



League of Women Voters Eden Area

VOTER

Vol. 49 No. 2

Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation

February, 2006

ATTORNEY GENERAL BILL LOCKYER WILL SPEAK AT FORUM IN SAN LORENZO

Attorney General Bill Lockyer will be the keynote speaker at a "Sunshine Week" forum on transparency in government and a citizen's right to know.

The forum will be held on Friday, March 17 at the San Lorenzo Village Community Hall, 377 Paseo Grande, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m.

The LWV Alameda County Council consisting of the seven Leagues in Alameda County were one of only 14 Leagues in the nation to receive funding from the LWVUS Education Fund for putting on an event to focus on the Brown Act, the California Public Records Act and the Freedom of Information Act.



Each of these laws were enacted to assure the public's access to information and processes within governmental offices and agencies. Elected and appointed officials will be invited, as well as city clerks and staff members who work with boards and commissions to this public forum.

The first session will provide an overview of the various "open government" laws, what citizens can reasonably expect of officials and what are some of the problems.

The second session will address how boards and commissions can conduct "sensitive" business and still meet the transparency requirements of the Brown Act and other "sunshine" laws.

Lockyer will speak at the luncheon and answer questions. For more information and/or to RSVP, contact Nancy at lwvea@aol.com.

HEALTHY MINDS & BODIES HEALTH FAIR

FEBRUARY 25 (Saturday)
10 a.m. to 2 p.m.

Eden Medical Center
Conference Center
20103 Lake Chabot Road, Castro Valley

The League of Women Voters Eden Area joins the American Association of University Women and the Iris Alliance Fund in co-sponsoring a day of learning and inspiration for the mind, body and soul.

Experts from Eden Medical Center and local community organizations will focus on health issues facing men and women today:

- Bone density screenings
- Blood pressure screenings
- Cholesterol screenings
- Mental health and depression
- Sexual health for older adults
- Heart health
- Tai chi and other exercise for the body and mind.

For further information
call 889-5078, or
register online at
www.edenmedcenter.org.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT - What is an "Educated Voter" and How Do We Get More of Them?

LWVEA just completed its Program Planning process for the 2006-07. We use this meeting to review our positions on various issues and to prioritize those we will update, drop or focus on in the coming year.

During our meeting, we discussed the LWVUS position on the "Citizen's Right to Vote", which basically encourages and protects the right of all citizens to vote, and which is a fundamental principle of our organization. What struck me during our discussion was the challenge we all face in educating voters on ballot measures and candidates so that their vote is a thoughtful one rather than a reaction to superficial data (e.g., candidate name recognition regardless of positive or negative, placement on the ballot, or thoughtless following of recognized endorsements.)

This presents a major challenge to Leagues, particularly in urban areas. People are busy with family and job, are unaware of educational forums or can't attend, or are on pure overload from the immense size of ballots. In addition, we have a huge variety of ethnic and cultural neighborhoods with a high percentage of non-English-speaking citizens.

The challenge is how to maximize our League resources to make the greatest contribution in improving voter awareness and education...for all voters. And to do so with a goal of increasing not only the overall number of voters, but assuring that a greater number of all voters is aware and informed on the candidates and the issues. I believe this should be a major goal of our League this year.

We started making a dent in this process in the last few years by increasing the number of "Pros and Cons" presentations; and by making the Easy Voter Guide available in the major languages spoken in the Eden Area. Regardless of your position on English as a national language or requiring only English on ballots, our making the balanced presentation of information on ballot measures available in critical languages only helps educate voters to make informed choices.

Now we must work to reach more voters with our "Pros and Cons" presentations and our structured candidate debates. We need to make certain that each of us is educated on all ballot measures and can speak concisely and clearly on each in a balanced manner.

BOARD BRIEFS

January 4, 2006

- Reviewed process and assignments for Program Planning meeting 1-21-06.
- Received report on plans for Sunshine Week event in March concerning venue and speakers.
- Requested volunteers to conduct annual LWVC legislative interview with Assemblyman Johan Klehs.
- Discussed recruitment of new board members and the work of the nominating committee—Linda Tangren, Jean Gaylord and Jean West.
- Reviewed the LWVEA calendar for January through June 2006.
- Received report on LWVC Energy Position update—two meetings held to discuss process for conducting the general consensus meeting.
- Reviewed an update on the County Superintendent of Schools study being done by the LWV-ACC. Committee reviewing draft of proposed position.
- Discussed Membership report—we have 152 members and ten people who have not renewed yet.
- Received report on InterLeague meetings attended by Pat Piras and also a report on transportation proposals by MTC.
- Next Board meeting will be Wednesday, Feb. 1, noon to 1:30 at the SLVHA. All meetings are open to the public.

We need to increase our outreach and take our presentations into more neighborhoods and places of work.

It is a challenge that I am asking all LWVEA members to take up this year. Are we up to it? I strongly believe we are, but we all need to assume a role in the process as speakers, moderators, logistical support, getting "bookings," spreading the word that the League will come where we are invited. We need to become more visible in our neighborhoods and our communities. Voter education of the greatest number of voters is the call for 2006.

Nancy Van Huffel, President

PROGRAM PLANNING SETS DIRECTION FOR 2006-07

If you missed the recent LWVEA Program Planning meeting on January 21—you missed a good opportunity to discuss major issues facing the nation, the Bay Area and our local communities.

As you know, Program Planning is the League's "reason for being." The results of program planning are the basis of both education and action efforts.

LWV BAY AREA POSITIONS

The LWVBA has positions on Regional Government and Planning, the Environment, CEQA Mitigation, Hazardous Materials Management, Housing, Surface Transportation and Airports.

Nikkie Harris of the LWVBA reviewed actions that the League had taken in 2004-05, including Desalination, Bay Area Regional Planning, and Reforming CEQA,

The group selected two of the LWVBA Potential Action Issues for 2006-08: (1) Continue monitoring the Joint Policy Committee including an emphasis on Housing needs in the Bay Area, and implementing the Smart Growth Vision linking land use and transportation; and (2) Monitor and comment on Hetch-Hetchy System improvements, Bay Area Water Agency Seismic Improvements and CALFED project.

LWVUS POSITIONS

Based on a previous survey of the membership, six LWVUS positions were selected for in-depth discussion and prioritizing. Angie Reyes presented background information and actions taken by LWVUS on -- Citizen's Right to Vote and Campaign Finance Report.

Evelyn Cormier presented LWVUS positions on Environmental Protection and Natural Resources Management.

Suzanne Barba presented on Health Care and Reproductive Choice.

After discussing the six positions, the members prioritized by consensus and recommended sending three positions to LWVUS for education and action:

- (1) Campaign Finance Reform,
 - (2) Reproductive Choice, and
 - (3) Natural Resources Management.
- Citizen's Right to Vote was a close fourth.

The group also was made aware that the LWV Illinois is proposing to ask the LWVUS at the convention in June 2006 to take a position to abolish the Death Penalty. It was felt that we could not instruct our delegates to that convention how to vote on the proposal until we had a forum presenting the pros and cons on the issue. The Board will discuss the interest in having such a forum.

LWVEA POSITIONS

Suzanne Barba reviewed the Matrix showing local, county, bay area, state and national positions and explained that any League could use of these positions to educate and advocate on the issues.

The local positions were not reviewed in depth since they received a comprehensive update late year and were approved at the annual meeting. She did review an extensive list of actions taken on local and other positions during the past year.

However, one recently updated position on the Unincorporated Area was reviewed. Changes were published in the January VOTER. Essentially, the proposed position changed the main thrust from support of all unincorporated areas being incorporated into cities or annexed to neighboring cities TO an emphasis on the residents of unincorporated areas to have input and a choice on four different models of governance or staying an unincorporated area.

Several attendees felt that the "good government" thrust of the position was diluted by not emphasizing the need for incorporation. The position will undergo further review by the Board and membership before being taken to the Annual Meeting in June for approval or further update. A copy of the position with changes shown is on the LWVEA website www.lwvea.org

KEEPING CALIFORNIA'S LIGHTS ON

In previous VOTERS, we have published a series of articles on updating the LWVC Energy Position. The state committee worked for two years gathering information and developing a study guide to help local Leagues reach consensus on what the LWVC Energy Position should contain.

Our local Energy Study committee has had several meetings to discuss the process of how we will reach consensus on eight complex but important questions to ensure that the LWVC has a comprehensive position from which to educate and advocate.

During the month of February, we plan to have several discussion group meetings to bring everyone up-to-date on the Energy Study materials and consensus questions.

For example, one question concerns what values should be considered in electric policy decision-making in the coming decade. Some of the choices are (1) reasonable rates, (b) environmental protection, (3) reliability of service, (4) transparency and efficiency of government and (5) social equity.

In our discussions so far, we have realized that every answer has a trade off and has stimulated thoughtful comments pro and con for each. If you want reasonable rates, the trade off may be negative impact on the environment. Our discussions are interesting as well as informative.

Members of the committee are Suzanne Barba, Bill Quirk, Malca Chall, Meg Jurich, Nancy VanHuffel, Trish Taylor, Tom Guarino, Michael Sweeney and Evelyn Cormier. If you would like to join the committee, please call Suzanne at 538-9678 or suzbarba@comcast.net.

Position in brief: Support a state energy policy that promotes conservation, fosters the development and use of a variety of renewable energy sources, and considers the impacts of energy development and use on public health and safety and on the environment. State government should provide an efficient, coordinated energy administrative structure and regulatory process and establish state energy policies and minimum standards

ENERGY STUDY FORUM MARCH 2

The LWVEA Energy Study Forum will be held on

Thursday, March 2, 2006

4:00 to 8:30 p.m.

Eden Medical Center

Hayward Room

20103 Lake Chabot Rd., Castro Valley

California's economic vitality depends on affordable, reliable energy for homes, businesses, industries, agriculture and the water sector. Over the past decade energy demand has been rising as a result of population growth and advances in technology.

Building new power plants is not the only way to meet growing demand. Improved building standards and appliance and lighting efficiencies have contributed greatly to reducing per capita demands for electricity. In fact, conservation is the least expensive form of "new" energy.



Please join us in reviewing, reaching consensus and advising the state League on updating its position on Energy. You'll learn a lot and you'll have a chance to have your voice heard on this important issue.

A light dinner will be served, so an RSVP is appreciated to Suzanne at 538-9678 or suzbarba@comcast.net.

DEATH PENALTY PROS & CONS LUNCH FORUM—Tuesday 2/21 San Lorenzo Community Hall

Come listen to the most recent news on whether the death penalty is actually a deterrent to crime. Steve Dimick will speak on the Pro side and XXXX will give the Cons

If you want us to provide lunch, please RSVP to lwvea@aol.com or call Suzanne 538-9678

UPDATE FROM LWV BAY AREA

ACTION ON REGIONAL AIR QUALITY

The LWVBA will be encouraging local Leagues in the Bay Area to support the adoption of local ordinances to restrict the emission of particulates from wood fired smoke. The Bay Area Air Quality Management District's model woodburning and woodsmoke prevention ordinance is designed to improve air quality and public health by reducing particulate matter air pollution. LWVBA will provide a sample letter for Leagues to send to their local City Council or Board of Supervisors on this important issue.

REAFFIRMING THE SMART GROWTH VISION

Communities within the Bay Area will be asked to reaffirm the Smart Growth Vision for our region that was established a few years ago. The Vision includes an emphasis on infill development, the coordination of transportation and land use planning, the protection of important open space resources and production of needed housing.

Presentations will be made to elected officials throughout the region to explain the Vision, and reaffirm that there is regional agreement. Support from interested community groups would be welcome.

As part of this vision, regional agencies have begun work on sub-regional planning efforts around new transit station projects: Santa Rosa SMART station, Dumbarton Rail station in Menlo Park, Alameda Point ferry terminal, San Jose-Santa Clara Station for BART, Fairfield Multi-Modal Station for the Capital Corridor train, the Hacienda station for T-Bart in Pleasanton, **the San Leandro Bus Rapid Transit Station**, and a station on the e-BART corridor in east Contra Costa County. Local Leagues will become informed about and participate in a planning effort in their local area.

Linda Craig, President
president@lwvba-ca.org

SPEAK OUT FOR REPRODUCTIVE FREEDOM

Wednesday, March 29, 2006
Sacramento Convention Center
9 a.m. to 4:30 .m.

- EDUCATE your Legislators
- CAUCUS with Women's Health Advocates from all over California
- PROTECT Women's Health Rights
- LEARN about emerging issues

The League has joined over 50 other organizations as the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom.

For more information contact Jo Ann Madigan (415) 346-0563 or by email jomadigan@earthlink.net.

HOMEOWNERS' ASSOCIATION ELECTIONS

A new California law, SB61, will go into effect on July 1, 2006 which requires that "common interest developments"—i.e. homeowner groups and community associations—select an independent third party to act as an Inspector for elections that deal with assessments, selection of members of the board of directors, amendments to the governing documents, or the grant of exclusive use of common area property. All California homeowner associations, no matter how small, are covered by this law.

This new requirement may fit very well with the League's skills and principles. Quite a few local Leagues already monitor elections for various groups. It is important that local Leagues who choose to do this be thoroughly trained before undertaking the role of Inspector.

Robbie Davis, Chair, LWVC Education Fund.

EDUCATION UPDATE

From EdSource

As the governor's annual budget proposal kicks off the state's 2006 spending deliberations, K-12 education--at 39% of the general fund--once again takes center stage. How much to budget for schools is a key question, in light of last year's pitched battle, the defeat of the governor's ballot initiatives, and now a projected state revenue increase. But whatever the funding level, policymakers face multiple decisions on how to spend the funds.

A new EdSource report, "Issues and Actions in California Education Policy: Setting the Stage for 2006," explains important and complex issues that are on the table, summarizes policy actions of 2005, and previews issues that promise to be out front this year. Some highlights:

* High school. This spring, for the first time, students must pass the state's exit exam to graduate. Though about 78% of the class of 2006 has passed, that includes only some 35% of special education students. Debate continues over how to accommodate students with special needs.

* School finance system. Despite a likely substantial increase in school spending, direct benefits to K-12 programs may prove elusive due to spikes in other costs. With the strain on finances since 2001, many districts have cut programs in order to address rising costs for utilities, health benefits, and salaries.

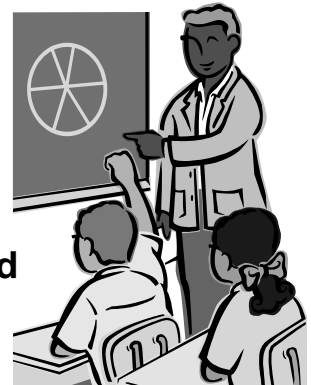
* Teachers. To bolster student achievement and close achievement gaps—as well as to meet federal requirements--policymakers will continue to grapple with issues of teacher supply, certification, professional development, and distribution. Controversial issues such as differential pay and pay for performance may get a hearing.

* Accountability. Given the currently

mismatched state and federal approaches to measuring school performance, schools that do well under one are sometimes labeled as failing under the other. Policymakers are negotiating; the hope is to resolve this confusing and potentially counterproductive situation.

To download, go to http://www.edsource.org/pub_abs_ediss06

REMINDER: The 2006 EdSource Forum, "School Accountability & Funding: Can California Get It Right?" will be held on March 17th in Fremont. Go to



<http://www.edsource.org> for more information and to register. Register by February 17 to receive the early bird discount!

HELP WANTED

Do you have an interest in important issues at the local, state or national level—health care, transportation, housing, land use, voter registration, mental health, energy, and many others—then we can help.

Our League has accomplished a lot, but we can do even more with your help. We have tasks that just take a little amount of your time and tasks that take more time and effort.

We will need lots of help for the upcoming elections—registering voters, conducting candidate forums and doing Ballot Initiative Pro and Con presentations for various community groups.

We have Board positions open and need help with putting our newsletter together and taking it to the post office.

If you would like more information, contact any Board member on page 8.

LWVUS UPDATE

Coalition of Seven Reform Groups Presents a Six-Point Plan for Real Lobbying Reform

WASHINGTON, D.C. – Congress has finally awakened to the corruption that festers under the influence-peddling system in Washington. The legislative proposals offered so far are good first steps, but more needs to be done and the key will be the details of the proposals. The groups released six benchmarks for lobbying reform that they will use to judge the merits of the proposals being considered by Congress in the next few months. The groups are Public Citizen, Common Cause, Democracy 21, Public Campaign, Campaign Legal Center, U.S. PIRG and League of Women Voters.

The six benchmarks for lobbying reform that the national watchdog organizations urge Congress to use when developing bipartisan legislation are:

- **Break the nexus between lobbyists, money and lawmakers:** By capping contributions to candidates from lobbyists and lobbying firm PACs at \$200 per election; prohibiting lobbyists and lobbying firms from soliciting, arranging or delivering contributions and from serving as officials on candidate campaign committees and leadership PACs; and prohibiting lobbyists and their organizations from paying or arranging payments for events “honoring” members of Congress and political parties, and from contributing or arranging contributions to entities established or controlled by members of Congress, such as foundations.
- **Prohibit private interests from financing trips or subsidizing air travel for members of Congress and staff, executive branch officials and federal judges.** Corporations and others should be prohibited from making privately owned planes available for members to travel at the cost of a first class air ticket rather than the cost of a chartered plane.
- **Ban gifts to members of Congress and staff.** The gift ban should close the existing loophole in the gift rules that allow lobbyists and others to pay for parties held to “honor” or “recognize” specific members, such as the lavish parties held at the national party conventions.

- **Oversee and enforce ethics rules and lobbying laws through an independent congressional Office of Public Integrity and increase penalties for violations.** The office would monitor and oversee financial disclosure and lobbying reports, advise members, staff and lobbyists on compliance with the rules, conduct investigations of non-frivolous allegations of ethics violations, present cases involving potential ethics violations to congressional ethics committees for consideration and action, and refer potential lobbying law violations to the Justice Department for civil enforcement.



- **Slow the revolving door:** By prohibiting members of Congress and senior executive branch officials from making lobbying contacts or conducting lobbying activities for compensation for two years after leaving their positions.
- **Place sunshine on lobbying activities and strengthen financial disclosure reports:** By requiring establishment of a robust disclosure system on the Internet; ensuring that lobbying firms disclose grass-roots lobbying activities and the financial backers of stealth lobbying coalitions are also disclosed; and requiring lobbyists to file a list of the members’ offices and the congressional committees they lobbied during the quarter.

The organizations also called for fixing the presidential public financing system in time for the 2008 elections, extending public financing to congressional races, replacing the Federal Election Commission with a real campaign finance enforcement agency, closing the loophole for 527 groups and abolishing leadership PACs. Also key are addressing the earmarking problem and creating a more open and democratic process in Congress to ensure lawmakers have time to read bills before they are voted on and to ensure open debate, the groups said.

A more detailed explanation of the six benchmarks for lobbying reform is available at each of the group’s Web sites and at www.CleanUpWashington.org.

League of Women Voters of Eden Area
 P. O. Box 2234 – Castro Valley, CA 94546 • 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
 education and advocacy.*

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS
All members and the public are welcome.

FEBRUARY	
1	LWVEA Board Meeting, 11:45 to Noon, SLVHA
21	Death Penalty Debate—lunch forum San Lorenzo Community Hall-Noon
25	Healthy Minds & Bodies Health Fair Eden Medical Center 10am-2:00pm
MARCH	
2	Energy Study Consensus Forum Eden Medical Center - 4 to 8:30pm
17	Sunshine Week Forum –San Lorenzo Community Hall 9am to 2:00pm Attorney General Bill Lockyer, speaker 2 morning panel sessions
17	EdSource Conference on Education Fremont

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

- Nancy VanHuffel – President
276-4554 X6 or lwvea@aol.com
- Jo Murdach – VP Membership
5816794 or allisonandjo@hotmail.com
- Suzanne Barba – Secretary
538-9678 or suzbarba@aol.com
- Angelina Reyes – Voter Service
583-4405 or angier@ci.hayward.ca.us
- Pat Piras – Local legislative Action
278-1631 or piras@ix.netcom.com
- Beverly Reiford – Social Policy
887-0671 or relifordb@aol.com
- Evelyn Cormier – Voter Registration
471-0475 or evcormier@earthlink.net
- Jean Gaylord – Voter Registration
537-6722 or gaylords51@aol.com
- Eleanor Parker – Historian
925-837-3041 or eliparker@comcast.net

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