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

Want to work with us? Become a member!

Want to reach us? We’re at info@lwvskc.org!

Making A Difference
Members of our Economics and Taxation Committee spoke in the King County town halls to provide public feedback to the bipartisan Tax Structure Work Group for Washington State. Take this survey to help their work!

Members Barbara Erickson, Marge Murray, and Candis Litsey were superstars in helping voters make sure their ballots counted. Shoutout to Voter Services’s Sara Thein too!

LWVSKC President Heather Kelly provided expert analysis to Seattle’s City Council on its proposed rules of order, highlighting ways to promote transparency and accountability.

Member Lee Keim testified to the Shoreline City Council, helping sway the Council to approve an ordinance to ban fossil fuel use in space and water heating in buildings.
This month’s features

All About You! Program Planning for the Year Ahead
Want to Take Action?
Want to Develop a New League Position?
Climate Justice: Down with Carbon Emissions — Up with Community Equity!
Learn About — and Have A Say! — In New WA State Tax Options
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We’d Like to Hear From You!
In this season, you may be thinking about this past year and the clear and present threats to our democracy. The League remains your best investment in guarding against these threats. Thank you for your tax deductible donations made here.

All About You! Program Planning for the Year Ahead
Thursday, January 6 at 7:00 p.m. via Zoom
Barbara Tengtio

Your presence and input are requested for our January forum! At this annual planning event we will meet for our forum that's all about you — and what forums, programs, and committees you want to be involved in during the year ahead.
Results from our survey show that, for forums that include members and the public, popular suggestions are:

- Climate Efforts
- Civics Education
- Alternatives to Incarceration
- Public Safety in Seattle
- Urban Sprawl and Transportation Infrastructure.

For our member-only forums, survey results show very high interest in Voter Services/Programs for Schools. For committees, members expressed a variety of interests, with the strongest interest in Fact vs. Fiction/Perception — a topic that includes discerning the truth in a crowded information environment, what role the League can play in supporting healthy democratic debate, and the roles and responsibilities of media organizations. (Sounds like we might be forming some new committees!) We are also tracking the write-in requests.

Come prepared to speak up on what interests you — what you want to work on in 2022! Check our event calendar or lwvskc.org for details on how to register, or use this link.

Criteria for Selection of New League Programs

- The issue must be one for which government action is needed.
- The issue must fall within the principles of the League of Women Voters (LWVUS).
- League members must be willing to spend time and effort on the issue.
- League involvement must be expected to make a difference.
- It should be a crucial time for the issue.
- The issue should be a current topic of discussion in the community or able to generate interest from the community.

Want to Take Action?
Lev Elson-Schwab and Adele Reynolds

The first step is to examine our League positions!

Our action items — like letters to the editor, or public testimony — are always based on League positions. We in
LWVSKC can decide to take action on a position from any level: local, state, or national.

You’ll find all our League positions on our website here.

Find the position that undergirds your hoped-for action, and reach out to Action Chair Lev Elson-Schwab at action@lwvskc.org!

Want to Develop a New League Position?
_Adele Reynolds_

The **first step** is to propose a study (like police reform, or ranked choice voting) with a scope, focus, and an identified committee (consisting of a committee chair and three or more members) for adoption by the members at the annual meeting.

A committee of members then forms, and, using the Board policies and the guidance of a reading committee, conducts a study which includes all related facts and considers all perspectives. It will be accurate, balanced, and credited (fully researched and sourced). The final study, with study questions, is approved by the full Board before publication, usually in an issue of _The Voter_.

A forum for members is followed by the work of the membership (study, discussion and response to consensus questions). A consensus committee determines where there is consensus, and the study committee devises new positions for adoption by the Board. These approved positions are presented to the membership at the annual meeting.

**Climate Justice: Down with Carbon Emissions — Up with Community Equity!**

_Thursday, February 3 from 7:00 to 8:30 p.m. via Zoom_
_Callie Ridolfi, City Climate Action Committee Chair_

In our region, the climate crisis will demand substantial community engagement as well as investments in resilient infrastructure. Our LWVSKC City Climate Action Committee is working to increase democratic engagement among residents
in King County to support our cities in meeting their climate action goals. Cities must reduce carbon emissions dramatically to meet our State targets of 50% reduction by 2030, and 95% by 2050. Through equitable education and engagement, residents can help cities meet their climate goals.

A framework of climate justice and equitable access to resources and improvements is key to our success. Systemic inequities leave frontline communities with limited opportunities for input and access to fewer resources. With the urgency of the climate crisis, community resilience requires that we promote equity for all, especially the most vulnerable.

- What is climate justice and how can we implement it in our engagement with cities?
- What does a fair and transparent process for delivering evidence-based results for all look like?
- How might we uplift climate actions that promote equity, eliminate barriers, reduce harm?
- How might LWVSKC members interact with local agencies and programs to support pro-equity actions?
- What actions can we take to support climate equity and build community resilience?

A diverse panel of local experts will present their perspectives and answer compelling questions to guide our work on climate in our region. Please mark your calendars now and join us next month to learn more about this timely topic.

Learn About — and Have A Say! — In New WA State Tax Options

Kristi Carpine-Taber, LWVSKC Economics and Taxation Committee

Photo k. kennell

Did you know that there is work underway to change the state’s tax structure?

A bipartisan Tax Structure Work Group for Washington State is exploring options to reduce both sales and property tax and
replace the B&O (Business and Occupation) tax. This advisory group has conducted a series of *town halls* from September to November for public discussions on various alternatives in order to get feedback from tax payers and inform policymakers.

- Members of our committee actively participated in the King County Town Halls.
- State tax experts presented at one of our meetings.

The advisory group has put forth options and scenarios to the current sales, property and B&O taxes that would be overall tax revenue neutral.

**New Personal Tax Options** The goal is to reduce both sales and property tax. Here are options presented:

- **Personal income Tax** — either flat 3.7% or progressive 2.1% - 4.2%.
- **Wealth Tax** — 1% on financial property greater than $1 billion.
- **Updating Property Tax 1% Growth Limit** — make the tax limit indexed to inflation and population.

**B&O Tax Elimination** The goal is to completely replace the current B&O for businesses with the one of following options:

- **Margins Tax** — As currently in Texas.
- **Value Added Tax** — Currently in New Hampshire, Canada, and Europe.
- **Corporate Income Tax** — Currently in 45 states.
- **Employer Compensation Tax** — This is a payroll tax where businesses with greater than $7 million payroll and applies to only employees that earn more than $150,000 a year.

**Send in your input!** This Washington State tax advisory group is looking for your input! Please see the links below for references and townhall videos to further educate yourself on the options and proposals — then, take this survey to provide input. The Washington State Tax Structure Work Group Committee will take feedback throughout 2022, with the goal of enacting legislative changes in the tax structure during the 2023 legislative session.

**Resources**

**Videos:**

- Tax Town Halls Videos
- Presentation Deck for Town Halls
- Tax Calculator for Households
- Business Tax Calculator
The following reports have more detailed descriptions and impact analyses of the options:


Redistricting: It’s Not Over Until It’s Over

Alison McCaffree

Redistricting in 2021 for Washington state’s legislative and congressional districts has been full of surprises, our LWVWA colleague Alison McCaffree recently wrote (read more here).

Here’s what’s next and how you can help work on this key issue for the health of our democracy:

- **Feedback**: Many of you participated in the redistricting process over the last years. To help us plan for the next round, we need your feedback. Please fill out this quick survey.

- **Short-term reform**: Using the momentum stemming from the discord over the rocky end to the redistricting process, we need to act quickly to create reform. In the 2022 legislative session, we will be lobbying for a redistricting reform bill. Our goal is to implement comprehensive change that modernizes the process, ensures transparency, and gives equal access to all.

- **Long-term reform**: We know the world has changed considerably since 1983, when an independent bipartisan redistricting commission was established by law. We are advocating for structural change to our commission that would include ordinary citizens and citizens who do not represent either major party. This will require a bill in the legislature and a vote of the people to pass a state constitutional amendment.

If you have any questions or comments, or want to be involved in short- and long-term reforms, please contact LWVWA Redistricting Issue Chair Alison McCaffree at amccaffree@lwvwa.org.
The LWVSKC Nominating Committee is now recruiting for the 2022-2024 Seattle-King County LWV Board!

- Expand your commitment to the League.
- Build your leadership skills.
- Help set the direction of LWVSKC.

The reward is empowering yourself and others to understand and help shape public policy.

- Are you interested?
- Can you recommend another League member?

You know you are capable and motivated. You like to understand and be a part of the big picture.

You know the importance of education, advocacy, action and are eager to do the work.

You know the importance of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI).

- It is time to move into the next phase of League involvement.

We will elect our new Board members at our LWVSKC Annual Meeting on June 4, 2022. Mark your calendars now! Vacations and family needs, and the usual interruptions of a busy full life, are understood. The members of our Nominating Committee are: Joanna Cullen, Chair; Jerri Gordon; Pat Griffith; Sarah Beth Miller; and Adele Reynolds.

Send us your contact information. Recommend another League member.

- Email us now at nominate@lwvskc.org!
Join Our Advocacy Team!

*Lev Elson-Schwab and Kathy Sakahara*

Why did you join the League of Women Voters? For some of us, it was because we wanted to learn more about our government. For some of us, it was because we wanted to help people register and get out the vote. But for some of us, we were concerned about what’s happening in our country and wanted to change things — *to advocate for what we believe in.*

The Seattle-King County League is working hard to expand our advocacy efforts and would like to invite you to help us do that! We are building an Advocacy Team that will enhance our impact on broad public policy. We will do that by:

- building and strengthening relationships with elected officials
- tracking the issues being considered by city and county governments
- speaking up for the values that we all believe in.

This is our chance to have a real effect on the issues that affect us each day!

Are you interested in having an impact on public policy? Do you want to improve elections, policing, LWVSKC’s response to climate change? Do you want to help the League strengthen our relationship with elected officials? Are you interested in working at the local level on advocacy for the League? Are you interested in better understanding the decision-making processes at the city and county level, and how your elected councils work? Do you want to get to know your council members and their interests better?

- *If you answered yes* to any of these questions, *we want to work with you!*

The Seattle-King County League of Women Voters Advocacy Team will be doing those things and many others, with the goal of advising the board and helping shape the League’s agenda!

- The group is open to League members *and* friends of the League.

If you are interested in taking part in this important work, or if you have any questions, please email me, Lev Elson-Schwab, Action/Advocacy Chair, at [action@lwvskc.org](mailto:action@lwvskc.org). Or call Kathy Sakahara, 1st Vice President, at 206-261-7797. Let us know what city/district you live in and if you have any specific interests or skills that you want to bring to the table.
Be LWVSKC's Bit of Sunshine?

Barb Tengtio

Would you like to bring a bit of cheer to a fellow member, when needed? We are looking for a member to reach out, when asked, to another member in need of a bit of — lifting up ... thinking of you — type of communication. It might be a card or note to someone recovering from surgery, or having a trying time at the moment, or ...? Any member who knows a fellow member in need of a bit of cheering up would email you, LWVSKC’s Sunshine!, with the specifics, and you in turn would reach out to this fellow member with a “thinking of you” message. This requires just a bit of time, all on your own schedule.

- Who wouldn’t want to bring a little sunshine to a fellow member?

Please contact Volunteer Coordinator Lauren Pixley at lauren.pixley@lwvskc.org if this activity speaks to you. Be the little bit of sunshine a fellow member needs!

The Development Team Is Looking for You!

Barb Tengtio

Interested in working on a one-time project or something more ongoing? Looking for a new way to engage with your League? The Development Team is a great way to support your League.

What do we do? We raise the funds necessary for LWVSKC to do its work — from designing the Giving Tuesday appeal, to organizing a special fundraising event for members, to new member outreach, to determining creative ways to fundraise and more. Your involvement can be for a specific event or activity or as a regular member of our team. Engagement on a variety of levels works well and is encouraged. So please, think about helping your League in this way. We are a collaborative group and your contributions will be greatly appreciated. We can only sustain and grow LWVSKC with your involvement! Contact Barb Tengtio at 2ndvp@lwvskc.org to join in the fun!
My first panic attack occurred during a final exam my senior year of college. I sat down, the timer started, I flipped to the first page and scanned for a problem I knew I could solve ... and then I flipped to the second page ... and the third. It was like all the air had been sucked out of my lungs. My brain shut down, my body shook, and my heart raced ... why is none of this familiar? I studied so hard! I began to feel nauseous and the room was spinning. I ran out of the room, collapsed in the hallway on the cold tile floor, and sobbed. This can’t be happening, I thought, and berated myself for being so unprepared and incompetent. When my tear ducts were dry and the nausea had subsided, I mindlessly walked down to the front of the lecture hall, told the TA I didn’t feel well and couldn’t finish the exam, and walked out the door.

All my life, I had been the exceptional one. The first in my family to go to college, I chose aerospace engineering because ... well ... I went to Space Camp and that was fun. From then on, I was a fish out of water. In high school, I was in an engineering class with one other woman. The teachers never learned our names, but certainly knew the names of the other 40 men in the class. One day in college, I was walking through campus and a professor came up to me to congratulate me on an award I had just won ... except I didn't win any award. I was again confused with one of the six other women in my class. Professional life didn't get any easier. One of ten women in my organization, I started at Boeing fresh out of college as a design engineer. I was so excited — I had proved to everyone, to myself, that I was good enough to be here — except ... no one took me seriously. If I had an idea, it had to be repeated by a male coworker to be taken into consideration. I heard more sexist and misogynistic remarks and conversations than I care to remember. More times than I can count, I pleaded with my managers to give me challenging assignments ... I was wasting away on documentation and organization and process improvement because I was good at it ... but that’s not what I wanted to do. Finally, in 2018, all of the anxiety, panic, worry, and doubt that I had ignored and pushed down for over two decades finally reared its ugly head in the form of physical illness. All of that pressure that’s supposed to compress you into a diamond? Yeah, it turns out I wasn’t even a lump of coal — I was a ball of yarn where each string was a story of childhood trauma, undiagnosed mental health problems, and unhealthy coping mechanisms.
Luckily, I had an incredible support system in my husband, whom I met in college and married in 2014. He helped me truly believe that it was okay to take time off, to focus on myself, to get better. I went through many, many therapists and consumed every book I could find on my own mental health conditions and those who raised me. It was all of this effort and rebuilding and self-awareness that led my husband to start therapy in 2019. The thing is, it turns out they weren’t my husband, but my wife. At dinner one night, they confessed to me that, through therapy, they were able to admit to themselves that they were transgender and wanted to begin hormone replacement therapy. My world turned upside down … but only for a brief moment. She was still the same person I married and fell in love with, who makes bad puns and amazing food and would do anything for me. Her bravery, honesty, and authenticity actually accelerated my own healing, and just a few months ago I found myself in a courtroom in Bellevue, crying in the back of the room while she stood in front of a judge and declared her new name to the world.

I am lucky to live in a state like Washington that makes it easy for my wife and I to be ourselves in our private and public lives … even luckier to live in the Seattle-King County region where the LGBTQ+ community is so openly welcomed and celebrated. My differences have only strengthened my empathy for others, and my desire to help those less fortunate than I am to see policy changes that help them believe that they live in a world of infinite possibilities. Through the League of Women Voters, I’ve met incredible women and men who hold the same values of justice, equality, and respect — ideals that aren’t partisan. I have been welcomed with open arms and celebrated for my abilities and accomplishments but also reminded not to take on more than I can handle. The compassion and unconditional acceptance of my whole self — who still struggles with anxiety and perfectionism — has not only made me feel like I “fit in” here, but that I belong.

I hope the future of the League looks … well … a little more like me — young, queer, and neurodiverse — but also less like me — white, educated, middle-class, and able-bodied. I hope my story can instill confidence in others that they, too, belong here, and that the League is a truly welcoming place with members who listen when you ask for help, who want what’s best for all residents of our county, and who accept you and embrace your whole, true self.

I again leave you with a quote from Ted Lasso that I believe sums up the mindset of our members ... "If you care about someone, and you got a little love in your heart, there ain't nothing you can't get through together."

- Let’s change the world, one heart at a time.
Here we are, it is January 2022, the holidays are behind us, and a new year beckons. For me, January can mean a trip to Doldrums Island. While the January doldrums can be an unavoidable state, I have found that gratitude can be a great panacea.

This January I am focusing on my experience with the League of Women Voters-Seattle King County, for which I am grateful.

Here’s why:

In March 2020 I retired after working as a social worker and program manager with King County Superior Court for 32 years. I provided direct service for 10 years in family law, adoption, and juvenile court cases, and then managed the King County Drug Diversion Court program for 22 years. In all of these positions, I had the chance to make a difference in people’s lives, on both an individual and policy level. It was worth the inevitable headaches and struggles with the system — it was a good fight. On March 13, 2020, I walked away from the King County Courthouse, into retirement and the ensuing pandemic.

Then came opportunity! I had joined the League in 2019 in anticipation of retirement, but had not participated, although I so appreciated the welcome phone call and the letter with little magnetic words like democracy, action, and issues. Following retirement, with more time on my hands, I began zeroing in on League emails. There was a call by our now-President, Heather Kelly, and our Volunteer Coordinator, Lauren Pixley, for members to join our Observer Corps. Given my interest in local politics and criminal justice reform, I jumped on it. I observed the Community Police Commission for months, and learned so much from a local perspective that was relevant to the racial reckoning in our country. I joined the League’s Police Reform group and the State Level Criminal Justice Workgroup. I eventually worked on ballot endorsement recommendations and helped plan the police reform, behavioral health, and homelessness forums. In all these ventures, I was able to research, write, learn, and interact with people who were all intent on making a difference in their own way. In August 2021, I joined the Board as an At-Large Member.
I am still a newbie on the Board, observing and learning the ins and outs of League leadership. What is evident to me already is the commitment of Board members to League principles, sustainability, and growth. And the commitment to growth transcends that of increasing membership and revenue. The League’s President, Heather Kelly, has emphasized the importance of the relationship among members and of treating each other with respect. There is also recognition on the part of Board members that diversity, equity and inclusion are standards to be integrated into the League, and that leadership must be enlightened and committed to that transition. To that end, on December 1, Board member Tania Hino led the Board in a candid and heartfelt discussion of the first three chapters of the book *White Tears Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Color*, by Ruby Hamad. The book confronts the historical and current oppression faced by women of color. Besides being an enlightening experience, the activity brought Board members together in a different way, sharing ideas, thoughts, and feelings, and discussing ways in which the absence of diversity, equity, and inclusion have led to oppression, and opening our eyes to how we have been a part of that. Additional discussions will follow.

- *I am grateful to be a part of a grassroots organization committed to change and to making a difference.*

**Board Brief**

*Heather Kelly, President*

Happy 2022! I hope you had a warm and restful holiday season.

When a new year dawns, I try to set an intention that will help me achieve my goals and deal with challenges that arise. This year, I’m setting an intention to do what I can to protect our democracy. I invite you to join me because we can be even stronger if we make this a collective effort! As a League, we can consolidate our power as activists, standing even more firmly rooted in our values.

So what steps do we take to achieve that vision?

First, we need to keep pulling our community closer. That means finding new ways to show we care for one another, despite the challenges of the pandemic. It means coming together in friendship as well as for League business. It means bridging generations and communication styles and coming back to our common purpose — serving our democracy.
and the voters. I am still learning how to build and strengthen our community, but I know it can be done because I see all of you modeling it every day.

Second, we need to expand our ranks. I am excited to announce that for the first time in several years we are planning a membership drive! Thanks to the hard work of Judy Deiro and Lauren Pixley, we have an orientation program to give new members the tools they need to succeed in the League. New members will then be matched with opportunities that suit their skills and interests. This new intake process will help people hit the ground running. Help us greet these members by joining our Welcoming Team!

- Email membership@lwyskc.org to sign up.

Third, we need to work more closely with other organizations fighting for our democracy. Rather than duplicating efforts or (worse) competing with these allies, we can learn from them and support their work. Pooling our talents, we can develop a highly effective network of democracy defenders.

Ambitious? Yes, but like all of you, I have a lot riding on this. We know the forces working against the electorate are powerful, organized, and highly motivated. But there are more of us, and we are stronger.

From one League member to another, let’s do this!

**Units Unite Us**

*Sarah Beth Miller*

Our nine small discussion groups (Units) meet once a month to discuss topical issues and connect members to outreach activities.

Any member can attend any Unit meeting.

*Check our website calendar for locations and times -- including our virtual-only Unit!*

The Enumclaw unit will next meet in March — no meetings for January or February. See you in the spring!

**Units revitalize** Anyone who’s experienced multiple days of back-to-back Zoom meetings knows the dullness of mind that can result. For two weeks this October, I zoomed for hours a day.
But instead of feeling dull, I felt energized and motivated! That’s because I was “visiting” each of the Seattle-King County Units to introduce myself as Unit Liaison and listen to what the Unit members had to say. In those two weeks of zooming, I met so many talented, energetic women (and men!) committed to the mission of the League. But the Units expressed some common concerns, too. Almost every Unit was worried about declining membership due to age, health, and attrition. Members also spoke of feeling disconnected from the activities and goals of the LWVSKC Board, and unsure how to rebuild the bond that had existed in the past.

**Grassroots!** As League members, we’ve heard and used that word so often. But the health of our grassroots — the Units — needs tending. To “cultivate” a discussion about how Units might be reinvigorated, the Unit and Board members met together this December to talk about concerns and strategize ways to revitalize our Units and strengthen their connection with our Board.

Discussion at the December meeting revealed the value of our Units: “Units serve up a smorgasbord of opportunities for getting involved and volunteering,” according to one member. They offer education and information about critical issues of the day, both local and national. Newer Unit members were inspired by depth of knowledge and commitment of long term-members. Older members valued the personal connections they have made over the years. They feel pride in all that their Units have accomplished.

There are difficulties, too. Long term members miss the old format of Unit meetings, where discussion and consensus-building flowed from monthly Forum topics and the studies published in *The Voter*. A narrowing and defining of the focus of Unit meetings is needed. Units feel strongly that they’d like to see Board members joining up to be Unit members, too! In addition, objections were voiced about the way in which the Board has recently handled certain policies and endorsements.

The conversation that began in our December “Units Revitalize” meeting will forge ahead into the new year. We will meet again to explore solutions for stronger more productive connections among all League members as we move into the future, empowering voters and defending democracy.

**Brag time!** This month, I would like to highlight — *brag*, really — about what our Seattle-King County Units are up to!

- Enumclaw Unit Leader Cathy Dormaier spotlights the many contributions of Sande Nelson, a member since 1981. Sande says that she joined “at a time when devoted
leaders like Dorothy Roberts, Jan Sardinia and Barbara Norby were a lesson in civics education just to listen to! These women created the model for study, discussion, then consensus within the local unit, which was adopted by South King County.” Currently, Sande is focused on the 2020 Census and redistricting. She feels that the League of Women Voters has been a wonderful influence in her life!

- North King County Unit Leader Judy Deiro speaks up for the new online orientation, “Getting Engaged,” that she and Lauren Pixley created with the help of Sarah Phillips and members of several other local leagues in Bellingham, Mason, Thurston and Clallam Counties.

- The Issaquah Unit has ambitious plans to introduce to their schools the new Civics Book, “The State We’re In” that was developed by the League. Many other Units are curious about the Civics Education for Youth initiative developed with the cooperation of our state and local Leagues. Contact Susan Vossler at vosslers66@gmail.com for more information!

There’s so much more in the works, but I will stop here for now!

*Thanks to all Unit and Board members for their contributions this month to make our LWVSKC better and stronger!*

**In Memoriam: Scientist and Activist Dana Widrig**

*Heather Kelly*

The League of Women Voters of Seattle-King County wishes to honor and celebrate the life of member Dana Widrig, who passed away in August. Dana was a Senior Scientist with Veolia Nuclear Solutions, supporting many of the nuclear facilities here in Washington state. Her role involved monitoring environmental conditions to keep our state clean and beautiful.

Dana was also committed to serving others through advocacy. In 2009, Dana was beaten and raped by a man who broke into her home after stealing a key from her landlord. After recovering from her injuries, Dana used her experience to advocate for stronger security protections for tenants. Her efforts culminated in the “Safe Keys” bill, signed into law by Governor Inslee in 2013. Because of Dana, landlords are now
required to secure keys to rental units. Dana told her story courageously in order to fight the stigma of being a sexual assault survivor, and raised funds for the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center.

I am grateful to Dana for all she contributed to our community during her lifetime. If you knew Dana and would like to share a memory with her family, please email me at president@lwvskc.org.

**Becoming A Democracy: How We Can Fix the Electoral College, Gerrymandering, and Our Elections**  
Kristin Eberhard  
Book Review  
Vicky Downs

Eberhard reminds us that twice in recent history, the popular vote did not elect our president. Also, when we hold “winner takes all” primaries, many voters feel their choices do not matter. In some states, gerrymandering is arranged to give unfair advantage to one political party. As a director for the democracy and climate programs at Sightline Institute, a think tank, this author makes it clear our democracy needs help!

She tells us too many individuals are frustrated when trying to vote. Daniel moved to Syracuse and learned his vote didn’t count. Joe, an Army vet, returned home after years abroad to learn he was no longer registered. Nia spent an entire day trying to vote and was exasperated at how hard it was to do so. Teenaged Darnel got involved with gangs and drugs, was sentenced to 11 years in prison, but learned when he got out, he had to pay all his court fees before he could vote.

What can we do? Eberhard argues for the use of ranked voting, showing how that provides choices for virtually all voters. I learned that ranked voting, rather than “winner takes all” voting, leads to a truly positive vote, as most would have at least received their second or third choice, even if they didn’t get their first.
Today, Cambridge Massachusetts uses ranked choice. “From the voters’ perspective, Cambridge’s multi-winner, ranked choice system makes it much more likely that their vote will help put someone they support on the city council.” Over 90% of voters are able to elect their first or second-choice candidates. Compare that to Portland, Oregon, where only half the votes went for the winners who supposedly represent everyone. Not surprisingly, Cambridge boasts better voter turnout compared with Portland or similar cities.

As for gerrymandering, Eberhard (pictured left) says, “No one wins but incumbents … no matter who holds the drawing pen.” She believes we should break the two-party “stranglehold” and “usher in a multi-party system to ensure the people’s votes matter.” Clearly, ranked choice opens the election to more choices.

It also can lead to Proportional Representation, in which “candidates and parties win seats in legislative bodies in proportion to the votes people cast for them.” This results in a political mix of winners. “Proportional representation is not vulnerable to gerrymandering.”

The Electoral College is a big problem and Eberhard shows us why: “the nation as a whole is not going to elect the next president: twelve states are.” She suggests we encourage states to join “The National Popular Vote Interstate Compact.” This is a group of states that agree to cast all their electoral votes for the candidate who wins the popular vote.

Another issue is campaign reform. Billionaires and corporations tend to overwhelm the election. Eberhard suggests we encourage ordinary citizens to provide small amounts, and thereby vastly enlarge the number of donors. Small monetary gifts would not lead to political “favors,” but would have a strong positive effect on the candidates they support.

This is an information-filled book that provides ideas for action including: assemblies, adding new states, electing more women and people of color, and much more. I’m not sure I agree with all Eberhard’s ideas, but this is a stimulating textbook that is also a page-turner. It was no surprise to learn that the LWVWA held a memorable webinar book event, focusing on this title.

With many chapters listing ideas for action and discussion questions, this is a lively book for anyone in the League of Women Voters.
Correction
The December book review contained an error introduced during the publication process. The paragraph correctly reads:

Amazon needs temporary workers, especially in the months before Christmas. They do sometimes provide a place where people can park, but I was shocked to read that that company seems to treat their low-paid workers more like robots than real human beings. One woman developed wrist problems caused by repetitive work, but the company appeared more interested in getting the work done at low pay, not protecting the woman's health issues.
We'd Like to Hear From You!

Not sure who to reach? You can always find us at info@lwvskc.org or 206-329-4848!

Membership coordinator Saunatina Sanchez is at membership@lwvskc.org and holds in-person and virtual office hours. Check our events calendar!

Want to stop by our office? We have office hours every Tuesday and Thursday, 9:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. We're located at:

Melbourne Tower
1511 3rd Avenue
Suite 900
Seattle, WA 98101

Executive Committee of the Board of LWVSKC

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<th>Position</th>
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Education Fund of LWVSKC
Board members also serve as the Education Fund Board.

| Treasurer | Katie Dudley | eftreasurer@lwvskc.org |
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And if you’re looking for the editor of The Voter, reach out at votereditor@lwvskc.org!

Find us on the web at lwvskc.org!

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS’ OF SEATTLE-KING COUNTY