



# The Voter

January, 2015

## The League of Women Voters of Tacoma—Pierce County

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LWVWA: <http://www.lwvwa.org/>

LWVUS: <http://www.lwv.org/>

The League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

### Co-President's Message

I hope all of you enjoyed your holidays and are ready to begin the new year with fresh energy. We have much to do.

We enjoyed fun, food and fundraising at our December meeting. Thank you to Merrill Gardens for hosting us again this year. In addition to the Three Fs, we did program planning for 2015-16. Thanks to Lyz Kurnitz-Thurlow for her leadership and to all of you who shared ideas and suggestions. Everyone will have an opportunity to review the proposed program and make comments at our unit meetings in January.

We welcome several new members who have volunteered to get involved right away. We look forward to getting to know you better and to work with you. These are exciting times with important issues facing our communities. Let us know your passion is and we can help find a place for you to be involved.

Happy New Year!!! Looking forward to what's next.

*Ruth Ann Hatchett, Co-President*



### Your Board at Work

On December 10, the Board met and discussed the Program Planning suggestions from the December 6 general meeting, the upcoming Unit meetings, the 2015 TRY, finance drive donations and fundraising at the general meeting., replacing the leased copier, replacing the phone service, and Board vacancies.

Suggestions for program planning are included in this Voter, pages 2-5, and summaries of the next two Unit Meetings are on page 8. Several people have helped to gather accurate information for the 2015 TRY. See John Thurlow's short article. His efforts at coordinating this effort are much appreciated.

A big thank you to those who donated to LWVT-PC through the Finance Drive and through fundraising at the general meeting, December 6. To reduce our expenses, the board has decided to discontinue the leasing of a copier and to change our phone service provider.

**The next Board meeting will be  
Tuesday, January 20, 2015, at 3:00 p.m. – 5:00 p.m.**

## December—Program Planning; Here's What Happened

By Lyz Kurnitz-Thurlow

The December 6 general membership and program planning meeting was enjoyed by all. There appeared to be a consensus that people liked doing program planning as a general meeting. It would have been even better with more people there! The discussion was wide ranging, with lots of information shared.

Not only did we work hard, but we had fun. The raffle made \$220, and the auction generated \$250. The potluck was fabulous.

Here's what we did and proposed.

1. **Nobody suggested any changes to or updates of our local positions.**
2. **A new local study was proposed:**

**PIERCE COUNTY FUNDING (What services do we want and how do we pay for them?)**

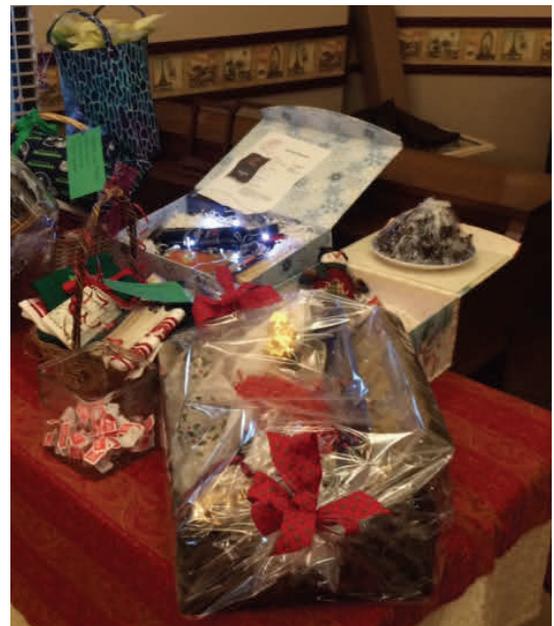
*(continued below)*



*Some of the many raffle baskets contributed by League units*



*Enjoying League friendship during lunch*



*More beautiful League unit contributions to the raffle*

**Local Study Scope:** Sources of revenue – How counties are funded. Where does the money come from? Needs vs. available funds.

- What services are provided? How does the County set priorities?
- Current cost of services provided.
- What are special taxing districts and what is funded through them?
- What services are paid for through fees?
- Fiscal outlook for the future.

*(continued next page)*

**PIERCE COUNTY FUNDING (What services do we want and how do we pay for them?) (cont'd from page 2)**

**Study group so far:**

Paula Eismann, Mary Moore, Nancy Pearson, Cynthia Stewart,

Your suggestions for tweaking the scope and defining the Outlook for Work are invited. You are also invited to join the committee to work on this. (But, you may make suggestions without volunteering further) Suggestions of resources for finding information are also welcomed.



*Lyz Kurnitz-Thurlow leading the Program Planning discussion*

*Bobbie Fletcher's gorgeous quilt, auctioned at the end of the meeting, in the background*

**3. Other local interests- (NOT in order of importance):**

- Immigration/Detention Center (not just local)
  - Get info on how new policies will affect locals and those in detention. Articles? Unit meetings?
  - Privatization effects.
  - Police arrest policy – ask for citizenship status when stopping?
- League presence at Citizenship Ceremonies (including information about or copies of LWVWA civics book).
- Responsibilities of Being an American – Get what is given out at citizenship ceremonies Consider putting in TRY. Other ways of publicizing?
- Equal protection – Look through state and national positions. Find all places which refer to equality. Put together. Publicize. If doesn't actually say EQUAL PROTECTION, start working on lobbying National to fix this.
- ADA Required Hearing Devices in all Courts. (Required at Council Meetings too?) Compliance or lack thereof. Find out – take action.

*(Continued, next page)*



*Animated discussion at during Program Planning*

## December—Program Planning; Here's What Happened, *cont'd from p. 3*

- Minimum wage activism locally? Info.
- Port of Tacoma and Seattle Alliance – open meetings. Observer. Keep public informed.
- Tacoma Public Library – budget cuts, ACTION - Immediate need to speak out.
- Transportation/ Transit Funding. - ACTION
- Juvenile Incarceration
- Tax Structure (Local and state)
- New WAmend Initiative – We'll deal with this at Citizen's United Toolkit Meetings in March.
- ALEC – getting many legislators elected in WA. Unit meetings?the level of interest, of suggestions, and of people interested.

**We hope that these ideas are reviewed and discussed at January Unit meetings, so that the Board can have a better idea of the level of interest, the suggestions and the people interested in each.**

### 4. State Program – in order of priority. (We send them the top three.)

1. NEW STUDY –VOTER TURNOUT (described next page)
2. ACTION – Transportation/Transit Funding – LOBBY
3. ACTION – Support Climate Change Legislation – LOBBY
4. Other – Carbon Pricing; ALEC getting WA members elected. (see Local)
5. Policing Practices – Civil Rights. Racial Profiling – At the meeting, this was actually a number 2 priority, but there is no place in State program that it fits, so we couldn't find a way of putting it in. Keep it in mind for another new study some day, perhaps, for State or National.

Again, thanks to all who participated. The discussions were fascinating, the level of interest was high, and the food and raffle prizes were great! To comment on any of this, please send comments to the office: lwvtaco-mapierce@gmail.com.

## In Memoriam

*By Susan Eidenschink*

After struggling to keep her active spirit alive, **Michelle Pizzo** died on December 22. Michelle brought to League her desire to have an impact with her no-nonsense approach to life. In our local League, Michelle served on the board of directors and as The Voter editor for many years. She helped us to be active in our local communities, to aid those less fortunate than ourselves, and to support labor by encouraging us to have our TRY printed in a union shop. Michelle will definitely be missed.

**Janice Perry** died on December 10. Janice was a long time League member, participating in League for over 50 years. Janice cared about poverty and injustice and tried to make the world a better place in which to live. She volunteered for ten years at Remann Hall, Pierce County Juvenile Court, working with troubled young people. She also volunteered as an English tutor to a Cambodian refugee family, who became like family to Janice and her husband. Janice had a full life and will be missed.

Another long time League Member, **Peggy Peterson**, passed away on November 25th. Peggy's passion was equal rights for women, for which she was very active. As a visual artist, she exhibited many watercolors locally, and she supported women artists as a charter member of the National Museum of Women in the Arts in Washington DC. Peggy had an full, active life, and she will be missed.

*Continued from page 4*

**PROPOSED STUDY RECOMMENDED TO LWVWA: VOTER TURNOUT - Why it is low and how to improve it.**

**SCOPE:** Study voting trends in Washington State. Examine turnout around the state, in all counties, over the last few elections. What are people’s reasons for not voting? Examine voter turnout efforts; try to evaluate which are successful and why. Study, leading to consensus, and action to improve voter turnout.

**OUTLOOK FOR WORK:** Washington State has one of, if not the easiest to use voting systems in the country. Washington State is not one of the places where voter suppression practices have been promulgated by the Legislature, yet voter turnout has been very low. In the 2014 general election, voter turnout was only 54% of those registered to vote. In the previous midterm election, turnout was more than 71%.

The lowest turnout was in the counties of Yakima, Pierce, Clark, Franklin, Snohomish, Thurston, and King, ranging from 47.5% to 53.4%, respectively. The highest turnout was in the counties of Klickitat, Lincoln, Ferry, Jefferson, San Juan, Columbia, and Garfield, ranging from 65.1% to 80.2%, respectively.

The League of Women Voters has a mission to provide voter education and encourage voters to vote. Theories abound about why voters do and do not choose to vote. The news has many commentators giving their explanations for the low turnout.

Another possibility for the study is to include the reasons why many are not registered to vote. While surveying voters and county records, we could also cover those who have not voted, the reasons, and if specific ethnicities are more likely not to be registered to vote.

The League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County therefore recommends that the LWVWA conduct a study of voter turnout to explain what factors contribute to this phenomenon and to differences among counties. The League could partner with other concerned organizations to cover the cost of the study, and the study should include a formal survey of registered voters who did not submit ballots in the general election of 2014, as well as comparing this year’s voting rates to those of other recent years.

*This will be sent to other Leagues in Washington State so they can discuss and consider it too, and to LWVWA as our Program suggestion.*

**LWVTPC Board Members**

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Your Voter is brought to you by the following people:

**Editorial Volunteers:**

Cynthia Stewart  
Susan Eidenschink  
Julie Offner

**Distribution Volunteers**

Susan Eidenschink  
Bobbie Fletcher  
Judy Payne  
Ingrid Curtis

## Mental Health Study – More Important Than Ever

*By Cynthia Stewart, Chair, Mental Health Study Committee*

At our last annual meeting, June 2014, League members voted to conduct a study of mental health issues in Pierce County. The study is intended to describe financing, relationship to homelessness and housing, effect on returning war veterans, and analyze whether a mental health court and/or mental health tax should be adopted in the County.

This study decision followed unit meetings earlier in the spring, at which mental health issues were eloquently described by persons affected by mental illness and providers of mental health services. It has remained a topic of great interest not only in Pierce County, but throughout the country.

This month's discussion by the Pierce County Council about whether or not to put the mental health sales tax on the ballot for voter advice has generated new interest in the status and outcome of this League study. Pierce Coun-

ty is one of only 17 out of the 39 counties that has not enacted the mental health and chemical dependency sales tax of 1/10 of 1% (in other words, 1 penny on each \$10 purchase), and the only large urban county to not enact the tax. Apparently there was not enough support to adopt the tax, nor was there enough support to get voter "advice" on next Fall's ballot.

Any new tax in Pierce County requires a 2/3 vote of the County Council, as a result of County Charter amendments in 2012. This is a larger majority than most counties require.

In some counties, League studies have facilitated public support for adoption of the tax. A good example of this is our neighbor, Kitsap County, where the League's study was highlighted by County Commissioners as the background upon which they relied to adopt the tax.

Watch for our study this spring. It will be completed and published in *The Voter* with consensus questions for the April 2015 unit meetings. Perhaps our study can have a similar impact.

## Hospital Mergers — Why Does it Matter?

*By Cynthia Stewart and Susan Eidenschink*

There are eight hospitals in Pierce County, and none of them have merged in the last five years. Why should Pierce County residents – and League members – care about hospital mergers? Here's why.

In recent years, cost-reduction requirements have created a significant consolidation of hospital and clinic services around the country. Many of these consolidations have been between formerly secular organizations and faith-based organizations. While in Pierce County, the hospitals are somewhat evenly split between faith-based and secular, with five Multi-Care institutions and three Franciscan ones, in some counties in Washington State, there are no secular hospital services available. However, patients of Group Health who reside in Pierce County (and those in other counties referred by Group Health to facilities outside of Seattle) are served only by faith-based hospitals.

The question that emerges is whether people whose only access is to a religiously affiliated hospital are able to re-

ceive regular or emergency care that is forbidden by the Ethical and Religious Directives for Catholic Health Care Services (ERDS). For example, Washington's Death with Dignity Act (2008) "permits terminally ill, competent adult WA residents medically predicted to die within six months to request and self-administer lethal medication prescribed by a physician." But no physician who is bound by the directives of the ERDS can honor that request if his private office is in a building owned by a religiously affiliated hospital. Another example is that faith-based hospitals may not allow abortions or certain reproductive services, but there are no other facilities in which to receive those in the community.

January unit meetings will cover this topic, including ways in which citizen activists have been able to change the outcomes of these mergers. For additional background prior to the unit meetings, [click here](#).

If there are any specific dimensions of this issue that you would to have addressed in these unit meetings, please contact Cynthia Stewart, [stewdahl@comcast.net](mailto:stewdahl@comcast.net), or Susan Eidenschink, [susaneiden@harbornet.com](mailto:susaneiden@harbornet.com).

## Join the Tacoma—Pierce County League of Women Voters !

**The League of Women Voters of Tacoma – Pierce County invites you to join us!**

Any citizen of voting age, male or female may become a Member.

**Yes, I'd like to become a Member of the League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County.**

This application ALSO entitles me to full membership in and mailings of the Washington State and National League of Women Voters (LWVWA and LWVUS)!

Membership for one year is \$60 (for two Members of a household - \$90). Student membership is \$30 but we are currently offering it at half-price, and even have scholarships available at this time! Membership dues are NOT tax deductible. Contributions to the Education Fund (by separate check, and they are tax deductible) and/or the General Fund are welcome.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Comments: \_\_\_\_\_

Mail to: League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County  
702 Broadway, Suite #105 / Tacoma, WA 98402-3710

### Consider making a monthly contribution to the League It's Easy!

Looking for a method to make an affordable but larger contribution to the League? Just set up a monthly "account" in your checking account Bill Pay system. All you need is the League's address and phone number.

- For "account number", call it "contribution".
- The payee, of course, is "League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County".
- The address is:  
League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County  
702 Broadway, Suite 105  
Tacoma, WA 98402
- And the phone number is: (253) 272-1495



### Visit us on Facebook at

[www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Tacoma-Pierce-County/312747775413](http://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Tacoma-Pierce-County/312747775413)



### Keeping up with League of Women Voters of Tacoma-Pierce County

For those of you who are not on Facebook, look for LWVT-PC online posts at The Suburban Times, [thesubtimes.com](http://thesubtimes.com), and Patch, [patch.com](http://patch.com). Both of these news sites have become easy to use. For Patch, select your desired community (Find your Patch) and scroll among the latest Bulletin Board posts.

## Get Involved! Attend a Unit Meeting and Bring a Friend (or two)

### Tacoma

#### 2nd Thursday of the Month

1:00—3:00 pm

North Tacoma Police Station  
5140 N. 26th St.

Tacoma

Contact: Lyz Kurnitz-Thurlow,  
lyzkurnitz@harbornet.com

### Lakewood & Neighbors

#### 2nd Friday of the Month

10:00 am to noon

Steilacoom Community Center  
2301 Worthington St.

Steilacoom

Contact: Ann Elliston, 253-564-4102

### East Pierce

#### 2nd Saturday of the Month

10:00 am to Noon

Puyallup Library  
324 S. Meridian

Puyallup

Contact: Ellen Zulauf,  
eazul@comcast.net

### Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula

#### 2nd Saturday of the Month

2:00—4:00 pm

Harbor History Museum  
4121 Harborview Dr.

Gig Harbor

Contact: Sharon Peace-Doane, 253-  
265-0841

For more information, see  
[www.lwwa.org/tacoma/](http://www.lwwa.org/tacoma/)

### This Month: January — Hospital Mergers; Why Does it Matter?

In January, our four Unit meetings will include information on hospital mergers and how these mergers of religiously affiliated hospitals with secular hospitals may affect the range of care that is delivered. Cynthia Stewart and Susan Eidschink, who are members of the State League's Hospital Merger Committee and of a coalition of groups concerned about this matter, will discuss the issues and how public comment has been affecting outcomes.

To read more about the hospital merger issue, click here. If there are specific dimensions of this issue that you would like to have addressed in these unit meetings, please contact Cynthia Stewart, stewdahl@comcast.net, or Susan Eidschink, susaneiden@harbornet.com.

### Next Month — State of WA Budget: Implications of the McCleary Decision

At our February Unit meetings, we will find out how the WA State Legislature is handling the task of funding K-12 education, as the WA Supreme Court has directed in the McCleary Decision. Other needs of the state, such as mental health care, early learning expansion, higher education, and many others have been cut over the past several years; and these cuts leave the state's most vulnerable without the resources they need to live safe and healthy lives. In these meetings, we will discuss the revenue challenges presented by addressing McCleary and other state needs.

### Last Month: December - Program Planning

In December, our Unit meetings combined in a General Meeting to discuss Program Planning all together. Usually we have Program Planning in Unit Meetings in January, but we tried a different format so that each of us who participate could hear other members' thoughts and ideas on possible studies, updates or actions on local and state topics. This format worked very well and gave members many opportunities to share ideas and concerns about our local League positions and the State League positions, along with actions we could take as a result of these positions. See more information on pages 2-5.

## LWVT-PC Calendar January—May 2015

<b>January 8</b> 1:00—3:00 pm	<b>Tacoma Unit Meeting</b> Hospital Mergers	<b>March 13</b> 10:00 am – noon	<b>Lakewood &amp; Neighbors Unit Meeting</b> LWVWA Toolkit for Action - Citizens United
<b>January 9</b> 10:00 am—Noon	<b>Lakewood &amp; Neighbors Unit Meeting</b> Hospital Mergers	<b>March 14</b> 10:00 am – noon	<b>East Pierce Unit Meeting</b> LWVWA Toolkit for Action - Citizens United
<b>January 10</b> 10:00 am—Noon	<b>East Pierce Unit Meeting</b> Hospital Mergers	<b>March 14</b> 2:00 pm – 4:00 pm	<b>Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Unit Meeting</b> LWVWA Toolkit for Action - Citizens United
<b>January 10</b> 2:00—4:00 pm	<b>Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Unit Meeting</b> Hospital Mergers	<b>March 20</b>	<b>Deadline for April Voter articles</b>
<b>January 20</b> 3:00—5:00 pm	<b>LWVT-PC Board Meeting</b> 702 Broadway, Tacoma	<b>April 8</b> 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm	<b>LWVT-PC Board Meeting</b> 702 Broadway, Tacoma
<b>January 20</b>	<b>Deadline for February Voter articles</b>	<b>April 9</b> 1:00 – 3:00 pm	<b>Tacoma Unit Meeting</b> LWVT-PC Mental Health Study Consensus
<b>February 11</b> 4:30—6:30 pm	<b>LWVT-PC Board Meeting</b> 702 Broadway, Tacoma	<b>April 10</b> 10:00 am – noon	<b>Lakewood &amp; Neighbors Unit Meeting</b> LWVT-PC Mental Health Study Consensus
<b>January 24</b> 10:00 am-3:00 pm	<b>Project Homeless Connect</b> Spanaway Middle School 15701 B St E, Spanaway	<b>April 11</b> 10:00 am – noon	<b>East Pierce Unit Meeting</b> LWVT-PC Mental Health Study Consensus
<b>February 12</b> 1:00 – 3:00 pm	<b>Tacoma Unit Meeting</b> State of WA Budget: Implications of the McCleary Decision	<b>April 11</b> 2:00 – 4:00 pm	<b>Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Unit Meeting</b> LWVT-PC Mental Health Study Consensus
<b>February 13</b> 10:00 am – noon	<b>Lakewood &amp; Neighbors Unit Meeting</b> State of WA Budget: Implications of the McCleary Decision	<b>May 8</b> 10:00 am – noon	<b>Lakewood &amp; Neighbors Unit Meeting</b> Your Choice of Topic
<b>February 14</b> 10:00 am—Noon	<b>East Pierce Unit Meeting</b> State of WA Budget: Implications of the McCleary Decision	<b>May 9</b> 10:00 am – noon	<b>East Pierce Unit Meeting</b> Your Choice of Topic
<b>February 14</b> 2:00 – 4:00 pm	<b>Gig Harbor/Key Peninsula Unit Meeting</b> State of WA Budget: Implications of the McCleary Decision	<b>May 9</b> 2:00 – 4:00 pm	<b>Gig Harbor-Key Peninsula Unit Meeting,</b> Your Choice of Topic
<b>February 20</b>	<b>Deadline for March Voter articles</b>	<b>May 13</b> 4:30 – 6:30 pm	<b>LWVT-PC Board Meeting</b> 702 Broadway, Tacoma
<b>March 11</b> 4:30 pm – 6:30 pm	<b>LWVT-PC Board Meeting</b> 702 Broadway, Tacoma	<b>May 14</b> 1:00 – 3:00 pm	<b>Tacoma Unit Meeting,</b> Your Choice of Topic
<b>March 12</b> 1:00 – 3:00 pm	<b>Tacoma Unit Meeting</b> LWVWA Toolkit for Action - Citizens United		

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**Thanks to our generous donors since the last Voter:**

Marie and Jack Cameron  
Bobbie Fletcher  
Laura Gardner  
Catherine Gleva  
Diane Kerlin  
Lyz Kurnitz-Thurlow  
    and John Thurlow  
Mary Ann Leskie  
Dorothy McBride  
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Patricia Morse  
Julie Offner  
Nancy Pearson  
Ginny Peterson  
Janet Siano  
Helen Sohlberg  
Drorothy Spadoni  
Cynthia Stewart  
Lucinda Wingard

And to all who donated through the fundraiser at the December 6  
General Meeting

**2015 TRY Nearing Completion -  
Many Thanks to All Involved**

*By John Thurlow*

The 2015 TRY has been a many-member team accomplishment. The booklet's design and layout has been refreshed, facts checked in detail, getting the material ready for the printer is in progress, and it will go to the printer and up on the web in early January. Thanks to Marie Cameron, Susan Eidenschink, Laura Gardner, Jackie Jones-Hook, Lyz Kurnitz-Thurlow, Judy Payne, and Cynthia Stewart for all their help.