

# VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF PULLMAN

June 2009

The League of Women Voters of Pullman is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

## Officers

**Chair of the Board:** Sue Armitage, 332-4279; **Vice President:** Alice Schroeder, 334-2470; **Secretary:** Fran Law, 334-3002, Backup: Deb Olson, 332-2114; **Treasurer:** Joan Folwell, 332-3946; **Voter Service:** Karen Kiessling, 332-4755; **Voter Editor:** Susan Daniels, 332-6699; **Finance Drive Chair:** Lenna Harding, 332-7749; **Membership/Hospitality:** Judy Krueger, 332-8208; **Observer Corps Chair:** Lucy Linden, 332-2755; **Action Chair:** June Crawford, 332-7186; **TRY Editor:** Lucy Linden, 332-2755.

## Meetings

### July Planning Meeting

Date: Monday July 20, 9:30 a.m. - 12:30 a.m.

Program: Plan League activities for the coming year followed by a salad potluck.

Place: Home of Ruth Brown; see directions in Planning Meeting article below

Chair: Sue Armitage, 332-4279

## Board Meetings

### Monday June 22

Time: 3:00-5:00 p.m.

Place: Home of Natalie Clark, 220 SW Mountain View Dr.

## Other Events of Interest

### Johnson Parade

Date: July 4th, 10:00 a.m.

Program: March in the parade and hand out information

Place: Johnson, WA

Chair: Karen Kiessling, 332-4755

### Lentil Festival Table

Date: August 21, 6-9 p.m.

Program: Answer questions and hand out information

Place: LWV table  
Chair: Susan Daniels, 332-6699

### **Lentil Festival Parade**

Date: August 22, 11:00 a.m.  
Program: March in the parade and hand out information  
Place: Pullman, WA  
Chair: Karen Kiessling, 332-4755

## **July Planning Meeting**

Monday, July 20, 9:30-12:30

Why go on a cruise, when you can sit in Ruth Brown's sunny backyard instead and feel constructive by planning our activities for the coming year? At the annual meeting in May we looked back on the year's activities, and now it is time to look forward. There are many possibilities for study and action in the coming year. Just to list a few: candidates' meetings for city and country offices and state initiatives; continuing issues in Pullman city planning; recycling; a study of conservation districts; possible public meetings on health care and the state budget; and many more. At this July meeting we decide our priorities, and the month in which we plan to discuss them. Join us for discussion in the sun followed by a potluck salad lunch!

If you can't come, we'll miss you. If you have issues you'd like us to consider, contact Sue Armitage (332-4279) or Alice Schroeder (334-2470) and we'll put your item on the agenda.

### **Directions to Ruth's farm:**

- From the Pullman-Moscow Highway turn south on Bishop Blvd.
  - Go 0.3 miles and turn left on Johnson Road (just past Quality Inn and the old Pete's Restaurant).
  - Go 3.3 miles on Johnson Road (WITHOUT turn-offs; do NOT turn onto the Old Moscow Road or Sand Road).
  - You will now find yourself between 2 big white barns on either side of the road. Ours is the one on the left with the beautiful blue roof.
  - The driveway is long and narrow, so stay in the middle.
- WELCOME!

## **Minutes of the Annual Meeting, May 5, 2009**

League of Women Voters of Pullman

Present: Sue Armitage, Mary Ann Boehmke, Kay Buss, Susan Daniels, Joan Folwell, Diane Gillespie, Marj and Bob Grunewald, Lenna Harding, Alberta Hill, Karen Kiessling, Judy Krueger, Lucille Linden, Elinor McCloskey, Janet Miller, Muriel Oaks, Diane Smerdon, Paul Spencer, Zuma Lee Staba, Dorothy Swanson, Bev Webster.

Sue Armitage, Chair of the Board, called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. at the home of Karen Kiessling. A quorum was declared with 21 members in attendance.

2008 Annual Meeting Minutes: Judy Krueger moved that the minutes be approved as read by her and Dorothy Swanson. S/P

Treasurer's Report: Joan Folwell reported revisions from the April VOTER report, a current balance of \$4056.57, working reserves of \$3000.00, and \$2315.00 in the Education Fund with \$9376.00 total assets. Joan moved that the report be accepted. S/P

Finance Drive Report: Lenna Harding reported \$640 in regular donations, \$675 in Education Fund donations and \$150 from Tri State and a total of \$1465. More (\$300) came in after the April report was printed. Lenna moved that the report be accepted. S/P

Budget Report: Dorothy Swanson reported a balanced budget of \$10,164.40 for July 1, 2009 to June 30, 2010, as presented in the April VOTER. Dorothy moved that the budget be accepted. S/P

Nominating Committee Report: Dorothy Swanson thanked the leaders who served League in the past year, expressed hope that new members be involved in league activities and move on to become board members; she then presented the slate of new officers as published:

Chair of the Board – Sue Armitage

Vice President – Alice Schroeder

Secretary – Fran Law, Debra Olson, Alice Schroeder

Treasurer – Joan Folwell

Finance Drive Chair – Lenna Harding

Membership Records and Notices – Judy Krueger

Voters Service – Karen Kiessling

Action Chair – June Crawford

Voter Editor – Susan Daniels

TRY Editor – Lucy Linden

The Observer Chair – Lucy Linden, was added to the slate presented.

Dorothy moved that the nominations be accepted. S/P

Election of Officers: Officers were elected by acclaim.

Election of Delegates to State Convention: Karen Kiessling described the convention in Tacoma, May 29, 30 and 31, clarified the Direction to the Delegates and invited members to consider attending as observers. Delegates selected were Sue Armitage, Alice Schroeder and Lucy Linden. Diane Smerdon moved that we send three paid observers. S/P Dorothy Swanson moved that observers receive the same \$300 stipend as the three voting delegates. Muriel Oakes amended the motion to a limit of three observers. S/P

Observer Reports: Diane Smerdon - Arts Committee, Susan Daniels - School Board; Paul Spencer – County Commissioners, Diane Gillespie – Library Board. Brief reports from Helen

Stiller who was at the Hospital Board meeting, and Fran Law – Lawson Gardens Committee were read. Joan Folwell reported on the recent City Planning Committee discussion on the city's contemplating urban growth areas as a citizen.

Planning Ordinance Committee: Karen Kiessling acknowledged the commitment of the pre-development ordinance group that appeared before the Planning Commission. We will wait for the outcome of the June 22 Planning Commission meeting when they reconsider our proposal. League will then meet with the City Planner to decide further action on moving this planning ordinance forward to consideration by the City Council.

Voter Service: Karen Kiessling reported that our smashing new sashes that we wore at the Johnson Parade and Lentil Festival were from her grant proposal to the State Education Fund. We hosted the Vote Smart bus near the Library our Know Your Government/They Represent You brochures were again underwritten by the Bank of Whitman. She also noted that we may try to go to an every other year production of TRY, our citizen's directory to elected and appointed officials.

Local Program Planning: The July date will be announced after the hostess is contacted. Discussion of program suggestions for next year included events to be celebrated. The League of Women Voters has significant anniversaries coming up in 2010:

- 60th anniversary of the League of Women Voters of Pullman, February, 1950
- 90th anniversary of the 19th Amendment giving women the right to vote in 1920
- 100th anniversary of women in Washington getting the right of vote in 1910

Local program suggestions:

- Nursing home situation in Pullman
- Health care (based on National League position)
- Promoting open meetings for public business
- Member recruitment
- Recycling expansion
- Income tax education
- Civic engagement program (State league is promoting this)

The meeting was adjourned at 8:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,  
Lucille Linden, Secretary, Pro-tem

## **Leaguers Needed For the Johnson Parade!!!**

Here's a great way to spend the first part of the 4th of July. League members will be marching in the parade at Johnson, Washington, that takes place at 10 a.m. on Independence Day. We will be handing out flyers that remind citizens of the date of the Primary Election on August 18, 2009, as well as the date, place and time of the forums the League will host for candidates who must defeat their primary rivals. Leaguers will wear League sashes or League pins and will walk the parade route handing fliers to the viewers on the walk through the village and back. We will

have a meeting later in June of those interested to answer any questions and arrange rides there and back to Pullman on the Fourth.

The Pullman League did this for the first time last year and we had a great time. People were very welcoming, often calling out "Thank you League for the service you provide us" and other positive remarks. It was a boost for our visibility and a chance to reinforce what our independence depends upon -- open, fair elections at all levels of government.

Be a part of the fun. Volunteer for this event. Call or email Karen Kiessling, 332-4755, to say you want to take part.

## **Lentil Festival on August 21 and 22, 2009**

The Pullman League will have a table at the Lentil Festival on Friday evening, August 21st when thousands of Pullman citizens, WSU students newly arrived in town and visitors from around the county and the region come downtown to enjoy the music, the food, the great weather and all the agencies and services on display.

This is our chance to meet people, answer questions about League and recruit new members. It is a lovely summer evening with music and vendors and free lentil chili and lentil packets, food and friends. Please think about signing up to spend some time at the table we staff for several hours that evening. It is fun and worthwhile. The table needs Leaguers from 6 to 9 p.m. It is good to have two people for each hour but one is adequate. Please contact susan Daniels, 332-699, or any board member if you are willing to spend an hour or two at the table.

**AND.....WE WILL WALK IN THE LENTIL PARADE ON SATURDAY, AUGUST 22!!!**

Yes, we will be walking in the Lentil Parade on Saturday at 11 a.m. to hand out information on the forums we will conduct for the general election on November 3, 2009. We need League members to volunteer to walk along the parade route to give flyers to the public telling them the date and place and time of the forums. Please volunteer to take part. It is fun, it is easy and it is rewarding. Call Karen Kiessling, 332-4755, if you will walk in the parade. Thanks!!

## **Convention Reports**

### **Alice Schroeder's Report**

Fantastic weather, a hotel with beautiful glass art on every floor—the Viking ships above the conference lobby were amazing—and a view of the Sound or Mt. Rainier from every room, set a wonderful stage for the 2009 Convention. Plenary sessions each day introduced us all to the business of the State League and Parliamentary Procedure, with its complexities and ability to speed the group through a long list of objectives. The first session introduced everything: budget, nominations, bylaw changes, possible studies, the Civic Engagement Project and new positions. The next day we voted whether or not to consider motions for non-recommended

studies and could ask questions about the budget. Having had two days to consider, the last day found us debating and voting on the program and budget and electing officers.

Dinner on Friday featured Senator Maria Cantwell as speaker. Then many of us continued working by attending caucuses to work on and learn about possible programs. I attended the Tacoma-Pierce County League's caucus on Conservation Districts. The League became involved because of questions raised about the election processes of the Conservation District. They found the District did important work for sustainable agriculture, had significant federal and state funds and elections were obscure. Interestingly, three other local Washington State Leagues have looked at Conservation District elections and found that election procedures are different in each. Tacoma-Pierce County LWV proposed that, using their study as a basis, each local League study its County(s)'s Conservation District. A State study committee will provide more background, such as the scope of the Washington State Laws governing the Districts, and then will collate the local study reports. Those attending the caucus agreed to be on the State study committee—a new experience for me. With the League's interest in open and fair elections, accountability for public funds and support of sustainable agriculture, there was little trouble in getting the convention delegates to agree to the study.

Along with business there were also several sessions on how to improve League activities. A very interesting one was presented by Lonnie Johns-Brown, the LWVWA professional lobbyist. Lonnie lobbies for several non-profits with similar goals. Her main message was that getting a bill passed requires a lot of preliminary work acquainting the legislative leadership with the bill, getting the appropriate legislative sponsors, working with groups that will be impacted. Then there must be lots of support during the session from the public. All those e-mails in response to action requests really make the difference even though you think your legislator must surely never want to see your name again. Also important is having local Leagues talking with and educating their legislators between sessions, especially about the local impact of proposed bills. Pullman League has not done this for many years and we really need to approach this issue.

There was, of course, also fun at the *Good in Government Gala* at the Washington State History Museum, on quick visits to the Glass Museum and meeting our members from around the state. Thank you so much for being willing to spend some of our precious League money to help me attend.

### **Sue Armitage's Report**

I attended the Education Caucus discussion, which was pretty depressing. The Washington State constitution mandates education as the state's first funding priority, but in practice this has been ignored for years. The League, in cooperation with other groups, got the Legislature to pass a law reasserting this principle, which would mandate the state to take on major funding for K-12 education. The bill also mandated a civics course. Sounds great, but this year there was no funding! Furthermore, there are serious unresolved conflicts *within* the education coalition that seems to predict more of the same. I now understand more about the internal conflicts that are making education reform more difficult.

Report on the Budget -- Like everyone else, the League is cutting its budget for the next year. There was a completely predictable squabble over office costs, but in the end the proposed new budget carried. In addition to cuts, the State League took the step the State Legislature didn't, and raised our taxes. Our dues (the PPM) will go up \$2 next year and an additional \$3 the year after.

Civic Engagement Project -- I was looking forward to discussion of this project at the convention, but was disappointed. The basic idea of the project is to try to encourage public interest in, and discussion of, the state's recurrent budget problems because of the weakness of our tax structure—the well-known imbalance caused by reliance on sales tax and no state income tax. This is a tough topic to discuss given the public aversion to taxes, especially at the moment, and the general difficulty of discussing economic ideas at all. There was no discussion of the topic itself at the convention, and no serious discussion of how to present it to the public, unless you consider a description of Twitter useful. There will, however, be an ongoing email discussion of the topic, and I have signed up for it. I hope to have substantive information by the fall.

## **Resolutions Committee Report**

### **Karen Kiessling, Pullman League Observer at State Convention**

I chaired the resolutions committee at the convention in Tacoma. The other members of the committee were Ann Murphy of Spokane and Becky Cox of King County South. There were four business resolutions and one resolution of thanks to the host League, Tacoma-Pierce County League of Women Voters.

The four business resolutions were:

**Resolution on Health Care** which requires that within one month of the convention a letter be sent to the national board urging them to:

- Utilize a side-by-side comparative analysis of single payer proposals with other proposals for health reform as part of the deliberations on health care reform by Congress and the Administration and
- Support the principle of single-payer national health insurance by advocating that a single payer legislative proposal be included in deliberation of health care reform by Congress and the Administration.

**Resolution on Immigration Issues** requires the State Board to urge the National Board to:

- Communicate to the Department of Homeland Security and members of Congress our vigorous rejection of the policy of apprehending, detaining and deporting undocumented immigrants with no criminal record;
- Lobby Congress to investigate the policies and procedure being followed by Border Patrol and ICE and pursue legislation that conforms with civil rights;
- Lobby Congress to adopt comprehensive immigration reform that conforms with LWVUS immigration positions.

**Resolution on Residential Housing Standards** requires

- A task Force to determine whether the State of Washington laws require that minimal standards for safe and decent residential housing exist and are enforced;
- A possible priority for future legislative sessions to work to ensure that the state sets and enforces minimal standards for safe residential housing, including new and remodeled;
- Residential housing be free of toxics, including the toxic mold secondary to water incursion.

**Resolution on Referendum 71** requires

- That if Referendum 71 is placed on the ballot, the LWVWA will encourage voting 'Yes' to affirm the " 'everything but marriage' expanded domestic partner law" that has passed the state legislature and was signed by the governor.  
(Information on this issue: Referenda are always written to ask the question: "Should this law be continued on the books?" So if you want the law to remain as is, you vote YES. If you want the law repealed you vote NO. It is often confusing to voters and League has worked to clarify that issue for voters.)

Leaguers meeting in convention love to "wordsmith" and can debate a word, comma or phrase for as long as allowed. Resolutions make requests of the state board and must be acted on by the board if they are passed. I enjoyed chairing this committee and working with two very sharp League members.

If you would like to read the full text, all those Whereas-es, let me know. I have copies.

**Lucy Linden's Report**

Well, what's left to tell of our stimulating and inspiring convention weekend? A convention highlight for me was the well-organized and delivered *Marketing and Use of Technology for Not-For-Profit Organizations* session.

Three professionals stressed having a plan to meet challenges and opportunities in our organization for such marketing activities as:

- Publicity for an event, or issue of concern.
- Recruiting members.
- Fundraising for a special project, or any other league action.

Advice based on experiences working in non-profits and print media is condensed as follows:

- What do you need to know?
- What do you want to change? (based on your organizational goals).
- Who are you trying to influence? Make it personal; target your audience with a story, for instance, "as a result of this campaign, Sara and others will be able to attend citizenship camp sponsored by the local League of Women Voters."

How do we do this? Probably the most valuable advice was to ask a professional for an hour of their time to consult with you on the best approach. Or get a student intern to carry out a well conceived project.

Other ideas: Cultivate the media, by helping reporters and editors understand the issues and their impact. Know their deadlines and provide photos, story lines and use A-P style. Provide names, addresses and contact information. Learn how to pitch a story with two quick sentences, after asking, "Do you have a minute?". If you are sending a story to multiple sources, be sure to send them individually not as an email group.

Not to be neglected is the social media strategy for outreach. Social media such as Twitter, Facebook and MySpace have blurred the lines between traditional and new media. Why does this matter? These are two-way conversations that can occur 80 times a day with young people. We need access to this audience, and will have to develop the tools and tactics, the capacity to participate in this conversation with our League messages. How do we enter this culture change? Listen and learn! (And invite younger members to League.)

A note on the Health Care caucus resulting in the resolution Karen noted above: Discussion centered on the public/single payer with private delivery as the best system to fulfill the criteria of availability to all with the same comprehensive benefits, cost sharing, free choice of health care providers, and using a Medicare-like model for cost cutting efficiency.

In short, the site, program and events were perfect for a *Reflections on Democracy* gathering of enthusiastic Leaguers! Thank you for sending me as a delegate.

## **First Time Observer Reaction**

### **Diane Smerdon**

Personally, the convention was both inspiring and enlightening! The Murano Hotel was a perfect setting for the meeting and its emphasis on light spawned my enlightenment about the League. Getting out the vote and providing transparency in government remain admirable tasks--ones that women are uniquely equipped to champion. The pioneering women who began women's suffrage in the 1880's were well represented by the those attending convention and I must admit, I was inspired by so many! (I particularly appreciated the speaker on Saturday night who so eloquently followed the women's movement since the 1800s. It was humbling to note that women's blood was spilled to give women their current voting rights.)

I thought the break-out sessions were helpful. It was interesting to meet with our lobbyist and understand her role, in addition to talking about how our voting system might be improved. I feel I have a much better concept of how our state government functions and how we can affect change.

The *Good in Government Reception* on Saturday night made me proud to be a League member. Past Governor Booth Gardner, Senator Rosa Franklin and many others showed both gratefulness and respect for the work League does and that made me proud to be a member. Above all, I

came to the conclusion that even one voice can make a difference and I look forward to getting more active in our local League.

## **Observer Report Briefs**

**Pullman Regional Hospital Board, April 1, 2009**

**Observer: Helen Stiller**

The hospital is acutely aware of the financial challenges facing our community as well as the Hospital. In early February the hospital mailed a letter to each employee offering assurances about the hospital and reinforcing the commitment to the staff.

“The employment security of the staff at PRH is an essential part in the ultimate care and well-being of the patients we serve. In light of this, we establish an expectation that each of us commit to plan, lead, and manage the affairs of Pullman Regional Hospital to assure that no employee loses employment due to layoffs.”

“For this commitment to remain a reality requires that we devote necessary time and attention to identifying and implementing plans and activities that can restore and strengthen our financial performance.” The hospital plans to organize employee groups to brainstorm opportunities for cost reduction and efficiency.

At this meeting the Board agreed to abide by the law that was established with the passage of Initiative 1000—Assisted Suicide—provided that all requirements of the law are fulfilled. The hospital already recognizes the commitment to patient choice and flexibility in directing their personal care options: Do Not Resuscitate orders, Living Wills and Advanced Directives.

Dr. Duffy is continuing to work toward recruiting physicians. There are several family practice candidates who have been presented to Pullman Family Med, as well as Palouse Med., for consideration. No final decisions have been made. The most challenging activity of physician recruitment is “the Internist”. Inland Orthopedics is also hoping to add another orthopedist.

**Pullman Regional Hospital Board, June 4, 2009**

**Observer: Helen Stiller**

The Board will have a Planning session later in the month and will discuss the following items:

- Strategic objectives
- Physician Recruitment
- Hospital Expansion
- Financial Planning
- Succession plan
- Land purchase
- Organizational objectives
- Open invitation will be provided to all physicians re: recruitment issue

Finance Report: Bottom line better than anticipated. Hospital is strong.

Long term debt higher than many other facilities due to new building.  
Board accepted the Auditors report.

The Hospital had a surprise State Survey which they passed. Accreditation remains in place for another year. Thank goodness.

Board members and staff attending have good rapport.

### **Neill Public Library Board meeting, April 22, 2009**

**Observer: Diane Gillespie**

- 1) Director, Geraldine de Rooy, reported that none of the library goals (20-hour circulation position, 20-hour young adult librarian, restoration of materials budget) made the list of thirty two to be considered at the city's goal-setting retreat. City officials are emphasizing the tight fiscal year, but do not recognize that the NPL is in a non-sustainable mode given the rapidly increasing need for services and materials. Geraldine will amass statistics documenting these increases. She also is giving talks with a 6-minute video about the library to local organizations (to include the LWV?) to increase public knowledge and support.
- 2) The NPL In-House Work Week is May 4-10, during which time the library will be closed for installing new internet computers (Gates grant), painting and furnishing the addition (Shirrod money), and reconfiguring work areas.
- 3) Discussions are in progress with the Whitman County and Latah County historical societies about displaying Ivan Shirrod's and other inland northwest collections.
- 4) Rob Rembert was re-elected as Chair of the Board and William Brock was elected Vice Chair.
- 5) Kathleen Ahern, Children's Librarian, reported on program and outreach activities as well as plans for the NPL summer reading program funded by Friends of NPL.

### **Neill Public Library Board meeting, May 13, 2009**

**Observer: Diane Gillespie**

- 1) Two-hour parking signs have now been placed throughout the NPL parking lot to prevent all-day parking. Because families attending consecutive story-hours are getting tickets, the Board is going to ask for 3-hour signs, a change that will have to be approved by the City Council.
- 2) Geraldine de Rooy reported on the success of the In-House Work Week. New furniture is in the addition, the first step towards creating display space for Palouse historical materials, a condition of the Shirrod endowment. Library space has been reconfigured to include a technology corridor with new computers and furniture. There was discussion of a newspaper article to emphasize the improvements and the fact that they were all paid for with non-tax dollars (Shirrod endowment, Gates grant, and Friends of NPL).
- 3) Geraldine reported that library needs were not included in the city's Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy which goes to the state. She has requested that a neighborhood branch be added to the ten-year plan since no expansion is possible at the current site.
- 4) Geraldine has been invited to speak about NPL to both the Rotary and Kiwanis clubs. We viewed the power point presentation she is using. It contains data making clear that the current materials budget cannot keep pace with the significantly increased use.

## The League's Position on Health Care

*The League of Women Voters of Washington supports:*

Policies, as part of comprehensive reform of the existing health system, which:

- Ensure universal access for all residents to a comprehensive, uniform, and affordable set of health services. These services shall be available regardless of one's health status (i.e., pre-existing conditions) or financial status.
  - Provide “seamless” coverage and continuity of care, to the extent possible, regardless of changes in life circumstances such as change in employment, marital status, financial status, or health status.
  - Establish a mechanism to adequately control total system expenditures for health services while maintaining quality standards of care.
  - Assure that no one shall be forced into poverty because of medical or long-term needs.
- (1992)

## Quick Facts On Health Care Costs

**Resource provided by the LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force, 2009.**

- Total health spending in the U.S. reached \$2.1 trillion in 2007 – or \$7,026 per capita.
- By 2016, total health spending is projected to rise to \$4.2 trillion.
- Between 2005 – 2006, total health spending increased 6.7 percent, more than double the rate of the 2.9 percent increase in overall economic growth.
- Total health spending remained relatively constant at about 16 percent of gross domestic product from 2003 – 2006, but is projected to increase to 19.5 percent by 2017.
- Spending for home health care increased at a faster pace from 2005 – 2006 (9.9 percent) than any other category of health spending; however, its impact is limited because it accounts overall for only 2.5 percent of total health spending.
- Yearly prescription drug spending growth accelerated in 2006 to 8.5 percent from a low of 5.8 percent in 2005, in part because of full implementation of Medicare Part D.
- Between 2006 and 2007, premiums for health coverage offered by employers increased 6.1 percent, the fourth straight year of declines in the rate of premium growth, from a peak of 13.9 percent in 2003. Even so, this was more than twice the rate of growth in the Consumer Price Index.
- Of every dollar spent on health services in the U.S. in 2006, 46 cents came directly from government sources.
- Costs for program administration and the net cost of private health insurance were about 7 percent of total health spending in the U.S. in 2006 and grew 8.8 percent, a marked increase over the 3.6 percent rise in 2005.

This list (without the original endnotes) is from “A Reporter's Toolkit: Health Care Costs” (an Alliance for Health Reform Toolkit produced with support from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation) and is reproduced here courtesy of the Alliance for Health Care. The entire toolkit can be found at [http://www.allhealth.org/Publications/Cost\\_of\\_health\\_care/health\\_care\\_costs\\_toolkit.asp#keyfacts](http://www.allhealth.org/Publications/Cost_of_health_care/health_care_costs_toolkit.asp#keyfacts).

## At-Risk Americans: The Uninsured And Underinsured

*By Janis McMillen, LWVUS Board member and LWVKS, chair of the LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force.*

Data from multiple sources agree that in 2007, 47 million Americans (15.6 percent of the total U.S. population) lacked any kind of health insurance coverage. When these numbers are adjusted for age (excluding those 65 years and older), the uninsured percentage of the population rises to 17.9 percent. Moreover, it is estimated that 25 million adults under age 65 were underinsured during 2007, despite having insurance all year. In total, 42 percent of *all* adults (86.7 million) were either uninsured or underinsured during 2007.

### Putting a face on persons who were uninsured or underinsured during 2007 and 2008<sup>1</sup>

- **Age:** One of three people under age 65 were uninsured for some or all of 2007 and 2008; of the total uninsured population, 60.1 million were adults (between 19 and 64 years of age)
- **Duration:** Among the underinsured/uninsured, 74.5 percent were uninsured for nine or more months and one-quarter were uninsured the entire 24 months
- **Employment status:** 80 percent of individuals who were uninsured were in working families and only 16 percent were not in the labor force (due to disabilities, chronic illness, or serving as family caregivers)
- **Income:** Nearly 60 percent were in families with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL: \$21,200/year for a family of four); 52 percent with incomes between 100 to 200 percent of FPL went without health insurance in 2007/2008
- **Racial and Ethnic origin:** 55 percent of Hispanics/Latinos, 40.3 percent of African Americans and 34 percent of other racial or ethnic minorities had no health insurance in 2007/2008, compared to 25.8 percent of whites. While racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be uninsured, whites accounted for 49.8 percent of the uninsured
- **Age breakdown:** The likelihood of being uninsured declines with age; 49.5 percent of those 19 – 24 years old, 36.3 percent of those 25 – 44 years old, 32.5 percent of those 45 – 54 years old and 21.2 percent of those 55 – 64 years old were uninsured over this two-year time period. The 55- to 64-year-old age group consumes more health care on average than younger adults.

For all ethnic and racial groups, lower-income families and individuals were more likely to be uninsured than lower-income whites. This disparity continues even as incomes rise in all groups.

There is a marked increase in the number of adults having difficulty paying medical bills – the most visible consequence of the weakening in insurance coverage. In 2007, 41 percent of adults (72 million people) reported problems paying medical bills, faced bill collectors or were in debt for medical care, up from 34 percent or 58 million in 2005. The majority had insurance at the time these bills were incurred<sup>2</sup> – well in advance of the economic downturn.

<sup>1</sup> All statistics above and below are from <http://www.familiesusa.org/resources/publications/reports/americans-at-risk-findings.html>

<sup>2</sup>The statistics in this paragraph are from <http://www.commonwealthfund.org/Content/Publications/Testimonies/2009/Feb/Testimony-Insurance-Design-Matters-Underinsured-Trends-Health-and-Financial-Risks.aspx>

## **National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Result**

"The LWVUS affirms its support for the direct election of the president and abolition of the Electoral College, but the LWVUS has no position on the National Popular Vote Compact as currently proposed."

This consensus process was quite controversial and almost confrontational at times within LWVUS. Many Leagues had problems with the questions. The *Recommendations to LWVUS Board about the NPVC Consensus* are on [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)→*For Members*→*Projects and Programs*→*National Popular Vote Compact*. There is also a memo from Mary Wilson about the consensus process.

## **Voter Service Workers Needed!!**

This summer and fall there are wonderful opportunities to do voter service projects with the Pullman League. We have the parades this summer to provide notice of forums for the primary and general elections, those forums to organize and run in Pullman and Colfax and additional possibilities for encouraging young voters to join the ranks of active involvement in the business of government. There is one thing that will cripple the valuable service we provide to Whitman County. That is having too few members to do the job. We need you to join the Voter Service Committee and get involved with the planning and the carrying out of our work. You can take on as much or as little as you choose. Voter Service Committee members will begin meeting in June so call Karen Kiessling, 332-4755, to tell her of your interest and get your name down to help. It is a great way to get acquainted with other Leaguers and perform a very valuable service. See you at a committee meeting soon!