

**Minutes  
Washington Co Democratic Women  
January 26, 2021**

Greeting and Call to Order

- EmmaLe Davis called the meeting to order.
- EmmaLe reported that Senator Leding is concerned about legislation and asks everyone to stay involved and aware of what is happening.
- A motion was made and seconded to approve the minutes of the November and December meetings. The minutes were approved

Treasurer's Report, Glenda

- Ending balance November 30, 2020 \$2,231.93

Debits:	
Online activity	\$ 52.41
Speaker fee, Dr Corrigan	\$100.00
Total	\$152.41
- Ending balance December 31, 2020 \$2,279.52

January activity:	
Debits:	
Online activity fees	\$80.89
Zoom fee	\$13.56
Credits:	
Donations	\$520.00
- Current balance \$2,705.07

Membership Report, Beth Coger for Mary Alice

- 31 members
- EmmaLe reminded everyone that dues are suspended for 2021, so everyone is invited to join without a financial obligation. Dues are optional as a donation.

Program

- Simone Cottrell introduced herself as VP of Programming. This year's programming will have an art theme. Discussed multiracial democracy, which is only 55 years old.
- Simone had everyone participate in a theatre exercise. Our presenters for today gave a word for us to leave with: presumption, listen, concerned, dignity, and human. The group together came up with gestures for each word and placed it in choreography.
- Simone introduced today's program: Patty Rodriguez and Lensa Odima Warden from the Bail project. Beth Coger a member of the Arkansas Justice Reform Project. Noella

Cerna is a program coordinator with CASH and a writing mentor for the Pan America mentorship winner.

- Patricia Rodriguez and Lensa Odima Warden first presented. They asked everyone to give their comments on what everyone thought about the bail system. Spoke about the current system punishing people for being poor. These are people sitting in jail, they haven't been found guilty, they are losing their jobs, and can't afford their freedom. Black and brown people account for more than 50% of the pretrial population. Women are the fastest growing population in jails and prisons across America. It is a constitutional and humanitarian crisis. They are approaching it with legislation and advocacy, and they have a revolving bail fund to post bond and then return the money to their funds to use for others after the person appears in court. The data showing it is successful shows that with community support, release can be done without them having to have a stake or money on the table. They provide court reminders, help to contact their public defender, and rides to court. The bail project is also opposed to ankle monitor because of the costs, loss of jobs, and using it as another form of incarceration. Presented HB 1213 - indigent person and use of a public defender. If they post bail, they may not be entitled to a public defender. It still needs to go before the judiciary committee.
- Beth Coger and Patricia Rodriguez spoke about the closet at the jail. They collected donations for sweaters, coats, gloves, socks, hats to give people who have bonded out and may not have appropriate clothing to wear home. They need men's shoes, rain gear, and hoodies. They are asking for donations.
- Beth Coger provided statistics about Benton County and Washington County jail populations, particularly those who are presentencing. She also provided information concerning the cost per day of keeping them in the jail.
- Noelia Cerna is a Pan America mentorship winner. She works with Decarcerate. She read from the book Inside Out, which is poetry written by individuals incarcerated in Arkansas. She read a poem by Steve Robinson.

#### Volunteer opportunities and Community involvement

- EmmaLe Davis will be getting action items and sending those out.
- Looking for someone to work on our social media platform.
- We need an organized way to pay attention to the legislation, especially now when we can't go to the capitol, we need to watch what is going on. We are wanting a small group to get organized to have an effort of watching what is happening. If you are interested or have ideas, please email EmmaLe
- With all of the social media, watch out when you see bad bills or good bills that need attention. When you see this, please reach out to our legislators. Include bill number and name so they know what you are referring to when you speak and write them.
- Gracie Ziegler spoke about the state level - they are working to track committees and categories of bills. Working to make it easier to have access to committees. Working on educating about what the bad bills mean. Only 10 active counties, so doing events in March to get more participants in other parts of the state. Education, candidate training and recruitment across the state.
- Lou Sharp just elected to the Washington County Democrats group. They will also be working to track the bills. She wants to expand community service. Need help to pack food boxes on Tuesday mornings. Registering voters.
- Simone is leading a project from CASH of artists and culture barriers. She provided link and asked everyone to participate. [cachecreate.org](http://cachecreate.org)

- Sarah Thompson brought attention to the filed bills about anti-woman, ultrasounds, banning abortion access. She is meeting weekly on calls, has post cards for anyone who wants to write to legislators about bills connected to reproductive health care. Everything that Lisa Corrigan spoke to us about in November is happening. She showed copies of the postcards and can get them to anyone interested.
- ReBecca Graham spoke about the NWA Mom's Demand Action Facebook group. They are focused on the bills concerning Stand Your Ground and another bill about unregulated firearms. Request to join group if you want to keep up with this information.

EmmaLe adjourned the meeting. February 23 is the next meeting.

Respectfully submitted,  
Leana Houston