



WATCHDOG

Weber County League of Women Voters

January 2022



Critical Race Theory

By Terri McCulloch

To quote the Washington Post, “Critical race theory is an academic framework centered on the idea that racism is systemic, and not just demonstrated by individual people with prejudices. The theory holds that racial inequality is woven into legal systems and negatively affects people of color in their schools, doctors’ offices, the criminal justice system and countless other parts of life.” This topic is a difficult one to fully understand. It rebuffs the common believe that racism to

any group of people is brought about by the beliefs and prejudices present in individual people. Critical race theory states that racism is actually part of all areas of society and is promoted by practices present in justice, education, and so on.

It is stated that the civil rights movement has incorporated civil rights laws and court rulings based on these laws, but that this has not addressed the issue or racism or improved it. In an attempt to force people to pay attention to race to determine if equality is present, it has often resulted in the opposite effect.

The critical race theory moves from looking at racist motives, bias, and prejudice to focusing on how racial inequality is embedded in the normal structures in our society. It moves away from looking at individual cases and goes

towards the root cause of why racism is present.

Instead of identifying a person or persons who are racist, critical race theory involves digging deeper into content to see what racism is involved. For example, textbooks in school might need to be looked at and not always have an uneducated thief be black or a gang member be Latino. Women are not always at home mothers. It is believed that education should look at how history is taught to be sure that there are no “facts” given that represent stereotyping or categorizing specific races.

Opponents to the critical race theory believe it promotes division of people and is also racist to be looking at structures to find the racist material present. Many states and education systems have banned the teaching of the critical race theory. The ACLU believes these bans is an effort to erase the actual

discrimination that was present in history and provide an unrealistic history of events.

The Utah State Board of Education has banned using class material indicating that any race is superior to another and that the morality of people is determined by their race. For example, blaming white students today for slavery in the past.

Will the history of the United States become much different than it really was from this? The fact that events happened in the past might not be presented as they actually were? Are we placing too much emphasis on making everyone take no blame for anything? These are topics that are still being addressed.

Please join us on [January 10, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. at Weber County Library \(2464 Jefferson\)](#) to hear Adrienne Andrews, chief diversity officer at WSU, talk about this topic and answer questions.

Daffodil Planting

By Terri McCullough



The Gun Violence Prevention Center of Utah in partnership with the League of Women Voters sponsored their annual daffodil planting event in Ogden this year. This is the first time this event has been done outside of Salt Lake City. The beautiful Botanical Gardens was chosen as the location of the bulb planting. The Weber League helped with getting speakers Superintendent Luke Rasmussen and Police Chief Eric Young to speak briefly on the timely topic. Chief Young indicated that Ogden is one of the few cities of Utah that hasn't seen a huge spike in crime, which is a tribute to our police and citizens. Superintendent Rasmussen spoke of the many efforts that Ogden District has done to make Ogden schools safe, and the success rate is very high.

Utah is the second state in the nation for suicides involving firearms. About 75% of these suicides involve a gun found in an open environment – usually in the home.

The daffodil planting involves planting one bulb for every victim of gun violence in Utah for the previous year – 2020. There were 429 bulbs planted by community members and city officials. The display will bring about memories of the individuals affected by gun violence in our state when they bloom. It should be beautiful and a real tribute to the efforts of the Gun Violence Prevention Center. Take the time to visit in the Spring and reflect on these individuals.

Municipal Debates

By Terri McCullough



The Weber League took on a challenge this year and found it to be very effective. Each incorporated city within Weber County was approached about having a debate for council and/or mayoral elections. The Weber League was able to host seven debates: Ogden, South Ogden, Washington Terrace, Roy, West Haven, Farr West, and North Ogden. The turnout went from small to large for races happening during a municipal election year. The fact that many of the smaller cities really didn't know what a debate was or how to do one was quite a discovery. What that indicates is that the citizens of those cities have not been given an opportunity to hear candidates in a formal setting and have questions asked that affect the whole community. Tim Vandenaek, a reporter for the Standard who

is very supportive of community education events, helped to publicize the events and they were live streamed on Facebook for citizens to view. The comments made from the public and the candidates were extremely positive and the events worthwhile. The biggest learning point of these activities came from the fact that we as a League owe it to the communities we are a part of to provide these types of activities to encourage people to learn and vote intelligently. This tradition will be one we will continue. Hopefully, we can get all 13 cities next election.

OWTC

By Marcia Harris



Ogden Weber Tech College is now celebrating its 50th year. With just under 6,000 students, the college offers five categories of study for its adult students: business and computer tech, construction, health, manufacturing, and

service. These studies provide students quality credentials to meet the needs of future employers. This year 945 certificates were completed. Current graduates have a 93% job placement rate.

About 4% of those enrolled are completing their high school studies and earning credits toward college. They are primarily from Ogden with 31.9% represented by Latinx, which is one of the largest percentages in the State at technical schools. There is a 35% minority student population, and 28% of this is Latinx. This population has a student poverty rate of 17%, which is the third highest. High-school students can earn up to 30 credit hours at Weber State University, Utah State University and Ensign College for free at the ATC. For the past five years, the Latinx high school students completion rates at OWTC have been higher than any other student group.

Through state and federal funding and grants received, the College is able to offer free tuition opportunities to new, current, and returning OWTC students. This means, remarkably, that students graduate with no debt!

Foster Care and Volunteer Opportunity

By Maegan Johnson



Every year 250,000 kids are placed into foster care in the United States and it is probably not news to anyone that this can be extremely challenging for these children. There are currently about 424,000 total in foster care in our country with the average age being 6.5 years old. The challenge for these children is only magnified during the holidays and continues to get worse due to the pandemic. Unfortunately, these children usually believe – especially during holidays - that they do not feel like they have a home or a family, they face isolation and may even feel like they are “bad” because they do not get birthday presents or receive gifts from Santa Claus.

Making children feel included, valued, important, and so much more can be a surmounting struggle for the people in their lives. Social

workers, CPS case workers, volunteers and everyone who touches their lives do the best that they can to ensure these children get the care that they deserve.

So, how can we help? We can volunteer our time to our local Christmas Box House, who ensures these kids get gifts and clothes during the holiday season in a way that does not make them feel embarrassed. People can provide respite care and mentor children who are in foster care. Another way to help is to assemble gift boxes with things that help a child feel that they are “normal” and have the same things other children have. We can donate gift boxes to our local workers in the field to distribute and donate funds and gifts to the children and the programs that support them. Becoming a tutor to help students stay caught up in educational schools is another great thing to do. Go to Utahfostercare.org to see the many things that you can do to help children in our state that through no choice of their own have ended up in this situation

2021 “Get Out the Vote Day

of Service”- A Lesson in Voter Apathy

By Karen Thurber

Voterise and the Weber LWV conducted its second, annual “Get-Out-the-Vote Day of Service” beginning with a kickoff on October 9th, a week prior to the release of mail ballots. It was a cold and rainy day, which dampened volunteer participation. In fact, only 15 of the selected 19 precincts were covered by about 40 volunteers. The brightest aspect was the participation of 15 high school students from Weber State’s Upward Bound program who covered four, inner-city precincts. Approximately 5,000 door hangers were distributed in precincts with 2017 turnout (the last county-wide municipal elections) of less than 28 percent. Additionally, during September, more than 3,000 additional fliers were handed out at the Ogden Farmer’s Market and other events.

The doorhangers and fliers emphasized the importance of voting in local elections, including the responsibilities held by mayors and city council members and how

their decisions impact our lives. There were elections in every municipality in Weber County. Information about how to vote, where to vote, and how to register to vote were also included. All of the doorhangers were printed in English and Spanish.

So, what did we learn? As is being experienced nationally, voter nonparticipation is widespread. During our 2020 “doorhanger” project – albeit during a presidential election – we affected an average 11 percent increase in voter turnout in the 17 precincts targeted due to poor voter turnout in 2016. This year, we saw a DECREASE in voter turnout in the targeted 15 precincts by an average of -4.51 percent. Some precincts – with traditionally very low turnout – lost as much as 9.65 percent. In fact, only one precinct saw an increase in turnout.

Furthermore, these are areas where voter registration is generally under 50 percent of eligible voters. Over the past several years, while registering voters at events such as the Ogden Farmers’ Market, we found that young adults, in particular, are disinterested in registering to vote as they feel that politicians are, generally, corrupt and voting just doesn’t count. These findings are

consistent throughout the country. Even New York City, with generally high levels of voter registration, had a voter turnout of only 23 percent in its recent, highly publicized, mayoral election.

According to Project 531, apathy isn’t the only reason young adults aren’t interested in voting.

“According to our new survey with Ipsos of more than 8,000 Americans, people between 18 and 34 are less likely to have faith in our political system. But when we asked why they hadn’t voted in the past, we found that younger people weren’t more likely than older people to say they didn’t vote because they think the system is too broken to be fixed by voting, or because all the candidates are the same, or because they don’t believe in voting.”

What can be done? According to FairVote.com, there are four policy initiatives that can work to increase voter participation: 1) Fair Representation Voting (nearly impossible where gerrymandering exists), 2) A National Popular Vote, 3) Rank Choice Voting (used in the NYC Mayoral race, but largely misunderstood), and, 4) Universal Voter Registration.

Voterise is now re-focusing its attention on young voters, working to have a presence on college campuses, at high schools, and places where young people gather. Voter registration will also be paired with voter education to a greater degree. The LWV can help these efforts by using its considerable clout and volunteer resources to encourage greater voter participation. To get involved, contact Karen Thurber mensch1760@earthlink.net or 801-721-1926

Utah’s adventure in redistricting- The Voters’ wishes mostly ignored.

By Susan Skordos



Voters in 2018 passed Proposition 4, which was

introduced by the Better Boundaries group in Utah. The ultimate goal was to prevent gerrymandering, or the process of drawing geographical voting districts in order to favor specific political parties or incumbents. The general election in 2020 used voting districts based on the Census of 2010, but with population changes indicated by the Census of 2020, voting districts needed to be redrawn. Voters' passage of Proposition 4, meant that an independent commission must be appointed with the task of redrawing political boundaries to reflect population changes as well as political interests and views of the voters in the areas.

The U.S. Constitution provides that each state must have two senators, regardless of population; the total of voting seats in the House of Representatives is capped at 435. Each state is guaranteed at least one representative with the remaining 385 seats left to be assigned based on population of each state. A state may lose a representative, gain one, or stay the same, based on the Census.

The commission members were chosen February 1, 2021. Gov. Spencer Cox appointed Rex Facer, an associate professor of public

management at BYU, to act as chairman of the new commission. Other members appointed were: Former congressional representative (District 1), Rob Bishop, former Utah state senator, District 25, Lyle Hillard, N. Jeffery Baker, a geographical information specialist, former state senator, Pat Jones (District 4), former Utah Supreme Court justice, Christine Durham and former appellate judge, William Thorne.

The new commission was had multiple public meetings throughout the state. Residents were invited to create voting district maps that reflected the views of voters in specific areas. Based on one person, one vote, voting districts should ideally be drawn to include as close in equality, such as race, cultural values, and/or language as possible.

Legislative representatives also held public meetings to discuss their roles in determining how voting districts were to be drawn. The Utah Constitution states that the Legislature has the authority as to the final boundaries.

Software was used to aid in the district map-making. Esri GIS (Geographic Information System) is compared to

Microsoft in regular computer software. It is among the best mapping and spatial analytic technologies available. It was available to voters interested in creating their own maps.

The Independent Redistricting Commission presented 12 maps that included Congress, the House of Representatives and the Senate, as well as the state school boards, to the Legislature on November 1, 2021. The maps had been highly controversial. Former congressman, Rob

Bishop, had resigned from the commission in October, believing the maps didn't offer enough consideration for rural districts.

The maps were largely ignored by the Legislature. Instead, legislators redrew and approved their own maps within a week. They divided Salt Lake City, Sugarhouse, East Mill Creek and Holladay, which were mostly Democratic, into four separate districts that would favor more Republicans. The Senate voted 21-7 to approve the congressional district boundaries. The other maps that set boundaries for the State house and Senate districts were also approved. There was actually more bipartisan approval for those.

District 1 now includes much of northern Utah, also including part of Salt Lake City. District 2 seems to be the largest district geographically, taking in a portion of northern Utah, plus much of western Utah. District 3 includes much of eastern Utah, down to southern Utah, while District 4, one of the smallest districts geographically, is the most populous with Salt Lake and much of Utah County. It appears the Legislature has nearly guaranteed that the Republican party, along with some incumbents, will be able to stay in power.

Those in disagreement with the Legislature's action, claim the fight isn't over. The Better Boundaries group has created a new political action committee with a focus on lawmakers who voted for the maps. Additionally, the Utah League of Women Voters has also vowed to continue support for an Independent Redistricting Commission, in order to create fair district maps.

Ogden School District establishes an Advisory

Council on Equity

By Arlene Anderson

The District and Community Advisory Council on Equity, or DCACE is made up of community partners and Ogden School District staff to collectively provide input through a diverse perspective to ensure *all* our students feel safe, have a sense of belonging, and have equitable opportunities to succeed through a diverse lens and align with the mission of Ogden School District.

In 2021, the Utah State Board of Education developed the following resolution, [Resolution No. 2021-01 Denouncing Racism and Embracing Equity](#)

In summary, “All of our policies, programs, and activities shall promote unity and civility among diverse groups. The Utah State Board of Education commits to identify and examine issues of race, ethnicity, and color and the effect they have on the education system and community and to understand and correct any inequities; and recognizes that the starting point of this work of racial equity must be a reflection and internal

examination, whereby the Board will look for ways to engage our members in open and courageous conversations on racism and inequity.”

This group has been meeting for a few months, working on focused goals that will support [Nexus Elevated](#). This group will also be a channel to improve communicating information with our community related to outreach for parent resources and school district programs. This committee has reviewed school data and from this information will work on three goals this upcoming year. This is just the beginning of DCACE.

Members Corner

*Weber County
League of Women
members... "the new
normal!"*



Becky Jo Gesteland- *I will carry a mask in my car, my purse, my backpack, my suitcase, etc.*

Susan Kilborn- *My new, actually old, normal is consistently fighting for equality and parity in our communities. Peace.*

Jenica Wilcox- *The ability for a businesswoman to work from home without the stigma of laziness or inattention that used to come with such a request.*

Shanna Francis- *My new normal is an entire shift in what normal life looks like in America, and abroad, with a permanent loss of innocence and the comfortable, blessed*

way things were for the first 63 years of my life.

Carole Lapine- *I will most definitely wear a mask in all public places where I don't know those around me. I will not knowingly socialize with those who are not. Our lives have changed and I will follow my own guidelines as well as CDC guidelines. It is such a shame that a disease has become so political that we must resort to such measures.*

Tammi Ryan- *Wearing a mask in crowded places.*

Christina Hernandez- *My new normal in 2022 will be – "proceed with caution", to move forward with life and plans while heeding medical guidance.*

Anne Freimuth- *My new normal is acquiring cuter face masks!*

Leah Murray- *I think my new normal is not doing all the things - a little more work/service/family life balance - I am more likely to say no now.*

Article Contributions to WCLWV Watchdog Newsletter

If you would like to write an article for our next Watchdog issue, please send via email to our WCLWV President- Terri

We are on FB



Weber County League of
Women Voters

We wish you all a Happy
New Year!



Questions or Comments?

Let us know what you'd like to see in the next Watchdog edition! If you need to contact us, email us at weberleague@gmail.com.

Upcoming Events

Critical Race Theory-Adrienne Andrews. Chief Diversity Officer. Weber State University

Discussion on Critical Race Theory

Monday, January 10th, 2022 @6:30 pm

Location: Weber County Library 2464 Jefferson, Ogden

Immigration Economics-DorisGeide Steveson- Economics Professor. Weber State University

Discussion on Immigration Economics

Monday, February 7th 2022 @6:30 pm

Location: Weber County Library 2464 Jefferson, Ogden

Possibilities at the ATC- Monica Shwenk.VP of Student Services at ATC

Discussion on the possibilities at the ATC

Monday, March 14th 2022 @6:30 pm

Location: ATC Campus

Youth Futures Program- Cheri Bambrough.Adminsitrator at Youth Futures

Discussion on Youth Futures Program

Monday, April 11th, 2022 @6:30 pm

Location: TBD