

League of Women Voters of Thurston County

DECADE STORIES

**The First Five Decades
of Helping Democracy Work in
Our Community, State, and Nation**

1961-2011



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50 YEARS OF A GREAT IDEA

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Introduction

League of Women Voters of Thurston County – 1961-2011

The Thurston County League of Women Voters was established in 1961. It is part of the League of Women Voters of the United States, as well as the League of Women Voters of Washington, both of which date back to 1920.

The national League was formed out of the women’s suffrage movement. It was founded on the idea that a nonpartisan civic organization could provide the education and experience the public and the new women voters needed to assure the success of democracy. At its founding in 1920, the League was initially concerned with ending all discrimination against women, but gradually expanded its interests to include issues affecting the whole community.

Today, the League works to effect change on a variety of issues, such as health care, climate change, election and campaign finance reforms, land use, and education. Since 1920, the League nationally has been known widely for its voter education efforts and as a non-partisan, government watchdog group.

In 1961, the new Thurston County League entered into this tradition with great enthusiasm.

STORIES FROM THE FIRST FIVE DECADES IN THURSTON COUNTY

1960s

Background

In the early part of this decade, high-level professional jobs in government, as well as appointive and elective government offices, were not the norm for women. So, many women interested in governmental issues developed careers as volunteers in the League of Women Voters.

Locally, we made available multiple internal League meetings and committees. For example, we had three sets of “unit” meetings held in different locations, twice a month. Babysitting was provided for the day meetings. With this many meetings, we were able to study and discuss a number of issues of concern to League at the national, state, and local levels. We also offered public meetings and forums on issues League was studying in order to share with the community.

Members did extensive research on the issues they were studying. After completing our studies and reaching consensus on issues, members undertook action campaigns to carry out our positions on government at all levels. We also undertook a number of voter service activities to help our members and the community cast informed votes on candidates and ballot issues.

Thurston County League – 1960s

From Marjie Reeves, a founding member of the Thurston County League

The Thurston County League’s Beginnings

Efforts to establish the Thurston County League were difficult largely due to the prevailing idea that Olympia was too partisan, because it was the state’s capital. With

state officials' elections every four years, there were drastic changes in political philosophies reflected in the community when top state officials changed. An almost complete turnover occurred with state workers, who at the time were all patronage employees, loyal to their party and considered partisan.

Olympia had a small town culture made up mostly of pioneer families and the newcomers. There were very few women with jobs in the workplace. Women with families generally did not work outside the home. There was little or no childcare available.

The American Association of University Women was well organized and active in Olympia, holding study groups on many subjects. AAUW members had long thought that the state capital should have a League of Women Voters to focus on governmental issues.

When Miggs Gaudette brought together a small group to investigate the possibility of establishing a League of Women Voters organization, many in the AAUW group joined in the effort. It was thought that more in-depth study of the issues was needed, which a League organization could provide. The political climate at this time was conducive to this effort.

An initiative led by leagues throughout the state added a civil service or "merit" system to state employment. It was a departure from a strictly patronage system that had existed in the past years. This change resulted in less concern about partisan differences in Thurston County.

A provisional Thurston County League was established in 1961 by the state League. Full recognition as a local League was granted in 1962. The first local president was Miggs Gaudette, who had been diligent in her efforts to establish the Thurston League even though previous efforts had failed. The divided partisan issues had been overcome by the strong nonpartisan position of the League of Women Voters nationwide.

Governmental Issues Studied and Acted on in the 1960s

Local Governmental Issues

A first requirement of a new local League is to study and publish a booklet on its local government for distribution to members and the public. Starting in 1961, 50 members spent one-and-a-half years researching and interviewing county officials. In 1963, “Know Your County—Thurston” was published. Nearly 600 copies were distributed to county schools. Another study of local government was completed in 1966 with the publication of “A Look at Olympia.”

It is out of these initial studies that local leagues are expected to find their first local issues to study and take action on.

During the county study, members found that the unincorporated county had no planning commission, no planning department, no zoning, and no building codes. So, its first study, adopted at the 1964 Annual Meeting was land use planning – covering county planning and also planning in Olympia. By 1966, the League was active in supporting the county’s adoption of its first planning commission and planning department, and it gave suggestions for the makeup of the planning commission. In 1968, the League sponsored a local conference on land use planning, “Growing Pains.” One hundred invited local government and community leaders heard speakers from the University of Washington and other areas in Puget Sound discuss successful approaches to growth problems. They broke into groups to discuss how growth problems could be solved.

Local land use planning issues continue to be the subject of additional study and local action by the League to the present day.

Over the years, the League nationally studied water quality issues and developed positions on the subject. The Thurston League took interest in the water quality of Puget Sound inlets and, in particular, the sewage treatment plant in Olympia on Budd Inlet. The plant was discharging primary treated sewage into the inlet. During storms, it overflowed and discharged sewage directly into the inlet without any treatment. In the late 1960s, the League arranged trips to the plant, and, in 1968, the members wrote letters to Congress in support of federal grants to upgrade the plant to secondary

treatment. In the mid-1970s, Lacey, Olympia, Tumwater, and Thurston County agreed to a wastewater management partnership called LOTT.

State and National Governmental Issues

While work was being done on local government issues, members were also busy studying and acting on state and national issues. These included redistricting and the active soliciting of signatures for petitions to deliver to the Washington State Legislature to form a redistricting commission, a study of state and local taxes, foreign aid, foreign trade, the state constitution and resulting positions favoring a constitutional convention, and fair housing standards.

Birth of the Puget Sound Leagues with a Focus on Regional Issues

A new regional League was established in 1967 – the Puget Sound Leagues of Women Voters, known as “PSL.” Its purpose was to address shared governmental issues along the Puget Sound corridor. Nine leagues in five counties participated. Thurston League member Sheila Guenther was on the first PSL board of directors. Rita Robison also served on the board as PSL’s newsletter editor.

PSL began work by becoming familiar with the governments and issues in the Puget Sound corridor, publishing the results of its research in “The Puget Sound Region.” Next, PSL worked on transportation in 1968 and public port districts in 1973, publishing the results of their research for both. Sue Lean and Irene Christy were leaders in the port work.

PSL continued its activity through the 1970s when it was dissolved. Its positions were transferred to the state League and the port position to the Thurston League.

Voter Information

The first candidates’ forum was offered in 1964. In 1967, the first “They Represent You,” a directory of elected officials and their contact information, was printed and distributed in the community. Also in 1967, the League sent questions to all candidates for them to answer. Their written responses were published for the first time in The Olympian. In 1968, a voter registration drive was launched.

After the City of Lacey was incorporated in 1966, an election was held in May 1969 on whether Olympia should annex Lacey. The Thurston League prepared a fact sheet and offered a forum on the issue. The annexation did not occur.

Observer Program

During this decade, the Thurston League was sending observers regularly to meetings of the Thurston County Commission, Thurston County Planning Commission, Olympia City Commission, Olympia Planning Commission, Port of Olympia Commission, and Tumwater Planning Commission. Observers did not speak, but watched how each of the governmental bodies operated and tracked the issues being discussed and debated. Observers wrote brief reports for the League's newsletter, "The Voter," and often gave reports at unit meetings. They would alert the League to issues it might want to formally comment on, using positions on issues that had been studied, or to identify a potential new issue to propose for study.

One member, Barbara Gooding, while an observer to the Olympia City Commission, tells the story of how one of the commissioners came up to her during a break and told her, "I just hate to see you sitting there." Astonished, she asked, "Why is that? I never speak during the meeting." He responded, "Because you're my conscience."

Speakers Bureau and Fundraising

A Speakers Bureau was formed to offer presentations about the League's studies. In order to provide funding for the studies and other activities, a plan was developed to solicit funds from local banks and businesses.

For the first two decades, an annual "Finance Drive" took place. Members called on community leaders and businessmen and women. We told them about our work in the community during the past year and our plans for the next, talked about why League work was important for the community, and gave them a sample of our printed material. The Thurston League was fortunate to receive support from the community. It also was a good way to hear what community leaders thought of our work, as we would get feedback from them during our conversations.

Other ways of raising money for the budget such as rummage sales, garage sales, the more recent "treasure sales," craft sales at the holiday party, and home tours were also

used and continued to be used in later years. At one time, bed and breakfast income was collected by members who opened their spare bedrooms to League members from other parts of the state who came to Olympia for a "League Day at the Legislature."

Legislature-Related Activities

With the Thurston League located in the state capital, it is not surprising that members here had a great deal of interest in the legislative sessions and state government. During this era, members of the Thurston League began working with the state League as observers and note takers at legislative committee meetings. They also fulfilled unmet needs in providing help to citizens visiting the Legislature during sessions.

Legislative Information Desk and Tours

In 1969, after Thurston League members saw the needs of citizens visiting the Legislature when it was in session, League members from the Thurston and Tacoma-Pierce County leagues offered to assist the Washington State Library with its information desk in the Legislative Building. The desk was oriented to providing legislators with information during sessions, but League members noticed that members of the public asked for directions to meetings and hearings and for information about the Legislature, which the desk did not have.

Sheila Guenther, a graphic designer who worked in public relations, obtained blueprints of the Legislative Building. From those, she prepared handouts, simple floor plans of each floor of the building showing where offices and hearing rooms were located. Later, funding was received to print copies of "How a Bill Becomes a Law" for public distribution. Also at this time, the Legislature did not offer tours of the Legislative Building. Periodically during sessions, League members stationed themselves in different places throughout the building to offer information about what was occurring. Guides were also stationed on the Fourth floors of the two buildings behind the Legislative Building where legislative offices and committee rooms were located.

Legislative Forums

In 1965, AAUW and the YWCA invited the Thurston League to become a joint sponsor of the legislative study series they offered. These sessions addressed issues before each legislative session such as redistricting, budgeting, public assistance, water resources, and taxes. Free babysitting was provided.

1970s

Background

The story of this decade focuses on two issues that occupied much of the Thurston League's attention during the 1970s – racial discrimination and environmental issues.

The 1960s and into the 1970s were times of civil rights and anti-Vietnam War turmoil and much violence – President John F. Kennedy and Martin Luther King Jr. were assassinated, cities were being burned, and various groups marched for their rights, largely due to racial discrimination and entrenched poverty. Many League members struggled with trying to bring people together.

New environmental agencies and regulations, which began in the 1960s, continued to come into being in the 1970s. The Thurston League was poised for action based on many studies undertaken in the previous decade, not only local studies, but also those carried out with other leagues in the state and the nation, with resulting positions.

Women were demanding equality in the workplace and the end of sexual discrimination. This is also when women stopped being identified in written materials by their husband's names (Mrs. John Jones), and began being identified by their own names (Mary Jones). The governor at the time, Governor Dan Evans, promoted appointment of women to state boards and commissions by sending lists of openings to all leagues in the state, welcoming submittal of names of women. Women began to be appointed to these boards and commissions in increasing numbers. They also began running for and winning elective office and taking paid, high level-governmental positions, which were becoming more available to women.

Men had been non-voting associate members of the League, and in the interest of equality, delegates to the national League convention in 1974 voted to extend full voting membership to men. Because of its historical association of the name, convention delegates voted to retain the name, "League of Women Voters."

League began to simplify its operations during this decade as increasing numbers of women gave up their full-time volunteer League work for appointive and elective governmental offices and paid professional positions.

Thurston County League – 1970s

From Betty Tabbutt, President 1977-79

The 1970s, also known as the “environmental decade,” roared off to a start with the first-ever Earth Day. The Thurston League was more than ready. It already had national and state League studies and positions on pollution control, coordinated planning with public involvement, waste reduction, and recycling. The League was using these tools to work locally for environmental protection.

While attention was focused on environmental legislative gains and the follow-up work of influencing the implementing regulations and programs, the Thurston League continued its momentum in many areas. Studies and action included work on governance issues, welfare reform, low-income housing, the authority and accountability of local port districts, the status of women, Nisqually Delta, and more.

Nisqually Delta: The Thurston League had already recognized the unique value of the Nisqually Delta, one of the few remaining natural estuaries on the West Coast. Joining with the Tacoma-Pierce County League, under the structure of the Puget Sound Leagues, a forum was organized and a study published in 1970 called, “Nisqually in Conflict.” Thurston League members Jan Patton, Sue Lean, and Vivian Cuykendall worked on the study.

After developing a position, the Thurston League lobbied to protect the Nisqually from a proposed deep-water port. President Marie Cameron and Jan Patton testified at local and state public meetings on the Nisqually. The final victory came in 1974 when the delta, along with adjoining farmland, was designated a National Wildlife Refuge to be managed by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

Indian Treaty Rights: One notable effort, initiated by the Thurston League in 1971, was a study of Indian treaty rights. This focused on the education, health, and fishing treaty rights of Native Americans. Although the Thurston League could use the resulting position to advocate locally for education issues, it was limited on the other issues that required action by the state Legislature. Therefore, the Thurston League successfully urged the state League to take up Indian treaty rights. The study and consensus that

resulted allowed the Thurston League to take the lead on legislative lobbying for health, fishing rights, and other treaty matters pertaining to the state's Native Americans.

Racial Discrimination: In late 1971, an incident sparked considerable community attention, and two League members took action as individuals. The women of a fraternal organization were awarding the public library a check for purchase of a book. The gift was to be given at a dinner held at the lodge building. The librarian for the Lacey Timberland Library appeared at the lodge to receive the award, but was turned away because she was black. Much publicity ensued, the club apologized, and the librarian was invited to receive the gift at a meeting, which she declined.

League member Sheila Guenther and founding League President Miggs Gaudette set up a bank account and asked for contributions to a fund called "The Black Culture Book Fund" to buy books for the library.

1972 Ballot Issues: The 1972 election saw an amazing 24 ballot issues. Many of them were environmental protection measures, which were supported by the League along with other issues. The Thurston League supplied speakers on issues such as shoreline protection, litter control, transportation, campaign financing, and constitutional amendments for equal rights for women and combined county-city government. League speakers, including Barbara Gooding, Jolene Unsoeld, Marie Cameron, Marj Yung, and Joanne Wilk, reached more than 500 people at 65 meetings.

The fact that the Thurston League could mount such an effort illustrates the high energy and strong membership of the organization. The early 1970s may have been the peak for the citizen activists.

Percival Landing: In the mid-1970s, under the leadership of President Irene Christy, the Thurston League took a lead role in promoting and supporting the development of Olympia's Percival Landing boardwalk. It was seen as an amenity that would open up an area of the Olympia harbor waterfront to panoramic views, tourism, and downtown revitalization.

More recently, Percival Landing was designated by the American Planning Association as one of 10 "Great Public Spaces" for 2010, part of its Great Places in America program, which began in 2007. During the dedication of the reconstruction of the boardwalk in

the summer of 2011, the role of Irene Christy and the League was recognized in a historical exhibit at the new Harbor House on the boardwalk.

Olympia Yacht Club: In the mid-1970s, the Thurston League, again led by President Irene Christy, successfully challenged a proposal for the Olympia Yacht Club to renew its lease of state land in the harbor because it practiced discrimination in excluding women from full membership.

Local Governance: Toward the end of the 1970s, League members began to question the organizational structures of some of the local governments.

The focus first fell on the Olympia City Commission, a three-member body with an appointed city supervisor. The Thurston League produced a study prepared by members Rita Robison, Vivian Cuykendall, and Jan Dobbins.

After reaching a position supporting the council-manager form of government for Olympia, the League lobbied for its adoption. The change finally occurred in 1982, when city voters approved the council-manager plan in May. Among the first Olympia councilmembers who took office in November was a member of the Thurston League's action committee and former president, Holly Gadbow.

The next focus was Thurston County government. Chaired by Cherie Davidson, the Thurston League produced a study and reached a position in support of adopting a home rule charter. A charter allows counties greater flexibility in determining their form of government. Cherie Davidson was among the elected freeholders, whose job it was to write a charter. However, neither the charter proposal in 1979 nor a second attempt in 1989-90 was passed by the voters.

By the end of the 1970s, the Thurston League had attained a strong reputation for watching, learning, and making change. Many of its members were the "foot soldiers" for the state League and served as chairs and lobbyists on statewide issues. The Thurston League was known for its follow-through; members stayed with an issue and gained increasing knowledge and influence. Many of the Thurston League's members entering the workplace benefitted from the experience and discipline they had gained from the League. Although the fewer numbers of active members presented a challenge for the Thurston League, the community recognition of League efforts carried on.

1980s

Background

During this decade, a low point was reached in the size of Thurston League's membership, as well as in the number of League members willing to take on leadership positions. So many members were busy with professional jobs and elective and appointed governmental positions that few had time for League work. No one could be found to take on the presidency or vice presidency during the period 1984 to 1989, and only about five or six people could be found to serve on the board during those years. Normally, board membership numbered four to five officers and up to eight board members. However, the small handful willing to take on leadership positions held the Thurston League together as the organization downsized in membership and activities.

In 2010, the national League published a leadership guide titled, "ABCs for a Streamlined League." It was written for situations where only five or six people could be found to run a local League. It tells how to streamline operations and focus on the essentials to enable busy people to have enough time to be part of a leadership team. This probably would have been a help to the 1980s board members, who near the end of the decade called a League meeting to discuss whether the Thurston League should disband. Of course, the answer was "no" as members volunteered to help share the leadership load, and for the period beginning in May 1989, an experienced League member, Karen Verrill, agreed to take the presidency.

Thurston County League – 1980s

From Mary Murphy, a local Board member during 1984-89

It was not all wine and roses for the League every year during the 1980s. We had a functioning board, more or less. We could not get a president; we had only six board members and called it a double troika. But it seems like not much got done compared to earlier periods of the Thurston League.

As office manager, I went into the office nearly every day and did many of the chores. But, finally, I told my League buddies that we were going on a two-week vacation – and they would have to take care of everything. When I returned, the mail had stacked up

and the phone had not been answered. It reached a point where the mail was not even delivered.

It was time for action. Some of our old activists, Marge Sayre and Frances Poynter among them, called a general meeting at Frances' home to decide whether the Thurston League would live or die. I think you know the answer. It was "live." And they came through. We have been alive ever since.

Studies

In the period before and right after the 1984-89 downsizing, some important activities were undertaken by the Thurston League including two important studies before 1984:

- **Juvenile Justice:** This was a study of how the state juvenile justice law was being carried out in Thurston County. It began in 1979, concluding with positions reached in 1981. In 1983, the League urged school districts in Thurston County to be present during updates on the new juvenile justice code offered by the State Superintendent of Public Instruction's Office and Washington State Department of Social and Health Services.
- **Urban Growth Management:** Our county started working on establishing an urban growth boundary with common development standards before the 1990 Growth Management Act. The Thurston League study occurred between 1981 and 1983 and resulted in action supporting this growth management work.

Voter Service, Action, and Forums

Even during the "downsizing period," the Thurston League carried on with a number of key activities including:

- Legislative open houses were held where people could meet and talk to their legislators, candidate forums took place, and voters were registered.
- In 1984, the League urged the Port of Olympia to participate as a member of Thurston Regional Planning Council to facilitate cooperation and coordination with the region's planning as well as to facilitate public accountability.
- In 1986, three forums were offered on the charter form of government for Thurston County to raise public interest on this issue.
- In 1989, the new Thurston League president, Karen Verrill, announced League's endorsement of a ballot proposition to initiate a second county charter process. A Thurston League member, Lou Ann Houck, was among the freeholders elected.

1990s

Background

Membership continued to hover at about 100, mostly women, and many working full time. Nine monthly general meetings were offered each year that included speakers and discussions about social policy, natural resources, and governmental policies.

In addition, the Thurston League offered public forums, candidate debates, and voter registration activities. Members also took part in state and national League studies, worked on fundraisers, and took action on a wide variety of topics.

Due to the aging of the membership and the number of working members, “people power” was limited. Toward the end of the decade, the number of monthly meetings on issues was reduced to six and other months were devoted to the annual Education Fund luncheon, holiday party, and Annual Meeting.

Thurston County League – 1990s

From Karen Verrill, President 1989-1992 and Co-President 2007-08

The first TV broadcasts of forums and candidate debates broadened the Thurston League’s impact and visibility. The League also hosted the state League convention at The Evergreen State College in 1994 and continued to provide support – location, food, and supplies – to the state League’s “Lobby Day” held annually in Olympia.

Throughout this decade, the Thurston League was active on issues including Save the Salmon, Stream Team, Shop Smart, recycling, global climate change, childcare, and other matters.

Key Actions

Selection of Olympia School District Superintendent, 1990: President Karen Verrill commented at a meeting of the Olympia School District School Board and in a letter to the editor in The Olympian on the flawed process for selection of superintendent.

Thurston County Governance, 1990: President Karen Verrill and Cherie Davidson commented on drafts of the City-County Home Rule Charter and participated on the committee to promote passage of the new charter, which failed at the polls.

Selection of Port Director, 1991: President Karen Verrill and Irene Christy testified that a citizens' advisory committee should be established to involve the public in the selection process.

Tumwater City Governance, 1993: President Debbra Cole supported the efforts of the Tumwater Citizens League to establish the council-manager form of government for the City of Tumwater.

Port Strategic Plan, 1993: President Debbra Cole commented on the draft environmental impact statement for the plan. Comments included concerns about references to citizen groups that were involved and the Cascade Pole site cleanup. It ended by pointing out the difficulty of reading the draft EIS because alternatives were not organized by port location – peninsula, airdustrial, and airport.

Growth Management, 1993: President Debbra Cole testified on critical areas and rural area ordinances. The League also co-sponsored with the county a public meeting on how to pay for the public facilities needed for growth.

Aquifer Protection and Fair Campaign Practices, 1994: These issues became the primary focus of the League's work this year.

Takings Initiative, "No on 48," 1995: Extensive work by the Thurston League, the state League, and others led to its defeat.

Cooper Point Wastewater Facilities Plan, 1999: Led by President Sylviann Frankus Baldwin, the League opposed extending sewer lines into a rural area beyond the designated Urban Growth Area as proposed by the county. In 2000, the League joined with others to appeal the county's decision to the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board. The hearings board sided with the appellants. The county appealed to the courts but lost the appeal, and the extension of sewer lines was defeated.

Voter Service

Throughout this decade, the Thurston League provided candidate debates and forums on ballot issues. These included the first broadcast of a forum for judicial candidates on TCTV in 1992 and “Meet the Candidates Night” co-sponsored with AAUW. Other highlights included a Video Voters Guide that was made available to the public at libraries, at video rental stores, and on video loops at local grocery outlets.

Educational Forums

Forums were offered on the draft “Washington's Energy Strategy, 1992,” “Cost of Growth” in 1997, and “Cooper Point Wastewater Facilities Plan” in 1999.

In 1997-98, “Global Warming/Climate Change,” a series of 15 monthly meetings including regional experts as speakers followed by discussion, was offered. Co-sponsors with the League included the City of Olympia and Climate Solutions. League member and then City Councilwoman Mary Lux, along with members Donna Ewing and Sue Minahan, organized the series.

Studies

In the 1990s, many members participated on state League study committees including economic diversification, welfare reform, gun control, Washington public ports, and initiative and referendum. The state League’s four-year study of forestry issues was chaired by local member Peggy Bruton; other local members served on the committee.

Education Fund Account

In 1997, the state League established an Education Fund Board under 501c(3) of the Internal Revenue Service Code. This allows local leagues to create an account under the state League’s Education Fund. The Thurston League transferred its account from the national League’s Education Fund to the state League’s where it is easier to access.

Fundraising

During the 1990s, members and their friends gathered annually at theater parties at the Olympia Little Theater to raise funds for the Thurston League’s General Fund. In 1997, an annual event that included a speaker was initiated as an additional fundraiser. The events were often a breakfast and included speakers such as Justice Robert Utter and Secretary of State Ralph Munro. Later, the events became luncheons that raised money for the Thurston League’s Education Fund.

2000s

Background

During this decade, the Thurston League continued its streamlined schedule. Land use issues continued to be an emphasis with study and action on drinking water supply, rural densities, critical areas, and downtown development. Public forums on climate change, affordable housing, growth management, and open public records and meetings took place. Study of state issues, such as ferries, taxes, growth management, early childhood care and education, and election reform, also occurred.

Along with the voter service efforts offered in the past, candidates' forums began to be regularly televised and presidential debate watches organized.

Thurston County League – 2000s

From several League members and League newsletters

The national agenda for this decade was set on September 11, 2001, when airplanes hijacked by terrorists flew into U.S. buildings. It led to wars in Afghanistan and Iraq. Money poured into ports, airports, and the military. Security became onerous for everyone from travelers to library users. The League was not unaffected.

In the words this year of the national League president, Elizabeth MacNamara: “After 10 years of fighting the war on terror, we still have the chance to turn the tragedy of 9/11 into something positive for this country, but only if organizations like the League and those who support us have the strength and courage to raise our voices in support of an open and accepting society. We cannot give up and cannot give in to those who would prefer to hate and to exclude in a vain effort to make us more secure. ... We honor [those who died that day] by renewing our efforts to invigorate our democracy.”

Concerned about the future of civil liberties under the 2001 Patriot Act, the national League asked local leagues about their opinion on a number of behaviors regulated by the act. When some cities across the country, including Tumwater and Olympia, decided in 2003 to consider ordinances refusing to enforce those aspects of The Patriot Act considered unconstitutional, League representatives in each of two cities spoke in

support of the measures. Jackie Kettman-Thomas spoke to Tumwater for the League. Both cities passed their ordinances.

Action

Televising Local Government Meetings, 2000: In September of 2000, the Thurston League urged the Lacey City Council to televise its meetings over the local cable channel.

Olympia Downtown Isthmus Building Heights: Co-President Betty Tabbutt spoke at a 2002 Olympia Planning Commission hearing on a proposed urban waterfront zone. The League opposed increasing building heights to five or seven stories in an area that included the isthmus and two blocks on Capitol Lake plus other blocks. The League said it would form a barrier for public access to and enjoyment of the waterfront and would be damaging to the city's character. And, the League said, though housing downtown is important, housing located away from the water's edge would be enhanced by recovery of the shoreline.

Zoning was returned to 35 feet but later changed to allow a large condo complex with portions up to 100-foot heights on the isthmus. The higher limits were later changed back to 35 feet when three new council members were elected.

In July 2011, the county awarded a grant to a local park foundation from the countywide portion of the property tax earmarked "conservation futures" for a park on the isthmus property. The grant stipulated a timeline for raising the additional funds needed to purchase the property and prepare a development plan.

Court Cases, 2005-2008: Two court cases the League was involved in worked their way through the judicial system:

- **Thurston County Comprehensive Plan on Rural Densities and Size of the Urban Growth Area:** The Thurston League joined Growth Management Act watchdog Futurewise in challenging Thurston County's compliance with the GMA. The issues were an urban growth area too large to accommodate the projected 2025 population and not enough variety in rural densities.

The appeal was first sent to the Western Washington Growth Management Hearings Board, then to superior court and the Washington State Supreme

Court. The outcome was that the county was to (1) revise its rural densities so there was less reliance on the lower density of 2 dwelling units per acre, and (2) reconsider portions of the urban growth area boundary.

- **Port of Olympia and Records Request Legal Case:** In 2005, the port entered into a long-term lease with the Weyerhaeuser Company for a log export facility. Concerns were raised about the appropriateness of the lease.

In order to understand the issue more clearly, the League made a public records request in January 2006 for the port to disclose documents related to the lease. Eight documents were provided, and the port claimed the others were exempt from disclosure. The League, along with several individuals, filed a complaint in Thurston County Superior Court.

The judge identified a number of additional documents that should have been disclosed and ordered the port to pay penalties and attorney fees. The League withdrew from the case at that point, but the individuals involved continued with a challenge of the method the judge used to calculate the penalty and attorney fee payments.

Housing for the Homeless, 2007: Pat Dickason, the League's Social Policy chair, spoke in support of Tumwater's proposed ordinance for temporary housing for the homeless and encouraged more long-term solutions. The city adopted the ordinance.

Water Issues, 2010: The League spent a year studying land use plans in Thurston County in relation to the availability of water to support the projected development. Positions were arrived at in 2008. During Olympia's update of its comprehensive plan in 2010, President Clydia Cuykendall sent a letter to Olympia staff commenting on issues related to the study and other League positions including drinking water, wastewater, storm and surface water, climate change, and sea level rise.

Port and Public Participation, 2011: In March, President Clydia Cuykendall, who serves on the port's advisory committee, encouraged the port commissioners to act on public participation recommendations submitted in December 2010 by its advisory committee.

Clydia cited the League's position supporting improved relations between public port districts and citizens by better publicity of port activities and plans, increased citizen involvement and input, and responsiveness to citizen concerns.

Growth Management Act Implementation, 2005 and 2011: In 2005, Peggy Bruton testified for the League on rural cluster zoning proposals and in support of the Critical Areas Ordinance. She spoke again in 2011 in support of the Critical Areas Ordinance update and the Interim Prairie Ordinance.

Sustainability Policies, 2010-11: The League is participating at the invitation of the Thurston Regional Planning Council in a community coalition – Sustainable Roundtable of Thurston County – for establishing comprehensive plan policies for sustainability. The League will be carrying out League positions in support of this effort.

Voter Service

Turn Up the Vote, 2004: The Thurston League, in co-sponsorship with K Records and the Olympia Downtown Association, offered a musical show at the Olympia Farmers Market in July to attract people and get them to register and vote while there. League member Calvin Johnson organized the show, which featured vocalist Mirah and local bands. About 100 people attended.

Debate Watch, 2004 and 2008: The League, with the support of The Olympian and TCTV, invited the public to watch the presidential debates. The televised debates were presented on the large screen at the Washington Center for the Performing Arts.

The first year, a former president of the Thurston County Chamber of Commerce was the moderator. A local band entertained the large crowd of guests as they gathered. Exit comments included appreciation for the free presentation by parents and others who did not want to watch the debate alone.

Four years later, the project was repeated. For the second debate gathering, The Olympian publisher was the moderator. For both occasions, the City of Olympia donated the use of the Washington Center.

“They Represent You” and Candidate Interviews: Free directories of government officials elected locally and at the state and national level continue to be produced by the thousands and distributed at public places throughout the county. Candidate interviews for each election continued to be held and broadcast on local cable television and some in the later years also by KGY radio.

Forums, Education, and Studies

Climate Change, 2006: In August, the Thurston League sponsored a climate change forum “Solutions to Global Warming: What’s Happening Now?”

The 2000-2010 decade saw increased League involvement at all levels in education and legislative efforts to address climate change. Working with a coalition of more than 18 environmental groups through lobbying and educational materials, Thurston League members, part of the state League’s lobby team, contributed to passage of several bills mitigating the effects of climate change. The state League established an off-board portfolio position for climate change that was co-chaired by Thurston League members Donna Ewing and Sue Minahan.

The national League established a Climate Change Task Force of eight members, with Donna Ewing as one of the members. Education programs continued with caucuses at one state and two national League conventions presented by Donna Ewing and other Washington state members.

Open Public Records and Meetings, 2006: Coinciding with national “Sunshine Week” and a push for more open public records and meetings, the League co-sponsored a forum with The Olympian and Timberland Regional Library on open public records and meetings. It was broadcast by local and state cable TV and radio. The forum’s purpose was to educate the public on the importance of open government and answer questions submitted in advance to The Olympian’s website.

Growth Management Act, 2007: A forum on the act was offered at the Lacey Timberland Library as part of a study by all leagues in Washington state on growth management.

Affordable Housing, 2008: Curt Andino, from Puget Sound Habitat for Humanity, and Cathy Wolfe, Thurston County commissioner, spoke at a forum on affordable housing.

Curt described how their program works in getting private investment in housing for the poor. Commissioner Wolfe told of the county's approach to homelessness and what it is doing to maintain existing housing for the low-income residents.

County Governance Public Meeting: It was held in June 2010 as part of the local League's study of whether there continues to be a need for a home rule charter in Thurston County. The League study was chaired by Cynthia Stewart.

Community Education/Outreach on County Governance: The 2010 study led to an amendment in October 2010 to the League's 1978 positions on this subject. A committee led by co-chairs Cynthia Stewart and Jeff Jaksich has been meeting since April 2011 with a group of League members and others in the community to develop and carry out a plan for a two-year discussion with local groups about governance issues and possible ways county government might be changed.

Local Food Systems: Co-sponsored by Left Food Organics, the forum took place in June 2011 at the GRuB (garden raised bounty) garden in Olympia. Six local farmers described ways people can get involved in local food system opportunities.

Votes for Women

In 2010, members of the Thurston League were very active in working with the state League to recognize the 100th Anniversary of women receiving the vote in Washington state. They worked to create awareness of the important role women have had in government and to emphasize that the victory in Washington was a turning point in national history. Washington was the fifth state to grant suffrage. Thurston member Sue Lean, also a member of the Women's History Consortium, organized events and served on committees offering them at the Capitol and other locations.

Mother and Daughter in the Thurston League Vivian and Clydia Cuykendall

Vivian and Clydia Cuykendall were not local League members at the same time. Mother Vivian died in 2001. Daughter Clydia returned to Olympia after retirement from her career as a corporate attorney that took her to other parts of this country and the world.

Vivian had many interests in the Thurston League. She served on the local Board of Directors for many years. She was Foreign Policy chair when the League nationally was undertaking studies and action on various foreign policy issues. In December 1971, she wrote a letter to the editor on the behalf of the League about the work of the United Nations.

Vivian was also involved in the Nisqually Delta study. In May 1973, she along with two other League members commented on a Port of Olympia siting study, asking that the Nisqually Delta not be considered as a site for a future port.

Local parks were another of Vivian's interests. She was appointed to the Thurston County Parks Board where she served for many years, keeping the League informed about county parks issues. Vivian was instrumental in the establishment of Burfoot Park.

Vivian served as chair of the League's local observer program and was a long-time observer of Olympia city government. A July 1976 article in The Olympian has a picture of Vivian with a story about a coming League meeting where Thurston League observers were to give reports on their observations of the governmental meetings they were watching.

Clydia is currently president of the Thurston League for 2010 to 2012. She joined the local League in 2006 and became active immediately at the urging of long-time member Mary Lux. She summarized the key elements of the Growth Management Act for the local League's review of a 2006-07 state study of the GMA. The purpose of the study was to see if the League should add some specifics on the law to its state land use positions.

Clydia participated in a 2007-2008 local League study that reviewed land use plans to determine if enough water is available to support the projected level and distribution of development. She also is working with a coalition, which includes the local League, that is looking into the need for changes in the form of Thurston County government. The coalition also is commenting on the Thurston Regional Planning Council's plan for sustainable development.

Clydia is currently serving on the study committee to update the state League's energy position to address renewable energy. She also follows the family tradition of serving on governmental advisory committees. Clydia is a member of the Port of Olympia's Citizens Advisory Committee.

Observations About the Thurston County League

From 50th Anniversary Chair, Marie Cameron

This section is for special mention of the Thurston League members whose contributions to making democracy work is or has been through service as public officials, and to those who work in other organizations where they are focusing more in depth on issues of their choice. Then there are the men of the League and their roles over the years.

Public Officials

Many local members are serving or have served as elected members of Congress, the state Legislature, the board of county commissioners, city councils, and school boards. League members also are serving or have served on local and state appointive boards such as planning commissions, parks boards, and boards of adjustment. In addition, we have members who in their careers were appointed to positions of state department director and county chief administrative officer.

Participation in Other Organizations and Political Parties

Many of our members have also contributed to making democracy work through their participation or leadership in coalition groups and other citizen groups such as the Thurston Action Committee from the 1970s and 80s, Friends of the Waterfront, People for Puget Sound, Washington Environmental Council, Carnegie Group, Audubon Society, Olympia Capitol Park Foundation, and many others over the years.

In addition, many League members are active in their political party, serving as precinct committee officers and other office holders and working on political campaigns.

The Men of the League of Women Voters

In a special category are our men members, willing to belong to an organization named the “League of Women Voters,” as we insist on continuing with our historic name. Many, like some of our women members, join not so much to participate in the League activities, but in support of the organization. Increasingly, however, men members are participating – working in League committees on studies, helping to organize forums, and undertaking community education and advocacy programs. And, in this our 50th year, we have the first male member of the local Board of Directors, Ed Stanley, a member of the Tumwater City Council.

Conclusion

Compiling information on the work of the Thurston League over 50 years has been a daunting task. Many trips were made to the Washington State Archives and hours were spent making lists of projects and actions. Then, it wasn't easy to choose what to include here from the huge amount of advocacy, education, study, and voter service work undertaken by League volunteers over these 50 years.

Though a time consuming project, it was amazing and rewarding to see the vast amount of work the Thurston League has accomplished in 50 years over a broad array of topics. It has also allowed us to see that though the League has gone through times of strength and waning, overall the League has been constant in its credibility.

So much happens in the Thurston League, as research for the "Decade Stories" shows, we should do this review every decade or two while memories are fresh.

Thurston County League 50th Anniversary Committee

Marie Cameron, Chair (*Member since 1965; President 1969-71*)

Marilyn Funk (*Member since 2003; Co-President 2007-08; President 2008-10*)

Barbara Gooding (*Member since 1970; President first half 1974*)

Zena Hartung (*Member 1999-2002; again from 2008*)

Eve Johnson (*Member 1966-68; again from 1997; President 2003-07*)

Sue Lean, 50th Anniversary Exhibits (*Member since 1969*)

Dorothy Marsh (*Member since 1993; President 1996-98; Co-President 1998-99*)

Mary Murphy (*Member since 1971*)

Margie Reeves (*Founding member; member since 1961*)

Rita R. Robison (*Member 1967-84; again from 1989*)

Betty Tabbutt (*Member since 1971; President 1977-79; Co-President 2001-03*)

Karen Verrill (*Member since 1988; President 1989-92, Co-President 2007-08*)

Joanne Wilk (*Member since 1971; President 1983-84*)

This publication is dedicated to the members of the Thurston County League of Women Voters and all of its financial supporters, who for 50 years have made a difference in this community.

Many thanks to the staff of the Washington State Archives Reading Room, Olympia, where the Thurston County League's historical files are now housed. We made numerous trips to consult these files to refresh our memories of all those things we did, but had forgotten. The staff cheerfully brought us whichever boxes of files we needed, and their mantra was always:

"One Box, One File at a Time."

November 2011

Clydia Cuykendall, President

League of Women Voters of Thurston County



DECADE STORIES

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Editor

Rita R. Robison

Website

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