



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS EDEN AREA

VOTER

Vol. 48 No. 12

Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation

December 2005

LWV PROGRAM PLANNING SATURDAY, JANUARY 21

Every two years, local Leagues are invited to set the agenda for the National League by reviewing its positions. This keeps the work of the League a truly grassroots function. Each League member has the opportunity to influence the selection of the issues where the National League will focus its time, talent and money.

This is called the League's Annual Program Planning and all members are invited to participate. Members are asked to review the National, Bay Area, and Local positions and vote on whether to (1) retain, (2) drop, (3) study, or (4) update the position.

The Local, Bay Area and National positions are located on our website www.lwvea.org. For those who do not have access to computers, we will publish a summary of those positions in the January VOTER.

We will also be prioritizing those issues that we wish the National League to educate and advocate for.

Our local positions were updated extensively at the last program planning meeting and this will give us an opportunity to make any additional comments on them. The Unincorporated Area position is still being updated and will not be ready for review and comment until some time next year.

We hope to make this program planning meeting an interesting one with lots of discussion on issues that are important to us as a League, as a community, and as an individual.

Please join us on January 21 – Saturday, 9 a.m. to noon, Eden Medical Center, Castro Valley.



LWVEA HOLIDAY PARTY

**FRIDAY, DEC. 2, 2005
5:30 TO 8 P.M.**

**Home of June Wallace
18223 Lake Chabot Road
Castro Valley– Ph 537-0110**



Good Food and Good Fun

Auction items include:

- Two nights at Tahoe condo
- Oakland Warrior box tickets
- Congressional Holiday Ornaments
- Gourmet Dinner for six
- Ride on a fire truck
- Golf with Mayor Young
- Lunch with local elected officials
- Many other exciting items



Cost: \$10.00

RSVP: Suzanne 538-9678

Need a Ride?? Trish 886-1711

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Our recently held "New member Orientation" was a great success. Ten new members met with five experienced League members to learn more about the League, our structure, and our way of doing business. New members included Lou Andrade, Vickie Hetsfeld, Al Murdach, Sal and Sylvia Tedesco, Lillian Litzsey, Brian Foster, Bill Mc Cammon, Mary Jane Leonard and her mother, Joanne Leonard.

It was an informal setting and all participants shared why they joined the League, identified what they hope to get out of membership, and presented their ideas on how to make our communities better. It was one of the most interactive, productive, and really enjoyable events I've attended in a long time. The energetic participation by everyone made the event a positive experience for all participants.

Eleanor Parker gave an excellent history and description of the administrative set-up of the League. Suzanne Barba talked about our national, state, and local positions and how we advocate for and promote these positions. Angie Reyes discussed all of our voter service activities from registering voters to encouraging our elected officials to participate in Smart Voter. As a wrap up, Trish Taylor invited everyone to select a portfolio of interest to them, and to become an active member of their selected portfolio group. (NOTE: Portfolios are focus groups about advocacy items that we believe are important such as children issues, the patriot act, redistricting, etc.)

I hope to build on this great New Member Orientation success when we hold our major program planning forum in January. This forum, which is held by all Leagues across the United States in January of each year, will be your opportunity to discuss issues that you believe are important and to set our priorities for the coming year. I hope many of us will be able to participate and that the program development will be interactive and inclusive

Educating and exciting new members is critical to keeping our League strong. Input from our members guides the Board in selecting local priority issues. Participation from members allows us to keep the League visible and in the forefront of the good government movement; and allows us to keep our programs strong and relevant. I hope you all have the Program Planning Forum on January 21st on your calendar and that you will come prepared to contribute and participate.

Nancy Van Huffel

BOARD BRIEFS – NOV. 2, 2005

- * Approved reimbursement to Suzanne Barba for League hospitality expenses incurred during the year.
- * Approved expenses for first class mailing of Nov. VOTER because of time delay in printing.
- * Planned for New Member Orientation meeting for Nov. 16 at 5:30 p.m., including mailing of invitations.
- * Reviewed report on LWVC Sunshine Week, including applying for \$1,000 grant in cooperation with the other local Leagues in Alameda County.
- * Accepted a report from Trish Taylor that we should have two meetings in February to complete the LWVC Energy Study.
- * Heard a report from Eleanor Parker on the County Superintendent Study that she has received a copy of a report done by a consultant for the Sonoma COE on the same issue. The committee is meeting again on Nov. 9 to review the report.
- * Reviewed report regarding Voter Registration regarding the difficulty in getting voter registration sites this time. Also discussed need for placing more affidavit boxes and forms throughout our area. Repeated suggestion that we target real estate offices, as that would be an added service for their clients.
- * Critiqued Pros and Cons Forum Oct. 7 which included a suggestion that we need more of a "team effort" for these kind of events—more helpers and more greeters.
- * Accepted membership report indicating most of the people who have not renewed have been called with a fair response. Membership Committee recommends setting up a speaker's bureau to allow teams of two to go to outside groups to speak/recruit.
- * Received a report that on Nov. 14, the Registrar of Voters is having a demonstration of different types of voting machines they are considering for purchase and would like comments on them by the public.
- * Next meeting will be Wednesday, December 1 at noon All meetings are open to the public.

LWVC ENERGY STUDY

Enclosed with this VOTER is information about the upcoming State League Energy Study we will be doing.

Two study meetings are planned for some time in February to review the extensive materials on this important issue. All League members and others interested in the issue are welcome to attend.

The consensus questions the study group will be answering were published in the November VOTER. The information included with this VOTER provides some additional background information.

If you want to view the full 80-page study document, it can be found on www.ca.lwv.org/lwvonly/studies/energy. Or if you cannot download the document and are interested in a hard copy, call Suzanne at 538-9678.



You may also want to look at your recent PG&E bill and notice all the interesting “extra” charge you are paying for your utility service.

When we flip the switch, we expect our lights to go on. Most of us take our utility service for granted. However, if we had a choice would we choose rate over social equity? We would choose environmental protection over reliability of service?

The topic of Energy is not only timely, it is critical to the economy of our state and the welfare of every Californian.

The Energy Study Committee members so far are: Suzanne Barba, Trish Taylor, Meg Jurich, Malca Chall, Linda Sandsmark, Lee Andresen, Evelyn Cormier, Tom Guarino, Bob Swanson and Bill Quirk. If you are interested in participating, please contact Suzanne at 538-9678.



All seven Leagues in Alameda County have come together to participate in “Sunshine Week” March 12-18, 2006. The goal of Sunshine Week is openness in government and to raise public awareness of the alarming amount of public information that is being kept secret from citizens.

According to California Aware, “Accountability comes from transparency and open government and that’s what is in the public’s best interest.”

The League of Women Voters’ Education Fund is offering ten \$1,000 grants to Leagues willing to participate in Sunshine Week to hold forums, distribute information, and educate elected officials about their responsibility for openness to the public. The most important facet of Sunshine Week is reminding citizens about their rights concerning access to government information. The Oakland League has submitted a grant request for the Alameda County Leagues

During a recent Californians Aware forum conducted by Terry Francke, former attorney for the California First Amendment Coalition, he discussed the Brown Act and updates which requires elected bodies and certain committees of those agencies to provide adequate notice of meetings, clear agendas so that the public will understand what is to be discussed, and public access to materials that are furnished to the officials who are holding the meeting.

Watch for information about these upcoming forums in future VOTERs and on the LWVEA website—www.lwvea.org.

REDISTRICTING—New proposal considered by Legislature

As you know, Prop 77 on Redistricting went down to defeat in November's special election. Although the LWVC supports redistricting, it did not support Prop 77. An excerpt from the following Oakland Tribune article indicates that the legislators are now working on a new bill that will be more in line with the League's recommendations.

“Redistricting talks already resurfacing

By Josh Richman and Steve Geissinger, staff writers 11-11-05

While political leaders on both sides of the aisle now say they see the need for redistricting reform, it still might not be easy hammering out who should draw legislative lines, and how, and when.

In fact, there are signs of a thaw. State Sen. Alan Lowenthal, the author of a pending bill on redistricting reform, said Thursday that he won't budge on timing:

New lines should be drawn as regularly scheduled in 2011 and no sooner.

"The object of this is to depoliticize, and it's only going to pass if everybody is together on this," he said. "This is a historic thing, for a Legislature to put on the ballot an initiative to take away power from the Legislature. You're not going to get that if you try to do it mid-decade — it'll never happen."

On another front, state Senate President Pro Tem Don Perata, said Wednesday he's prepared to roll back



amendments to Lowenthal's bill that would have let lawmakers directly pick a majority of redistricting commission members.

"We can draw the lines of Congress because there's no conflict of interest," Perata said. "But there's absolutely no way that I believe we should be drawing our own lines."

Perata and Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez, say they're committed to coming up with a new plan, perhaps in time for placement on one of 2006's ballots.

Lowenthal's bill originally called for a five-member panel: the Judicial Council would provide up to 25 names, not necessarily judges; the party legislative leaders would pick two Democrats and two Republicans; and those four partisan panelists would then pick an independent as the fifth member and chairperson.

The bill as currently amended calls for a seven-member panel with four named directly by the Legislature and one each by the governor, the Judicial Council and the University of California president.

Today's system lets the governor approve or reject the boundaries drawn by the Legislature; the Senate bill gives the governor no such role.

Proposition 77 would have specifically barred the panel from considering party registration or incumbents' addresses when drawing its maps. Lowenthal's bill wouldn't.

Proposition 77 would have put each decade's new map to a public vote. Lowenthal's bill wouldn't.

And legislative lines usually are redrawn every 10 years, based on fresh U.S. Census data. Proposition 77 would have redrawn the lines immediately; Lowenthal's bill waits for 2011.

Note: *We don't know what the bill will look like after it winds its way through committees and the Legislature. We hope it will be something the League can support. Tune in for the next chapter.*

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE POLLS ARE CLOSED

The following article is from a Berkeley Leaguer who worked at the polls and gives an interesting insight into what goes on behind the scenes.

The last voter is gone, the polls are closed and the flags are taken down but the day is not over for the poll workers. The machines are totaled, memory cards removed and the machines locked and put away. Everything put out in the morning has to be packed up and taken down. The excitement at the start of Election Day has been replaced by the tiredness from the 14-hour day. Now the counting and the reconciling of the votes begins.

The number of names on the roster will have to equal the number of voters who used each machine plus the provisional voters and the absentee ballots turned in. Unused and spoiled ballots will be accounted for. This is not appreciably different from balancing your checkbook and each and every vote must be accounted for. Every poll worker hopes it checks out the first time.

When everything adds up all the items are packed up and sealed in the appropriate box, baggie, envelope or case. Memory cards (PCMCIA cards), voter access cards, encoders and tapes are placed in the all important in the official returns pouch. Absentee and provisional ballots go into their own envelopes and then into the roster bag along with the index and all the rosters. The miscellan-eous items go into the big gray ballot case. Before leaving the site poll workers will post returns on the outside of the polling place.

An Inspector and one other person then drives to an accumulation site and the crucial pouch is delivered and signed for and the other items are dropped off.

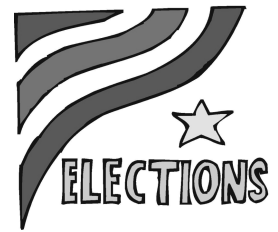
The poll workers can finally go home satisfied with a sense of civic duty willingly offered and well done. The next step goes on until the wee small hours in the morning.

There are four accumulation sites in Alameda, Dublin, Fremont, Hayward, where the PCMCIA cards are uploaded directly to the central server at the Courthouse, which is one of the four accumulation site. Meanwhile, back at the Courthouse there are 10 touchscreen machines and people sit there all night putting in the PCMCIA cards from each precinct and taking them out. Counting of the votes is done on a separate machine using Gems software. Only members of the official observer panel are allowed inside the vote count room at the Courthouse. Members of the League serve as observers for Logic and Accuracy test during this time.

Everyone else can watch through the windows. If many people want to observe, they are escorted into the observation area in small groups on a rotating basis so everyone gets a chance to observe. There is a room at the conference center where people can watch returns.

It is now three in the morning. The results from Alameda county are put on the County's website from the vote count room. The Secretary of State announces the statewide results. Provisional and absentee ballots collected that day will be scanned and added to the tally in the days following. All this takes about two weeks for a final count. With all the paper ballots in this election, it may take longer.

League members get involved in the voting process not only because of their feeling about civic responsibility but also because we can be trusted to function as non-partisan players. *Gen Katz*



HOW CALIFORNIA RANKS

From EdSource

The failure of Proposition 76 promises to re-focus attention on the school finance debate. Is California appropriately funding its schools? How much is enough? How high are we aiming for student results? How well are schools using the funding they get?

EdSource's new eight-page annual update, "How California Ranks: A National Perspective," can help inform that debate. It updates where the state stands as compared with other states--in terms of student needs, level of funding, and student results. The picture that emerges is one of lower-than-average investment, high needs and costs, minimal staffing, and low student achievement.

Key facts at a glance show that the state ranks:

- * 1st in percentage of English learners;
- * 3rd in teacher salary levels;
- * 10th in proportion of low-income students;
- * 29th in per-pupil spending;
- * 49th in teacher staffing ratios, and
- * 44th or below in reading and math achievement on national assessments.

Particularly notable is the story told by staffing data. For example:

? The average number of teachers per 1,000 students in school districts nationwide is 63. In Texas that average is 67; in New York, 75. In California, the same workload is handled by just 48 teachers.

? The burden for principals and assistant principals is even greater. The work handled by 3.4 such administrators nationwide is done in California by just 2.1 people.

To order your copy of the report, go to http://www.edsource.org/pub_abs_ranks05.cfm

REGISTER NOW FOR EDSOURCE FORUM

Don't miss this year's EdSource Forum: "School Accountability & Funding: Can California Get It Right?" The morning session on accountability features speakers Alan Bersin, Secretary of Education (Thursday); Jack O'Connell, Superintendent of Public Instruction (Friday); and Ruth Green, President, State Board of Education (Thursday and Friday invited); followed by a panel of influential superintendents.

The afternoon session delves into funding issues, with speaker Ted Mitchell, chair, Governor's Advisory Committee on Education Excellence (invited), and a distinguished panel of researchers

The Forum will take place on Friday, March 17 in Fremont. Contact EdSource at www.edsource.org to RSVP.

CLEAN MONEY/FAIR ELECTIONS

State and Local Leagues are supporting AB 583 the California Clean Money and Fair Elections Act which was introduced during the 2005 legislative session by Assemblymember Loni Hancock. The two-year bill has gained more co-authors, including Assemblyman Johan Klehs, and is picking up momentum as various groups have jumped in to educate the public and convince more legislators to support it.

The bill will provide candidates who seek state office with public funds for their campaigns. To qualify, the candidate would have to secure \$5 from each of 500 contributor/signers to his/her petition.

The bill would have to be amended to secure a dedicated funding source rather than relying completely on the general fund. Several options are now being discussed. For more information contact www.CAClean.org.

PRESCHOOL FOR ALL INITIATIVE

(The following is excerpted from a news release from Preschool for All. To read the Legislative Analyst Office analysis of the Initiative, go to <http://action.preschoolcalifornia.org/initiative/>

SAN FRANCISCO – Standing with business leaders from across California, children’s advocate Rob Reiner announced that the Preschool for All Act has collected one million signatures to qualify the initiative for the June 2006 ballot.

Reiner was joined by business leaders and representatives from chambers of commerce across California,

The Preschool for All Act will make quality, part-day preschool available to all four-year olds in California. The system will be voluntary, allowing parents to choose the preschool that meets their needs by building on the existing network of public, private and nonprofit preschool providers.

The initiative calls for quality education and services for children and their families; adequate qualifications and compensation for instructional staff; flexibility to meet local needs; and accountability to the public.

A recent study by economists at the RAND Corporation confirmed the benefits of a universal preschool program. The researchers found that every dollar California invests in quality preschool would return \$2.62 in savings from reduced remedial education, lower drop out rates, and less crime.

Soon, one million signatures will be delivered to local election officials in all 58 California counties. Once the signatures are verified, the Secretary of State is expected to qualify the Preschool for All initiative for the June 2006 ballot.

MEDICARE PART D – PRESCRIPTION DRUGS



seniors.

At a recent League New Member Orientation, there was a suggestion that we do a forum on this topic because it was of great interest and very confusing to many seniors.

Fortunately, several elected officials have also heard the call for more information and are holding sessions on the subject of the new prescription drug program to answer those questions.

Congresswoman Barbara Lee will hold a Town Hall Meeting on Medicare Part D on Saturday, December 10 from 9 to 11 a.m. at Faith Lutheran Church at 20080 Redwood Road (across from the CV Library).

In addition, Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker’s staff is also offering individual help for seniors or their caretakers in her San Lorenzo Office on Hesperian Blvd. Call 278-0367 for more information.

UPDATE ON LWV-ACC SUPERINTENDENT STUDY

The LWV Alameda County Council committee on the study to determine the efficacy of elected vs. an appointed by the Board of a county superintendent, has been meeting monthly for over a year.

They have completed a review their survey of selected county superintendents and county board of education and a similar but more widely based study by a consultant hired by the Sonoma County Office of Education.

The resulting information will be distilled into an ACC position paper which would guide League members to advocate for an effective and efficient system of governance for this county agency.

League of Women Voters of Eden Area

P. O. Box 2234 – Castro Valley, CA 94546, Phone 510/538-9678
Representing cities of Hayward and San Leandro and unincorporated areas of
Ashland, Castro Valley, Cherryland, Fairview, Hillcrest Knolls and San Lorenzo

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Dues: Regular \$48 Same Household \$24 Student \$20
Dues and contributions to the League are not tax deductible.
Contributions to the LWVEA Education Fund ARE deductible
to the extent allowed by the law.

**The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan
political organization, encourages the informed
and active participation of citizens in
government and influences public policy through**

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

All members and the public are welcome.

| | |
|--------------------|--|
| Dec 2 | LWVEA Holiday Party & Auction |
| Dec 3 | Clean Money Seminar—Oakland City Hall |
| Dec 7 | LWVEA Board Meeting |
| Dec 10 | Medicare D forum |
| Jan 4 | LWVEA Board Meeting |
| Jan 21 | LWVEA Program Planning |
| Feb | Energy Study Forums |
| March 12-18 | Sunshine Week |

The Board of Directors wishes you



**HAVE A QUESTION?
CONTACT A LWVEA BOARD MEMBER**

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- Angelina Reyes – Voter Services
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- Eleanor Parker – Historian
925-837-2905 or eliparker@sbcglobal.net

For more details on Calendar of Coming Events items, visit us at www.lwvea.org.