

Report of Civics Education Committee, 2017-2018
Spokane League of Women Voters
Beth Pellicciotti

The following report contains formation and membership information on the Civics Education Committee, description of the high school student voter information and registration project, next steps and proposed budget items for 2018-2019.

Civics Education Committee Formation: Gretchen McDevitt convened the first meeting of the Civics Education Committee following the February 2018 League meeting and asked Beth Pellicciotti if she would be chair. Attending this first meeting were Mardell Cochran, Susan Gray, Gretchen McDevitt, and Beth Pellicciotti. Susie Gerard, coordinator of social studies for District 81, presented at this League meeting and invited the League to register Spokane high school students during the last two weeks of May 2018. The committee brainstormed many other ideas related to civics education and decided to focus initially on the high school student registration.

Committee Membership: In the months following this first meeting, the committee grew in several ways. Suzi Hokonson forwarded to the chair the names of members and new members interested in education (from the member questionnaire). Sally Phillips also sent names of members interested in civics education. Beth Pellicciotti sent letters to these members inviting them to join the committee, and she included background information and notices of the next meeting. The committee met immediately following the March and April meetings. Brainstorming was encouraged; the immediate task at hand was registration of high school students.

Partnership with Voter Services: Bev Austin and Susan Hales proved invaluable in their support of the committee's work. Bev Austin recruited a number of members already trained in voter registration to do high school student registration. She arranged for a just-in-time training of members who wanted to volunteer for the high school project. She ordered the League hand-out material and helped create 43 packets of information for these classes.

It is important to note that of the 12 volunteers who visited the six area high schools, six were new members (joining this year or last); two were spouses of members; and four had been members for a few years. The 12 volunteers were Mark Adams, Bev Austin, Prakash Bhuta, Mardell Cochran, Marilyn Darilek, Susan Hales, Judy Krueger, Mary Lou Johnson, Gretchen McDevitt, Sylvia Oliver, Beth Pellicciotti and Jan Wingenroth.

Partnership with Susie Gerard: Susie Gerard made this project a reality and was critical to its success. In March 2018, she coordinated a meeting of League members with the high school social studies department leaders (League members attending were Bev Austin, Mardell Cochran, Gretchen McDevitt, Sylvia Oliver, and Beth Pellicciotti). Susie Gerard led this brain-storming session and asked the department leaders how the League might partner with the high school teachers (see "next steps" below for the leaders' recommendations).

She worked with the civics teachers to develop a schedule of classes for each of the six schools (no small task). Teachers asked League members to create a short presentation on the following topics: 1) History and mission of the League; 2) Why voting is important; 3) Why voting is important for each of us; 4) How to get information on candidates; 5) Description of voting in Washington State and how receiving your ballot while away at college.

Outreach to Spokane High Schools: During the last two weeks of May 2018, 12 League members met with 588 students in six Spokane high schools, registering 272 students to vote in 41 classes. With the dates and times supplied by Susie Gerard, Beth Pellicciotti developed a standard template for each school, with two volunteers scheduled per class. She also developed a sample presentation outline and a sample presentation script.

In some classrooms, one League member took the lead in presenting, and the other member helped students with the registration process. It is important to be sensitive to the fact that not everyone is comfortable in presenting, and some prefer working one-on-one with students, answering questions about the voter registration form or voting in general. Those who did present provided very inspirational stories about why voting was important to them. In some way, League members acted as oral historians, recounting their own challenges in not being able to vote (because of age restrictions at that time) or voting in states with restrictive voting procedures.

High school schedules were intense; schools started early, and classes moved quickly. Some League members volunteered for several high schools, others were able to give their time for one. Others members fit a few classes into their schedule. All these contributions made this commitment to 41 classes possible.

Next steps:

Expanding Voter Information and Voter Registration to County High Schools: Vicky Dalton, Spokane County Auditor and League member, asked the Civics Education Committee to plan a strategy for expanding the high school project to include high schools within Spokane County. This planning would be directed at fulfilling parts of House Bill 1513, which requires high schools to have all eligible high school students registered to vote on January 16, 2020. Members of the Civics Education Committee have also inquired about plans for expansion to schools within the county. Bev Austin, Susan Hales, Susie Gerard, Beth Pellicciotti, and Vicky Dalton will meet on July 12, 2018 to begin this planning.

Purchasing the State We're In: The League Board requested feedback from the schools on a possible purchase of a classroom set of this textbook. The Spokane District 81 social studies department leaders (prompted by Susie Gerard) asked that each school nominate one civics education teacher to receive this classroom set, and that the League committee determine the teacher to receive the set. Civics committee members have asked that one set also be purchased for future work with the county schools. Additional copies are being requested for League members to use in their outreach work.

Recognition of Susie Gerard and Norm Luther: Beth Pellicciotti recommended that Susie Gerard be recognized at the May 2018 annual meeting of the League. However, Susie Gerard was not able to make that meeting. It is important that Susie Gerard be recognized during a League meeting early in the fall semester.

Norman Luther, a community member and retiree, has recruited 10 volunteers in the community to register high school students to vote. During the past year, he and his team visited 11 area high schools and registered over 400 students to vote. Though he is not a League member, he is worthy of recognition for his dedicated service to students and their voting rights.

Committing to civics education: Below are several ideas from civics committee members as well as teachers of civics education on future directions for the League in civics education. Documenting these

ideas is important, as they reflect the chapter's enthusiasm for civics education as well as present possible projects for the future.

- get the students (especially student councils and debate teams) involved in the planning of voter registration.
- continue to partner with teachers
- be aware of challenges in voter registration with undocumented individuals (much of our voter registration work has been done following naturalization ceremonies, and citizenship has not been an issue)
- make sure the committee focuses on civics education across the K-12 range, including elementary education students
- support Susie Gerard's work in civics
- make referrals for possible speakers to classrooms, as Susie Gerard develops a Speakers' Bureau during the next school year.
- Ensure that public officials (and there are many who speak at League meetings) speak to high school students
- have legislative aides, like Sen. Billig's legislative aide (who attended the League meeting that day), be a speaker and young role model for high school students
- follow Susan Gray's current work in which she will be supporting (Beth McGibbon's) AP course in Rogers High School.
- (Given the activism of high school students sweeping the country), consider this time a "teachable" moment (for us, for legislators?) and for students of civics education
- continue developing presentations to high schools
- contact other (elected officials) to see if they would be committed speakers for high school civics classes
- invite students (parents?) and teachers to a League meeting to hear them present papers or debate topics on civics education. Start with 5th graders, then 8th graders, and then seniors. Offer some time of recognition (gift card, bond) to recognize each student's work.
- explore other opportunities for partnering in civics education such as 4-H, after school programs, etc. This outreach may be a possibility after partnerships with the schools are fully explored.
- do not try to do too much at once, but keep going on initiatives. Track and record the work carefully.

In March 2018, League members met with social studies department leaders. These teachers provided an overview of their work in civics education. In addition to following the civics education curriculum, they provided many examples of how they engage their students in the voting process. These teachers:

- help young, potential voters become informed about issues and candidates.
- set up assignments in which students research and debate both sides of issues/policies
- review the ballot (for that high school's district) with students and provide instructions for completing the ballot
- take students to Olympia (one teacher took students to a Town Hall meeting --back and forth to Olympia in one day)
- give students instructions on how to register to vote online.
- plan student voting during Fall Semester
- respond to new law letting 17 year olds sign up to vote in election by which they turn 18

The department leaders and League members discussed how League members could become more involved in civics education in the schools. They invite League members to:

- come into classrooms to register students after first two weeks in May (the first two weeks of May are set aside for AP tests)
- help students register to vote online
- plan to be guest speakers next fall
- observe civics lessons in high school classrooms
- help recruit guest speakers of local importance (how can students be politically active in Spokane?)
- distribute League of Women Voters' material (one department leader asked for multiple copies of brochure which showed local, state, and national candidates)

Budget requests for 2018-2019:

Textbooks on civics education for classrooms	\$660
Textbooks on civics education for League outreach	\$200
Small American flags for voter registration	\$280
Pens for students to complete registration form.....	\$170
Total.....	\$1310

Textbook Information: The State We're In, 8th Edition

Two classroom sets, 30 books, one Teacher's Curriculum Guide and one poster @ 330 each ...\$660
Additional copies for League members to use in their outreach work. 10 copies at \$20 each....\$200

Each Spokane high school would nominate one civics education teacher to receive this classroom set, and the League committee determines the teacher to receive the set. Civics committee members have asked that one set also be purchased for future work with the county schools. This request includes 10 copies for League members to use in their outreach work.

Voter Registration of High School Students

Flags would be handed to students when they register to vote, and pens would be used by students in completing the voter registration form. Many students came to class with no pens, or just pencils.

1000 small American flags for \$280 (note that this price may be on the high side, as Susan Hales has a vendor which shows .15/flag versus .28/flag). This less costly vendor would need to be explored.....\$280

https://www.amazon.com/100-American-Stick-Safety-WindStrong%C2%AE/dp/B00JAD8BJ0/ref=sr_1_5?ie=UTF8&qid=1530575137&sr=8-5&keywords=small+american+flags+on+stick+in+bulk&dpID=51pEXQowm2L&preST= SX300 QL70 &dpSrc=srch

1000 customized pens with League of Women Voters logo for students to complete voter registration...\$170

<https://www.totallypromotional.com/washington-classic-pen.html>