

THE VOTER



This Newsletter published by and for the
League of Women Voters of Yakima County
PO Box 723, Yakima, WA 98907 509-452-3419

*We respectfully acknowledge
that we are on the traditional
land of the Yakama People.*

October, 2021
Vol.21, No 10

MISSION STATEMENT:

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

VISION:

We envision a democracy
where every person has the desire,
the right, the knowledge, and the confidence
to participate.

VALUE STATEMENT:

The League believes in the power of women to
create a more perfect democracy.

Officers

President: Cheri Kilty
Secretary: Karen Pilon
Treasurer: Janis Luvaas
Membership: Rhonda Hauff

Leadership Team

Criss Bardill
Quinn Dalan
Kitty Jubran
Susan Kaphammer
Lee Murdock

Voter Editor: Susan Kaphammer
949-0127; susanlkap@gmail.com

The Board currently meets at 4:30 PM,
typically the first Monday of the month.

All members are welcome.

CALENDAR

Tuesday, October 26, 5:30 PM Community
Conversation: Domestic Violence Awareness. Panel
Discussion. *See announcement below. Available on
LWVYC Facebook page to stream at your convenience.*

Monday, November 1, 4:30 PM Leadership Team
Meeting at YWCA, 818 W Yakima Ave, Yakima. Contact
Cheri if prefer to attend via Zoom.

Tuesday, November 2, 8:00 PM Election Deadline.
Ballots Due. In-person Registration and
Updating available at Auditor's Office, Room
117, Yakima County Courthouse.

October Community Conversation

Domestic Violence Awareness Tuesday, October 26, 2021, 5:30 PM

Panel Discussion

Learn from Dana Aguilar, Outreach Coordinator
for YWCA, as we celebrate
Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Online Event

Stream to view the entire presentation
LWVYC Facebook Page

League Conversations: Informing the public.

LWVYC President's Column...

NOTES FROM CHERI

Lunell Haught, President of the Washington League of Women Voters had a great message this month that I want to share with you:

When you wonder what's to be done, look at some of the actions League members are taking to make democracy work:

- The [*Your Vote*](#) tabloid (available online from a link on the LWVWA website home page, and in print) directly addresses several issues: what's true and what's not (factoids), the enthusiasm of college and high school voters and voting centers, and the safety and security of Washington's almost unique voting system, which is a new experience for those moving here from another state. (*See article in this issue summarizing some of the facts about elections.*)
- Civic education throughout the state is being boosted by local League efforts to engage students in how democracy works. This is a long-time effort finally coming to fruition.
- Social justice advocates are networking and supporting each other as local and state approaches are developed and implemented.
- Climate change is being tackled through advocacy with other groups and with our own Advocacy Team.
- The election season is upon us; local Leagues are working with election officials, ensuring again the effectiveness and transparency of our system. Local Leagues are ramping up to host debates and educate (in multiple languages) about ballot issues.

These are just a few answers to the "What can I do when I get discouraged?" question. Be aware. Join in.

You don't have to be a League member to participate—although that would be great—just know that there are things you can do to foster hope. It begins by reading this *Voter* and checking out the [LWVWA website](https://lwvwa.org/) at <https://lwvwa.org/> or your local League at <https://www.facebook.com/LWVYC>.

We hear the world is getting more fractured. The League is working to bring us back together.

Let me know what you want to do when you are discouraged.


-- Cheri Kilty

LWVYC Voter Services...

LOCAL LEAGUE CANDIDATE FORUMS ANNULLED

Poor candidate participation forced cancellation of LWVYC plans to sponsor a Candidate Forum for Yakima City Council candidates. Two candidates declined and another did not respond at all to the forum invitation.

Criss Bardill, immediate past president and Leadership Team member, explained in an October 21 article in the *Yakima Herald Republic* that, "The league hosts unbiased and professionally run forums." League rules require participation by both candidates in a race so an "empty chair" does not imply any preference for or against the non-attending candidate.

The League continues to invite and encourage candidates to speak to voters through forums and on our Voters' Guide at  <https://www.vote411.org/ballot>.

Yakima County League Study...

CONSENSUS STATEMENT ON HOMELESSNESS ADOPTED

Our League of Women Voters of Yakima County's *Study of Homelessness in Yakima County* documents the findings of a dedicated group of our members. The *Study* describes causes, conditions and services impacting homelessness in our county. (See related articles in the May and June issues of The Voter.) The *Study* will be distributed to organizations addressing issues of homelessness as well as provided to libraries and made available to interested members of the public.

The Leadership Team approved the following Consensus Statement on Homelessness to focus our advocacy on the issue:

LWVYC believes safe housing for individuals and families experiencing homelessness is essential for a thriving community. The League supports:

- Expanding community understanding that homelessness is a social and health care issue that impacts some populations disproportionately more than others
- Addressing gaps in services and resources for housing solutions based on Best Practices
- Increasing strategies that address a range of services from Prevention to Permanent Housing
- Delivering basic hygiene needs to those who are unsheltered to mitigate public health issues.

September Community Conversation...

YAKIMA IMPACTED BY OPIOID EPIDEMIC

September's League Community Conversation focused on alarming information about the extent and impacts of opioids in the Yakima area. Erika Ochoa from the Yakima Health District, Theresa Adkison from Triumph Treatment Services, and Jim Curtice, Yakima County Coroner, shared statistics and information during the video presentation that can be viewed from our LWVYC Facebook page.

Curtice noted the increasing fatalities with about 77 deaths thus far this year, heading to likely 100 by the end of the year. This compares to a total of 75 for all of last year. The greatest danger comes from counterfeit prescription pills. People may think they are taking a prescription-strength drug but ingest fentanyl, which is a thousand times more potent than morphine. Curtice reports that an estimated 2 out of 5 illicit pills can kill. In September of this year, the U. S. Drug Enforcement Agency (DEA) released an alert stating, "A deadly dose of fentanyl is small enough to fit on the tip of a pencil."

Narcan, which can reverse to some extent the body's reaction to opioids, may not be effective because of the amount it takes to neutralize fentanyl and the swiftness of death. Curtice spoke of arriving to find dead victims with paraphernalia still in hand and Narcan nearby; the user lost consciousness almost immediately and died shortly after. He stated that for a user of counterfeit opioids, the question is, "not if, but when" a fatal overdose will occur.

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OPIOID EPIDEMIC... (Continued from Page 3)

The DEA reports that, “The vast majority of counterfeit pills brought into the United States are produced in Mexico,” often with chemicals provided by China. Yakima is a regional hub for the criminal distribution of opioids throughout a multi-state region. Curtice notes that a surge in deaths in Yakima from particularly lethal pills is followed a few days later by a surge in King County. The FBI is coming in to assist, and Yakima participates in a 15-county work group to address the epidemic.

Erika Ochoa spoke of the Health District’s efforts in addressing the public health aspects of the epidemic. Harm reduction programs include providing test strips for fentanyl potency, needle exchanges, instruction in use of Narcan and linkage to care. Interventions are often a “hard sell,” so the Health District works to educate providers, partners and the public.

Theresa Adkison reviewed addiction treatment options available in the Yakima area including inpatient treatment, outpatient treatment, and 12-step programs. The drivers for addiction vary from individual to individual, so it is important to have intervention and treatment options. An important component of only a few programs is addressing families. Treating only the addict, she said, is like coming upon a whole family involved in a car accident, picking up and helping only the one critically injured, and leaving the rest at the side of the road. A potentially more wholistic approach is connecting users with certified peer support staff to assist the user in the community to stay alive and work toward recovery.

All three of the speakers highlighted the seriousness of the opioid crisis in Yakima and the challenges of making changes. They agree that a key is community-wide awareness and attention. Be alert to behavioral changes in family and friends. Learn about and advocate for services not only for treatment, but also to address stressors and mental health concerns that have increased with Covid. And believe that we can build a more compassionate community.



Voter Education....



YOUR VOTE, YOUR VOICE – SOME FACTS

Whether you have already mailed or dropped off your ballot or you still have it sitting out ready to complete and submit, election security may be on your mind. It certainly was a concern for the Washington State Office of the Secretary of State given the number of phone calls and emails received before, during and after the last election. The following information on election security is excerpted from the LWVWA-sponsored tabloid, *Your Vote*, available from the LWVWA at <https://lwwa.org/>.

- **Our elections are safe and your vote is secure.** According to a Brennan Center for Justice report, an American is more likely to “be struck by lightning” than be impersonated at the polls. America’s elections are among the safest and most secure worldwide.
- **Our elections follow recommendations to preclude a “rigged” election.** Recommendations raised by security experts, have been followed for years, such as paper based-systems, including voter verifiable paper audit trails; independent testing; pre- and post-election audits; and physical security of tabulation equipment. Safeguards include: testing of tabulation equipment at a federally approved independent testing lab; systems tested again at the state level and reviewed by our own voting systems certification board comprised of technology experts, accessibility experts, and certified county election officials; required county acceptance testing and logic and accuracy testing prior to every election; and post-election audits where we draw precincts and races at random and compare the vote totals from the tabulator to a hand count of ballots before the election is certified.

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YOUR VOTE, YOUR VOICE – SOME FACTS (Continued from Page 4)

- **Only one ballot per voter per election is counted.** As each signature is validated, a database is checked to verify that a ballot has not been counted for that voter. If a person submits more than one ballot in the same election, the ballot envelopes are set aside and reviewed. Only the first valid ballot submitted is counted.
- **Signatures must pass multiple checks.** Signatures are examined using Washington State Patrol procedures. If a ballot turns up without a signature, the voter is contacted and given until the last day before the end of the canvass period (the period from Election Day until the results are certified) to provide a signature that matches their official ballot signature.
- **Ballots are tracked at every point in the election process.** Ballots are tracked from the moment they arrive at the county elections office until they are archived after counting. At each point, ballots are checked to ensure that the number of validated voters matches the number of ballots moving through the process. Totals must match exactly.
- **The actual physical paper ballots are the important documents.** Electronic scanners assist in counting ballots, but actual humans check, recheck, and confirm that ballots are properly accounted for at every step of the process. Ballots can be hand counted in the case of extremely close elections. All ballots are preserved for possible recounts and examination.
- **Official election observers are invited to be present at all times during the counting process.** Ballots are unsealed, handled, and counted in the presence of observers including representatives of both major political parties as well as nonpartisan representatives. Observers leave the building where the ballots are counted at the same time as the election staff.
- **Vote-count records are kept safe.** Multiple safety precautions including built-in audit logs prevent anyone from changing votes or from hacking the machines that tabulate the votes.
- **Party affiliation is private in Washington state.** Washington voters don't register by political party and are asked to declare their political party affiliation only during presidential primaries. That information is recorded on the voter's registration record for 60 days, per state law, before being permanently removed from the voter's record. If a candidate or political party has personal information, they got it from somewhere other than the government.
- **Our votes are private.** Other than ensuring that a ballot returned by mail is properly delivered to its respective county elections office, the U.S. Postal Service has no way to track ballots or their contents. No one can obtain information from the elections office about how you voted on candidates and measures.
- **Multiple layers of safe-guards prevent outside interference from other countries.** Our American decentralized system, where elections occur at the local level, reinforces this protection from outside interference.

*Yakima County League History...***YAKIMA COUNTY LEAGUE FOCUSES ON
GOVERNMENT STRUCTURES**

This is the fourth monthly installment of a series of articles adapted from a typed ten-page document titled, "A History of the League of Women Voters of Yakima County," by co-authors Kara Kondo, Geneve Bowden, Marge Van Scoy, Laura Hopp, Pat Ball, Charlotte Kendrick, and Marilyn Lane. From enthusiastic beginnings in 1950, our local League got to work learning about local issues and promoting

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YAKIMA COUNTY LEAGUE... (Continued from Page 5)

improvements. This installment outlines activities in the 1950's and 1960's related to city and county governments, and state and national issues as well as redistricting, a topic we have continued to work on through 2021!

Editor's Note: Direct quotes from "A History of the League..." will be indicated by quotation marks or indented sections. Some details and names will be omitted. At the conclusion of the newsletter series, the entire document will be made available to interested members.

City Government

"The League studied the structure of city government and established criteria for good administration." They found that the City Commission Form, with three elected officials that headed the departments of administration, finance, and engineering, provided an arena of continuing conflict. The election of new commissioners did not change the underlying problems." The League advocated for a Council-Manager structure, and League president, Dorothy Ledbetter, was appointed to a citizens committee to "secure community acceptance for a change." The Council-Manager form was approved at the November, 1958, election but disqualified for a legal technicality. With League support, the measure was passed again a year later.

"The League continued its interest in city government and in 1966 published a financial survey, 'Making Dollars Out of Sense.'"



1961 demolition of the old Yakima County Courthouse. Photo from Yakima Memory, an online collaboration between Yakima Valley Libraries and Yakima Valley Museum. <https://archives.yvl.org/>

Reaching Out to the County

"In 1958, because of increased membership and the number of members outside of the city area, the League became the League of Women Voters of Yakima County, and began a 'Know Your County' study. "Forms of County Government" became an on-going project, and an information pamphlet was published in 1960s and updated in the 1970s. "The League studied and was an early supporter of county zoning, urban renewal, metropolitan development plans, park and recreation administration and land acquisition, and solid waste management.

State and National Issues

Beginning in 1952, our Local and State Leagues "continuously worked for a state tax structure that is adequate, fair and based on the ability to pay." These early years also saw the Yakima League supporting positions of the "League of Women Voters of the United States on the United Nations, world trade and international development for third world countries. We have made local trade surveys, sponsored national speakers, cooperated with other organizations with similar aims, and promoted issues on civil rights for women and minorities."

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YAKIMA COUNTY LEAGUE... (Continued from Page 6)

Reapportionment and Redistricting

In 1954, the State League began studying reapportionment and redistricting, which had last been done by initiative in 1932! With no action from the legislature following the 1950 census, the State League sponsored Initiative 199 in November, 1957. “The Yakima League believed in the ‘one man – one vote’ premise and worked vigorously for this initiative, even though it meant reduced representation for Yakima County and it was a very unpopular position locally.” Although passed in the election, “the legislature in 1958 and the courts severely reduced its effectiveness.” The legislature declined again to act following the 1960 census. The history continues:

We continued to press for action through the courts and for the legislature to enact legislation to establish a commission that would automatically reapportion and redistrict the state following each national census, provided the legislature did not act. The political climate was not conducive to such legislation until after the 1980 census, when the 1982 session established such a commission. (The State League will continue to monitor this process through the 1990 census, covering nearly 40 years of active work on this issue.)

Editor’s note: Attention and advocacy continue through the present, currently totaling nearly 70 years “of active work on this issue” of fair reapportionment and redistricting.

(Next month’s installment reviews Voter Service activities beginning in the 1950s.)



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF WASHINGTON
STATEMENT ON DIVERSITY**

The League of Women Voters is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are central to the organization’s current and future success in engaging all individuals, households, communities, and policy makers in creating a more perfect democracy. We will actively work to remove barriers to full participation in this organization 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



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF YAKIMA COUNTY

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

Cordially invites you to: JOIN US!

New Member **Renewing Member**

Name: _____

Membership Categories:

Address: _____

_____ \$10 Student

_____ \$60 Basic

Phone: _____

_____ \$40 Each added
family member at the same
residence

E-Mail: _____

Scholarships are available for potential members who cannot afford dues. Please contact us at yakimacountylwvyc@gmail.com

Additional Sustaining Gift: \$60 _____ \$40 _____ \$25 _____ Other: _____

Your Sustaining Gift will help support our local activities.

Make checks payable to: LWVYC And mail to: LWVYC, PO Box 723, YAKIMA WA 98907

Please note: Our fiscal year is July 1 through June 30. Initial dues received before December 31 will be subject to renewal on June 30 of the following year. Initial dues received after January 1 will be subject to renewal on June 30 of the year following that year.

- Examples: a) Initial dues paid October 10, 2020; renewal date June 30, 2021
- b) Initial dues paid February 24, 2021; renewal date June 30, 2022