



League of Women Voters Eden Area

VOTER

Vol. 54 No. 2 *Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation* Feb, 2011

JOIN US FOR A LUNCHEON FORUM

THE STATE BUDGET & IMPACT OF THE NOV. ELECTION THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

Friday, March 11, 2011

Noon to 1:30 p.m.

San Lorenzo Village Community Center
377 Paseo Grande, San Lorenzo

Speaker: Hon. Betty Yee
Chairwoman of the State Equalization Board

Hon. Betty Yee was elected to the tax board in 2006 and re-elected in 2010. She has over 25 years of experience in public service, specializing in state and local finance. She served as Chief Deputy Director for Budget with the California Department of Finance where she led the development of the Governor's Budget, negotiations with the Legislature and key budget stakeholders, and fiscal analyses of legislation on behalf of the Administration.

Program Schedule

11:45 - Registration

Noon - Buffet Lunch

12:30 - Speaker

1:00 - Q & A

RSVP FOR LUNCHEON FORUM – MARCH 11, 2011

Cost: \$10 for the luncheon if payment is received by Monday, Mar. 7. The cost if paid at door is \$15. The forum is free to those who just come to hear the speaker. Make checks payable to Treasurer, LWVEA and mail to LWVEA, P. O. Box 2234, Castro Valley, CA 94546 by Mar. 7

_____ Yes, I will be attending (name)_____ Ph.#_____

_____ I am bringing _____ guests: (Names)_____

Questions: Call Suzanne at 510-538-9678 or email suzbarba@comcast.net

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

By Nancy Van Huffel

Please join the Observer Corps

All members of the LWVEA are encouraged to volunteer for our Observer Corps. Members attend meetings of a government group that they are interested in, such as City Council, County Board of Supervisor's meeting, or School Board. Their attendance allows the League to stay up-to-date on issues affecting our area, especially those that concern League Action/Advocacy Areas. The Corps has an important role to play in keeping LWVEA membership informed and connected to local officials.

Tips for Observers

- Try to pick a geographic area you are interested in (close to home, in your district, etc.). Plan to cover the same meetings over a period of time. This way you will get to know the officials and know what to expect.
- Know the time and place of your meeting, and call the Clerk or secretary to confirm. All the Cities and County have a website which post the agenda/minutes.
- Wear a LWV button or nametag with "LWV" on it to the meeting. Arrive a few minutes before meeting time.
- Check to see if the Board/Council has been in Executive Session beforehand or if they plan to adjourn to an Executive Session.
- If the Board/Council is in Public Session, citizens may ask questions or bring up areas of concern.
- Take notes on the session - particularly decisions or outcomes of discussions. Is there anything the LWV should be alerted to, or were things that we already have as an action item discussed?

- Turn in a brief reporting of significant information, and plan on having a short paragraph of relevant information ready for our monthly newsletter, the VOTER.

If there are enough members interested in becoming Observers, we will schedule a training session. Please contact me if you are interested.

BOARD BRIEFS January 19, 2011

- Membership – Response from those who need to renew still sluggish. Board agreed to call these members again.
- Palomares Homeowner Election – Board members were recruited for an “assemble ballot information” party to put together packets for 1605 homeowners. Our next need for volunteers will be when we count ballots in March.
- Cinnamon Girl Project – Suggested this might be a good project for the Oakland League to do with our help for conducting mock elections and programs on why voting is important.
- Annual Meeting Speaker - Discussed having a backup plan if Senator Mark Leno cannot speak at our annual meeting because of last minute commitments in Sacramento for legislators. He is to speak on healthcare.
- Affidavit Servicing (Registration form placement sites) – More volunteers are needed in the Hayward area to make sure various sites have registration forms on hand. Also, more sites are needed overall in the Eden Area.

Board meetings are open to the public and are generally held on the third Wednesday of the month at 5:45 p.m. at the San Lorenzo Village Conference Room.

MORE INFORMATION ON THE 2011 STATE BUDGET

(The following is taken from Minutes of the Working Party for Children, a subgroup of League and other Child Advocates in the Los Angeles area.)

Christian Griffith, Chief Consultant, and Assembly Budget Committee mentioned three aspects of the budget: realignment, program cuts, and tax extensions. He indicated it takes 90 days to put a measure on the ballot and the governor plans for a June ballot to voters. This means there are not many days left for the Legislature to complete and pass a budget. Hearings must be completed by mid-February and the budget must go to the floor by early March.



In the realignment, \$5.9 billion in Vehicle License Fee and sales tax extensions would go to

the counties for a long list of programs, including: fire, law enforcement, housing of low level offenders, adult parole, juvenile justice, mental health, substance abuse treatment, foster care, and child and adult protective services. The premise is that counties can do a better job on these programs than the state does.

Questions to be addressed include: Who should be in charge of what in the realignment and who should pay for what? How does the money go to the counties, in one pot or in sub-accounts? How is the money allocated among counties? How will the method affect more efficient counties? How will federal requirements be met and sanctions applied? To achieve standardization,

could county groups set standards instead of the state? How will matching funds be addressed? Will shifting of funding from one program to another be allowed? What will be the state's role once programs are moved to the counties? Given federal rules, how much flexibility will counties have?

In terms of cuts, the governor made an effort to protect K-12 education funding. He did this with cuts to CSU and UC; reductions in child care rates and eligibility requirements; reduction in SSI grants; reduction in IHSS hours, eligibility and co-living obligations and requirement for doctor's certification; elimination of Medi-Cal coverage of over the counter cough/cold medication and nutritional supplements and Adult Day Health Care; redirection of mental health funds; reduction in benefits and increase in co-pay and premiums for Medi-Cal and Healthy Families; and elimination of funding for libraries, redevelopment agencies, and enterprise zone subsidies.

On the revenue side, the governor proposes a five-year extension of Sales, Vehicle License Fee, and Income Tax increases. In terms of corporate taxes, the governor proposes requiring corporations to use one formula for allocating profit to California instead of allowing them to choose a method each year.

A summary of the budget is at <http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/pdf/BudgetSummary/FullBudgetSummary.pdf>. The County Welfare Directors Association analysis is available at <http://www.cwda.org/uploads/BudgetUpdate1-ERRATA-2011-12Governor'sBudget.pdf>. The Legislative Analyst's analysis of the budget can be found at http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2010/bud/fiscal_outlook/fiscal_outlook_2010.pdf.

About The State Board Of Equalization

(Our speaker on March 11 is the chair of the State Board of Equalization. Here is what that agency does.)

The California State Board of Equalization is the only elected tax commission in the nation. Its mission is to serve the public through fair, effective, and efficient tax administration. The five-member Board oversees the agency's nearly 4,000 employees in California, New York, Chicago, and Houston to ensure tax and fee laws are interpreted and applied correctly, consistently, and fairly; revenues from the sales and use tax and special tax and fee programs are collected and allocated as required by law; and utility properties are valued properly and the resulting revenues allocated as required by law.

The Board collects taxes and fees that provide nearly 35 percent of the annual revenue for state government and essential funding for counties, cities, and special districts. In fiscal year 2008–2009, Board-administered taxes and fees produced more than \$48 billion for education, public safety, transportation, housing, health services, social service, and natural resource management.

The Board was created by an 1879 constitutional amendment to ensure statewide uniformity in county property tax assessment practices. Today, it is charged with administering the sales and use tax and a variety of special tax and fee programs, centrally assessing utility property, determining and setting the value for timber harvest yields, hearing business tax appeals and Franchise Tax Board income tax appeals, and overseeing the assessment practices for real and personal property by California's 58 county assessors.

Meet LWVEA Member: Dr. Dennis Byas

by Connie Rusk

The display case opposite the office of San Lorenzo's Superintendent of Schools Dennis Byas is filled with arts and crafts by elementary school students. The reading material in the reception room is the San Lorenzo High School student newspaper, The Rebel Record. He says that young people are his life.

The genial educator not only joined the League of Women Voters in Colton, he was awarded the Citizen of Achievement award from the League, as well as many other honors in San Bernardino County. He served as Superintendent of Schools there (25,000 students) for eight years, where the district enjoyed seven years of improved test scores. He has also taught at the university level.

He holds a doctorate from the University of Southern California, and his dissertation topic was the use of direct instruction in closing student achievement gaps in literacy. And the gaps in San Lorenzo schools have closed dramatically in the past few years. "We've had more awards in recent years than in the 20 years before," he said. "We have some of the smallest student achievement gaps in Alameda County." His goal is that San Lorenzo be one of the most successful school districts in California despite current challenges. "I want every student to be ready for college."

Now he faces the biggest financial crisis ever. And not just locally, but nationally and internationally, he points out. "My staff is brilliant and we have great kids. We will succeed."

Dr. Byas is married and the father of four grown children and has four grandchildren. He earned his BA in Economics at CSU San Bernardino, and a MA and MBA at Claremont Graduate School. He was one of the most

recognized citizens in San Bernardino County and received numerous awards there. We're hoping he will continue his award-winning ways with the Eden Area League of Women Voters.

MEMBERSHIP ALERT

There are a few of you who have not renewed for 2011-12 yet and we hope you will do it ASAP. At the end of January 2011, those who have not renewed are supposed to come off the local/state/national League rosters and that will mean no more VOTERs, notices about League events, Legislative Alerts and articles to keep you "in the know" about important issues. Please don't let that happen to you if you have not renewed. Just use the brief form on the back page and get your \$50 check in today. Thanks.

YOU ARE ON OUR "MOST WANTED" LIST

The League has many worthwhile "projects" and committees that can't get off the ground without interested members indicating their willingness to participate. For example:

Observer Corps - People to attend or listen/watch online various public agencies like City Councils, School Boards, Sanitary Districts or one of hundreds of boards and commissions that make important decisions on our communities and our lives. OC members are then asked to complete a short report on what they see or heard evaluating whether they have witnessed ongoing "good government practices and transparency" or where improvement can be made. Contact lwvea@aol.com

Ballot Counters – Our local League needs eight (8) ballot counters on March 15 at 6:30 p.m. at the Palomares

Community Center in Castro Valley. Ballot opening and counting takes approximately two hours and our League gets reimbursed for providing this service. Contact Suzanne at suzbarba@comcast.net if you want more information and/or are interested.

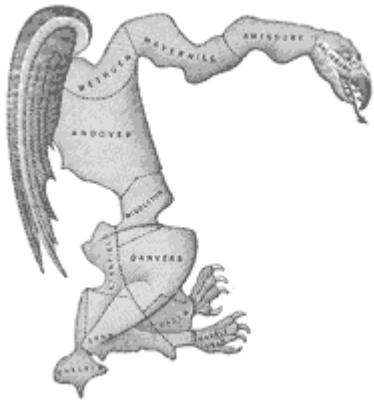
Legislative Interview Team Members - Some time in March or April we will be interviewing legislators who serve Eden Area using a set of questions provided by the State League. Responses to these interviews are forwarded to the State League and also published in our monthly VOTER. For more information, email: suzbarba@comcast.net.

Brown-Bag Luncheon Discussion Chair – Set up a schedule of monthly brown-bag luncheons where members can discuss important issues of the day—education, healthcare, mental health services, juvenile justice, climate change, you name it. Contact: lwvea@aol.com.

Redistricting Observer – The State League has asked locals to observe and monitor the Redistricting Commission as it travels around the state doing its important work of redrawing the boundary lines for Senate, Assembly, State Board of Equalization and Congressional districts based on the 2010 census. The work of the commission should put an end to blatant **gerrymandering** of districts to protect incumbents. If you are interested in the commission's work, go to its website at www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov. To get information on being a Redistricting Observer, go to the State League's website at <http://ca.lwv.org/lwvonly/> for training information and forms to fill out after observing. They also have a media watch component—you let the State League know if there has been any coverage in local newspapers about redistricting.

GER-RY-MAN-DER – To rezone voting districts to gain electoral advantage.

Elbridge Gerry, a signer of the Declaration of Independence, offered his political credo at the Constitutional Convention of 1789. “The evils we experience flow from an excess of democracy. The people do not want virtue, but are dupes of pretended patriots.” As if to test the theory, in 1812 Governor Gerry signed into law a Massachusetts redistricting bill aimed at helping his Republican party pick up state senate seats, an intention made clear in



the grotesque appearance of one particularly convoluted voting district.

The story goes that Gilbert Stuart (the artist who painted pretty much every portrait of

George Washington) entered the offices of the Columbian Centinel, where a map of the infamous district was hanging. Stuart scribbled a head, wings, and claws onto the oddly shaped district. “That will do for a salamander!” the artist said. “Gerry-mander!” said the editor. The editorial cartoon had its desired effect, and to prove that people aren’t total dupes (or at least back then) the citizens of Massachusetts voted Gerry out of office.

*Submitted by
LWVEA member Eleanor Parker*

PROGRAM PLANNING RESULTS SUMMARY

“This was one of the best Program Planning meetings we’ve ever had,” said Eleanor Parker who has been a member

for 48 years and probably has attended and participated in that many Program Planning sessions. According to the evaluation sheets, those who attended agreed with Eleanor.

Before the meeting, a survey was sent to all members, listing the 24 State League positions on various issues, and requesting that they rank their top five for prioritizing for education and advocacy by LWVC. Using those results, six positions were selected (there was a tie for two) and submitted to the Program Planning meeting attendees to discuss at length and decide which three would then be sent forward to LWVC as requested.

The three which will be forwarded to the State League:

- 1 – Education Pre-K to 12
- 2 - State and Local Finance
- 3 – Campaign Finance Reform

There was also a lot of discussion concerning those positions under Natural Resources and the suggestion that Air Quality, Water, and Energy could be consolidated into a Land Use position because they are inter-related and also each impacts the Climate Change issue that is currently being debated at every level of government—local, state and national.

The Education position was considered critical in the face of the continuing cuts in education funding and the disastrous impact it will have on students and their future as contributing, productive and well-rounded citizens.

The State and Local Finance position was also considered critical at this time because it underpins everything else. Without appropriate and adequate finances, nothing can be done to improve education, healthcare, the environment, etc., etc.

The Campaign Finance Reform position was considered important at this time because it was felt that the recent ruling by the Supreme Court (Citizens United) will give moneyed interests even more power to control and direct the election of candidates and issues.

Attendees felt that our local League should do as much as it can to educate the public about state and local finance, campaign financing and other important positions. It also suggested the State League should update some of its older positions and add “veterans” into its Mental Health position as one of the vulnerable populations needing services.

LETTER FROM LWVUS PRESIDENT ON AFFORDABLE CARE ACT

January 20, 2011

To: Members of the U.S. Senate
From: Elisabeth MacNamara, President

Re: Support the Affordable Care Act

The League of Women Voters urges you to oppose legislation to repeal the Affordable Care Act, the comprehensive health care law passed by Congress in 2010. The League believes that the Affordable Care Act is a major step forward in guaranteeing health care for all. It has already made a difference by improving health care access and coverage for millions of Americans. Repealing it now would be a step in the wrong direction.

We have a health care crisis in America. Too many citizens lack adequate health insurance coverage and rising costs threaten everyone. Since its passage, the Affordable Care Act has brought about positive changes: children are no longer denied coverage for pre-existing

conditions, insurers can no longer impose lifetime limits on coverage, adult children can stay on their parents' health plans up until age 26, and Medicare recipients can have a number of preventive and well-care services without being charged a deductible, co-pay, or coinsurance.



The League of Women Voters believes that as provisions of the Affordable Care Act continue to be implemented, more and more Americans will have health care coverage while health care costs are reduced for individuals, businesses and communities. In contrast, the Congressional Budget Office estimates that repeal of the Affordable Care Act would add \$230 billion to the national deficit over the next ten years and leave about 54 million Americans without insurance.

As an organization that has worked for 90 years to improve government procedures, educate the electorate, and make government at all levels more accessible and responsive to citizens, we are deeply concerned that opponents of the Affordable Care Act have adopted a strategy of fear and obfuscation in attempting to repeal the law.

Medicare was enacted over strong opposition from those who opposed “socialized medicine.” Social Security was adopted despite loud and prolonged complaints. Yet, both these systems are now sacrosanct. Many other accomplishments, from civil rights to voting rights, were controversial when first adopted but have proven to be critical steps forward. The Affordable Care Act is part of that tradition.

The League of Women Voters urges you to oppose repeal of the Affordable Care Act and support health care coverage for all Americans.

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

**IT'S EASY TO JOIN THE
 LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

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

CALENDAR

DATE & TIME	EVENT	PLACE
Feb. 1 6 – 8 p.m.	New Member Orientation	5787 Highwood Rd., CV
Feb. 5 9-noon	LWV ACC Meeting	Nate Miley's Conf. Room 20999 Redwood Rd, Castro Valley
Feb. 15 5:45 – 7	LWVEA Board Meeting	San Lorenzo Village Conf Rm
Mar. 11 noon-12:30	LWVEA Luncheon Forum Hon. Betty Yee – Speaker	San Lorenzo Village Com. Hall 377 Paseo Grande, San Lorenzo

**Please visit our website for up-to-date event information—
www.lwvea.org**