BRIEF HISTORY OF THE BILLINGS LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

As you are likely aware, Montana’s first Constitution of 1889 provided that “any citizen” of the United States over 18 years of age could vote. Our own Jeanette Rankin was elected in 1916 to the House of Representatives, the first women to serve in the House. With woman’s suffrage a fact of life in Montana, the National women’s suffrage movement was little involved in Montana. After the adoption of the 19th Amendment, August 1920, to the US Constitution which provided that citizens right to “vote shall not be denied or abridged”, the women involved in the suffrage movement started the League of Women Voters.

Soon after, in October 1920 national speakers, on behalf of the League of Women Voters, spoke at a public meeting at the Congregational Church. Yet, there are no records of any movement to establish a Billings chapter of the League of Women Voters. Until February 8, 1928 when a small notice was published in the Billings Gazette. The notice said:

Women Voters Plan
Meeting Wednesday

Whether a permanent organization of the League of Women Voters will be enacted here, will be determined Wednesday night, when interested women will gather in the law office of Mrs. Emily Sloan in the Hart-Albin building to consider the matter. A temporary organization was started about a month ago. The meeting is scheduled for 7:30.
Brief History of the League of Women Voters, cont.

That the February 1928 meeting was successful is reflected by a further notice published in the *Billings Gazette*, Saturday, March 3, 1928. This notice announced that the next meeting would be on March 7, when officers would be announced and invited women interested in national and state policies to attend.

Public records indicate that the Billings League continued into the 1940s. Due to World War II, the Billings League, along with many other Leagues in Montana and around the country disbanded. Then on Friday, December 7, 1951 a notice entitled “Women Organize Voters’ League” appeared in *The Billings Gazette*. The notice advised, at a meeting held at the Parmly Billings Memorial Library, Mrs. Wilma Smith was installed as president of the Billings League of Women Voters. Once again, the Billings League of Women Voters was in business and is continuing.

The League of Women Voters celebrated 100 years of voter education, registration and public service in 2010. Our 100th year anniversary will provide opportunities to members to participate in the planning and presentation of events.

**LWV Billings Conducts Voter Registration Drive at Passages**

Dispelling the popular belief that former felons cannot vote in the state of Montana, Billings League of Women Voters members Janice Munsell, Judy Allen, and Cathy Grott conducted a voter registration education program at Passages. Passages is a community-based correctional facility that includes alcohol and drug treatment as well as provides services for pre-release into the community after incarceration. Roughly 37 women from the facility participated in the program which resulted in 32 new voter registrations.

To date, Voter Registration Services has registered 171 new registered voters since March 2017. Voter registration drives will continue at Riverstone Health. League members will also be on hand to register eligible voters at the naturalization ceremony at the federal courthouse on Thursday, July 27.

**Meet LWV Billings’ New Co-President — Cathy Fitzgerald**

I recently moved back to Billings for a job opportunity with Stockman Bank and to be nearer to my family. Prior to my move, I was employed with the Montana Department of Revenue in Helena. I joined this grass-roots organization to make a difference in my community and to connect with like-minded people. Being co-president of the league has given me the opportunity for both. If you haven’t been involved on the board or one of our standing committees, I highly recommend you contact a board member to find out how to get involved.
LWV — Paris Climate Agreement

June 1, 2017 Washington, DC – The League of Women Voters president, Chris Carson issued the following statement in response to President Trump’s announcement that the United States will leave the global Paris Climate Agreement:

“Withdrawing from the Paris Climate Agreement is a giant step in the wrong direction for the health of the planet and all living beings. President Trump’s decision today will undermine global cooperation and have a harmful impact on U.S. relations with our most trusted world allies. The long-term effects of this decision will make more people sick, especially children and the elderly. The League of Women Voters is gravely disappointed to see the United States on the wrong side of history in the fight to protect our planet.”
https://lwv.org/press-releases/league-statement-paris-climate-

FUNDING DECISION

The League of Women Voters of Billings has sponsored the airing of Democracy Now for several years. This year members did not direct donations to fund the program. Therefore, the board discontinued sponsorship of Democracy Now.

The following concerns influenced the board’s decision to not fund Democracy Now out of operating funds:

• We are unable to determine who is actually watching the program.
• The program currently airs at 6 am.
• Democracy Now broadcasts two additional times later in the day.
• Community 7 would have to address technical issues plus bump existing programs for Democracy Now to air later in the day.
• Community 7 programming is only available to those with cable service.
• Many people are opting out of cable service.
• Community 7 has had intermittent technical problems airing Democracy Now at 6 am.
• Members have tried unsuccessfully to resolve the above issues directly with Community 7.

Long Time Member Spotlight — Virginia Kyger-Jellison

Virginia is a long-time resident of Billings, and she now resides at West Park. She has been a member of the LWV for seven years. She joined the League because she has an interest in politics and learning more about it.

New Member and Voter Co-Editor — Bonnie Lorenzen

I moved to Billings five years ago, after living many years in the midwest. I am a speech-language pathologist at St. John’s Lutheran Ministries, and became involved with the League of Women Voters when I volunteered to help out with a voter registration drive that was organized by Cathy Grott. I decided to join the LWV because I wanted to learn more about local politics and the political process.
The April Annual meeting was full of surprises. I arrived late, found a seat, and quietly listened to the moderator Nancy Detrick, speak about variety of topics. Including the addition to our By Laws of a provision that all Leagues are to admit as full members anyone sixteen (16) years of age or older. It’s exciting to know that enough younger people want to join the League, that we now officially can admit them as full members.

She proceeded to the election of officers of the League. The nominating committee had come up empty for candidates for president and vice president. When Nancy opened the meeting for nominations from the floor for officers, to my surprise Betty Whiting spoke up and nominated Cathy Fitzgerald and myself to be co-presidents’ to serve for one year. Neither the nominating committee nor Betty had spoken to Cathy or me about this. Cathy and I had not met before, she recently joined the League, and as many of you know, due to medical concerns and my work schedule I’ve not been active in the League the past three (3) years. After a few moments to think about the proposition, both Cathy and I agreed to serve as co-presidents this year.

Cathy and I chat, email and meet to discuss League affairs several times each month. We’ve worked out a division of responsibilities that fits our abilities and it’s working. It’s been a joy to work with Cathy. She brings a welcome perspective to the League. Cathy works full time traveling around Montana, however, as she plans to be at our August third, general meeting, you will have an opportunity to meet her. Speaking of our August third general meeting, Judy Senteny, Program chair, arranged for Danny Chorki to speak to us about the Electoral College.

One of the benefits I’ve always liked about the League is that I get to meet and work with many, many smart, talented, and knowledgeable women, and men. We often have different views about politics and society, but we all are dedicated. Dedicated to “monitoring and working with all aspects of local, state and national governmental bodies, often speaking for the minority, unafraid to take the less popular stand on issues vital to our rights as citizens.” (Quoted form letter by Bill Clark, a member of the Columbia, MO LWV.) Here in Billings, Montana we do all of these things. So, when the Nominating Committee (LaVerne Frank chairs the committee and Jean Ott and Lorraine Collins are committee members) contact you about serving on our Board, please remember that it gives you an opportunity to learn more about the League and work with other women and men dedicated to the same values as you.

At the August third meeting, you will have the opportunity to sign up to work at various Billings Candidate Forums. LWV is coordinating the forum with other organizations, with which we are forming coalitions. You can sign up to be on the Upholding the Paris Climate Accord committee that Kathy Masis is chairing. Additionally, you can sign up to be on the Immigration Voter Education committee, that I’m chairing. Lots of new initiatives by our League and opportunities to participate with more to come.

Cont., next page
Finally, a thank you to all of you who responded to Cathy Grott and Judy Allen, co-chairs Voter Services, and have worked doing voter registration. Voter registration is at the core of what we do, having worked to expand the right to vote and to make it easier for citizens to vote.

“I think if the people of this country can be reached with the truth, their judgment will be in favor of the man, as against the privileged few.” Eleanor Roosevelt

Hope to meet up with you all at the August third meeting.

Theresa Schneder

BILLINGS AREA LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OFFICERS 2017-2018

Co-presidents: Cathy Fitzgerald and Theresa Schneder, serving 2017-2018
Secretary: Alicia Pettys, serving 2017-2019
Treasurer: Janice Munsell, serving 2017-2019
Board Members at Large: Kathy Masis and Candace Forette, 2017-2019
Judy Allen and Judy Senteny, 2016-2018

Nominating Committee: LaVerne Frank, Chair, Jean Ott & Lorraine Collins

Standing Committee:
Development: Judy Senteny (awaiting a co-chair)
Publicity: Lorraine Collins
Membership co-chairs: Theresa Schneder & Bonnie Lorenzen
Voter Services: Judy Allen & Catherine Grott, co-chairs
Program: Judy Senteny

Temporary Committees:
Facebook Manager: Pam Ellis
Voter Editors: Janice Munsell & Bonnie Lorenzen
Website Manager: Alicia Pettys
Governance: Open
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<tr>
<th>DATE</th>
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<tr>
<td>July 27th</td>
<td>Naturalization Voter Registration</td>
<td>Federal Courthouse</td>
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<td>August 3rd</td>
<td>Meeting- Danny Choriki speaker</td>
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<td>August 14th</td>
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<td>724 Park Ln., Billings</td>
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<td>September 7th</td>
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<td>Primary Election Billings Mayor &amp; City Council Candidates</td>
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<td>September 16th</td>
<td>Board Retreat</td>
<td>United Way Offices</td>
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<td>September 26th</td>
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<td>October 5th</td>
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<td>October 19th</td>
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<td>Federal Courthouse</td>
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<td>November 2nd</td>
<td>Meeting – TBD</td>
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<td>November 7th</td>
<td>General Election Billings Mayor &amp; City Council Candidates</td>
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<td>November 20th</td>
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<td>December 2nd</td>
<td>Holiday Gathering/Party</td>
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<td>January 4th</td>
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<td>February 19th</td>
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<td>April 5th</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 22nd</td>
<td>Earth Day Voter Registration</td>
<td>Good Earth Market</td>
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Look for emails concerning additional events. Coming up soon we will have dates, time and places for Billings City Council & Mayor primary candidate debates.
The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, we do not support or oppose any political candidate, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Visit us on Facebook @LWVBILLINGS or at our web site: www.lwvbillings.org

DONATIONS
Contributions can be made to the Billings League of Women Voters (BLWV) or the Billings League of Women Voters Education Fund (BLWVEF). Contributions made payable to the Billings League of Women Voters of Billings, a 501 (c)(4) organization, are not tax deductible. Contributions made payable to the Billings League of Women Voters Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization, are tax deductible to the extent permitted by law.

My gift is for (please check one) ______ BLWV ______ BLWVEF

CONTRIBUTION INFORMATION:
(PLEASE PRINT)

NAME: _______________________________________________________
ADDRESS: _____________________________________________________
C/S/Z: ________________________________________________________
Email: _________________________________________________________
Home Phone: _________________________________________________
Cell Phone: __________________________________________________

Please make checks payable to: The Billings League of Women Voters
Please mail checks to: BLWV, PO Box 21631, Billings, MT 59104-1631
Thank you for supporting the League of Women Voters. Only with your support can we achieve our mission!