



VOTER

Vol 52. No.8 *Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation* September 2009

SAVE THESE DATES--LWVEA Retreat Sets Calendar for 2009-2010

Whether you use a paper calendar or one of those new fangled electronic wizards, please enter these dates so you won't miss any of these upcoming events.

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Sept. 30 (Wednesday) 6 to 8 p.m.

NEW MEMBER WELCOME

5787 Highwood Road, Castro Valley

Not so new members are also welcome.

The League gets to know you and you get to know the League. Please note that the place has been changed from that listed in last month's VOTER.

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Oct. 10 (Saturday) 8 to 10 p.m.

SULLIVAN & GILBERT

A Musical Comedy

Douglas Morrison Theater

22311 N. Third Street, Hayward

Questions? gala05@peoplepc.com
or 537-3730.

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Oct. 22 (Thursday) 6 to 9:30 p.m.

HAYWARD VOLUNTEER RECOGNITION DINNER

LWVEA Honoree – Malca Chall

If you are interested in attending this dinner, please contact Suzanne at 538-9678 or suzbarba@comcast.net

Nov. 6 (Friday) Noon to 2 p.m.

FIXING THE STATE BUDGET PROCESS

State Treasurer Bill Lockyer has agreed to be one of our speakers at an educational forum on how to fix the state budget process

The forum will include a look at the proposed California Constitutional Convention as a way to solve the budget problem.

In addition, the Forum will include the views of California Forward which has put forth another method for how to deal with the state's dysfunctional budget process.

More information on this upcoming Forum will be published in future VOTERs. Be sure to put it on your calendar now!

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Dec. 4 (Friday) 6 to 8 p.m.

LWVEA ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY

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Jan. 23 (Saturday) 9 to noon

ACTION ON ISSUES STATE AND LOCAL LEAGUE POSITIONS

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Feb. 5 (Friday) 6 to 8 p.m.

MEET & GREET YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

No one responded to my request last month for people to participate on a Climate Change or Fixing the State Budget off-board committee. However, one member, Evelyn Gertler called me and said she would be interested in working on a committee having to do with the state of education these days.

Evelyn has been teaching for many years and I promised her that we would get others to join her on that committee because everyone realizes that well educated children are our future.

Along those same lines, the League has started planning for how we could run a Mock California Constitutional Convention at one or more of our high schools. It is a timely and important topic and it fits right into the curriculum students are learning in their government or other social studies classes.

The League could provide some of the study materials and how constitutional conventions are run. We would also monitor the event and the students would run it.

Of course we will need the permission, cooperation and some assistance from the teachers, principals and board. We realize that teachers are overwhelmed with having to cover too much content in too little time, but we hope they will agree that the topic is one that will support what they are teaching and give students a hands-on project that will be instructive and meaningful.

So if you are interested in working on this project which may or may not get off the ground, please let me know.

On another matter, I want to thank the local branch of the American Association of University Women who have graciously co-sponsored some of our events in the past—like the Climate Change Forum—and plan to do so in the future.

Suzanne Barba

BOARD BRIEFS SPECIAL MEETING

August 4, 2009

- **ELECTION OF OFFICERS** – Approved a resolution confirming the election of officers on June 25 at the Annual Meeting in order to satisfy bank guidelines for changing signators on bank records.
- **ALTERNATE REP. ON ACC** – Approved the appointment of Nancy Van Huffel to be the alternate representative from LWVEA on the LWV Alameda County Council.
- **CHANGING BANKS** - The Board approved moving LWVEA savings from the present bank to another bank that offers more interest and no fees.

Next meeting will be September 16. Board meetings are held on the third Wednesday of the month at 6 to 8 p.m. They will generally be held at the San Lorenzo Village Conference Room, 377 Paseo Grande, San Lorenzo. All League meetings are open to members and the public.

REPAIRING CALIFORNIA

Thursday, Sept. 17

9:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

Alameda County Administration Bldg.
1221 Oak Street, 5th Floor,
Board Chambers, Oakland

The Alameda County Board of Supervisors, in partnership with several other groups, will present a Town Hall Forum and discussion on "Repairing California."

The Forum is designed to work on solutions that will effectively get California back on the track—including a limited Constitutional Convention.

For more information, contact Supervisor Nate Miley's office at 272-3691.

July 16, 2009

To: Members of the House of Representatives

From: Mary G. Wilson,
President, LWWUS

Re: Comprehensive Health Care Reform Legislation

The League of Women Voters welcomes the introduction of America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009 in the House of Representatives and we urge you to support quick action on this essential legislation.

We believe that it is imperative for Congress to send real health care reform to the President for his signature as soon as possible.

America is facing a health care crisis caused by a combination of skyrocketing costs and an insurance system that leaves 47 million of us without any coverage. The current health care system is endangering both our economy and our health, and voters have made it clear that they want change.

According to a study reported in The New England Journal of Medicine, 70 percent of Americans surveyed believe the health care system needs major changes, if not a complete overhaul.

All Americans must have health care coverage, including the choice of a quality, affordable public insurance plan. It is universal coverage that will determine the humanity of our system. We believe that health care reform legislation must guarantee access to comprehensive and essential benefits to all U.S. residents.

But coverage is not enough. We need to provide for quality and safety in the health

care system. We believe that health care legislation must establish a system-wide program to coordinate information, establish best practices and provide consumers the information they need to protect themselves and their families.

It is essential that comparative data on treatments, benefits packages and medical outcomes be made publicly available so that individuals can make informed health decisions and so costs can be controlled.

The federal government needs to take additional strong action to reduce the costs of health care for individuals, businesses and communities. As a nation, we are spending \$1 out of every \$6 we earn on health care.

Over the last three decades, increases in the amount we spend on health care have consistently risen faster than wages and inflation. If nothing is done to control costs, we could be spending \$3 trillion for health care by 2011 and \$4.2 trillion by 2016.

The League believes that cost containment measures must take place in the context of overall health care reform. We must reduce or eliminate the cost-shifting that currently exists in health care financing and work to streamline the system.

Legislation must provide effective cost controls, equitable distribution of services and allow for efficient and economical delivery of care. Offering everyone the choice of a government administered health insurance plan like Medicare that would compete with private health insurance plans will be key. To achieve this kind of comprehensive, system-wide reform will take a shared effort by citizens and Congress. The League of Women Voters is ready to work with you to reach this goal.

VOTER SERVICE

Voter Service is what the League is all about. It is one of the League's most important functions and encompasses assisting potential voters to register, educating voters on the issues so they can make an informed choice, and providing candidate forums so voters can ask questions of those who are running for office.

But, it all starts with assisting potential voters to register. For many years we have supported the Registrar of Voters by placing voter registration forms (called affidavits) at places that get a lot of "foot traffic" in Hayward, Castro Valley, San Lorenzo and San Leandro.

These places are usually post offices, libraries, school district offices, the DMV, colleges, hospitals, churches and chambers of commerce offices.

During election cycles, these voter registration affidavit boxes need to be checked and refilled. The Registrar of Voters pays the League to provide this service.

Now this is the part where you come in. We need people to agree to "service" four or five of these sites—preferably in your own neighborhood—a place you might go to or pass by on your errand runs.

If you are interested in finding out more about helping the League with this important task which won't take up very much of your time, please let me know. I will send you a list of the places we service and you can let me know which ones you can visit to replenish voter registration forms.

You are also asked to call these places on a monthly basis to find out if they have enough forms on hand. That might take a few minutes a month.

If you have suggestions for other places to put these registration forms, we would be happy to know that, too.

Please call Suzanne at 538-9678 or email to suzbarba@comcast.net.

LEAGUE CLASSIFIED ADS HELP WANTED!!

Webmaster - Check out our terrific League website at www.lwvea.org. Our poor Program VP has her hands full with that job and can't do both. So if you have some skills in putting articles, newsletters and such on a website, please let us know. Our Program VP will be so happy.

Telephone Tree - Have some time to phone a list of 10-15 League members to remind them about an upcoming event?

Candidate Forums - Help with sending letters of invitation to candidates, arranging for forums, including televised ones, sorting questions from the audience, being the timer.

Observers – We need a few more people who would like to be Observers and attend governmental agency meetings to observe whether these boards and commissions are abiding by the tenets of the Brown Act. This is important work.

If you want more information on any of these positions, contact Suzanne at 538-9678 or email to suzbarba@comcast.net.

WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS Joined this past year.....

The League is happy to welcome new members: Hayward City Council members Anna May and Francisco Zermeno, Superintendent, San Lorenzo School District, Dr. Dennis Byas, and his wife Barbara Byas.

Also welcome to: Rene Besold, Heather Weston, Jennifer Ong, Kathleen Ready, Melita Santos, Sara Lamnin, Katrina McCurdy, Estelle Raderman, Helene Carr, James Sibbring, Florence Kadis, Patricia Bass, Susan Scott and Katherine Ralph.

LWVC REGIONAL WORKSHOP



The Palo Alto League invites you to learn what the League does and how it does it!

Date & Time: Saturday, October 24 - Registration 9:30 am
Workshop ends at 2:30 pm

Location: Avenidas
450 Bryant Street
Palo Alto CA
Just north of University Ave, 6 blocks east of El Camino Real

Price: \$25/person; \$30 after October 16 (\$15 if bring own lunch)

Topics: **“Tools You Can Use: A Guided Tour
of the League’s Members’ Only Web Page**

**“Redistricting and Constitutional Reform:
What’s Happening and What You Can Do To Make It Happen”**

**How Leagues are Using Their Web Sites,
Social Networking and Video to Communicate with the Public**

**Please register (and pay by credit card) at the
LWVC Members’ Only Web Page**

by October 16

**or write check payable to LWVC & mail with form to
LWV Palo Alto, 953 Industrial Ave., Ste 113, Palo Alto CA 94303**

If you have questions or need additional information please contact
LWV Palo Alto at (650) 327-9148 or lwvpa@lwvpaloalto.org

Name _____ League _____

Phone _____ Email _____

LWVUS — “LET THEM HEAR YOUR VOICES!”

Your Senators and Representative are in their district offices for Congressional recess. Now is the time to contact them on the issues that are most important to you. Health care and climate change, the League's highest priority issues, lie in the balance. When they return to Washington in September, your elected officials will determine how these issues take shape in ways that will affect our country forever. Opponents are ramping up their efforts to fight quality reform--your voice is needed more than ever.

Health Care: Contact your Senators and Representative on health care by [clicking here](#) and entering your zip code. [Click here](#) to visit the League's main health care page to learn more, and here to read the letter LWVUS sent to the [House of Representatives](#) urging reform.

Climate Change: Contact your Senators on climate change by [clicking here](#) and entering your zip code. LWVUS recently sent a letter to the [House of Representatives](#) and the [Senate](#) urging reform. [Click here](#) to visit the League's main climate change page to learn more.

To contact your Senators and Representative by phone or mail, [click here](#) and enter your zip code to find their contact information, including locations of their offices.

Please send this message on to other concerned citizens--your grassroots network, friends and coworkers.

[Sign up to receive Action Alerts or the League's e-Voice directly by email.](#) Don't miss an opportunity to take action and get educated on the issues! It's easy to sign up and the League will never share your email with others.

MEMBERSHIP DUES ARE DUE

Several weeks ago invoices were sent out for the 2009-2010 dues. So far, about half of the members have renewed. The other half either didn't receive the invoice, buried it in a pile of "things to do" or they think that they already paid—but actually haven't.

A second reminder has been emailed and hopefully, you will respond soon after you receive it.

Your dues payment ensures that you keep getting the monthly VOTER, supports our educational programs, voter registration and voter service programs.

Your dues payment supports the valuable services of the national and state Leagues.



HELP FOR CHILDREN'S HEALTH CARE SERVICES

Healthy Families, a health care program covering nearly 1 million children in California, is getting an \$81.4 million contribution from the First 5 State Commission. First 5 is funded by tobacco tax funds.

The money could provide coverage for more than 200,000 children, but probably isn't enough to keep hundreds of thousands of older children from being dropped from Healthy Families starting next month.

The program covers office visits, hospitalization, and dental and vision care for children up to 18 years old in struggling families that don't qualify for Medi-Cal.

The lost coverage is related to state budget cuts that left Healthy Families with a \$194 million shortfall for the 2009-10 fiscal year.

League Says Broken Budget Process Highlights Need for Reform

Some may view final passage of a budget deal with relief as a hoped-for end to IOUs and the decline of California's credit rating. But the **League of Women Voters of California** urges legislators and the Governor to make this moment only the beginning of a quest for reform of the state's fiscal system.



“For days, we’ve heard again and again that this budget has plenty in it for everyone to hate,” said Janis R. Hirohama, LWVC

President. “Californians deserve better than that. It’s time to mend our dysfunctional system so our budget priorities can make our state vibrant and productive once again.”

The League lays much of the blame for the failure of our finance system on the requirement of a two-thirds vote to pass a budget or raise revenues. It gives a minority the power to dictate draconian cuts to the majority by threatening to vote as a bloc against any additional revenues. In the face of an economy that has not yet bottomed out, deep cuts in services were unavoidable. However, this budget does not reflect the priorities of a majority of Californians.

We believe that a permanent solution must include a balance of new, ongoing revenues as well as reductions in programs. Instead, we have been handed a mix of cuts, borrowing, and accounting gimmicks that makes many problems worse and pushes others off to next year’s budget.

Although this budget avoids the outright elimination of important safety-net programs, it will have severe, lasting impacts on vulnerable Californians, and our schools and colleges will not easily rebound from yet another round of cuts.

Local governments, reeling from the impact of the recession on their own operations, will suffer from the burdens created by state budget decisions.

“If there is any hopeful aspect to this situation,” stated Hirohama, “it’s that momentum is building for change. A number of individuals and groups are looking at the prospects for reform, and the League believes that Californians should get informed and participate in the discussion.”

One basic reform the League supports is the elimination of two-thirds vote requirements for passing a state budget or raising taxes at the state and local levels. Allowing the majority to make these decisions will break the paralyzing grip that now makes effective government decision-making almost impossible.

Another needed reform is a more efficient tax structure that is fair and based on ability to pay, reflects the structure of California’s economy, and provides adequate revenues for the programs and services Californians want. Although revenue volatility should be addressed, there are ways to do it that do not sacrifice tax fairness. Tax expenditures—credits, deductions, and the like—also need more scrutiny and should be required to be effective, efficient, and fair.

Hirohama concluded, “We’re at a turning point in California. We can’t maintain the status quo of unreasonable budget manipulations, unsustainable cuts in services, and failure to invest in public facilities and programs.

“Without reform, we will only continue the constant, draining budget battles that erode public confidence in government, leave problems unsolved, and shatter the California dream.

“All of us—individuals and leaders—must rise to the challenge.”

Janis Hirohama, President, LWVC

CELEBRATING 89 YEARS OF A STRONGER DEMOCRACY

August 26 marked the 89th anniversary of the constitutional amendment that granted women the right to vote. The nonpartisan League of Women Voters—founded the same year women achieved this right—celebrated Women’s Equality Day by remembering this historic achievement, and looks forward to greater civic participation and healthy debate on the issues that matter most to our communities.

“On Women’s Equality Day, we take time to recognize not only the historic 19th Amendment, but the tremendous progress we’ve made over the last 89 years in expanding and protecting voting rights,” said national League president Mary G. Wilson. “But our work is not done,” Wilson continued. “As we face new and even greater challenges as a nation, the League will continue to support smart, active, local leaders who are dedicated to safeguarding democracy. These leaders are in your communities, engaging elected officials as we work together to find viable solutions.”

“The League of Women Voters believes that the hands-on work of an engaged citizenry can and does lead to civic improvement at all levels of government,” said Wilson. “Women’s Equality Day is a celebration of such a basic part of our democratic process—the right to vote—and the opportunities to channel that power into real, lasting change, starting at the grassroots level.

“As a League member, we have the opportunity to have a profound, direct and positive impact on the issues that matter most to our community, and what better day than the anniversary of the 19th Amendment to get involved?”

Mary Wilson, President, LWVUS

RIDE-SHARING TO SPARE THE AIR

LWV Bay Area Monitor Alec MacDonald

Every day in the Bay Area, solo drivers account for an astonishing 3.5 million commuting trips between home and work, contributing to highway congestion that ranks second-worst in the nation. Beyond aggravation, this also produces a lot of tailpipe emissions that lead to smog.

In order to address this problem, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District has launched a new campaign as part of its Spare the Air program to promote carpooling and ridesharing. By educating the public about this practice, the agency hopes to reduce the high number of single-occupancy vehicle trips and thereby improve air quality.

The Air District wants to impress upon rush hour drivers that adding extra passengers will allow them to enter High-Occupancy Vehicle lanes, which bypass slower traffic and save time; carpoolers in the East Bay, for example, save an average of 20 minutes crossing the Bay Bridge. And on the subject of savings, a carpooling group who splits the cost of gas saves each commuter an average of \$2,663 a year, based on a 30-mile round-trip commute.

To assist commuters in setting up or joining a carpool, the Air District recommends the 511 RideMatch Service at www.511.org. This website allows visitors to search for carpool partners, find available seats in existing vanpools, and download a map of the more than 150 free “Park & Ride” lots where ridesharing starts.

The Air District also provides details about green travel options in general at www.sparetheair.org — reminding people that in some cases, driving need not factor into the daily commute at all.



DIVERSE GROUPS AGREE TO REDISTRICTING PRINCIPLES

The League of Women Voters recently issued a [Statement of Essential Principles on Redistricting](#) supported by a diverse set of reform community leaders and activists, many of whom gathered at the Pocantico Redistricting Conference late last month. The League, in partnership with the Campaign Legal Center, convened this meeting to explore ways that the public can best participate in the redistricting process in 2011 and beyond.



"We are very pleased that such a diverse coalition of groups and individuals who have long been interested in and concerned about redistricting, have

signed in support of these essential principles," said Mary G. Wilson, national President of the League of Women Voters.

"The enunciation of [these principles](#) by the voices we brought together at the conference provides a big step forward as we move toward 2011."

"Historically, transparency has been absent in the process used by officials to design and carry out redistricting in the states," Wilson noted. "Too often those in charge have simply gathered in back rooms, away from public view, to carry out this extremely important process in our democracy.

"Members of the public must be able to see and participate in this process. Redistricting should foster the democratic principle of allowing voters to choose their elected officials rather than be a process in which we allow our elected officials to 'choose their constituents.'" said Wilson

The principles are:

- An accurate and complete count in Census 2010 is an essential building block for all redistricting efforts;

- The process used for redistricting must be transparent to the public;
- The redistricting process, at all levels of government, must provide data, tools and opportunities for the public to have direct input into the specific plans under consideration by the redistricting body; and
- In order to achieve representative democracy, redistricting plans must be drawn in a manner that allows elected bodies to reflect the diversity of the populace, especially racial and ethnic diversity.

"Our work on redistricting has already begun with projects to encourage an accurate and complete Census 2010. And the League will continue to work to form important partnerships, strategies and messaging that can have real impact on the redistricting efforts in individual states," concluded Wilson.

CALIFORNIA FAIR ELECTIONS ACT

The California Fair Elections Act (CFEA) is a measure that will appear on the June 2010 ballot creating a pilot project in 2014 and 2018 to provide voluntary public financing for candidates running for Secretary of State who qualify and comply with strict spending prohibitions.

The CFEA was put on the ballot after the legislature passed and the Governor signed AB 583 authored by Assembly Member Loni Hancock.

The Secretary of State makes an ideal test for public funding at little cost and will show how it will open up the political process for statewide elections in California. It will assure voters that this elected official guarding the integrity of elections has no need to raise private campaign contributions. CFEA is patterned after the successful clean money systems now working in Arizona, Maine and Connecticut, but is adapted for California.

League of Women Voters of Eden Area
 P. O. Box 2234 • Castro Valley, CA 94546 538-9678
 Representing the cities of Hayward and San Leandro
 and unincorporated areas of Ashland, Castro Valley,
 Cherryland, Fairview and San Lorenzo

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

Just cut out and mail this form with your check to:
 League of Women Voters of Eden Area
 Treasurer, P O. Box 2234, Castro Valley, CA 94546

Name: _____
 Address: _____
 Phone: _____
 Email: _____

DUES: Regular \$50
 Same Household \$25
 Student \$20

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 UPDATE

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| Sept. 16 from 6 to 8 p.m. | Board Meeting | San Lorenzo Village Homes Assoc. |
| Sept. 30 from 6 to 8 p.m. | New Member Welcome | 5787 Highwood Road, Castro Valley |
| Oct. 10 from 8 to 10 p.m. | Sullivan & Gilbert Musical Comedy | Douglas Morrison Theater Hayward |
| Oct. 21 from 6 to 8 p.m. | Board Meeting | San Lorenzo Village Homes Assoc |
| Oct. 22 from 6 to 9:30 p.m. | Hayward Volunteer Recognition Dinner | Centennial Hall, Hayward |
| Nov. 6 from noon to 2 p.m. | Fixing Our Broken State Budget Process – Speaker: Treas. Bill Lockyer | San Lorenzo Village Homes Assoc |

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