



VOTER

LWVSJ Happenings

Holiday Luncheon – Monday, December 8th

11.30am - The Grange

Lunch \$20 per person – RSVP by December 5th

Featuring Our Guest Speaker: Award Winning Author & Biologist - Thor Hanson

Sharing stories of wonder, nature, and inspiration for the year ahead



Thor Hanson was born and raised in the Pacific Northwest, where he now lives with his wife and son. He caught his first salmon at age four, and often collected a wide array of temporary summertime pets, from caterpillars and tadpoles to garter snakes, hermit crabs, and tree frogs. His early interest in the natural world steered him towards a career in conservation biology. Hanson received his bachelor's degree from the University of Redlands, his master's from the University of Vermont's Field Naturalist Program, and his doctorate in a joint program through the University of Idaho and the Centro Agronómico Tropical de Investigación y Enseñanza, Costa Rica.

Hanson's research and conservation activities have taken him around the globe. He has studied Central American trees and songbirds, nest predation in Tanzania, and the grisly feeding habits of African vultures. He served as a U.S. Peace Corps volunteer in Uganda, where he helped establish the mountain gorilla tourism program in Bwindi Impenetrable National Park, and he has also helped manage a brown bear tourism project for the U.S. Forest Service in Alaska. He often works at the interface between natural and human systems, and has conducted research on habitat fragmentation, endangered species, and the ecological impacts of warfare.

Hanson is a Guggenheim Fellow, a Switzer Environmental Fellow, and an independent conservation biologist. In addition to his writing, he consults for conservation groups and government agencies, and is a sought-after public speaker. Hanson co-hosted the PBS Nature series *American Spring Live*, and has appeared as a guest on programs ranging from NPR's *Fresh Air* to *On Point*, *Science Friday*, *The World*, *The Splendid Table*, and *Book Lust* with Nancy Pearl.

Hanson is the author of *Close to Home*, *Hurricane Lizards and Plastic Squid*, *Buzz, The Triumph of Seeds, Feathers*, and *The Impenetrable Forest*, as well as the illustrated children's favorites, *The Escape Artist*, *Star & the Maestro* and *Bartholomew Quill*. Honors for his books have included The

John Burroughs Medal, The Phi Beta Kappa Award in Science, The AAAS/Subaru SB&F Prize, and three Pacific Northwest Book Awards, and his writing has been translated into more than ten languages. Hanson's academic work includes co-editorship of the volume *Warfare Ecology*, as well as dozens of papers in such journals as *BioScience*, *Conservation Biology*, *Environmental Conservation*, *Neotropical Ornithology*, *Neotropical Primates*, *The Pan-Pacific Entomologist*, and *Molecular Ecology*. His popular articles and essays have appeared in publications ranging from *Audubon* and *Orion* to *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Times of London*, *The Los Angeles Times*, *The American Scholar*, *The Guardian*, and *The Huffington Post*.

Griffin Bay Books will have a table at the luncheon where you can purchase Thor's latest book – Close To Home: The Wonders of Nature Just Outside your Door



Plus! A Silent Auction of Baked Goods

From gingerbread giggles to peppermint swirls, we hope that our silent auction table will be overflowing with homemade holiday delights. We warmly encourage everyone to bake something! Your cookies, cakes, bars, pies, and secret-recipe masterpieces will help make the event extra magical (and help support the League).

A Sad Goodbye to a Wonderful Friend of the League – Lee Sturdevant



Lee grew up with her brother Jim in Los Angeles CA. As kids, the pair of them tap danced Vaudeville together as part of the Meglan Kiddies in the 40's. Lee and Jim remained close all their lives; both ending up together in Friday Harbor. Married to Tal Sturdivant in 1952, Lee studied journalism and wrote for local papers before starting a successful beachwear manufacturing company. She learned to sail and the family purchased a sailboat to explore the South Pacific. During their many adventures they met Tim and Kathy Ballard from San Juan Island. In 1979 they moved to Friday Harbor and fell in love with the island and the people they met. Lee's life was an adventure – whether sailing the high seas, designing dresses for Saks Fifth Avenue, propagating herbs, or starting a non-profit housing group on the island.

Lee was a dedicated and inspiring member of the League of Women Voters, working tirelessly on behalf of democracy and our organization. Her passion for informed civic engagement, unwavering integrity, and constant willingness to serve made her a cherished colleague and friend. Lee's contributions strengthened our community and will continue to guide us for years to come. She will be deeply missed.

Fun Facts about the League of Women Voters is that they were one of the **first organizations officially recognized by the United Nations as a non-governmental organization** and maintain an official observer status to this day. The League helped lead the effort to establish the UN following World War II.

- First Ladies Eleanor Roosevelt, Lady Bird Johnson, and Betty Ford were members.
- The League withdrew sponsorship of presidential debates in 1988 due to demands for a restrictive format that would have "perpetrate[d] a fraud on the American voter".



Necia Quast is back from Belem, Brazil where she attended the second week of COP30 as an observer for the **League of Women Voters** of the US. COP 30 was the 30th United Nations Climate Change Conference, which took place last month in Brazil. As the Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, it brought together governments, experts, and civil society to negotiate and agree on policies to address climate change and its impacts. A key focus was advancing progress on the Paris Agreement goals, reviewing new climate action plans, and discussing issues like climate finance, energy, and deforestation.

You can read her dispatches from the event on our facebook page. Join us on **January 12th** for our monthly meeting where Necia will present her stories and experiences from the convention.

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1JMVoHVCUA/>.

We Had A Retreat!

On November 10, the League of Women Voters of the San Juans (LWVSJ) held its annual membership retreat. At this year's retreat, we focused on how LWVSJ can best fulfill the League's mission. The retreat addressed several key issues:

First, we discussed how to ensure that the League's own membership is diverse and engaged in our work. Members recognized the difficulty in serving all of San Juan County residents, however, they encouraged the board to reach out to residents on the other major islands and to engage with younger-aged islanders who are key to any efforts to preserve democracy. The League will be establishing a membership committee with members from throughout the county.

Second, we discussed how to strengthen the League's core programs: the Observer Corps, Voter Forums, and Civics Education. Each of these programs are important to the League's mission and are seen by many county residents as vital sources of information. While there is already a strong committee overseeing Voter Services and Forums, there is not a formal committee to do the same for the Observer Corps, which provides summaries of meetings of the County and Town Councils and several other governing bodies. Also missing is a committee to oversee communications and publicity that would ensure that the League can continue to provide the Voter, our monthly newsletter and manage the League website, Facebook page, and other communications with our members and other residents. The members also discussed ways to enhance our civics education program. The League already distributes civics books and voter registration forms, holds meetings on civics issues, and has provided the Journal of the San Juans and the Knowledge Bowl with civics questions.

Third, the League undertook program planning for 2026. Immigrant rights tied with voting rights for the most votes when members indicated their priority interests. The San Juan league has provided leadership in developing a state-wide League position on welcoming immigrants to Washington. Based on the position, the State League is advocating for greater protection of immigrant rights. The President of our local league is now working with other state leagues to make the State League's position national policy for all Leagues across the country.

The second major issue to be discussed in 2026 is voting rights. This has been a core issue for the national League since its founding. The concern today is that Congress will pass legislation that will make it more difficult for people to vote, and the administration will use its executive orders to put

up additional roadblocks. Washington State has some of the highest levels of voter turnout, in part because of mail-in ballots. Understanding potential threats to the Washington way of voting is essential for our community.

Understanding constitutional rights is a further area of discussion supported by most members. All residents need to learn more about their rights under the constitution if the United States is to remain a representative democracy. The members also asked that one of the League's monthly meetings focus on the role of the Washington State Attorney General's office in preserving democracy. Members also recommended that the League hold a meeting on barriers to naturalization that the current administration has imposed, making it harder for immigrants to become U.S. citizens.

The last issue identified by members comes close to home. That is the relationships between the Town of Friday Harbor and the San Juan County governments. The question is how well the two entities will work together in the future?

LWVSJ welcomes new members who are concerned about the state of democracy today and what can be done to protect it. Please go to <https://portal.lwv.org/membership> join the League.

We would like to see more of our members become active volunteers to maintain and carry out key programs such as the Observer Corps, Civic Education outreach, and Voter Forums.

The national League is encouraging state and local Leagues to develop partnerships to broaden our engagement with the community and our members brought forward ideas on groups and organizations we could partner with and specific joint activities or projects in which we could partner. Libraries, schools, resource centers, service clubs and other non-profits topped the lists.

Around the League – State and National Issues

News on Redistricting from Utah

SALT LAKE CITY (AP) — A Utah judge on Monday rejected a new [congressional map](#) drawn by Republican lawmakers and adopted an alternate proposal creating a Democratic-leaning district ahead of the 2026 midterm elections. Republicans hold all four of Utah's U.S. House seats and had advanced a map poised to protect them. But Judge Dianna Gibson ruled just before a midnight deadline that the Legislature's map "unduly favors Republicans and disfavors Democrats." She had ordered lawmakers to draw a map that complies with standards established by voters to ensure districts don't deliberately favor a party, a practice known as gerrymandering. If they failed, Gibson warned she may consider other maps submitted by plaintiffs in the lawsuit that led her to throw out Utah's existing map.

Read more at:

https://apnews.com/article/utah-redistricting-congressional-map-democrats-a443a6584fad0ad0e5eadcc336a4390?utm_source=substack&utm_medium=email

The League is Suing the Federal Government

In mid-November, LWV and five state and local Leagues [filed a lawsuit](#) against the federal government because of anti-voter actions.

We're suing the US Citizenship and Immigration Services, the US Department of Homeland Security, and other federal officials for enacting — without following the required process — a new rule that bars nonpartisan civic engagement groups from providing voter registration and civic engagement at administrative naturalization ceremonies.

Read Our Statement

“Purposely excluding groups like the League from administrative naturalization ceremonies is a deliberate move by this administration to exclude new citizens from the democratic process and attack the League’s very mission to register and support new voters,” said Celina Stewart, CEO of LWV.

The newly enacted rule violates the First Amendment rights of the League and other civic groups. Also, it fails to adhere to provisions that require federal agencies to follow transparent procedures when adopting new policies.

[Read our press release](#) to learn more.

Team LWV

League of Women Voters of the US

Cynthia Stewart is Calling on Local Leagues to Respond

You may have seen the flyer from the Washington State Republican Party promoting I-126 signature gathering at certain events. Please take action to protect your right to vote.

The campaign for I-126 is picking up. That means our **Decline to Sign** work must as well.

Do not object to or disrupt signature gathering when you see it. The League strongly supports free speech, including when we disagree over an issue. Our job in asking people to decline to sign is to be persuasive about our own position, but not to disrupt others who have different opinions.

Another action local Leagues can take is to write letters to the editor regarding the Decline to Sign concept. Even if after the meetings above, this can be valuable for those who see the messages. Use the information linked below to help with this.

Get more information about I-126 [HERE](#).



Resisting Threats to Democracy provides League members guidance on addressing assaults on the US Constitution. We provide these alerts as they are needed. Please share widely with others interested in standing up to these threats.

If you have information, including photos or videos, to submit for future editions of the Resisting Threats to Democracy newsletter please send it to comms@lwwa.org.

Holiday Shopping? Shop the League's values!

You may have seen calls on social media for an economic blackout on and after Black Friday. As these important public conversations continue on the power of collective economic action, the League can show up in a way that aligns with our mission to uplift communities and expand civic power. This national movement is a reminder that democracy thrives when every

community can thrive. By uplifting diverse local businesses, we advance equity and strengthen civic engagement.

Supporting women-owned, minority-owned, and small businesses strengthens local economies and helps resources stay within the community.

This holiday season the League encourages you to shop with democracy in mind!



UW Journalism Hears about LWWA Local News Work

Local news is a key component of the League mission of empowering voters and defending democracy.

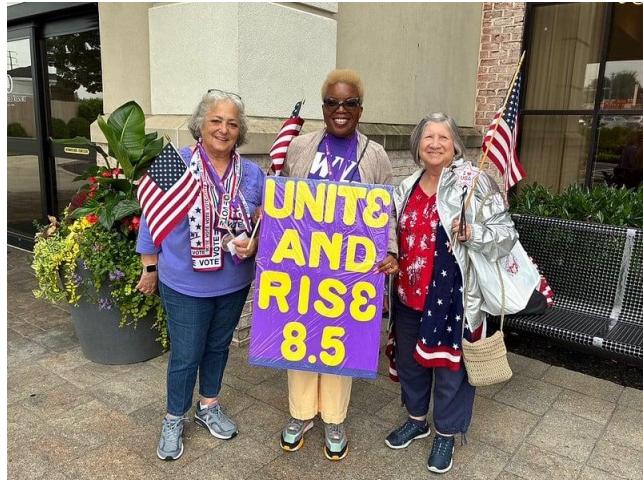
Judy Hucka, Whidbey Island League President spoke to an audience at the University of Washington on November 13th.

[Read more](#)



Upcoming Events

12/17 – Wednesday - The Redistricting Reform Task Force is working to improve redistricting in Washington state. All individuals and organizational representatives are invited to join us the third Wednesday of each month. Each month we strategize and implement actions for reform. [Contact Alison McCaffree](#) for the link or more info.



Unite and Rise 8.5

Unite and Rise aims to build a movement of 8.5 million individuals to fight back against the anti-democratic actions of the current administration. According to research, 8.5 million people taking non-violent action are all we need to make meaningful change in this critical time.

Join us as we defend democracy, from the courts to the streets and beyond!

<https://www.lww.org/uniteandrise>

Tell Congress to Stop Interfering in DC

The District of Columbia is home to more than 700,000 residents but is denied representation via voting members in the US Senate and House of Representatives. The people of the District of Columbia do not have a voice in Congress and thus cannot

advocate for or against federal policies that affect their everyday lives. The fact that DC does not have statehood means that DC's local laws – including an annual budget – are subject to congressional oversight. **The people of Washington, DC deserve the same rights as their fellow Americans living in the 50 states.** This includes full voting representation in the US Congress and the end of congressional interference in their local government.

Urge your Members of Congress to oppose interference in DC!

<https://www.lwv.org/take-action/tell-congress-stop-interfering-dc>

5 Calls

Make your voice heard!

5 Calls is the easiest and most effective way for U.S. constituents to make a political impact. Calling your congressperson is the most effective way to influence policy. Make calls in support of progressive issues. We update the list regularly as legislation develops and remove topics as soon as they're no longer relevant.

[Learn more about why calling works.](#)

[Read our guide to getting started.](#)

Visit 5calls.org – input your location (Friday Harbor) and select what is important to you.

<https://5calls.org/>

Dues Payment and Processing System

As you may know by now, The League of Women Voters has switched to a new member portal, ChapterSpot, for all Leagues across the country. By now, all members should have received an email to log in to the portal. If you haven't received an email, you can use this link to renew: <https://portal.lwv.org/membership>.

Dues are 'pay what you can' with a recommended level of \$75 annually.

What DOES the State League Do With Our Membership Dues?

Your dues are distributed in this way:

The portion to local Leagues remains steady at 20%. Our state League split has *increased* to 47% - with the difference carved from the national percentage.

Understandably, members have questions related to this change, including one that surfaced at the 2025 Convention in June. Through the resolution process, members requested "the LWWA board establish a planning process, in consultation with local Leagues, for increased revenue which provides increased support to local Leagues and/or increased support for grassroots advocacy as intended by the LWVUS Transformation Process."

The state League has taken this request to heart in several ways.

At its July retreat the 2025-27 WA state Board of Directors created this list of priorities for the biennium:

- **Strengthen Operational Infrastructure**

Review staffing and technology needs. Commit to adding capacity to grow League impact statewide.

- **Grow Financial Resources**

New financial resources must be generated to support both LWWA infrastructure and services to local Leagues.

- **Focus on Membership and Leadership Development**
Create effective tools to recruit, engage and retain new League members. Build future League leaders at all levels.
- **Enhance Internal and External Communications**
Tell a clear, powerful, ongoing story of effective civic education, engagement, and advocacy to League members and residents across Washington state.
- **Increase Statewide Community Outreach and Engagement**
Build deep, true, sustainable partnerships with democracy allies across Washington state.

Meeting Dates 2026

Our full calendar will appear in the January Voter. Please note that our board meetings (open to all) are usually scheduled on the first Monday of the month and Membership Meetings are on the second Monday of the month.

| Board Meetings | Monthly Meetings |
|----------------|------------------|
| January 5 | January 12 |
| | |

*All members are welcome to attend our board meetings –
in person or via our zoom link*

Board Members of the League of Women Voters of the San Juan's

| Officers | | | |
|------------------|----------------------|--------------|--|
| Susan Martin | Co-President | 360-370-5205 | martinsf@georgetown.edu |
| Barbara Sharp | Co-President | 360-472-0148 | b_gsharp@hotmail.com |
| Michael Martin | Treasurer | 360-370-5205 | martinml@ieee.org |
| Stephanie Butler | Voter Services | 907-209-5885 | sjbutlerak@gmail.com |
| Steve Bowman | Voter Services | 360-370-5814 | steve.bowman52@gmail.com |
| Necia Quast | Observer Corps | 360-370-5502 | collquas@aim.com |
| Robbie Lawson | Roster/Membership | 360-378-5513 | robbie@rockisland.com |
| Jill Belcovson | The Voter | 805-689-2260 | jbelcovson@gmail.com |
| XXXX | Secretary | | |
| Members-at-Large | | | |
| Audra Adelberger | | 360-378-6322 | audraaeaba@gmail.com |
| Mary Campanella | Nominating Committee | 360-298-2823 | marycampanella@icloud.com |
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| Pati Otley | | 360-378-5632 | pdotley@comcast.net |
| Chita Miller | | 360-378-2153 | chita.miller@gmail.com |

Nominating Committee: Clare Kelm, Mary Campanella, Sarah Crosby

When you join the League, your dues go to three different places: to National League to help support voting rights advocacy efforts, to State League for voter education as well as advocacy for state issues that League supports; and then there are a few dollars left to support our local forums and programs.

Let us know of any changes that need to be made to your contact information. Thank you for continuing to support the important work that we do.

I would like to make a tax-deductible donation to the League of Women Voters San Juans Education Fund and have enclosed a separate check in the amount of \$_____.

PLEASE RETURN TO: League of Women Voters of the San Juans
PO Box 784
Friday Harbor, WA 98250

Voter Editor: Jill Belcovson – 805-689-2260 – jbelcovson@gmail.com