

Revised Proposal Title: Speak Out for Equity (Action Effort)

Program Proposal: Evaluate the Effectiveness of Enhancing Equity Efforts by Thurston County Governments

Background

The League of Women Voters' consideration of diversity, equity, and inclusion has been increasing in recent years. **During the 2018 Convention in Chicago, the National League of Women Voters (LWVUS) held several workshops to introduce their new Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Policy: LWV is an organization fully committed to diversity, equity, and inclusion in principle and in practice.** Adoption of the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Policy at the 2019 LWVUS Council represents a watershed moment. Leagues nationwide were encouraged to assess what they could do to become more aware, welcoming, and supportive of people from marginalized groups.

General awareness of systemic racism and the harm causes by unfair treatment of peoples from historically underrepresented groups grew dramatically during the next year. As a reflection of this, during the LWVUS 2020 Convention an Emergency Resolution was adopted, which included the following:

„,That the League help our elected officials and all Americans recognize these truths to be self-evident; that Black, Indigenous and all people of color (BIPOC) deserve equal protection under the law; and that we demand solutions for the terrible wrongs done, so that regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, disability, and gender identity or sexual orientation we may truly become a nation "indivisible, with liberty and justice for all".

We understand that inequity exists in Thurston County. We also acknowledge that there appear to be governmental plans to improve this problem. We know that:

- One of the four Strategic Goals in the newly adopted Thurston Public Health and Social Services Plan it to enhance equity.
- The Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan includes Equity and Climate as one of the Vision, Goals, and Guiding Principles for the plan.
- The Thurston Community-Driven Review of Agriculture Policies and Programs will consider land use policies, non-regulator actions and economic development actions that can be framed as in support of farmers in general and farmers of color specifically due to past inequities.
- The City of Olympia has recently established a Social Justice & Equity Commission.

- In future years members can engage in the affordable housing planning done consistent with the recently enacted HB 1220 which calls for all cities and the county to plan for housing by income level. The income analysis, to be done by the Department of Commerce, includes a racial equity analysis.

Proposed Program

A number of League ad hoc committees and individual members have been participating in one way or another in the governmental equity efforts listed above. Many ideas have been put forth about ways to broaden government policies, programs, and practices to make them more equitable. This program will allow us to encourage best intentions and actual efforts to enhance equity in our county.

This action effort will involve examining new and emerging policies, programs, processes, and products of specific local governmental agencies in the context of a diversity, equity, and inclusion lens. It may also include identifying places where we can explore ways the community can repair past and current harms. This will enable the Thurston League to assess how new equity initiatives are perceived by various communities, voices, and perspectives. It will also allow us to speak out to encourage positive actions, as well as to point out barriers that may prevent plans from being equitable or inclusive of everyone.

Scope of Project

Building strong support among LWVTC members for observing, investigating, and evaluating the DEI and Justice aspects of evolving local government policy and programs. Initial focus will be on public physical and mental health, government support for affordable housing, and implementation of the Thurston Climate Mitigation Plan.

Impacting the local government process by reviewing progress and making recommendations for the programs, processes, and products being consider by local jurisdictions.

Informing the community about the actions LWVTC is taking during the two year program period, 2021-2023.

Considering the timing and political realities of the efforts being evaluated.

Using local news reports, government documents, meeting agenda, content of meetings over the course on the 2022 LWVTC membership year, we will provide a progress report to the next Annual Meeting. At that time, it will be possible for LWVTC to refine the scope of work or decide if the action effort should be viewed as background for a formal study.

Work Group Members

Jody Disney
Shelley Ferer
Carol Goss
Sandra Herndon
Darcy Huffman
Kat Ransom
Loretta Seppanen
Peggy Smith

Motion to Adopt: Evaluate the Effectiveness of Enhancing Equity Efforts by Thurston County Government (aka Speak Out for Equity).

