Letter from the President – Looking Back and Looking Forward

I have met some amazing women in the Billings League over the past fourteen months who squeeze in time between their volunteer efforts, jobs and personal commitments to make a real difference to the democratic process in our community. The state retreat in April was a wonderful opportunity to meet fellow leaguers from around the state and to share ideas about what all the local Leagues are accomplishing to make democracy work. In addition, the speakers organized by Betty Whiting were very thought-provoking. I especially had my eyes opened by Marci McLean of Western Native Voice who spoke about growing up thinking that her voice didn’t matter. I learned about how her life has changed to the point that she is now helping others to use their voices through the democratic process of government: voting, running for office, organizing to get legislation passed and telling their success stories all around the state in order to let others know that their voices can count as well. Marci is a notable example of how powerful one motivated woman can be.

The statistics coming out for the numbers of women stepping up to run for office are also energizing. Until 2008, the number of women running for Congress was around 200 in an election year. As of 6/14/18, the numbers have increased to 456 — close to a 125% increase in the past 10 years. In Senate races we have 51 women running — beating the record of 40 in 2016. I look forward to watching women use their voices to change how democracy and government can work. I am proud to be a part of that movement through the League. Get out there and make your voices matter!
Highlights from the State Retreat

Nancy Leifer, President, LWVMT
Democracy in Montana and the role of the LWV

Lisa Harmon
First Congregational Church
Civility in Politics

Danelle Jones
Author of *An African in Imperial London*
The Stories We Share: Communication in a Democracy

Marci McLean, Western Native Voice
Native American Voting Challenges

The Raging Grannies led singing

Delicious meals provided by Judy Senteney and Janice Munsell
Have you thought about getting more involved in the political process? Do you have a candidate you want to support?

I encourage you to consider getting involved at your political party headquarters. All parties need workers as much as they need money. It seems that our political system has been invaded with money from special interests, yet person-to-person contact and attending political functions is still an effective way to participate in the democratic process.

This involves harder work than writing a check but it is also needed. I am currently manning the phone bank at a political office for two hours each week. I hate the job but it helps the door-to-door canvassers later because we can identify who has moved, etc. If you want to get involved, I am sure they can use you somewhere.

What candidates do you suspect represent you? Do you know? Contact them by the internet. This morning I wrote to our 2 US Senators on my immigration concerns. I also wrote to Rep. Gainforte and Speaker Paul Ryan. All the public officials can be reached. At the state level you can access the representative’s e-mail address by looking under “Government” at the mt.gov site or get the political party contact information at https://sosmt.gov/Elections/Parties.

I am convinced that people DOING JOBS as volunteers is so necessary. I hope you will follow up and get connected to the process.
Since joining the LWV a little over a year ago, I have worked toward helping people register to vote. Last spring Bret Rutherford, Yellowstone County Election Administrator, sent out a request for new election judges, and I volunteered.

After a 2-hour training designed to teach about the roles and responsibilities of election judges, I worked my first election on June 5, starting the day at 6:00 a.m. and ending about 8:30 p.m. I was assigned to help voters from three of the 22 precincts that vote at the MetraPark poling place.

Throughout the day, I helped only about 65 voters. It was slow because nearly 40,000 votes came in through absentee ballots while just over 1,600 ballots were cast in person at the 14 Yellowstone County poling places.

The long-time, experienced election judges told me that it was not a particularly exciting day because it was a primary election. They said, “Come back for the general election in November . . . it will be much more exciting.” I plan to go back.

If you are interested in becoming an election judge, you can learn more at the Montana Secretary of State’s website at https://sosmt.gov/elections/judge/ or by calling them at 406-444-2034.

---

**Election Information**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Monday, October 9th</td>
<td>Close of regular voter registration</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tuesday, October 10th</td>
<td>Start of late voter registration — in person only</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Friday, October 12th</td>
<td>Absentee Ballots mailed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tuesday, November 6th</strong></td>
<td><strong>Federal General Election (Polling Place Election)</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Unsure about the status of your registration?**

You can check your registration status at *My Voter Page*, by following this link on the web:

https://app.mt.gov/voterinfo/
The Committee is coming to some conclusions that we are ready to run by our legislature. First, we think that personal identifiable information should not be shared by our government unless there is a need to do so for transparency in government. In addition, we think that the purchase of voter information from the Secretary of State’s office needs to be investigated to see how that information is used. The LWVMT President, Nancy Leifer, spoke for the Voter Rolls Committee at the May meeting of the legislative interim committee for election oversight (SAVA) presenting our concerns about these two issues and the SAVA committee has put this on the agenda for their July meeting. Nancy has also been invited to attend a panel discussion at the meeting to present our recommendations.

In preparation for the meeting, I just sent 27 letters to the people who purchased voter rolls in 2017, asking them how they used the data and which information was most useful for them. We will use the responses to craft any recommendations for any change. Thank you to the committee members who have helped to get us started on this important project and for keeping up the momentum – every little bit helps.
1. The Coalition on Climate Change, with YVCC Sustainability Committee and Eco Angela's, continues to meet the third Thursday of each month at 5:30 p.m., at YVCC. All Billings League members are welcome. Coalition members plan to attend City Council meetings, to observe, be seen, listen for actions of the council or comments by council members that we want to positively reinforce. The goal is to get the subject of municipal energy conservation and cost savings on their radar screen. We are gathering support from council members and other stakeholders. Working on shared goals with dynamic local action groups is invigorating!

2. We co-hosted a presentation by Dr. Cathy Whitlock from MSU and the Montana Institute on Ecosystems, on the 2017 Montana Climate Assessment at the Billings Public Library on May 24. It was covered by Local TV, video recorded by Billings Public Library for future use, and covered in the Last Best News and the Billings Gazette. My estimate, there were more than 110 attendees. Other co-hosts were the YVCC Better Billings Sustainability Committee and Billings Chapter of Citizens' Climate Lobby. Each co-host introduced their organization, and Cathy Fitzgerald mentioned the League's positions on environmental and climate issues.

The researchers took two years to bring together answers to the questions from stakeholders from Montana's agriculture, forest, and water sectors. The report shows that Montana’s average temperatures are increasing, mountain snowpacks are declining, and large wildfires are more frequent. Dr. Whitlock said their objective was to help Montanans plan for the future. You can learn more about the project at: http://montanaclimate.org/

Kathy Masis
Chair, Climate Change Committee

---

**MSU offers online educational module on the Montana Climate Assessment**

Montana State University Academic Technology and Outreach and the Montana Institute on Ecosystems have developed a free online educational module that helps citizens learn key information from the Montana Climate Assessment.

The module is self-paced and takes about two to two-and-a-half hours to complete. Participants can take the course from any personal computer with internet access. To register for the module, visit [http://eu.montana.edu/noncredit](http://eu.montana.edu/noncredit) and look for Montana’s Changing Climate.
Meet one of our new Board Members, Hope Smith

Hope Smith was raised in Kentucky, and attended Colorado College and the University of California, Santa Cruz where she earned degrees in biology and environmental studies. In addition, Hope holds a graduate degree in education from the University of California, Irvine.

After retiring from teaching and coaching cross country and track, Hope opened a small bakery and bistro in Red Lodge, along with a farmers' market booth and a catering business. Having recently sold the business, she has kept busy volunteering for numerous community organizations. She is currently serving on the board of the Red Lodge Friends of the Library and she is on the Store Operations Committee for the local food bank, Baretooth Cupboards, in Red Lodge. As a long-time election judge she has made increasing voter engagement, voting rights and voter registration top priorities.

She envisions a future where communities are empowered to create new solutions to present-day problems using direct action, political advocacy, and community development to inspire new people to get involved in politics and to create a united platform for progressive causes.

LWVUS Position Statement: Representative Government

Citizen’s Right to Vote - Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.

Citizen’s Right to Know/Citizen Participation - Protect the citizen’s right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision-making.

The LWVUS holds the position that every eligible voter should have a fair and equal opportunity to vote, but miss that opportunity due to missing registration deadlines or not understanding the registration process. In an effort to increase voter participation, the LWVUS supports the Automatic Voter Registration Act of 2017. The LWVUS encourages members to contact their representatives urging them to support this bill.

You can find out more about the bill and contact your representatives via the LWVUS webpage:

http://participate.lwv.org/c/10065/p/dia/action4/common/public/?action_KEY=12949&_ga=2.41973477.1917298652.1531796356-1306674732.1531796356&okay=true
LWVUS Position Statement
Social Policy

Immigration

Promote reunification of immediate families; meet the economic, business and employment needs of the United States; be responsive to those facing political persecution or humanitarian crises; and provide for student visas. Ensure fair treatment under the law for all persons. In transition to a reformed system, support provisions for unauthorized immigrants already in the country to earn legal status.

The LWVUS has been working with lawmakers on immigration reform and family separation. The league was involved in opposing recent legislation that did not meet the LWVUS position. The league is currently urging Congress to pass the Dream Act. You can read more about the LWVUS involvement in these issues, and how you can become involved at:

https://www.lwv.org/blog/policymakers-focus-immigration-reform-and-family-separation

Calendar

- **Tuesday, July 24th**
  - Drinks & Nibbles
    - House of Books — 224 N. Broadway
    - 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

- **Thursday, August 2**
  - General League Membership Meeting
    - The Elks Lodge — 934 Lewis Ave
    - 11:30 - 1:00 p.m.

- **Saturday, August 11**
  - LWV Billings Picnic for Members, Family & Friends
    - LaVerne Frank’s home — 3632 Poly Drive
    - 5:00 p.m.

- **Thursday, August 16**
  - Billings Climate Change Committee Meeting
    - Yellowstone Valley Citizens Council — 220 S. 27th
    - 5:30 p.m.
LWVBillings
Board of Directors

President - Cathy Fitzgerald

Vice President - Ruth Blott

Co-treasurers: Janice Munsell & Jacqie Gee

Secretary: Bonnie Lorenzen

Board Members-at-Large: Kathy Masis, Theresa Schneder, Hope Smith & Audrey Wagner

Committee Chairs:

Publicity - Lorraine Collins & Coralee Hicks

Voter Services - Cathy Grott & Judy Allen

Program — Audrey Wagner

VOTER Editor & Website — Bonnie Lorenzen

Membership — Theresa Schneder
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 Voter of Billings, a 501 (c)(4) organization, are not tax deductive. 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!