

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF PULLMAN

December 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

Holiday Meeting

Monday December 7, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Program: Port District Commissioners & Christmas Dessert
Place: Home of Dorothy Swanson, 1055 NE Creston Lane
Contact: Alice Schroeder, 443-2470

The 2010 Census

Monday January 11, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Program: Dr. Don Dillman WSU Professor and recognized national authority on questionnaire design
Place: Neill Public Library, Hecht Room
Contact: Diane Smerdon, 334-5413

Birthday Celebration

Monday February 8, 7:00-9:00 p.m.
Program: Birthday celebration for Pullman League's 60th birthday and celebrating women in politics
Place: Neill Public Library Hecht Room
Contact: Sue Armitage, 332-4279

Board Meetings

Monday December 14, January 25

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

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

Other Events of Interest

Shred For Hunger

Date: Tuesday December 8, 1/2 day at each site, TBA

Program: Whitman County Solid Waste & Recycling and KHTR/KQQQ are hosting a *Shred Day* to benefit the empty shelves at area food banks. For every box or bag of documents to be shredded there will be a request for a food or cash donation to support the local food bank.

Place: Rossauer's Parking Lot, Colfax and Georgia Carpet Works, Pullman

Contact: Judi Dunn-Gray, 509-397-5213

Building Sustainable Communities

Date: Wednesday December 16, 12:00 to 1:00 p.m.

Program: LWV of Moscow hosts a panel discussion on Building Sustainable Communities.

Panel members are: Sandra Pinel, Asst. Professor, Bioregional Planning; Steven Hollenhorst, Director, BSCI; and Stephen Drown, Co-Chair, BSCI

Place: Fiske Room, 1912 Center, 412 E. Third St, Moscow, ID

Contact: Check [Moscow-Pullman Daily News](#) and the [Lewiston Tribune](#) for any changes

Learn About the Port of Whitman

Come to the Dec. 7 meeting and enjoy an evening of Dorothy and Thor Swanson's traditional Christmas hospitality and an engaging presentation about the Port of Whitman. Joe Poire, executive director since 1998, and John Love, long-serving commissioner, have enthusiastically accepted our invitation to talk about the Port. They will discuss the Port's particular mission and purpose, the staff organization and physical facilities, the sources of funding, and the current projects. Did you realize that the Port is supported by our tax dollars? Find out more!

Park across Stadium Way in the church parking lot as parking on Creston Lane is permit only.

2010 Census Information at January Meeting

Diane Smerdon

The 23rd United States Census will be collected in 2010. The Census has been conducted every 10 years since 1790, as required by the United States Constitution.

There will be several major changes in the 2010 census: 1) The Census Bureau will no longer use a separate long form for the 2010 Census. In previous censuses, one in six households received this more detailed form asking for detailed social and economic information. 2) The

2010 Census will use only a short form asking basic questions, such as names, gender, ages, date-of-birth, race, ethnicity, relationship and housing tenure. The cost will be over \$11 billion.

Monday, January 11, 2010, in **Neill Public Library's Hecht Room** from **7:00-9:00 p.m.**, the Pullman League will host Dr. Don Dillman, WSU Professor and recognized national authority on questionnaire design, to discuss the Census. John Sherman, Pullman City Supervisor, has also been invited. Many important questions will be asked, including: 1) What impact will the Census figures have on Pullman revenues? 2) How is the Census changing? 3) What challenges does the Census face in identifying overlooked populations, such as the homeless? 4) How do we create a Census that is as comprehensive as possible in the face of strong political pressures to shape the process to meet different needs?

This will be an excellent opportunity to identify the importance and impact of compiling this Census. Come and bring a potential new member for League. It will be a fascinating and informative night.

Birthday Celebration -- Save the Date

On Feb 8, 2010 we will mark the Pullman League's 60th birthday and the centennial of woman suffrage in Washington. Dorothy Swanson and her committee are preparing a display for Neill Public Library's display case. It will go up Feb. 1st. At our February 8 meeting we'll honor several local women who have been politically active (unnamed because we haven't had a chance to invite them yet) and have a birthday cake, of course!

Action Workshop Report

Alice Schroeder and Susan Daniels

On November 7 Alice Schroeder and Susan Daniels made the three hour drive to Kennewick for the LWVWA 2009 Action Workshop. It was a gray day, but beautiful country.

We were welcomed with coffee, tea, juice and donuts. At 10:00 Linnea Hirst, President of LWVWA, opened the meeting and spoke about the Civic Engagement Project. Civic education is a local project to educate citizens on tax policies and the budget. If government is the problem we need to help citizens fix it not just wish it would go away. For this people need to understand government, taxes and budgets. LWVWA has papers available on their website for local Leagues to use. Two other sources of information are: the Economic Opportunity Institute website -- www.eoionline.org, and a blog about WA budget and tax policy at schmudget.blogspot.com. The Civic Project urges Local Leagues to get out and educate people on taxes and revenues.

Liz Flynn from the Pasco School District was the first speaker. She spoke about the importance of early learning and bi-lingual education. These are particularly important in Pasco where 71% of students qualify for reduced fee or free lunches and there is a high percentage of students

where English is not the language spoken in their homes. They are lobbying for better funding and particularly money to enable teachers to work with parents outside of school hours.

Schools in Pasco are working toward being more green and the website www.WAgreenschools.org is a good resource.

The second speaker in the morning was Craig Salins from the group *Judicial Campaign Financial Reform*. He made several points:

1. Money is polluting democracy at every level
2. The influence of money in politics, real or perceived, needs to be removed
3. Publicly financed elections result in more voices in government, e.g. women and minorities.
4. It is most obvious that judicial elections should be free of the influence of money, so that is a good place to start educating people.
5. Where public financing of elections has been passed it has gone by various names (*clean elections, voter owned,...*), and is financed in different ways (traffic tickets, tax check box, ...)
6. Estimate is 50 cents per person to finance judicial elections.
7. There is currently a bill in the Washington House, the *Fair Elections Now Act*, that should be considered this term.

At noon we broke for a delicious lunch with the lobbyists present.

After lunch Barbara Bush spoke about the WA state budget. These are difficult times. The budget shortfall keeps getting bigger, partly due to decreasing revenues, but also partly due to increased need for services as people lose their jobs.

Kim Able, our Lobby Team Co-Ordinator and LWVWA first vice president, outlined the LWVWA priorities for the upcoming short session. First there will be a discussion of new taxes and cuts. Suggestions already made are to tax candy, soda, and bottled water, double the B & O tax on services (It was halved a few years ago.), fill the hospital tax loop hole, and, of special concern to Leagues on the East Side, change levy equalization. Cuts being discussed include K-12 funding, early learning and medicaid.

She then outlined the League Action Priorities.

1. Try to prevent detrimental changes to the Energy and Climate Change Initiative 937 passed in 2006.
2. Support Public Campaign Financing and disclosure laws.
3. Continue support of efforts to provide low-income housing and protect the advances made in 2009.
4. Support environmental bills which require little money such as a tax on petroleum products to help clean up stormwater. (Pullman should really support this!), requiring BPA free baby and other bottles and providing for secure medicine return.
5. Support new funding for transportation as gas tax revenue falls with more efficient cars.

Following Kim, three members of the volunteer lobbying panel spoke about the areas they spear head: Wayne Martin—reproductive rights, Pat Dickason—Children's Issues, and Susan

Eidenschink, Health Care. Their basic message was **do contact your legislator** about the issues that concern you, even if you know they are opposed. Sign up for and use the League's e-legislative newsletter. Then e-mail or phone. Be polite, be informative and compliment them when they support issues important to you. The speakers have all seen that just a few contacts of this type can really make a difference.

It was a most informative day and made us very thankful that somehow our \$17 in dues to the LWVWA each year and the great volunteers in the Olympia area transforms into so much action. We came home with several handouts on the issues. If you would like a copy please contact us.

Whitman County Port District Background for the Dec. 7 Meeting

Alice Schroeder

We just voted for a Port District Commissioner, running unopposed. If you read your property tax bill carefully, you will find a small amount goes to the Whitman County Port District and you've certainly heard that "The Port" has land and buildings in the business park north of Pullman. But just what is its mission, how does it use our taxes, are the commissioners important? At our Christmas meeting on Dec. 7 we'll have a chance to hear the Port Manager Joe Poire, and one of the commissioners, John Love, talk about the Port and what it is doing today. To provide background so we can take advantage of their visit with us, here is a summary of the LWVWA 1989 Washington State Public Port Districts study.

When Washington became a state in 1889 the state kept title to the tide and shore lands of its navigable waters. However, many of the best lands for harbors were already being developed by private interests, especially the railroads. Their greed in setting rates and controlling the products to be shipped, finally led the legislature in 1911 to authorize public ownership and management of the State's ports (Hmm are there echoes for For Profit Health Insurance here?) The Port Districts are to regulate shipping and provide space for shipping and associated industry and can levy taxes and sell bonds to do so, with certain caps. To go over these amounts a vote of the public is required. Ports do not receive money from the State's general fund. By 1989 their mission had grown to include air and land, as well as, water based shipping and the Port District mission had become "the promotion of commerce and industry" which includes promoting tourism. State law dictates the number of commissioners, their elections and their salaries. Port districts are also subject to State, Federal and local laws, including environmental laws.

Port Districts are the only public entity that can establish a Industrial Development District. That means they can purchase land for the purposes of development, including using the right of eminent domain, and construct buildings and other improvements, which may include necessary utilities and transportation. The original development plan must be adopted at a public meeting. They can also spend money to market their facilities, which the state and its political subdivisions are not authorized to do. In 1989 there were 76 Port districts in 33 of Washington's 39 counties. They vary from owning a few recreational docks to the Ports of Tacoma and

Seattle. Tacoma is the 6th largest port in the US (1989) and Seattle has a wide variety of facilities including the Port and Sea Tac airport.

Ports are public entities and so come under open meetings and public disclosure laws. They must announce meetings and allow the public to attend. Most also set time to take comments from the public. Attendance at meetings other than public hearings is usually low. However, most local newspapers do cover meetings. The states differ significantly in port governance. There has been much discussion of a regional governmental body to oversee port activities in Washington and encourage co-operation and economies of scale. In 1961 the state authorized a voluntary organization, The Washington Public Port Association, to encourage inter port co-operation. A 1982 legislative study found no correlation between regional governance and port productivity, so no super government structure was set up. (And, that appears to still be the case, www.washingtonports.org)

Ports have been very important to Washington because, as of 1989, the state economy was twice as dependent on international trade as any other state. Interestingly, the exports as of 1989 were twice the tonnage of imports but less than half the value of the imports. At that time the major North West ports, including Portland, which is very important for the Columbia River ports, were competing well with California ports. This may be because the land mileage to the ports is about the same from the East Coast and Mid West, while the North West ports are actually a day closer to most North Asian ports by sea. However, at that time China was not a major import or export market.

Should there be public entities promoting private business? Clearly, early Washington State citizens thought so. In 1977 a study was commissioned by the Washington Public Port Association. It found that the ratio of taxes generated by businesses on or near port property, that could not operate without the port facilities, to that of taxes paid to support the port or lost because port properties are exempt from property taxes was 5.9 to 1.0. Thus, the ports were clearly of benefit to the state economy. They also noted that taxes primarily paid for facilities development with operations being covered by port fees to the businesses. The reliance on taxes varied with each district from as little as 10% of the budget for the large commercial ports of Seattle and Tacoma to over 50% for the ports of Bellingham and Olympia with large recreational marinas. It would be very interesting to see figures for recent years.

In the 1970's a number of private, non-profit Economic Development Councils were formed in Washington State to promote development. Businesses, business associations, interested individuals and governments belong. They often co-operate with port districts and may receive funding from them. Since they are private they are funded by members and contracts and do not have publicly elected directors nor open meetings. In 1985 the Legislature authorized and funded Associate Development Organizations. Their main function is to report on all economic activity in their area. They are often part of the Economic Development Councils but in some cases Port Districts take on this activity.

Ports have long acquired title to adjacent tide and shore lands to provide for future economic development. Often these were filled with dredged material from the harbor and seen as future

prime industrial properties. As it became recognized that filling of tide lands was very harmful to many species, ports have had serious problems with the management of these lands. In some cases they have inadvertently produced excellent shallow intertidal areas for migrating shore birds and therefore much opposition to continued filling and development. As of 1989 Ports were working with environmental agencies to develop management plans for these lands as they came to realize that "While economics is the theme, port decisions can no longer be made for entirely economic reasons".

Observer Report Briefs

Neill Public Library Board, October 21, 2009

Observer: Diane Gillespie

Since I was out of town when the NPL Board met in August and September, I have some catch-up reporting to do.

1. As you undoubtedly have read by now, Geraldine de Rooy is no longer Director of Neill Public Library. Her departure occurred following her first performance review by the NPL Board, that review and subsequent personnel meetings held in executive session. The official word is that she left "to pursue other opportunities." I personally wonder what was wrong with the NPL "opportunity" and, since Ms. De Rooy is well-known among library directors in the state, how her experience here will affect attracting a replacement.
2. That brings me to the question of the NPL budget, the subject of this October's meeting. All city departments have been asked to return money from their 2009 budgets and to cut their budgets for 2010. Compared to other departments which, for example, can amortize vehicles, the Library has only staff and services to cut. Since NPL is already down two professional library staff positions (Adult Services after Jim Belcher's departure for another job) and now the Director's position, there is no way to operate at a full service level. Until financial conditions improve, service must be reduced to what the budget can support. NPL therefore will reduce hours of operation by ten/week, opening from 1-6 on Monday; 10-6 Tuesday through Friday; 1-5 on Saturday, and closing on Sunday. Suspended indefinitely will be inter-library loan services and public printing; services to home-bound patrons will be modified. The hiring of an Adult Services librarian, now at the phone-interview stage, will continue, but that person will not be on board until January 2010. The hiring of a new Director will not occur until mid-2010.

In summary, the City must balance its budget, and Neill Public Library is doing what is necessary to continue its operations under the circumstances.

Neill Public Library Board of Trustees Special Meeting, October 28, 2009

Observer: Diane Gillespie

The NPL Board met again to discuss the 2010 budget proposal, due at City Hall on Friday of this week and approved at the meeting of 10-21-09. The discussion of options other than the proposed cuts was lengthy. After hearing from librarians and staff about behind-the-scenes

staffing and operations, however, the Board had to conclude that alternatives to the cuts are currently untenable. The Board therefore chose not to amend the proposed budget.

Neill Public Library Board, November 18, 2009

Observer: Diane Gillespie

Of interest to the LWV:

1. Joanna Bailey provided statistics on ever-increasing demands for library services; reported that the first candidate for the Adult Services Librarian position has visited Pullman and that the other will be here on 11-20-09; mentioned several community outreach efforts including 1,790 pounds of food for fines collected for Pullman Child Welfare; and noted that, with the 1% increase in property taxes approved by the City Council, there will probably be no further budget cuts in 2010.
2. Approximately half of the \$80,000 remaining in the 2009 budget will be returned to the city as part of a budget cut; the rest will be used for the last materials orders of the year.
3. Mary Reed, representing the Friends of NPL, reported on recent/future funding, noted that a used bookshop area (managed by the Friends) is up and running successfully, asked that the Library work with the Friends on a funding-request budget for 2010, and described an upcoming campaign for membership renewals and new members.
4. The majority of the meeting was again about cuts in services, especially in library open hours, but primarily about the decision-making process. A group of staff members, several of them present at the meeting, had sent a letter to Board members defending Joanna Bailey's budget proposal (a product of long discussions with library personnel) to get demands on staff into line with NPL budget resources. These letters also questioned the Board's erratic actions after it had approved her proposal--twice. (Joanna Bailey excused herself for this part of the meeting.) Rob Rembert, Board chair, indicated that one problem resulted from an initial understanding that the City did not want staff members to be required to work overtime. Then, he and John Anderson learned, in informal conversations with John Sherman, that such overruns were okay in order to avoid cutting open hours. Certain Board members also had a problem with the rapidity of open hours reductions, and wished to delay implementation so as not to present the City with a *fait accompli*. Proposals for later dates, however, left supervisory, part-time, and time-slip staff totally confused and unable to schedule and coordinate their Library responsibilities, other part-time jobs, and/or personal lives. An overriding problem, defined by the Library staff, was inadequate communication between the Board and the staff many of whom felt that the reasons for Joanna Bailey's budget proposal were not fully acknowledged or understood. The upshot of the long discussion was that cuts in open hours will not be implemented until Jan. 1, 2010, but that Joanna Bailey (back in the meeting) and her supervisory staff will have full authority to decide staff working hours.

Useful Pullman League Numbers

Contact Us: lwvpull@yahoo.com

Online VOTER: www.lwvwa.org/Pullman