factory. She married Emet, had children, and moved from one hovel to another. Soon Emet could barely pay for the food they needed on his \$50 dollar a month job. When one daughter developed congenital heart failure, he knew he had to go overseas.

He got an offer to clean pools in Saudi Arabia, where he made ten times the Filipino salary. He sent much of it home to his family. Now thousands of miles away, he suffered painfully from homesickness. Every time he saw a plane in the air, he ached to be on it going home.

Saudi Arabia was so different! He’d been “warned that the heat and police were equally severe: no Bibles, no booze, and no play-boys.” Workers who committed adultery could be jailed or flogged.

He settled into a dorm reserved for Filipinos that had hot and cold running water, toilets, and a cook. It was by far the best housing he’d known, but Emet was miserable. He’d been orphaned at a young age and all he wanted was his family. But “to support it, you had to leave.”

In Manila, Tita used the money from Emet. She stopped running out of fish and rice, and she bought an extra school uniform for each child so she didn’t have to wash and iron every day. She had her aching teeth removed and “treated herself to dentures.” Later,

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## Book Review, cont'd from p. 19

she bought a toilet and a television.

Meanwhile, her authority grew. When workmen brought the new toilet to the house, she told them where to put it, and Tita noticed her neighbors began to give her more respect. Le Parle says that at that time, it was mostly men who worked overseas, and more than three quarters of Filipino wives said they were stronger when their husbands were abroad.

Eventually all five of Emet and Tita's children became workers overseas. It started because they were desperate. Then it became a way of life. They loved their home near Manila, but money and a chance for a better life came from work done in another country. Tita had a grade school education, but her sister Peachy earned a doctorate with money her daughter made by cleaning cabins on a ship.

Tita's daughter Rosalie was able to enter nursing school thanks to money Emet earned cleaning Saudi swimming pools. Nurses earn more money and are more respected than nannies or maids. Eventually, with only basic English skills, she was able to work in America.

De Parle shows how and why Tita and her family would emigrate to work overseas. The author's empathy for this family helps us understand why emigration is both profoundly important and very difficult.

This book describes how the need to survive pushes people to leave home for a country they do not know, and how migration is changing the world we live in.



**Be a VOTER**

**Checklist for August 3rd Primary Election**

- ☐ **Register to Vote by July 26**  
Or register in person until August 3 (see [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov))
- ☐ **Learn about candidates & issues**  
Check your Voters Pamphlet  
Get more info about candidates at [Vote411.org](http://Vote411.org)
- ☐ **Mark your ballot choices**  
Ballots mailed mid-July
- ☐ **Sign the envelope**  
Make sure your signature matches your driver's license, state ID, or voter registration
- ☐ **Return your ballot**  
Use a ballot drop box until 8 p.m. on August 3  
Or use U.S. mail (recommend mailing by July 27)
- ☐ **See your ballot status after voting**  
Check your ballot status on [VoteWA.gov](http://VoteWA.gov) to make sure it's counted

**LWV** LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON

**VOTE 411**  
ELECTION INFORMATION YOU NEED





## Board & Committee Contacts

All contacts can be reached via [info@seattlelwv.org](mailto:info@seattlelwv.org) or 206-329-4848 if not otherwise noted

### Term Executive Committee

2021-23	President	Heather Kelly	<a href="mailto:president@seattlelwv.org">president@seattlelwv.org</a>
2021-22	1st VP / Communications	Kathy Sakahara	<a href="mailto:ksakahara@lwvwa.org">ksakahara@lwvwa.org</a>
2021-23	2nd VP	Barbara Tengtio	
2021-23	Secretary	Barbara Erickson	<a href="mailto:secretary@seattlelwv.org">secretary@seattlelwv.org</a>
2020-22	Treasurer	Marilee Fuller	<a href="mailto:treasurer@seattlelwv.org">treasurer@seattlelwv.org</a>

### Term Directors

2021-23	Action Chair	Lev Elson-Schwab	<a href="mailto:action@seattlelwv.org">action@seattlelwv.org</a>
2021-22	Member-at-Large	Tania Hino	
2021-23	Voter Service	Chelsea Jordan	<a href="mailto:voterservice@seattlelwv.org">voterservice@seattlelwv.org</a>
2021-23	Unit Liaison	Sarah Beth Miller	
2021-23	Technology	Lisa Nelson	<a href="mailto:webmaster@lwvskc.org">webmaster@lwvskc.org</a>
2020-22	Volunteer Coordinator	Lauren Pixley	<a href="mailto:lauren.d.pixley@gmail.com">lauren.d.pixley@gmail.com</a>
2021-23	Member-at-Large	Mary Taylor	
2020-22	Program	Adele Reynolds	<a href="mailto:adelereynolds@aim.com">adelereynolds@aim.com</a>
2021-23	Member-at-Large	Sara Thein	
2021-23	Member-at-Large	Meg Van Wyk	

*Note: All board members listed above are also members of the Education Fund Board*

### Education Fund Officers — same as above except Treasurer

Term			
2020-22	Treasurer	Katie Dudley	<a href="mailto:eftreasurer@seattlelwv.org">eftreasurer@seattlelwv.org</a>

### Term Nominating Committee

2021-22	Chair	Joanna Cullen	<a href="mailto:nominations@lwvskc.org">nominations@lwvskc.org</a>
2021-22		Jerri Gordon	
2021-22		Pat Griffith	

### Committee Chairs

Communications	Kathy Sakahara		<a href="mailto:communications@seattlelwv.org">communications@seattlelwv.org</a>
Economics & Taxation	Nora Leech		<a href="mailto:nleech2002@yahoo.com">nleech2002@yahoo.com</a>
Education	Joanna Cullen	206-329-8514	<a href="mailto:jfoxcullen@gmail.com">jfoxcullen@gmail.com</a>
Climate Change	MAK Mitchell	917-865-8423	<a href="mailto:mak@armak.us">mak@armak.us</a>
Investment Committee	Cindy Piennett	253-777-9864	<a href="mailto:cindypiennett@gmail.com">cindypiennett@gmail.com</a>
Observer Corps	Heather Kelly		<a href="mailto:action@seattlelwv.org">action@seattlelwv.org</a>