

MUNI NEWS

VOLUME 91, ISSUE 3

Website: www.munileague.org

Fall 2001

The Strength of America: We Govern Ourselves.

By Tom Albro, League Chairman

One of the goals of the terrorist attacks of September 11th was to destabilize our Nation. Without a doubt we have suffered a previously unthinkable tragedy. So many lives lost...so many children without a parent... spouses without their mate....families without one they hold dear. A sadness pervades us all, unlike any this generation has known.

In spite of all of this we are not destabilized.

Experts believe that the terrorists were targeting the ultimate symbols of our democracy: the White House and the Capitol building. The idea seemed to be to reduce us by destroying the symbols of our economic and political power. But in fact, a great nation is not reduced by the destruction of its symbols, because power and greatness reside elsewhere.

Our economic power does not reside in a couple of buildings in New York. It flows from the ingenuity and hard work of Americans and the opportunities provided to each through our economic system, despite its shortcomings.

Too many peoples in the world must stake their stability and security on just a few leaders. Consider a country like Pakistan, a nuclear power with 140 million citizens. Policy makers fret about the consequences of one person, General Musharraf, being toppled from leadership. The effect could be catastrophic for Pakistan, the region, and possibly the world.

Our political strength does not rest solely on President Bush or on our other elected leaders in Washington DC. The political strength of our democracy springs from every corner of this Nation. From every citizen who holds freedom dear, from every voter who casts their ballot, from every elected leader – dog catcher to President, and from every group of citizens working to make it better.

A stable and strong America rests here, with you and me. What we do as members of the Municipal League is not insignificant. Indeed, it is fundamentally important because our strength as Americans is that we govern ourselves.

Candidate Evaluation Wrap up

By Putnam Barber, CEC Steering Committee Chair

A few weeks ago you received your copy of the 2001 *Candidate Evaluation Report*. It might look a lot like last year's report and the report from the year before that, but the look is about the only thing this year's report has in common with recent guides.

Planning for this year's candidate evaluation program (known to League supporters as CEC) began right at the end of last year's program, with a steering committee debriefing meeting in late September. Candidates, CEC volunteers and League Trustees helped by providing detailed feedback on what worked and what needed improvement. The debriefing identified several areas for attention: clarifying the meaning of the four evaluation criteria, streamlining the candidate questionnaire, recruiting a broader cross-section of volunteers, making better use of the League's web site and improving publicity around the ratings.

For the next nine months the CEC steering committee met regularly over pizza and beer to study, plan and prepare to make 2001 the most successful year in nine decades of candidate evaluation. We think we did it.

The numbers only begin to tell the story. Nearly 60 volunteers served on four committees to research and evaluate 141 candidates over three weeks in August.

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Contributors to this issue: Tom Albro, Putnam Barber, Lonnie Lusardo, Jocelyn Marchisio, Tom Page & George Scott

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Representing urban to rural King County, volunteers ranging in age from 22 to 78 years old went through hours of training and preparation before they began researching and interviewing candidates.

Candidate participation was very high. In earlier election cycles as many as a quarter of the candidates have declined to take part in the League's evaluation program; this year over 86% of the candidates worked with us to provide voters with the only non-partisan ratings in King County.

The evaluation process combines community service with a great learning experience for the volunteers. The result of their hard work has to reach the voters, though, if it's going to matter. 2000 was a low point for the League when only two newspaper articles appeared when the ratings were released. Thanks to great work by Teresa Moore, the League's media relations consultant, 2001 saw at many articles, op-ed pieces and letters to the editor appear papers throughout King County. (See sidebar). In addition, several radio stations mentioned the ratings in news coverage. Thousands of voters picked up copies of the printed report at local libraries and government offices. More thousands have visited the League's web site to see the ratings, read the candidates' questionnaires, and take advantage of easy-to-use research links to educate themselves before casting a ballot. (See <http://www.munileague.org/cec/>)

Again this year, the CEC Steering Committee will assess the successes and look for ways the Municipal League's evaluation of candidates can be improved before the legislative races that will occupy our attention during the next election cycle. If you have comments, suggestions or ideas, please call the office or (better) send them as email to <mailto:muni@munileague.org> right away – before they slip your mind and before the Committee gets too far along in its review. And if you would like to be involved in the CEC planning process, or be work on the evaluations next year, let us know of your interest as soon as you can.

For more than 90 years, the Municipal League has been providing non-partisan ratings of candidates to voters. Other organizations' ratings reflect partisan strategies or are based on special-interest criteria. By focusing solely on identifying candidates who show promise of being effective leaders and representatives for the people of King County, the League performs a unique public service. Without the active support of the CEC volunteers it wouldn't happen.

When you pick up your Muni League Candidate Evaluation Report before casting your ballot in the election this Fall, please give a silent "thank you" to the hard working people who contributed to this vital resource for responsible elected governments throughout the county.



Media Campaign Puts Candidate Ratings in Public Forefront

By Lonnie Lusardo

With the help of the League's Media Consultant, Teresa Moore of Moore Ink, the Muni League's candidate ratings received widespread coverage in virtually all major print media in King County. The hard work of this year's CEC volunteers garnered far more attention than in recent years, primarily through a concerted effort by board members to impress upon editors the importance of voters making informed choices at the polls; Board Chair Tom Albro, and many board members helped craft op-ed pieces and attracted the interest of editorial boards at the Seattle Times, Post-Intelligencer, Eastside Journal, Mercer Island Reporter, and other outlets.

Information on the candidate ratings, including complete lists of all Municipal League ratings appeared in both the Seattle Times and P-I; local community newspapers also published ratings of candidates in their specific circulation areas. Municipal League ratings have been publicized in at least 18 different articles, op-eds and letters to the editor appearing in 10 different newspapers. You can read many of these articles, including thoughtful criticism of the CEC process at the League's web site by clicking on the links at <http://www.munileague.org/cec>.

Maintaining the Media Momentum

In addition to requesting funds to hire a media consultant this year, the League's Communications Committee has been working arduously to stimulate and strengthen the League's public image through media outreach, development of a soon-to-be-released brochure, and the redesign of the League's corporate identity. The Committee will continue its focus on implementing a media plan outlined earlier this year.

The flame, used as a principle design element in the League's logo for as least 50 years, is undergoing a facelift by Seattle graphic designer Randi Coffman. The revitalized logo, expected to be launched before Election Day, will include the flame image, minus the circular lettering. The flame has come to symbolize a "passing of the torch" as well as a sense of upholding liberty and justice in the community.

Muni News Editor Wanted

The Municipal League is seeking a volunteer editor to coordinate publication of the newsletter. The newsletter editor works with the Communications Committee to solicit and write articles, edit copy and works with the designer on the layout of the newsletter.

The committee meets monthly. It is currently finalizing a new logo for the Municipal League, and a redesigned format for the newsletter. The new logo and format will be launched with the next issue.

For more information, call Tom Page at 206-622-8333 or Lonnie Lusardo, Communications Chair, at 206-325-4595.

VOTE “NO” ON INITIATIVE 747

Measure would hit vital services

Initiative 747 is a tax limiting measure sponsored by Permanent Offense, the organization founded by Tim Eyman. It would limit property tax increases to one percent per year, unless a larger increase is approved by the voters in an election. Currently, state law allows taxing districts to increase property taxes up to six percent per year with the approval of their elected commissioners. A limit of one percent would not allow local governments and local taxing districts to even keep up with inflation. Last year the consumer price index rose 3.7% to 4% in the Puget Sound region. If I-747 becomes law, local governments and local taxing districts will be forced to hold elections much more frequently at an additional expense to taxpayers.

Initiative 747 would cause a huge cut in essential government services. Costs go up primarily because there are more citizens to serve, services cost more due to cost of living increases, and because citizens may request new or different services. Any limitation that is lower than inflation will force our elected officials to reduce or eliminate essential services over the next six years. The largest fiscal impacts would be on cities and counties; Communities whose tax base is primarily residential will feel an especially great impact.

This disregards the fact that as one of the few states without an income tax, Washington jurisdictions are limited in their choices for funding essential services.

The Municipal League opposes this initiative for the following reasons:

- According to the Washington State Department of Revenue, I-747 would result in losses of over \$1.4 billion to local governments and special taxing districts, such as libraries, hospital districts, fire districts, ports and even medical services, by 2007. In addition over \$400,000,000 will be lost to the state.
- According to the Bureau of the Census, state and local property taxes are a bit above average – per capita property taxes were \$930 in 1997, compared with the national average of \$817. And Washington is one of a small handful of states that do not have a state income tax.
- In King County 37% of the taxing districts took the maximum 6% in 2000. Of these 28 districts, 18 are fire districts. In the state 60% of the cities took the full 6% increase in 2000. Seattle, however, increased its property tax by 4% rather than the maximum.
- The present “limit factor” of 6% gives jurisdictions the flexibility they need. To reach this limit a super majority vote of the legislative body is needed.

Calendar of Events

THURSDAY OCTOBER 18 12-1:30 P.M.
I-747 DEBATE: PROPERTY TAX REFORM
AT WASHINGTON ATHLETIC CLUB
1325 SIXTH AVE, SEATTLE
CALL 206-682-7395 FOR RESERVATIONS

FRIDAY NOVEMBER 2 12-1:30 P.M.
SEATTLE MAYORAL CANDIDATE DEBATE
AT WASHINGTON ATHLETIC CLUB
1325 SIXTH AVE, SEATTLE
CALL 206-682-7395 FOR RESERVATIONS

THURSDAY OCTOBER 25 12-1:30 P.M.
KING COUNTY EXECUTIVE CANDIDATE DEBATE
AT HOTEL MONACO
4TH AVENUE & SPRING STREET, SEATTLE
CALL 206-682-7395 FOR RESERVATIONS

**NOVEMBER 6: ELECTION DAY
REMEMBER TO VOTE!**

MONDAY OCTOBER 29 7:00-8:30 P.M.
MEDINA CANDIDATE FORUM
AT ST. THOMAS SCHOOL
8300 NE 12TH STREET IN MEDINA
CALL 206-622-8333 FOR DETAILS

**NOVEMBER 6 7:30 – 11:30 PM
ELECTION WATCH PARTY**
AT TOWN HALL, 1119 EIGHTH AVENUE
ADMISSION: \$5 MEMBERS, \$10 GENERAL PUBLIC
CALL 206-622-8333 FOR RESERVATIONS

2002 Board Nominations Announced

Board elections are coming up in November. League members will receive a ballot in the mail by the end of October to vote for representatives to the 2002 board of trustees.

The Nominations Committee reviewed the names of 83 potential candidates and is pleased to put forward the following slate of nominees for your consideration:

Rita Brogan, Vashon resident, CEO of Pacific Rim Resources; former METRO Superintendent of Public Transportation Development; member Transportation Research Board; pro bono consultant to Asian Leadership Institute; former board member Leadership Tomorrow Alumni Association.

Keven Franklin – Seattle resident; Affirmative Action Coordinator for King County; active Muni League volunteer currently serving on Candidate Evaluation steering committee and as 2001 Central Committee vice-chair; former chair, Associated Recreation Council, City of Seattle Parks Department; former board member Central Area Motivation Program.

Rowan Hinds – Issaquah resident; Mayor of Issaquah, 1990-97; member Issaquah Chamber of Commerce, Kiwanis Club of Issaquah; former member Issaquah City Council, Association of Washington Cities, Suburban Cities Association, Washington Forest Council, Eastside Transportation partnership.

Tami Landurg – Shoreline resident; NW Regional Sales Manager, Kaplan Companies; active Muni League volunteer serving on three years as on Candidate Evaluation committees including 2001 North Committee vice-chair; member Children's Alliance, WA & OR Association for the Education of Young Children, Association of the United States Army.

Steve Marshall – Mercer Island resident, attorney with Perkins Coie LLP in Bellevue; Discovery Institute, board member; Counsel to Eastside Business Alliance; U.S. District Court Mediator; King County Superior Court Arbitrator; former member King County Charter Review Board, Friends of Youth.

Joe Quintana – Seattle resident; president Quintana Consulting; board member Association of Washington Business, Leadership Tomorrow, Alki Foundation, Greater Seattle Chamber of Commerce; member Seattle Community Development Roundtable, Washington State

Hispanic Chamber of Commerce, and the World Affairs Council.

Bob Roberts – Renton resident; President Emeritus of Renton Technical College; former member Economic and Development Council of Seattle and King County, Seattle-King County Workforce Development Council; Seattle-King County Private Industry Council; author of numerous articles and studies for local and state government and the Educational Research Information Center.

Harold Taniguchi, Kent resident; Deputy Director, King County Department of Transportation; board member Nikkei Concerns, NW Asian American Theatre.

Mike Wensman – Mercer Island resident, business owner; former 41st District Representative, committees included Appropriations and Education, served as Republican Caucus chair; former Mercer Island City Councilmember; retired U.S. Coast Coast Guard.

League Committees at Work:

League Committees are meeting regularly. The committees are a terrific way to play an active role in *your* Municipal League, while learning about the inner workings of local government.

To participate, contact the League office at (206) 622-8333, or e-mail muni@munileague.org for meeting times and locations. Updated meeting information in the "Upcoming Events" section at www.munileague.org/events.htm.

Seattle Governance: The committee is continuing with its in-depth study of Seattle City Light. The next meetings will be October 10th and 24th at 12:30 p.m. in the law offices of Davis Wright Tremaine on the 26th Floor of the Century Square Building, 1504 4th Avenue. *Chair: Jim Greenfield*

Ballot Issues Committee: Here's your chance to study ballot measures in detail, to directly question their sponsors and opponents. Call committee chair Jocelyn Marchisio at 425-746-3612 for details.

Communications Committee: This active committee works to get the word out about the League. Anyone with an interest in writing and research is invited to attend. Next meeting is on October 17th at 8am. Call 206-622-8333 for location. *Chair: Lonnie Lusardo*