

THE VOTER



This Newsletter is published by and for the
League of Women Voters of Yakima County
PO Box 723, Yakima, WA 98907

On the Web at:
<https://lwvyakimacounty.org>

August, 2026
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*We respectfully acknowledge that we live and work on
the traditional lands of the fourteen Confederated
Tribes and Bands of the Yakama Nation.*

CORE PRINCIPLES

MISSION STATEMENT

Empowering Voters. Defending Democracy.

VISION

We envision a democracy where every person has
the desire, the right, the knowledge, and the
confidence to participate.

VALUE STATEMENT

The League believes in the power of women to create a
more perfect democracy.

LEADERSHIP TEAM

- Cindy Olivas, President
- Janis Luvaas, Treasurer, Budget Committee Chair
- Tracy Levy, Communications Chair/The Voter Editor
- Barb Schultz, Budget
- Steve Hill, Nominating Chair, Budget
- Susan Kaphammer

The Leadership Team meets on the first Monday of the
month at 4:30 pm in the second floor conference room
at the YWCA, 818 W Yakima Ave, Yakima

All Members are Welcome!

KNOW YOUR LEAGUE

Yakima County League: <https://lwvyakimacounty.org/>
Washington State League: <https://www.lwvwa.org/>
Our National League: <https://www.lwv.org/>

CALENDAR

Saturday, August 15, 5:30-8:30 pm

Yakima Environmental Justice Film Series, "The River
Remembers," Glenwood Square, 2110 Tieton Drive,
Yakima. [Register here](#)

Friday, August 21, 5:30-7:30 pm

Know Your Rights forum. Part II of the Understanding
Your Rights as Citizen . Henry Beauchamp Community
Center- MLK Jr. Room, 1211 S. 7th Street, Yakima

Saturday, August 22, 8:00 am-5:00 pm

Poderosas State Summit hosted by Poder Latinx. Yakima
Valley Conference Center, 1704 W. Nob Hill Blvd, Yakima.
[Register here.](#)

Monday, August 24, 5:30-8:00 pm

Crisis in Care, Heritage University in Smith Hall, 3240 Fort
Road, Toppenish. Host is Yakima Valley Healthcare
Defense Partnership, [Register here](#)

Thursday, September 3

6:00 pm Data Center Affinity Group-via zoom. (For
members only.)

6:30 pm Membership Affinity Group-via zoom. (For
members only.)

Friday, September 11, 5:00 -8:00 pm

El Grito de Independencia Cultural Fiesta, Heritage
University, 3240 Fort Road, Toppenish

Monday, September 14, 4:30 – 6:00 pm

Leadership Team Meeting, YWCA – 2nd floor conference
room, 818 W. Yakima Ave., Yakima

Friday, September 18, 10:00am-2:00 pm

2026 Yakima County Employees Wellness Fair,
Performance Park, next to the Yakima County Courthouse
(LWVYC will have a table there).

MESSAGE FROM THE LWVYC PRESIDENT

Dear League of Women Voter Members,

It is time again for our monthly issue of “The Voter” which is one way that we reach out to you and friends of the league. I sense that all of us have been busy trying to get our neighbors and friends out to vote. It is a time-consuming activity for outreach, and it takes effort from community members, community organizations, and the League to work together. My outreach was canvassing to get out the vote. Now that the primary elections are over, we can rejuvenate our energy. All that is left is processing ballots, curing, certifying, then forwarding to the WA Secretary of the State office which of course is done by the Yakima County Elections, Auditor’s Department. There is exceptionally good news to share, on August 10, at 8:00 a.m., the voter turnout rate was 27.99%. This is almost a 12% increase from last year’s 2025 voter turnout rate for the primary election. The official results will be in about a week or so. My hope is that the turnout rate will be over 30%. I loved seeing these results!!! Thank you to our members who participated in getting out the vote (GOTV). A larger shout out to the community organizations that were canvassing door-to-door, giving workshops on filling out ballots, doing forums, and even having an art event to get out the vote.

So, what has the League of Women Voters of Yakima County been doing? A lot! NAACP hosted an “A Day of Good Trouble” event honoring John Day Lewis on July 17 at the downtown Performance Park. There are several of our members that are also members of NAACP. The league had a table set up providing information on voting, selecting candidates more.

On July 27 at the West Valley Library, the League had a program on Immigrants and what has been happening in Yakima. One of our own members, Danielle Surkatty, spoke about what the Yakima Immigrant Response Network (YIRN) has been doing to help families in the ‘reunification process’ with detained loved ones. There were eight members from the League that attended the program. The handbook Welcoming Immigrants to Washington were given to attendees at this event. It was a study done by the League of Women Voters of WA in 2024.

Recently, on August 8, this League worked with Alison McCaffree, Issue Chair, Redistricting and Lobby Advocate with the WA State League. She presented a program on Redistricting and Your Vote. There were sixteen participants that came to this event. Nine of the attendees were members of this League. Those that attended received information and a folder with power point slides. Everyone asked great questions and had lots of discussion. At the end of this presentation, I talked about a second part extending this event by having an opportunity to walk or run and see the boundary lines, visually. It will take place in October. The participants produced a name: Rock the Vote, Fun Run. Please think about getting involved. This event will need volunteers and community organizations to assist in making this happen. More information to come.

There is one more opportunity for members and the community who missed the one on August 8th to attend another Redistricting & Your Vote workshop. This same presentation will be on September 19 at Sunnyside Community Center. Alison McCaffree will make this trip again to Yakima. I hope to see more members coming out to our events in the future.

Cont.

Also, I would like to say “thank you” to all the members that volunteered and helped to set up this event with me. You are genuinely appreciated! Also, the League and I appreciate our partner organizations Asian Pacific Islander Coalition (APIC) for the folders and the printed PowerPoint slides and NAACP for sponsoring the cost of the conference room at the Best Western Plus, Ahtanum Inn and the pastries. Their contributions made this event possible. Also, to Alison McCaffree for traveling to Yakima from Seattle to present at this event. I drove her to sections of Yakima’s 14th and 15th districts that parallel next to each other. It was a crazy maze. The ‘Rock the Vote, Fun Run’ will let participants see how our votes are distributed by districts and precincts.

Last, members, if you have a topic that is important, let us explore and see about having small get-togethers to discuss and act on. A league only works when we can all find common ground and common interests. I believe in the mission and purpose of this league. As your president, I do have a vision and that is to see the League of Women Voters of Yakima County expand and reach out to include all communities throughout the Yakima Valley. Our statement is “To empower voters, defend democracy.”

With best regards,

Cindy Olivas, LWVYC President

WELCOME TO OUR NEWEST MEMBER!

Sitlaly Macias just recently graduated from Eastern Oregon University with a degree in Political Science. Her reason for joining LWVYC is she became familiar with the league back home at her old school. Laly stated that she would love to be involved here in Yakima since moving back. She would like to extend her support for the League’s mission and be involved in future volunteer work. Sitlaly graduated from Wapato High School and now resides in Wapato, WA. Welcome and thank you for becoming a member of the LWVYC!

ATTENTION MEMBERS!

Members, if you are interested in becoming a part of the Leadership Team and are in good standing with the Leagues, according to the bylaws, you are needed for current vacancies as an LT Chair for the Membership Committee and LT Chair for the Voters Service Committee. Also, there is a current vacancy for the position of secretary. Please contact your league president for further details at cindyo4lwvyc@gmail.com

REDISTRICTING AND YOUR VOTE

For the League's August 8 Day of Action, Yakima was treated to the presentation Redistricting and Your Vote. Alison McCaffree, who works on redistricting and other issues for LWVWA, teamed up with LWVYC President Cindy Olivas for an eye-opening presentation on redistricting: what it is, why it really matters just who controls it, and how it is done. We looked at Washington's Redistricting Commission and why the LWVWA has launched their redistricting reform effort, Rebuilding a People First Commission. They brought us up-to-date on the ongoing litigation over Washington Legislative District (LD) 14 and 15, and possible impact from recent U.S. Supreme Court decisions including Louisiana v. Callais.

Redistricting is the process of creating new districts or redrawing existing district boundaries to adjust for population changes. Each state is given authority to decide who gets to redraw the lines for Legislative and Congressional Districts. Alison led us through a hypothetical redistricting exercise by asking us how we would go about evenly distributing a bunch of red and blue dots. This clearly illuminated how a particular group's vote may be concentrated or diluted. Who decides where the lines are drawn essentially decides who has political power.

Just seven states now have independent citizen redistricting commissions, but in most states, redistricting is done by state legislatures. Forty-three years ago Washington voters approved a constitutional amendment that moved this authority from the State Legislature to a 5-member Redistricting Commission. There have since been calls for additional reform. LWVWA has launched a redistricting reform task force, Building a People First Commission, aimed at getting the State to form an independent, more transparent, more accountable Independent Citizen's Commission to redraw district boundaries.

Redistricting is generally done every 10 years after each Census. In 2021, the boundaries of LD14 and 15 were challenged in District Court for diluting the Latino vote. The boundaries were adjusted to more adequately reflect lawful redistricting criteria including roughly equal numbers of people per district; not dividing communities with common interests such as income, ethnicity, Tribe, or race; ensuring minorities have the opportunity to elect representatives of their choice; and preventing favor or discrimination against any party or candidate. Again, this was challenged but upheld by the Ninth Circuit, and appealed to the U.S. Supreme Court. A decision is due in late September.

More info can be found [here](#) and on the LWVWA website under [redistricting](#).

Joy McKinney



DATA CENTER MORATORIUM IN YAKIMA COUNTY

No doubt you've heard about the rapid expansion of data centers across the country and here in Washington. Some of the richest farmland in Grant and Benton Counties has already been converted, or is being considered for conversion, to data centers. Quincy is home to multiple facilities, while a massive new center is planned for the Wallula Gap Industrial Center, on former farmland. These enormous buildings house servers and GPUs that require 24/7 electricity and generate tremendous heat, requiring large amounts of water for cooling. They also rely on multiple backup diesel generators to keep running during power outages. In Quincy, data centers stretch more than 3.5 miles and are permitted for over 400 locomotive-sized diesel generators, raising concerns about air pollution and noise. Residents have also seen significant increases in electricity costs. And during a time of drought, we cannot afford to divert massive amounts of water to these thirsty facilities. These are just a few of the many concerns surrounding the rapid expansion of data centers. As a climate activist, I see these data centers as a direct threat to Washington state's climate goals and efforts to transition away from fossil fuels. One solution is for the data centers to bring their own clean energy generation and transmission.

Here in Yakima County, concerned citizens recently asked the Board of County Commissioners for a moratorium on new data centers, giving the county time to study the potential impacts and develop appropriate safeguards. On July 29, the Commissioners held a study session attended by approximately 80 people, with more than 50—including many League of Women Voters members from throughout the valley—speaking in support of a moratorium until additional research could be completed. I was encouraged and impressed by the number of people willing to stand before the Commissioners and make their voices heard. Speakers included Christina Serabia of the Yakima Valley Healthcare Defense Partnership, Preston Tucker of Washington Youth Alliance, Maria Fernandez of ELLA, Jean Mendoza of Friends of Toppenish Creek, and many others. Their participation demonstrated the growing community interest in ensuring that Yakima County carefully considers the environmental, economic, and public-health impacts of this rapidly expanding industry.

Coleen Anderson

Co-Leader, 350 Yakima Climate Action
Member, League of Women Voters

HOW SHOULD OUR LEAGUE SUPPORT IMMIGRANTS IN YAKIMA COUNTY?

On July 27, at the West Valley Library there was a program for our members to understand the LWVWA and our own LWVYC views. Seven league members attended this program. The purpose of this program was to start thinking about how LWVYC could support immigrants in our county. The program started with a short six-minute video with facts about Immigrants in WA State. Much of the information was taken from the Welcoming Immigrants in Washington State two-year study done by the WA League of Women Voters in 2022-2024. The study was published in 2025, linked [here](#).

Each member received a copy of Welcoming Immigrants in Washington State Study handbook. It highlighted the significant economic contributions that immigrants in Washington State contributed and paid annually. The study also revealed systemic challenges facing immigrants, such as access to healthcare, legal status issues, housing, education, childcare, and jobs. It is necessary for the state to address these challenges and emphasized the importance of local community action in creating a more welcoming environment for immigrants.

Here in our own state, the LWVWA started an outreach to all local leagues to sign a concurrence statement that the LWVUS take a position on Immigrants issues. The concurrence was presented at the LWV National Convention this past June. The vote was unanimous at the convention as all State Leagues wanted a national position for Immigrants to be taken. Our league had signed on the concurrence that our State League had presented back in February.

Stories of family experiences with immigration, the costs of getting legal status, lack of affordable legal services, travel time, and expense to go to federal Immigration offices, paperwork requirements, and taking time away from a job that only pays you when you work was shared. It can be difficult for an immigrant to improve their living circumstances in the United States.

Danielle presented a history of how the Yakima Immigrants Response Network (YIRN) originated from discussions at a FAN Advocacy Day held at St. Micheal's Church in 2017. The purpose was to help immigrant families by making sure that there was family reunification in getting necessary documents gathered and to make sure the detainee was safe. Also, helping families to prepare for the departure, especially when the detainee was the main family support.

In 2018, Tennessee State authored a report of lessons learned from a big raid. Washington decided that this could happen here locally. Local church leaders, community organizations, and community volunteers that collaborate with immigrants put a plan in place. This was the start of YIRN.

Danielle works tirelessly to help families when loved ones are taken by ICE. Since November of 2025, 177 families and persons have reached out for assistance for locating a person taken, providing phone cards, and commissary money for detainees to purchase necessities while detained in ICE facilities. Gas cards, clothing, food, and money for passports and for families to seek services in obtaining an attorney are provided. The funds are slim at times. Locally, ICE has been witnessed taking immigrants walking out of the courthouse, jail, grocery stores, and hardware stores.

Danielle said that YIRN's focus is on 'family reunification.' To date, there are fifty-five people from Yakima County being held at the ICE Detention facility. YIRN has given out 262 phone cards, 234 gas cards, food boxes, suitcases, and thirty-eight passports. A question was asked if teenagers had been picked up by ICE and the answer was, "Yes." Danielle also said that she encourages family members to obtain keys to pick up the vehicles that are left in areas where someone is arrested and taken away. Those cars are important in unifying families for travel.

When asked how the League could help to support YIRN, Danielle said that money is always needed. Volunteers are needed to accompany immigrants going to the courthouse to take care of business and getting their legal status properly filed. Volunteers are needed for running errands. Also, to watch public places that ICE is known to target regularly (in a safe way). Donating suitcases is helpful, too. The LWV Kittitas County brings suitcases down to Yakima regularly and donates to YIRN. NW Harvest and OIC have been supplying boxes of food to YIRN for families in need as incomes are reduced when ICE has arrested the main family wage-earner.

All members were engaged in today's discussions and found the program informative. Going forward, we will need to see what league members feel comfortable doing. We all thanked Danielle for her endless efforts in assisting families, as well as her volunteer staff. Danielle, you have a heart of gold!

Cindy Olivas,

LWVYC President

UNITE & RISE FOR VOTING RIGHTS PEP RALLY RECORDING AVAILABLE NOW.

A [virtual pep rally](#) on Aug. 6 energized people for the Aug. 8 Day of Action. Kristen Clark, NAACP General Counsel, was just one of many featured speakers. Clark recommended ten actions we each could take (skip to minute ~19 in the recording):

- Activate if you hear of gerrymandering in your area.
- Testify in hearings to register your objections.
- Make a plan to vote this election cycle.
- Encourage ten people in your network to register to vote.
- Post online about voting no less than once a week.
- Service: serve as a poll monitor, help drive people to the ballot box.
- Vote in this mid-term election cycle.
- Advocate for Supreme Court reform (term limits, ethics requirements).
- Demand other reforms that will strengthen democracy (push for the John Lewis Voting Rights Advancement Act).
- Dream big. This is a moment for big ideas.



MEMBERSHIP REGISTRATION FORM

BECOME A MEMBER OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF YAKIMA COUNTY, OR RENEW YOUR MEMBERSHIP

CONTACT INFORMATION

First Name: _____ Last Name: _____

Email: _____ Phone Number: _____

Address: _____

Street Address

City

State

Zip Code

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Understanding the demographics of LWV's membership base helps us progress in our value of being a fully inclusive organization. **Please fill out as much of the following info as you are comfortable with:**

Gender: _____ Pronouns: _____ Race/Ethnicity: _____ Birth Year: _____

DUES AMOUNT

Please select the dues amount you wish to pay. **The recommended rate is \$75.00**, but you may choose an amount below that, down to a minimum of \$20.00. Higher dues payments help to allow some members to pay below the recommended amount but do not grant additional benefits. *Attach a check payable to the League of Women Voters of the United States.*

☐ \$75.00/year

☐ \$150.00/year

☐ \$250.00/year

☐ \$500.00/year

☐ Choose your own amount (minimum \$20.00): _____

The amount you choose to pay in dues will be split between your local, state, and national League. Would you like to make an additional donation exclusively to your local League?

☐ Yes ☐ No

Amount: _____

Pay by credit card or bank account online by clicking on the join/renew form on our website's [Join Page](#) or scanning this QR code:

To pay by check: fill out this form and mail to:

LWVYC, PO Box 723,
Yakima, WA 98907



ADDITIONAL FAMILY MEMBERS?

Do you have a household member wishing to join or renew LWV membership? Please complete an additional form and send in with additional dues, thank you!