VOTERS' VOICE

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF THE ROGUE VALLEY

League of Women Voters of the Rogue Valley (LWVRV) Volume 91 Number 9 October 2026

LWVRV members will be hosted by Talent **Women in Action**

2nd Chance

Free Film Showing

American Troubles: A Tale of Two Democracies

Sunday, October 18th, at 4 PM
Talent Public Library

Join LWVRV members along with LWVRV Action Chair and LWVOR Vice President Barbara Klein for a film showing and discussion of Ranked Choice Voting.

Hear an interview on our local Jefferson Public Radio show addressing the film and proportional representation through Ranked Choice Voting: Documentary explores ranked choice voting in Oregon | Jefferson Public Radio.

Proportional Ranked Choice Voting
can transform our cities and communities

America's democracy feels more divided than ever - but what if the problem lies in how we vote? American Troubles explores whether proportional representation could break the cycle of dysfunction, drawing comparisons from two striking case studies: Portland, Oregon, where a bold new voting system is reshaping local politics, and Northern Ireland, where proportional elections helped end decades of violent conflict. Blending history, reform, and human stories, the film shows how electoral rules can entrench division - or create space for compromise.

Based on long-time studies and positions held by the LWVRV, **the League is advocating for Ranked Choice Voting to be used in the Rogue Valley.** This film addresses how it might work in our areas. After the screening there will be a Q&A period led by LWVRV members.

Voter Service Update

By Kathleen Donham, 541-772-5044

Vote411

Vote411, the League's online voter information system will go live in October if we can get candidates to participate. The following table gives a report about which candidates have answered the questions. If one of these candidates represents you, please email them or phone them with your request that they respond to the Vote411 request made to them.

https://airtable.com/apph1Yt5eQxGeXg4u/shr1GNrUxfwjCaHbS?PqEw0=allRecords

A pre-publication reminder went out Monday, September 28 to the candidates, and VOTE411 should go live next week. Two more "there is still time" reminders will go out Tuesdays, October 6 and October 13 to any non-responders.

Voters Guides

The state LWV printed Voter Guides will be shipped October 2. They will be mailed to my house in Medford. Typical distribution sites include branch libraries, YMCA, La Clinica, Rogue Community Health, and OLLI. Your local community centers may want a few copies. We have copies in Spanish as well. **Can you help deliver?** Call me at 541-772-5044.

Voters Assistance Team

I hope you will consider joining the Voters Assistance Team. Our aim is to provide voters with help filling out their ballot because of disability or access. The League has permission from County Clerk Chris Walker to team with a member *from a different political party* and assist voters. The following guidance from the Oregon Secretary of State is at https://sos.oregon.gov/elections/Documents/SEL620.pdf Help is needed in promoting this service to care facilities. Call 541-772-5044 to assist.

Voter Service Presentation for Josephine County

A discussion of the November 3, 2026 ballot measures in Josephine County along with state issues will be explained at the October meeting of the American Association of University Women at the Fruitdale Grange in Grants Pass **on Saturday, October 17 at 10 AM**. The LWV Rogue Valley welcomes League members familiar with the issues to join the discussion.

Oregon Mock Election for High Schoolers

Over 33,000 high school students participated in the Oregon 2024 Mock Election. Students learn to use authoritative resources and discuss issues in choosing candidates. If you know a social studies teacher who would like to partner with the League in conducting the Mock Election locally, please let me know. So far, North High School social studies teachers have been personally notified. If you would like to help promote the Mock Election at your nearest high school, contact me.

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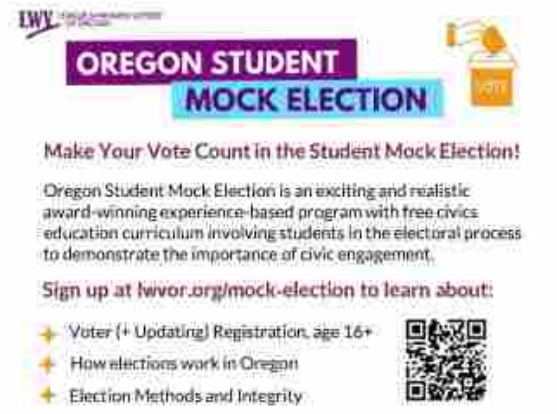

Constitution Day September 17, 2026

Thank you to all the League members who helped read the Constitution at the Medford Public Library and the Grants Pass Library. Jean Mount and new member Michelle Templar, Libby Watts, Dorothy Yetter and other Citizens for a Responsible Government (CRG) members were instrumental in making it a success.

Do not be dismayed by the brokenness of the world. All things break. And all things can be mended. Not with time, as they say, but with intention. So, go. Love intentionally, extravagantly, unconditionally. The broken world waits in darkness for the light that is you. – L. R. Knost

Congressional District 2 League Chapters: An association of Leagues in Eastern Oregon's CD2 have been frustrated in efforts to engage both candidates in public forums. To let the public know that it is not for lack of trying, we have sent the following letter to newspapers and campaign offices.

Sept 24, 2026

To the Editor:

The five League of Women Voters local Leagues within Oregon's Second Congressional District (CD2) have been working collaboratively on candidate forums for the seat currently held by Congressman Cliff Bentz. Offering forums reflects a key League mission to inform voters about their candidates. Our nonpartisan principle requires that we neither endorse nor oppose any candidate or political party.

Before the May CD2 primary, the five LWV local Leagues offered a nonpartisan, virtual candidates' forum and eight of the nine candidates responded and participated. Despite repeated attempts by writing, email and phone, Congressman Bentz never responded or acknowledged the LWV outreach. Voters chose Chris Beck in the primary as Representative Bentz's opponent.

In August, the CD2 Leagues again invited both Congressman Bentz and Mr. Beck to a virtual candidates' forum before the November election. Mr. Beck has agreed to participate, but Mr. Bentz did not respond or acknowledge our outreach, leaving us in a difficult position. A candidate League forum with only Mr. Beck appears to endorse his candidacy, violating our nonpartisanship policy.

So now we reset. The LWV invites both Chris Beck and Congressman Cliff Bentz to respond to the League's Vote411 candidate survey. Responses will be printed in the League's State Voter Guide, and posted on VOTE411.ORG, providing free candidate information to voters.

The door remains open for Rep. Bentz to respond to the League of Women Voters. Congressional Representative Bentz, we hope to hear from you.

Kathleen Donham,
League of Women Voters of the Rogue Valley
On behalf of the Leagues of Rogue and Umpqua Valleys and Deschutes, Klamath and Union Counties
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Membership Update – Welcome new members!

Michele Templar (Grants Pass)
Janet Sears (Central Point)
John Littleton (Medford)
Gretchen Ousterhout (Central Point)
Sarah Tozier (Ashland)

And thanks to all the many members who have renewed this summer.

Civics Learning Project

The Civics Learning Project has a new coordinator locally, Laura Latham. She will be leading school groups through the Courtroom Experience Tour in Jackson County. Please let us know if you would like to chaperone a future field trip in downtown Medford. Call 541-772-5044

Observer Reports

Ashland City Council Business Meeting
Tuesday, September 15th
By Anne Marie Avegno

During the Public Forum, two speakers addressed the Parks' Integrated Pest Management policy that allows pesticide treatment on pre-emergent spot areas with too little public engagement. Another speaker, involved in the 2200 Ashland Street Committee, gave the council a letter of interest for developing affordable housing at that site. John Maurer and several members of Save Our Ashland Community Hospital urged the council to set aside the entire four million dollars Asante Health Care Payment to establish an independent local health district.

The Public Hearing and First Reading of ORD No. 3311 (creating Chapter 4.10 of the AMC- Process for the Creation of New or Increased Fees on Utility Bills) was adopted. Measure 15-243 (amending city charter to require voter approval for utility fees) will be on the November 3rd ballot.

ORD No. 3307 and Resolutions 2026-25 and 2026-26 were approved by Council. This ordinance implements Oregon Housing Legislation (SB 974, HB 2138, HB 4037) and the two resolutions target adjustments to local development and construction costs; replaces the decades-old financial framework (Res 2006-09) and requires fewer public notices and fewer public hearings. Resolution 2026-28 updates Ashland's utility assistance program repealing the audit requirement. Most of Ashland's low-income households don't participate. Staff is committed to a more proactive outreach identifying those who would benefit and getting them signed up for the utility assistance program.

Under New Business, the Council Requested Chapter 18 Code Amendments, created pushbacks from two speakers who cautioned against speeding up code amendments without public input and putting rapid drafting over published procedures in Oregon's Land Use Law. The Chapter 18 Code Amendments was pushed forward by City Council Members Dahle and Sherrell with the intent to reduce the time and expense of creating housing in existing and future neighborhoods.

The council discussed the distribution of the 4 million dollars Asante payment in legal and ethical terms. Council member Bloom said they should follow the standard city financial management policies for unbudgeted revenues. Council members Kaplan and Hansen supported dedicating the full amount for health care as this was the original intent of our predecessors in the health care community. Jordan Rooklyn offered the recommended accounting practice that would not create a separate fund but would put the full amount in reserves committed to health care.

Medford City Council

By Sally Smith

Martha Bennett has been selected as Medford's next city manager. She was chosen from a list of 40 nationwide applicants and might be known to some Rogue Valley residents as she served as Ashland's city manager for five years. Most recently she was the city manager in Lake Oswego from 2019 to 2026. She has more than 25 years of experience in the public sector in Oregon. Her salary will range from $250,000 to $275,000 and she will take office on Nov. 30th. She is under the direction of the City Council and is responsible for the day-to-day administration of the city government.

The restriping of Main Street is scheduled to be completed by September 30th. It starts at the overpass on East Main and extends to Oakdale Ave. The changes will keep 2 one-way lanes of traffic, replace the bike lane on the south side of the road with 45-degree diagonal parking, and have an unbuffered bike lane on the north side of the road with parallel parking next to the sidewalk curb. The price tag for the restriping project is $1.25 million dollars.

LWVRV Coffee Chat

All members, join us for conversation and connections with our Grants Pass/Josephine County LWVRV members at the Black Forest Restaurant, 820 NE E St, Grants Pass, **Friday, November 6, 10:30.**

Call or text Jean Buck, 541-944-6271, to RSVP.

Two Ashland Candidate Forums in One Afternoon

By Regina Ayars

Sunday, October 11, Mountain Avenue Theatre, Ashland High School
201 S. Mountain Ave.

11:00-1:00 Ashland Parks & Recreation Commission

2:00-4:00 Ashland City Council

"I am no longer accepting the things I cannot change. I am changing the things I cannot accept."- Angela Davis

LWVRV Calendar

October	11	Ashland Candidate Forum, 11:00-12:00 & 2:00-4:00
	17	Ballot Measures Discussion, 10 AM, Fruitdale Grange, Grants Pass
	18	American Troubles movie, 4 PM, Talent Library
	27	Newsletter articles due
November	6	Coffee Chat, 10:30, Black Forest Restaurant, Grants Pass

If you need access to League materials or equipment, please contact the newsletter editor at newsletter@lwvrv.org.

- The League of Women Voters Rogue Valley welcomes submissions to our newsletter, *The Voters' Voice.* Editor Jim Buck can be reached at newsletter@lwvrv.org and 541-830-0602 (h), 541-227-4749 (c).
- LWVRV
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- If you must have a paper copy of this newsletter mailed to you, please call Jim at 541-830-0602 or email newsletter@lwvrv.org
- LWV members should also be receiving newsletters by email from State and National LWV.
- **To join LWVRV or renew your membership** online using check or debit card, or to request a membership application form to mail back to us, go to lwvrv.org/join-us
- **To donate to the Rogue Valley Chapter of LWV,**
  go to lwvrv.org/donate