



Precinct Caucuses

REPUBLICAN'S -
FEBRUARY 20
DEMOCRAT'S -
MARCH 26

Naturalization Ceremony

February 9 and 23
11 AM
US Post Office Bldg,
Courtroom #3

GENERAL MEETING

February 9
11:30 - 1pm
2404 N. Howard
The Social Hall
St. Andrew's Church

VOTER

League of Women Voters' Registration Project

Responding to a request from the Spokane County Auditor's office to help register voters at the Naturalization Ceremonies, two league volunteers began working with the Spokane County Elections office on March 17, 2015. Since then ten league members have volunteered to assist in this project. At each Naturalization Ceremony, approximately thirty to forty people are granted citizenship. In larger Naturalization Ceremonies held on Law Day and Constitution Day about hundred people receive their citizenship at each of these events. Our role at these events is to help the new citizens living in Washington and Idaho register to vote. About thirty to forty percent choose to register on site. The Elections Office staff takes the completed forms to process when they return to their office. New citizens who are unable to stay for the registration are given forms to take home, complete and mail in at their convenience. As part of our goal to educate voters we give both groups our TRY (They Represent You) directories, our Voter Cards and VOTE411 book marks.

The excitement of the Ceremonies never fails to move each of our volunteers no matter how many times they have offered their time and talent in this project. Each one views it as a privilege to see people from numerous countries, many of whom completed arduous journeys to arrive in our country, joyous and thankful to become American citizens. Looking back over the 2015 year, we have registered voters at fifteen Naturalization Ceremonies and have donated a total of sixty eight hours.

The calendar of the 2016 Naturalization Ceremonies has recently been released. Eight league members have signed up for the dates through May. There is still time to volunteer for dates in June through December. If you would like to volunteer, contact Bev Austin by phone at 509-981-7005 or by email at bjustin46@gmail.com

Precinct Caucuses - One Month Away

In the State of Washington, the Democratic and Republican precinct caucuses are the first step in participation in the presidential candidate selection. Precinct caucuses are used to identify delegates to the County party conventions, where, in turn, delegates to the national party conventions are selected.

Delegates to national conventions are usually obligated to vote, at least at first, for specific candidates, based on instructions given at the state convention. Delegates are generally elected to represent specific candidates. Many campaigns are organizing now to get people to the precinct caucuses to support their specific candidates.

The other function of precinct caucuses is to identify issues that can be carried forward in each party's platform.

What about the Presidential Primary election in May? That is advisory and not binding. But it will tell the story of how voters (at least, those who participate) feel about the various presidential candidates beyond those attending party caucuses. With so many of Washington's voters claiming to be independent, it could point to different results about voter preferences than the caucus system does.

Republican party caucuses are only a month away, on February 20 this year. Democratic party caucuses will be held on March 26. Please see your local party organizations for local times and locations.

General Meeting February 9 Social Hall

Ann Murphy, President of LWVWA, joined us for our General Meeting in January.



POLICE ACCOUNTABILITY

For many years, Spokane-area police have been showing up in the news in a negative light.

Despite passage of an initiative to give the police ombudsman more power, and changes in leadership within the City of Spokane and the Spokane Police Department, unseemly and possibly illegal incidents are still happening.

Please join us in a discussion about organizational changes that have been made in the Department and barriers to further change. Guest

speakers from the Spokane Police Department will be Kathy Armstrong, Program Manager, SPD Office of Professional Accountability. She will be joined by Jenny Rose from the Police Ombudsman Commission. Questions we hope to have answered include:

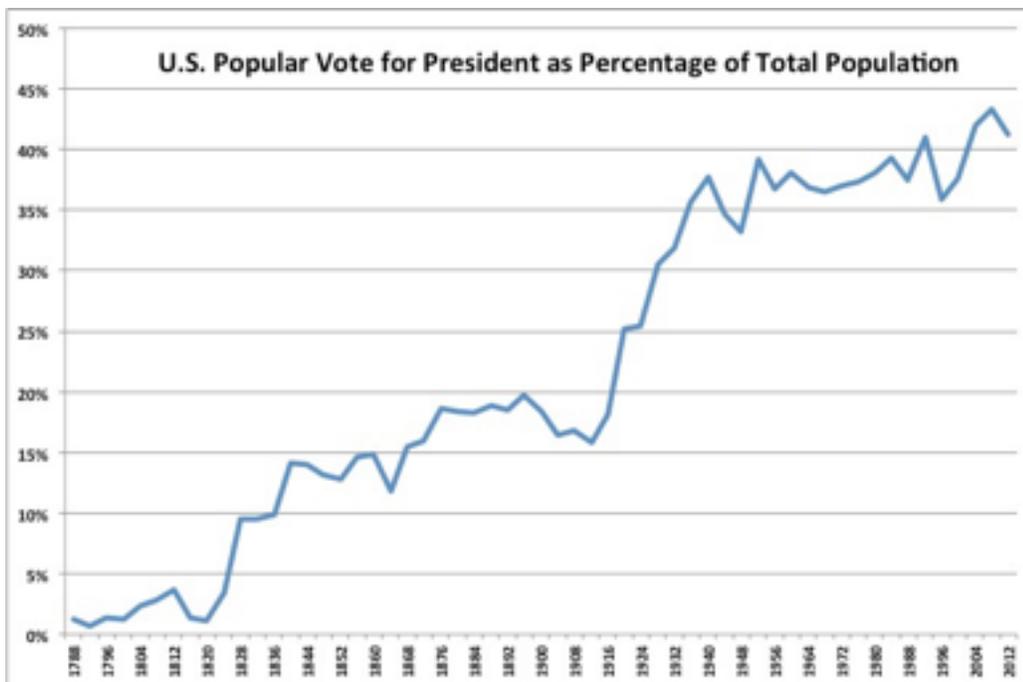
- Are community perceptions about the pervasiveness of improper conduct accurate? (We see allegations of sexual assault, drunk driving, cover-ups, and evidence tampering in the papers)
- Since instances of police use of force and bad behavior are reported widely and vividly remembered by the public, what can be done to provide the public with the full story?
- Why is it so difficult to remove 'bad apples' from the police department and provide appropriate punishment for misconduct?
- What systems exist within the Department to address performance issues?
- Does the culture of the organization need to change and, if so, how can that be accomplished?
- How can the Police Ombudsman’s Office and Commission help bring about change in the Department?

Join us Tuesday, February 9th, from 11:30 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. for this discussion. You are welcome to bring a brown bag lunch. Coffee and water provided.

U.S. Presidential popular election totals as a percentage of the total U.S. population. Note the surge in 1828 (extension of suffrage to non-property-owning free men), the drop from 1890-1910, when Southern states disenfranchised most African Americans and many poor whites, and another

surge in 1920 (extension of suffrage to women).

Source: wikipedia



League Drinks--Celebrating League's 96th Birthday!

We will be having our first League Drinks event of the new year on Tuesday, February 16 (2 days after LWVUS' official birthday) at O'Doherty's Irish Grille, 525 W Spokane Falls Blvd., from 5:30 to whenever. No programs or issues to discuss except the ones you want. A great time to meet other Leaguers, enjoy drinks of your choice, and shared appetizers, or order your own dinner. No rules, except good conversation and food! Look forward to seeing you there! Guests, including spouses, welcome. Linda Milsow, 838-9186, lindacmilsow@msn. Com

Book review by Susan Gray

POLITICAL ANIMALS: How Our Stone-Age Brain Gets in the Way of Smart Politics, Rick Shenkman

In this timely and readable book filled with lots of scientific data illustrated by real-life anecdotes and examples from news events we all remember, historian Rick Shenkman sets out to answer four questions:

1. Why do tens of millions of Americans fail to vote?
2. Why are we so bad at sizing up candidates?
3. Why do voters punish candidates who tell them hard truths?
4. What accounts for the lack of empathy in public policy debates?

Here's what he concluded:

1. Many people fail to vote because they don't feel like they need to. There's no penalty for not voting or for "voting badly" so why make the effort? Politics seems remote and irrelevant to their daily lives. And though information about candidates and issues is readily available (our Vote411 website was a source listed) it takes effort to obtain information and to evaluate the sources of information. Though much money has been spent to expand civics instruction in the public schools, this has had no effect on increasing voter turnout. Surprisingly, scientists working at Facebook discovered that when users posted an "I voted" sign on their page, three of their close friends followed suit and voted. So it appears that peer-group pressure works in close-knit networks.
2. We can find ourselves surprised and disappointed in candidates we have elected when they don't turn out like we expected because though we're rather good at sizing people up in face-to-face encounters, it's not so easy to do with politicians we only see at a distance or on TV or filtered through intermediaries. We think we can predict how politicians will act based on our perception of their personality, a notably poor predictor of behavior. And while believing they choose candidates based on some rational criteria such as their stand on particular issues, most voters' political decisions are made by using their often unreliable instincts.
3. Voters punish candidates who tell them hard truths because we don't want the truth. We want certainty, reassurance, feeling good about ourselves, making sense of things. Moreover, our cognitive biases can be a roadblock to accepting the truth or to what version of the truth we accept.
4. Public policy debates that focus on problems facing large numbers of people don't elicit wide-spread empathy, though individuals manifest it routinely toward those in need. When problems affect thousands, or even millions of individuals who are reduced to numbers, empathy is short-circuited.

But more interesting than the answers to these questions were the causes Shenkman uncovered and what we can do about them. Premodern humans were prewired with instincts that enhanced their survival in the world they inhabited then, a world of hunter-gatherers. Instinctive responses are automatic and protect us in certain

circumstances, such as when a rock is falling toward our head. But most instincts are often not well suited to the political tasks we face in the modern world.

Premodern people lived in small groups that interacted with other small groups and evolution selected for people who could keep track of a social network of about 150. It was an evolutionary advantage to be able to draw conclusions about people in your group who you would rely on for survival, picking up cues from watching their faces and their behavior close up. In the modern world, our groups can contain millions of people, far too many individuals to “know.” Most of us see our political leaders only at a distance or electronically, where facial recognition cues are much harder to spot and their actions and words are so often scripted. It’s no wonder we can’t get a read on our politicians.

This also explains why while we often can feel empathy as individuals, when we identify with individuals in distress because we’ve gone through something similar; or because they are a member of our group; or when we are face-to-face with someone in pain or jeopardy; and why public policy solutions so often seem to lack this. With Premodern humans depending on their group for their very survival, an impulse of concern for the well-being of those in your group was an evolutionary advantage. Large groups of people in terrible circumstances don’t elicit the same automatic impulse in many of us. Not only may we not identify with their circumstances, another problem is they exceed the 150 number our brains can keep track of.

In so much of the way we navigate our political world, we rely on our instincts—the same instincts that evolved from our Premodern past. Within these instincts are our biases. Biases are not character flaws. “Biases represent adaptive solutions to the decision-making problems of our evolutionary past,” and they operate outside our conscious awareness. Some examples of biases useful in a time when life-and-death situations called for quick action: availability bias (the first answer we think of is correct); perseverance bias (inclination to stick with our opinions); confirmation/ disconfirmation bias (tendency to believe what confirms our opinions and discount what doesn’t). This leads us to rush to judgment even when we don’t need to as is usually the case when evaluating a politician.

Instincts and biases are evolved psychological mechanisms that were designed to solve problems we encountered in the world of 10,000 years ago. They were not designed to solve the day-to-day problems of the modern world. So relying on them to make political decisions in our modern political environment can give us some really bad answers.

Fortunately, we are not slaves to our instincts. We can’t change our instant reactions. But we can learn to notice them. And digest them differently as we learn to recognize biased thinking. This process actually changes our neural networks. Though there is scientific evidence that liberals and conservatives are genetically predisposed to be what they are, the most important thing we can do is to study ourselves, analyze our biases and ask ourselves if they make sense. We can watch for the red flags that signal we need to look more closely: instantaneous reactions, a tipoff that our emotions are at work, emotional reactions that can mislead us; anxiety, a key trigger for change, signaling a mismatch between our expectations and reality; politics that make us feel angry. Anger evolved as a short-time response to specific threats, not as the default reaction to ordinary day-to-day politics or for fund-raising or membership recruitment. Anger destroys our system because it destroys compromise and leads to gridlock.

Other things we can do: experience politics close up by meeting the candidates or attending candidate forums in person. Expand our social networks to spend time around people with a different point of view. Scrutinize the media, even sampling media with a different point of view.

Rick Shenkman closes his book with these hopeful words: “While we busy ourselves with projects to reform the system, we need to work at reforming ourselves, too. Science, fortunately, shows us we can.”

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LWVWashington has been lobbying for HB 2160. The LWVSpokane supports this bill because it will allow for greater representation in county governments in the State of Washington. It will;

- ▶ Add two commissioners for non-charter counties over 300,000,
- ▶ Allow smaller counties to vote for this form of government without using the more complex Charter process,
- ▶ Commissioners will be elected by district,;
- ▶ District lines will be drawn by a bi-partisan committee.

This will mean;

- ▶ Each commissioner can more adequately represent the people of the district,
- ▶ Each commissioner can prepare for and attend more Committee and Commission meetings than is currently possible,
- ▶ Two commissioners may talk outside of public meetings to advance the business of the county.

The language was crafted from current state law and county charter models for improved representative government.

Calendar

**February 9 General Meeting, 11:30 @ St. Andrew's
Naturalization Ceremony, US Post Office**

16 League Drinks, 5 PM @

17 Board Meeting, 9 AM @ Office

March 8 General Meeting, 11:30 @ Office

16 Board Meeting, 9 AM @ Office

Thank you for Your Donations!

The Board wants to thank all of the generous members who support our work through donations to Spokane's account with the LWVWA Education Fund or to our local League for unrestricted use. This includes those members who contribute more to our local League's activities through a Sustaining or Benefactor membership or who just pay a bit more than the basic dues amount. For those who may not know, our local League retains only \$19 of the \$70 paid for an individual membership so donations to support our local activities are most appreciated. Donations this year included a generous In Memoriam donation honoring long-time League member Martha Preecs. Thank you to the following members who have made donations this year:

Education Fund: Kate Davenport, Mary Hughes, Mary lou Johnson and Linda Milsow.

Local League: Ann and Ron Bailor, Marianne Connelly, Kate Davenport, Molly Hannan, Mary Hughes, Joyce Jones, Carol McVicker, Linda Milsow, Ann Murphy, Jean Wells.

Thank You to all of the members who have renewed their League membership. We appreciate your continued support of League!

\$70 Individual Dues: Local \$19 - State \$19 - Nat'l \$32
\$105 Household
\$110 Sustaining Member
\$150 Benefactor
\$ 35 Scholarship (call for application)
\$ 35 Student

Police Leadership Committee, Community Forum by Lin McGinn

Ann Murphy and myself, as well as one other LWVSA member, attended the “Community Forum on Police Leadership,” Thursday, Jan 21, 6:30 - 8:00, at the Community Building Lobby, 35 W. Main.

The Police citizen Leadership Commission is tasked with leading a conversation about what the community is looking for in its next police chief. The members of the Commission are: Mary Ann Murphy, Chair (Former Executive Director of Partners with Families and Children), Toni Lodge (Executive Director of The NATIVE Project), Naima Quarles-Burnley (President of the NAACP Spokane Branch #1137), Jim McDevitt (Member of the Spokane Regional Criminal Justice Commission, and General Counsel for the Spokane Airport Board), Ken Hohenberg (Kennewick (WA) Police Chief), Susan Hammond (Member of the Use of Force Commission, retired public mental health psychiatric nurse administrator and consultant), and Jon Snyder (City Council Member).

After introductions were made of the panel, there were three minute statements by the panel members and then for about 45 minutes, we broke into small groups with each forum member. They recorded the small group member’s testimony of “what we personally want in a new police chief.” This input will be shared with the commission.

The committee will be tasked with three primary objectives related to the police chief search:

1. Review and make suggestions to the current police chief job description
2. Recommend the hiring and selection process that should be used
3. Identify the attributes the community is seeking in the next police chief

Separately, the committee will also provide guidance on the development of a culture audit, a recommendation of both the Use of Force Commission and the U.S. Department of Justice Community Oriented Policing Services. The committee will make recommendations about factors to be considered, approach, reporting and expected outcomes.

Tesoro-Savage Proposal Hearing on January 14, 2016 by Lin McGinn

The Spokane hearing on a proposed oil terminal in Vancouver, WA had over 500 people attending and 143 speakers. There was standing room only, with witness testimony lasting late into the evening. If built, the Tesoro-Savage proposal would ship almost half as much crude oil as the now defunct Keystone XL pipeline, bringing four additional oil trains through Spokane – through downtown, along I-90, and by businesses, a high school, two hospitals, and homes. There were numerous people from Montana as far as Helena and along the rail line that follows I-90, and Idaho communities of Sandpoint, Bonners Ferry, and Coeur d’Alene. However the people who reside outside of Washington State have no standing in this Washington State facility hearing.

The majority of the speakers spoke against the facility being built. We heard from Ben Stuckart, president of Spokane City Council and several council members against the project. The Tesoro-Savage proposal is opposed by the Spokane Tribe, Spokane Firefighters Union, Vancouver City Council, Vancouver Firefighters Union IAFF Local 452, ILWU Local 4, Columbia Waterfront LLC, the sport fishing community, the environmental community, and people from all walks of life across the Northwest.

There was testimony in favor of the Tesoro project from oil industry leaders, and union welders and a few private citizens in favor the project who would gain financially from this project.

“I’m here to represent a purely public health position on this proposed oil terminal,” said Dr. Donald Storey, a retired physician and pulmonologist, from Spokane. “I spent much of my career treating patients with lung disease and my take on this is the only 100% reliable prevention for the increased health risks is to deny the proposal.” And several physicians in the Spokane area gave testimony on the decline in public health and more respiratory problems in children and adults with COPD and related health problems if the project is given an OK by the governor to go ahead.

There were three members from LVSA present at the hearing at various times, and I presented the Spokane League position as the 121st speaker.

___ Yes, I want to join/renew membership in LWV/ Spokane Area

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: H _____ W _____

Fax: _____ e-mail _____

I would like to receive the newsletter by ___ mail or ___ email (please check one)

Please indicate amount enclosed: _____

Please make check payable to & mail to: LWVSA 2404 N. Howard St., Spokane WA 99205

Pay by Credit Card through Pay Pal at www.lwvspokane.org/join.html



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
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TO:

"The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, and influences the public policy through education and advocacy."