

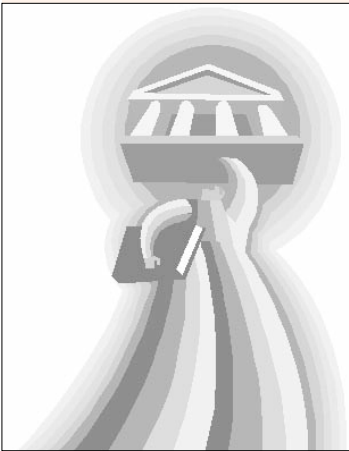


CIVIC ACTIVISM DEFINES OUR REGION'S HISTORY

Walt Crowley, *HistoryLink*

INSIDE:

From the League Chair
Calendar of Events
Growing the League



the
Retrospective
issue

Simple survival demanded cooperation among the members of the original Denny Party, who landed at Alki Beach on the cold, drizzly morning of November 13, 1851. Something more profound may have motivated Chief Seattle and members of the Duwamish and Suquamish Tribes, who fed and aided these strange newcomers through their first winter on Puget Sound. Credit them for running Seattle's first "food bank."

Over the next several decades, women would organize the city's first public schools, a lending library, new churches, and early social agencies. The Sisters of Providence arrived in the 1870s to take over King County's "poor farm" and went on to found its first modern hospital. Women also played major roles in political movements for labor rights, prohibition, and, not coincidentally, woman's suffrage.

By the dawn of the 20th century, Seattle was the largest city in the Pacific Northwest. Local politics already had a definite progressive slant, as reformers fought monopolies, corruption, and special interests and promoted civic enterprises such as the Olmsted park plan and public ownership of rail transit. Inspired by former President Teddy Roosevelt, these activists made a common cause in 1910 by reviving Seattle's Municipal League (which had faded after being founded in 1894). Two of the Muni League's immediate priorities were to lead the recall of Mayor Hiram Gill and propose the creation of the Port of Seattle. That same year, the women of Washington secured the right to vote, a decade ahead of the rest of the nation. Two years later, Washington established the powers of citizen initiatives, referenda, and recall elections.

The Great Depression revived movements for political and economic change on both the right and left, and the Muni League was in the thick of the fight. Some of its members, notably future Seattle Mayor and Washington Governor Arthur Langlie, even championed a slate of city candidates under the banner of the "Order of Cincinnatus." Meanwhile, citizen volunteers responded to the social crisis through charities, churches, and pro-bono agencies such as the YMCA, YWCA, and Children's Hospital.

World War II demanded a new level of civic unity and public sacrifice, but it also inspired paranoia as Seattle's large Japanese American community was interned with few public protests. The influx of thousands of new African American defense workers would change our demographics forever.

Postwar prosperity fueled a new public agenda focused on controlling suburban sprawl and raising the quality of urban culture. James Ellis and other Muni League leaders championed creation of Metro to control pollution and foster regional planning, Allied Arts promoted public improvements and arts development, and groups such as the Urban League

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Walt Crowley served as policy director of the Muni League in the mid-1980s and now directs www.HistoryLink.org, the online encyclopedia of local and state history in Washington.

REFLECTIONS FROM THE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE CHAIR

Putnam Barber

In a few weeks, I will complete my term as Chair of the League. I want again to thank the hundreds of volunteers and supporters who have carried on the important work of the Municipal League during 2004, and built toward a strong program for 2005.

Their work helped the League fulfill its mission in enduring ways this year:

- David Horsey, the P-I's prize-winning cartoonist, reminded us of the foibles of the political scene in his talk at the Civic Awards.
- Candidate Evaluation volunteers reviewed, interviewed, and rated candidates for our annual Voters' Guide. For the first time in recent memory, the League rated candidates for the Washington Supreme Court.
- New this year, Safeway stores distributed the Voters' Guide along with King County and Seattle libraries. Newspapers used the ratings in their election coverage to give voters information about which candidates showed strong promise of serving our communities well.
- The League's Issues Committee investigated and developed positions on issues facing the city, county, and state, including the monorail recall, the "top two" primary, and the size of the County Council.
- The League has broadened its audience with a new monthly program on King County's public access channel.
- Rachel Jackson brought welcome stability to correspondence and record-keeping.
- Looking ahead, a group of Trustees developed a strategic plan for the League as it moves toward its centennial of service.

You can help the League continue this great work in 2005: Consider joining one of the League's committees. When your renewal letter arrives, respond quickly and generously. Ask a colleague to join the League. Most importantly, share your enthusiasm for the great work that this organization accomplishes.



THE MUNICIPAL LEAGUE
BOARD OF TRUSTEES
THANKS PUTNAM BARBER
FOR HIS OUTSTANDING
WORK AS LEAGUE CHAIR.
CONGRATULATIONS, PUT!

Do you have a story idea for a future edition of **muni**news? Want to comment on an article you read in this issue? Send your comments and suggestions to muni@munileague.org.

HISTORY OF ACTIVISM

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and NAACP fought for civil rights and inner city programs. Building on the success of the citizen-led 1962 World's Fair, many groups rallied under the banner of Forward Thrust in 1968 to campaign for a diverse menu of civic projects, but the main course of rail transit was sent back to the kitchen by taxpayers.

The turmoil of the 1960s and early 1970s changed the character of activism in greater Seattle. "Liberated" by new laws and attitudes, many women entered the work force, shrinking the numbers of volunteers and memberships of groups such as the League of Women Voters. The left-liberal activist agenda fragmented as citizens focused on narrower issues such as environmental quality, neighborhood empowerment, and minority rights. At the same time, reforms in state and local government expanded official opportunities for citizen participation in policy decisions.

Conservatives took a page from the progressive playbook in the 1980s and 1990s by organizing their own grassroots movements around social and political issues. Expanding use of paid signature gatherers gave right-wing "populists" new clout through initiatives to limit government and cut taxes.

As a result, the 21st century has dawned over a political stalemate in which activists on both sides of the political trenches battle for control of the state and local agenda.

Regardless of ideology, it seems that everyone is an activist now—just as our community's founders were a century and a half ago.

MUNICIPAL CALENDAR

december

MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS
www.munileague.org

january

CANDIDATE EVALUATION
COMMITTEE RECRUITMENT

A TALK WITH SEATTLE CITY
LIGHT SUPERINTENDENT
JORGE CARRASCO
1501 4th Avenue, Seattle
26th Floor Conference Room
January 14 at 12 p.m.

stay tuned for...

REGIONAL GOVERNANCE
PROJECT PUBLIC FORUM

If you would like to list a civic event in the calendar, please send the event details to cirkovich@comcast.net with the subject "ML Calendar."

JOIN A LEAGUE COMMITTEE

Don't just read about the Muni League in the newspaper; join a League Committee and become part of the action. Work on one of the League's six committees is interesting, thought-provoking, and rewarding.

The Municipal League has six working committees that are the heart and soul of the League's work:

Candidate Evaluation: Oversees the candidate evaluation program, maintaining its integrity and respectability.

Issues Management: Coordinates all Muni League issues work, including studies, advocacy, and ballot issues.

Communications: Keep League members, public officials, media, and the general public informed about League activities.

Programs and Events: Plan and execute programs that further the League's mission, including Civic Awards.

Development/Membership: Recruit potential members and nurture the League's growth.

Operations: Oversee the League's administration and operations.

Be a part of King County's oldest and most well-respected candidate rating system. Decide which public officials deserve to be rewarded for their work. Hear about the issues facing our region directly from the decision-makers themselves. Stop reading about what is going on in your community, and start talking about it with other civic-minded people.

STRATEGIC PLAN HELPS GUIDE LEAGUE'S GROWTH

Rita Brogan

One of the Board's major undertakings this year has been the development of a two-year strategic plan. Although the Municipal League has been active for almost a century, the last economic recession hit us hard, and we have had to work hard to rebuild our visibility and credibility.

The new Strategic Plan marks a commitment by the Board to systematically expand its outreach to Municipal League members and to the community at large. A copy of the plan is posted at www.munileague.org.

In addition to making some changes in committee structure and formalizing organizational responsibilities of Board members, the 2005-2006 Strategic Plan sets forth an agenda of activities that includes more events, more dialogue on issues and increased participation by Municipal League members in shaping the positions taken by the League. The Plan also encourages more of its activities to occur throughout King County.

We can use your help to achieve these initiatives. Each Municipal League Committee will be welcoming volunteers from among our all our membership. If you have an interest in helping with issues, communications, special events, fundraising, or membership recruitment, just log on to www.munileague.org or call the League offices at (206) 622-8333.

We need your help to achieve our vision of: Empowered Citizens. Informed Choices.

Rita Brogan
Mark Troxel
Beth Arman
Harold Taniguchi
Lucy Steers
Todd Slind
Stephanie Cirkovich
Vaughnetta J. Barton
Chris Cooper
Sandra Driscoll

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VICE-CHAIR
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COMMUNICATIONS
PROGRAMS AND EVENTS
DEVELOPMENT/MEMBERSHIP
OPERATIONS

2005 OFFICERS & COMMITTEE CHAIRS

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MUNI LEAGUE FORUM HIGHLIGHTS PORT OF SEATTLE

This month on the Muni League Forum, Rita Brogan discusses the changing roles of the Port of Seattle in the global economy. The Forum's guests will be Port Commissioner Paige Miller and former Port Executive Director and Washington State Transportation Commission member Dick Ford.

The *Muni League Forum* can be seen on Channel 22 throughout most areas of King County and on Channel 72 or 80 in Downtown Seattle and lower Queen Anne Hill. The show can also be accessed via the League website, www.munileague.org, or at www.metrokc.gov/ctv.

ABOUT OUR ORGANIZATION...

Muni News is published by the Municipal League Foundation, a 501 (c)3 nonprofit organization that works in conjunction with the Municipal League of King County to provide King County voters and citizens with the resources they need to make informed decisions about civic issues.

The Municipal League is nonpartisan and welcomes all points of view. If you have any question or would like information on joining the Municipal League, call 206-622-8333 or send an e-mail to muni@munileague.org.