

President's Report  
League of Women Voters of Alaska  
April 17, 2021

This has been a most amazing, full year for the League of Women Voters of Alaska. Many League members learned a new technology and several became experts: Cathleen Rolph and Judith Mitchell come to mind, the two members who hold our ZOOM meetings together and send out the invites; Carrie Henson is joining them as the ZOOM coordinator for our State Convention.

We have had some amazing efforts by members across the state who wrote Op-Eds on a variety of issues important to the League: the Equal Rights Amendment, the need for strong voting rights, the passage of the Voting Rights Advancement Act which would restore a preclearance process for those states that suppress the vote, important women in the Alaska fight for voting rights, and other issues. Many thanks to Sue Sherif, Bridget Smith, and Cathleen Rolph for helping with this effort.

The State League is currently finishing up our two grants from the LWVUS. You will recall these grants were to focus on the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act (S. 561) and the ERA (S.J.Res 6). Senator Murkowski has already co-sponsored both bills. The grant committee (which included folks from all four local Leagues) met via teleconference with representatives of both Senator Sullivan and Senator Murkowski. We wrote op-eds for major Alaska newspapers and we included several social media pieces on the LWVAK Facebook page along with articles written promoting both bills both locally and nationwide. With Judith Mitchell's help, we launched a website under the Juneau League's website where we could post information on these bills in a read-only format. We also mounted a Voter's Guide for the statewide positions of Senator and Representative. We had four of the nine candidates respond to League questions. We are ending the campaign with a Social Justice piece covering both bills that is being done by the Youth Vote group. Look for it on the LWVAK Facebook site. The grant committee members included Sue Sherif, Joan Diamond, Cathleen Rolph, Laurie Sica, and Carolyn Brown with assistance from Bridget Smith.

The process of working on these two grants brought us into contact with other Leagues as well as leaders of other groups that work to foster democracy. After six months of studying the language of Ballot Measure #2, the state board voted to endorse the Measure. We met with the ABE folks, held a ZOOM with Stateline on ranked choice voting, co-hosted two virtual events with American Promise dealing with democracy, and promoted a post-election Commonwealth North virtual event on ranked choice voting.

Looking ahead, there are some processes that we might want to investigate to raise the posture of LWVAK and our local Leagues. All local Leagues have FB sites, so a process in which we share across those platforms (and with our personal FB timeline when appropriate) can help to get the word out about bills and other issues and events important to democracy. The grant committee is boosting various postings on the two bills covered by the grant. But if we all share postings across the local League FB sites as well as personal FB sites, we can expand our

coverage further without additional cost. Some types of information is also suitable for website posting.

Another area that the League will need to be involved in is the education needed as we move forward under Ballot Measure #2, particularly the way that ballot marking and counting works and the open primary aspect of the election process. A partner to this change is the small-donor public financing outlined in the For the People Act, which has passed the House and is now in the Senate. Together ranked choice voting and public financing have the potential to make changes in the way that candidates approach campaigning and allow moderate candidates to run with some hope of success. This would change the hyper-partisanship that has weakened our democracy lately.

And finally, but of equal importance, we have adjusted our by-laws to reflect our DEI policy and bring our by-laws into alignment with the LWVUS by-laws. As this change was in the first three Articles of the by-laws only, we did not need a Convention vote to move ahead with this change. In addition, we must continue as an organization to reach out to all citizens particularly on issues of voting and social justice.

I continue to be amazed by the work of the League at the local level. As we come out of this pandemic, I look forward to in-person meetings as well as continued use of ZOOM and similar platforms to advance the issues that concern the League.