A LETTER FROM THE LEAGUE

Wednesday, July 22, 2020

Contact: Alyssa Weed, President
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LWVSKC leadership sent the following letter to LWVUS regarding the ongoing federal occupation of Portland, Oregon and the threat it poses to our community in King County.

Dear LWVUS Leadership,

We write to you today from the Seattle-King County chapter of the League of Women Voters — scared, disturbed, and sadly unsurprised by the federal government’s ongoing occupation of Portland, Oregon. Watching what’s happening just three hours south of us is not only alarming, but a sign of what’s headed our way.

Yesterday we learned that our own community was already unknowingly visited by armed federal agents from US Customs and Border Protection over the Fourth of July weekend. According to Crosscut, federal agents were deployed to Seattle with the intent to “protect U.S. monuments and buildings” without the knowledge of Washington Governor Jay Inslee or Seattle Mayor Jenny Durkan.

LWVUS encouraged League members to march peacefully in support of Black lives. Our members did that and experienced firsthand the brutality inflicted upon protesters in our city that has been ongoing since the end of May. I was tear-gassed along with another Board member. Our local law enforcement has deployed chemical weapons and rubber bullets against non-violent protesters, tear-gassed a residential neighborhood, blocked members of the press from accessing key areas of activity, and gaslit the public about these activities despite video footage. We are terrified about what will happen when they are supported by armed federal agents.

We fear that the show of federal force in Portland will only grow worse in other cities. Will members of our community, including League members, be picked up off the streets by unmarked vans? Will immigrant activists be harassed and threatened by ICE agents? Will activists be subjected to serious injuries from “less-than-lethal” ammunition?

We are working as hard as we can, and as fast as we can, within LWV policies and positions to help keep our community safe and support needed reform. But we need help. We were heartened by your statement released July 22 asking for the withdrawal of federal agents, and we ask that you immediately direct LWVUS resources to help determine the legality of the Portland occupation and arrests, and pursue legal action should federal misconduct be identified. Further, we ask that LWVUS seriously consider the national call to demilitarize and defund local and federal law enforcement agencies that are utilizing chemical weapons and munitions against citizens.

We need your leadership and support now more than ever.

Alyssa Weed, President
Christy Wood, 1st VP
Heather Kelly, 2nd VP

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