



League of Women Voters Eden Area

VOTER

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Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation

August 2005

LWVEA RETREAT NOTES • JULY 10, 2005

At its July 10th Retreat, the LWVEA Board reviewed the League's Mission, the role of Board members, established priorities for the year, and designed a calendar of meetings and events for 2005-06.

The Board also reviewed the Directions to the Board from the Annual Meeting in June. There was discussion about how to recruit more members and how to retain members, and what could and should be placed on the League's website.

The following are some of the actions taken by the Board:

- **Non-Partisan Policy** - the policy was reviewed with the following addition: "If a Board member plans to engage in political activity, the member must seek Board approval as to whether the activity would affect the community's perception of the League's nonpartisanship." (See complete policy pg 3.)



- **Website** – The Membership Handbook materials would be on the website. If the member did not have a computer, then it would be mailed

- **Goals and Priorities** - a summary of the suggestions contributed by Board members was distributed: (1) Develop a membership committee to design an action plan for increasing diverse membership; (2) Conduct an Educational forum on initiatives; (3) Meet Your Legislator's Event; (4) Increase portfolio involvement by holding at least six bi-monthly unit meetings focused on priorities.

- **Priorities for LWVEA** - (1) Universal healthcare; (2) Patriot Act affecting Library privacy; (3) Land Use – process and outcomes; and (4) Libraries.

LWVEA Action on "Directions to the Board " from Annual Meeting:

- ✍ Work with County League on reviewing County Boards and Commissions based on updated position and interest of Board of Supervisors.
- ✍ Put together an LWVEA Policy Manual.
- ✍ Hold a Unit meeting on Library services re Patriot Act.
- ✍ Keep informed on current Energy legislation being considered now. (We will be doing an LWVC Energy study soon.)
- ✍ Look into legislative term limits. (We will monitor and support LWVC action on this.)
- ✍ Review Governor's budget and its impact. (We will keep membership informed and put information in our VOTER.)
- ✍ Have a forum on the special election. (We will have a forum on the initiatives.)
- ✍ Determine if there is a threat to Measure D (Assign this as a portfolio issue.)
- ✍ Establish a portfolio on weapons in schools. (LWVUS issue, Establish a portfolio.)
- ✍ We need to keep focused and use unit meetings to educate. (We are trying to narrow down our priorities and are planning to reinstitute unit meeting.)

PRESIDENT'S REPORT: Housing is THE Issue.

It appears that housing is the issue for this year: How much should we have? What kind should we build? Who has it and who doesn't and what can we do to level the field? Does housing pay for its own services or is it a drain on local jurisdictions?

Housing is the premier issue this year for the State Legislature, the California League of Cities, advocacy groups for the economically challenged, environmentalists, and our local Eden Area governmental agencies. And two main questions seem to drive the issue for all: How do we provide more affordable housing to new entrants into the market so that we share the economic and social benefits of home-ownership; and how do we build sufficient housing while still protecting our environment? These are critical and important questions and participants in the discussion offer a variety of solutions.

LWVC's position states: Local land use planning should be utilized as a means to determine how local communities should change and develop consistent with state growth management policies, guidelines and standards.

- General plans should be used as a basis for zoning and other planning decisions at the local level.
- Growth management decisions should relate to and protect the overall quality of the environment.
- Local government should plan for the preservation of open space and provide for adequate parks and recreation (*LWVC--Land Use #5*).

Other questions that have to be raised if we are to have a balanced discussion: Should we provide housing for everyone that wants to live in our Bay Area; and, if so, what rights do existing residents have to their current quality of life which includes schools, traffic, noise, etc? I recognize that these two questions are not popular and lead to accusations of "nimbyism" and attempts to be exclusive.

However, as an active participant in the housing discussion throughout Alameda County, I hear and deal with the rising tide of anger and resentment from those who have worked hard to buy their own houses and to maintain their desired community quality. They believe their quality of life is being threatened by the "squeezing in" of high density units, by the influx of added population, and by the lack of control over land use issues in their communities. I believe it is time to have a balanced and honest discussion and define solutions that take into account all of the above issues.

Nancy Van Huffel, President

BOARD BRIEFS, JULY 6, 2005

- **Retreat** - The draft agenda for the LWVEA Retreat was reviewed and finalized.
- **Membership** – We have been calling to recruit more volunteers for various League jobs and portfolios
- **Libraries & Patriot Act** –concerning privacy rights and library information should be a priority for us to oppose. However, the matter is presently being debated in Congress and we don't know the outcome yet
- **Appointment of Pat Piras** to serve on the Board with the portfolio of the Local Action chair.
- **Website** – We will put the following on the website: agendas, minutes, board roster, by laws and some information from the membership handbook.
- **Binders** –a checklist was compiled of things that each board member should have in her/his binder.
- **Unincorporated Study** - the committee had a recent meeting and went over the information from the County Library staff. Jean West joined the committee.
- **Student Voter Education Project (SVEP)** The SVEP committee has had several meetings and is planning to move ahead with the program again this year.
- **Social Policy** – Beverly reported that she will be working on a committee on Juvenile Justice with Supervisor Gail Steele.
- **County Superintendent Study** –the committee has sent out letters to ten county board and superintendents who either elect or appoint their superintendent.
- **Next LWVEA Board Meeting:** Wed, August 3rd

The system that's designed not to work

By Peter Schrag –
Sacramento Bee Columnist
Published, July 13, 2005



What would the best headline have been for last week's California budget deal? "Terminator hugs girlie men." "Sacramento tears up credit card once again." "Governor un-kicks butt." "With polls down, humility rises." This isn't an exclusive list. Any number can play. Send entries to Mike Murphy, Bob White or any of the other political campaign consultants who helped the governor dig the hole he's in. Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger called it a "terrific" deal. Assembly Speaker Fabian Núñez, who helped arrange it, called it compassionate yet fiscally responsible.

In truth, it's neither. It's yet another exercise of borrow, defer and fudge, a hold-your-nose compromise in an unworkable political system that couldn't be better designed to defeat rational policy-making and planning and foster irresponsibility. The budget assures another deficit next year and promises almost nothing in the way of better schools or infrastructure in the future. The absence of new taxes is the fig leaf over the governor's diminished macho.

Neither the governor nor the legislators who approved the deal deserve all the blame. The two-thirds vote required to pass California's budgets and other fiscal legislation and the supermajorities required to raise taxes gives political minorities, usually Republicans, an effective veto power over spending, even though they rarely have to take the rap for using it. It allows the majority Democrats to pose with spending proposals that have no chance of passing. It keeps unpleasant fiscal decisions off the governor's desk.

Combine all that with the sacred cows that voters have installed in the Constitution - Proposition 13; spending limits; Proposition 98, which mandates a school spending minimum that almost no one understands; plus a list of other voter-enacted auto-spending formulas (one sponsored by Schwarzenegger himself) - and you have a parody of democracy. Call it electile dysfunction.

The governor's promised remedy for the state's convoluted governance and fiscal system is more of the same. Last year, instead of trying to make it more workable, he cut a deal with the cities and counties that locked the state's irrational property and sales tax allocations further into a scheme that encourages the mad pursuit of big-box retailers and stifles rational local planning. This year he supports a ballot measure that, in the name of reform,

replaces one part of the Proposition 98 school funding minimum with other auto-pilot spending formulas that will give the governor - any governor - and the state's political minorities still more fiscal power.

A half century ago, Louis Hartz, a political scientist at Harvard, published a book called "The Liberal Tradition in America" - liberal in the classic European sense, not to be confused with anything Rep. Tom DeLay calls liberal. In it he observed that the U.S. Constitution was created out of the Founders' mistaken belief that they had to deal with "frightful conflicts" when, in fact, the nation enjoyed a fundamental consensus. In response to those imagined conflicts, they devised "a complicated scheme of checks and balances which it is reasonable to argue only a highly united nation could make work at all." It was a system made for delay and confusion - in short, designed to work as little and as slowly as possible.

The system that's evolved in California is both similar and different. Designed by the Progressives in the first decades of the last century as a check on unresponsive or corrupt government, it's now making it even more unworkable, in part because this is not a "highly united state" and hasn't been for more than a generation. The national constitutional consensus, as Hartz says, broke down when it faced the slavery crisis but otherwise worked reasonably well, at least until recently. But in California, the checks and balances - the supermajority requirements, the spending mandates and tax limitations - are more restrictive than those in the federal constitution, and they're supposed to apply to a society that's more divided than the one Hartz wrote about.

And unlike Hartz's assumptions about 18th century America, it's plausible to say that the latter-day impulse to write ever more checks and commandments into the state constitution rests not on a mistaken belief about social and economic conflict as it did in 1787, but on accurate, if unstated, assumptions about the state's diversity.

The other day there was yet another call from an Eastern reporter asking whether California was ungovernable. The answer, as both the state's problems and the governor's proposed remedies indicate, is that we're not really sure we want to be governable, at least not sure enough to untie the knots on government, and thus on our own choices. We seem to prefer the status quo.

In the last few months even the governor seems to have learned how tight the knots are. But last week's satisfied sounds from Sacramento won't give you a clue about that.

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS of EDEN AREA--Non-Partisanship Policy

The League is able to render effective voter service and to gain support for its positions on governmental issues only by ensuring that all LWVEA members and the public understand the League policy of non-partisanship, as follows:

The League of Women Voters does not support or oppose political parties or individual candidates for elective office. (By-Laws Article II, Sec 1 and 2.) The League does take action to support or to oppose public policy issues based upon those positions and principles of government established through member studies and agreement.

League Publication and Application of Policy

1. Board members must ensure that the nonpartisan image is preserved, that what the Board does and what it says are not influenced by a party or candidate, or in support of or opposition to a party or candidate. Unintentional support or opposition is often unavoidable when a party's or a candidate's position coincides with League position.

However, Board members maintain nonpartisan attitudes at all League meetings and at all public appearances when representing the League.

a. Board members and some members highly visible to the public, such as those filling speaking engagements, are subject to special restrictions. Board members do have a special responsibility to avoid statements or actions on behalf of organizations or issues that are likely to cause public misunderstanding of the League's position.

b. A Board member who wishes to run for or hold public office, or take a major public role in partisan politics, may not remain on the Board unless granted an exception by the Board. The President and the Voters Service Director are not eligible for such an exception. Note: Any League member who becomes a candidate for elective office shall not state or imply in his/her statement of qualifications that he/she is supported by the League. However, there is no

prohibition against simply stating that he/she is a member of the League, or including the League in the list of organizations in which he/she holds membership.

c. No Board member may publicly support an issue in opposition to a League position. If a Board member believes that his/her employment may cause a conflict of interest with an issue under discussion, he/she may decline to discuss the issue and may abstain from voting.

d. If a Board member plans to engage in political activity, the member must seek Board approval as to whether the activity would affect the community's perception of the League's nonpartisanship.

2. The Board ensures that the Non-Partisanship Policy together with the positions and principles of LWVEA are printed in a local membership handbook. The local Board of Directors applies the positions and principles to current issues and determines the League's position and actions. A Board-designated person, often the President, is the spokesperson for the League.

3. Members are encouraged to carry out their responsibilities as voters, but are cautioned to use good judgment. When taking a public partisan stand, individual League members may not identify themselves as representing the League. If writing a letter to an elected official, commission, or other governmental body, the member should write as a private citizen.

a. No petitions will be circulated at LWV meetings for any candidate or on a topic where there is no LWV position of support. A league member's partisan political activity must be left outside the door of any League meeting. (Political activities of spouses and relatives of members are beyond the scope of this policy.)

Adopted: July 9, 2005

CEQA Reform

The issue of reforming the California Environmental Quality Act has become a priority with the California Resources Agency, which formed an advisory committee to propose "needed" reforms. ABAG's Regional Planning Committee held a meeting on April 6 to consider potential changes, with issues framed by the Advisory Committee consultants. The meeting, one of six to be held throughout the State, was organized and moderated by the California Center for Regional Leadership.

At the Bay Area meeting, only the Bay Area Council and the Building Industry Association presented strong arguments for substantial changes in the CEQA process, primarily to remove the procedural and legal roadblocks to getting need housing projects approved. Opponents, largely organized by the Planning and Conservation League through the Greenbelt Alliance in the Bay Area, spoke to the importance of CEQA providing a standing for community organizations to have full disclosure of information about proposed projects and a legal standing to be able to give input, have comments responded to, and to sue. Many talked about the need to provide local agencies with more money for proper planning "upstream" (i.e. prior to project proposal).

Since this involves the State government, and legislation, LWVBA has provided consultants of the LWV of California the details of our Bay Area positions and prior research on the CEQA process and the need for monitoring of mitigation of identified negative environmental impacts. As of this writing, we have not received the LWVC's position, but we can provide it to anyone who is interested – just let me know by e-mail.

Linda Craig, President, LWV Bay Area President@lwvba-ca.org

LETTER FROM KAY J. MAXWELL, LWVUS President

TO:Members of the U.S. House of Representatives

Date: June 29, 2005

RE:H.R. 1316, Repeal of Campaign Finance
Limitations

The League of Women Voters strongly urges you to oppose H.R. 1316. The legislation, reported by the House Administration Committee, is a dangerous retreat to the days of huge special interest contributions to office holders, candidates and the political parties.

H.R. 1316 repeals fundamental protections to our election process put into place by the Federal Election Campaign Act in 1974 and the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. These landmark reforms were hard-won responses to the Watergate scandals and the fundraising abuses of the 1990s. They were accomplished through years of citizen action. Americans do not want to give wealth and special interests more access to power. American citizens want more reform, not a retreat from anti-corruption safeguards.

Under the guise of reform, H.R. 1316, the so-called "527 Fairness Act of 2005," instead would roll back important safeguards. H.R. 1316 lifts the ceiling on individual contributions – allowing upwards of \$3 million to be given by a single individual -- and invites the corrupting influence of enormous campaign contributions back into elections. Members of Congress, the President and federal candidates could solicit these huge contributions and direct where they are spent.

The bill increases fundraising from corporate sources by allowing unlimited solicitations from trade associations and exposing employees and their families to repeated requests for funds. The legislation also increases by 50 percent the total amount that a political action committee (PAC) can contribute to a federal candidate for both the primary and general elections.

The legislation would repeal a key restriction enacted in 2002 to prevent the use of soft money to fund sham issue ads -- broadcast ads promoting or attacking federal candidates close to the election. Finally, the bill, by exempting the Internet from the definition of "public communications," would allow federal candidates to directly control the spending of unlimited sums of soft money on paid advertising campaigns run on the Internet.

The League of Women Voters urges you to publicly oppose H.R. 1316.

UNINCORPORATED STUDY UPDATE

Although many of our LWVEA positions were updated at the Annual Meeting in June, one position is "under construction" as some websites state. Updating a study as complicated as the Unincorporated Area position is, requires a lot of research.

Members of the committee have volunteered to use nine survey questions to ascertain what services various county agencies provide to the unincorporated area (UA), how much they spend on the UA, where the funds come from and if there are any barriers that keep the agency from fulfilling its responsibilities to the UA.

Some of the agencies/departments to be surveyed include: Library, Planning, Public Works, the Sheriff's Department, Health Services, and the County Finance Department. The County Library and Healthcare Services surveys have been completed.

When all the reports are finished and analyzed, the committee plans to hold a Unit meeting to provide information to the membership before developing an updated UA position. This position will then be reviewed by the Board, presented at the annual Planning Meeting and submitted for final approval at the LWVEA's Annual Meeting in June.

If you have any questions, contact Linda Tangren, chair of the study committee at 886-6133.

STUDY COMMITTEE UPDATE COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT POSITION—ELECTED OR APPOINTED

The Alameda County Council study committee on the "efficacy of appointing or electing a county superintendent of education," has been meeting monthly to gather information.

More than 70 letters have been sent to county boards of education and county superintendents, half of whom elect and half who appoint their county superintendent. They were asked in a survey what were the advantages of each method, how, if any, performance evaluations are done, and how they settle differences of opinion.

The committee reviewed the surveys received so far and will analyze the results when more are received. The committee will consider making presentation of its findings for each of the seven Leagues participating in the study.

For more information, contact Lynn Groh, study co-chair at 510/522-2473.

Facts, Myths, and What to Look for in HealthCare Reform.

Summary by Trish Taylor

Sheila Kuehl spoke to the LWVC membership and delegates at the Convention on May 20, 2005.
From my notes at that talk, I put together the following

Facts:

- ✍ \$160 billion spent in California on healthcare.
- ✍ \$184 billion projected cost for next year.
- ✍ 20% of Californians are still uninsured. (70 million individuals)
- ✍ 10 million have no prescription insurance.
- ✍ Half of bankruptcies are due to medical bills, 3/4 of those had insurance and still filed.
- ✍ Insurance industry looks through a 1-year profit lens, not long-term economic health of the industry.
- ✍ 30 thousand types of insurance in California alone.
- ✍ 20-30% of cost goes to administration.
- ✍ 10% predicted for administration with single-payer plan.
- ✍ 5% predicted for administration with SB840.
- ✍ It's predicted that by 2015, 1 in 4 Americans will be without insurance.
- ✍ Co-pays and deductibles are already increasing and will continue to on this current track.
- ✍ Healthcare is an increasingly large part of the GNP.

Myths:

1. *Californian/Americans receive the best health care in the world.* (The quality of healthcare received in the state and country is so varied, especially with 20% uninsured, that to assess ours as the best in the world is not a rational conclusion.)
2. *Single payer healthcare system is socialized medicine.* (Doctors, hospitals, clinics, DDS, physical therapists, eye doctors, chiropractors, etc., all still would be private, for-profit businesses. They would simply be reimbursed by a single entity rather than many different insurance companies. Decisions would be made by medical personal.)
3. *California doesn't do a good job of running the education system. How could it manage healthcare any better?* (VA hospitals are federal, but a very good example of a system which retired service personnel consistently choose over community and for-profit facilities for medical attention.)

What to Look For in Healthcare:

Any doctor, DDS, hospital, etc.
(No lists of authorized deliverer.)
Residency (NOT employment) as base for eligibility.
(Establish residency similarly to college entrance.) (Change jobs, no change in coverage.)

No pre-existing condition rules.
Preventative care emphasis.
Primary care, family doctor.
1 system of medical records throughout the entire network of doctors, hospitals, DDS, etc.
1 system of financing and accountability.

Oversight board with a preponderance of doctors.
Kaiser type systems like the plan.
Not financed through state budget (not dependent on budget.)

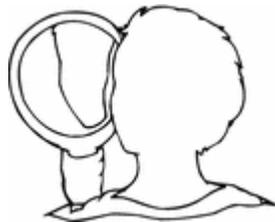
LWVEA WEBSITE GOOD RESOURCE

If you haven't visited our LWVEA website, we hope you will do so and bookmark it as a handy place to get good information.

The website has our VOTER so you can forward it to friends. It has a calendar of events, community news, websites for local government and elected officials, and links to other local and state Leagues.

The site is www.lwvea.org. Try it, you'll like it. We would also know what you would like to see added. There is a place to contact us on the site.

YOU WOULD LOOK GOOD IN A PORTFOLIO— HONEST



Soon, League Board members will be calling people on the membership list to find out what issues interest them or what skills they may have that would help our League continue its important work.

Some of our portfolios are held by Board directors, but some portfolios are issue oriented and can do most of their work “off board.” They can gather others of the same interest or expertise and meet to discuss issues when and where they find convenient.

For example, the members who are interested in education may want to have meetings to discuss the No Child Left Behind Act, Charter Schools, School Finance or the upcoming legislation to provide preschool for all. The group may come up with some type of action, based on a League position, that they want the local League to do—write a letter, testify, visit legislators, etc. Or they may want to host a unit meeting to have a larger discussion on the issue.

So if you are interested in universal healthcare, county/city land use, library, transportation, campaign finance reform, the environment, energy, water quality, open government—contact Patricia “Trish” Taylor who will be coordinating portfolios this year. Trish can be reached at 510/886-1711. Or you can wait until we call you to say “yes.”

Other Needs

The League is also recruiting for members to:

- join a committee to develop a membership recruitment and retention plan.
- work with a database to keep track of members and make mailing labels.
- assist at candidate forums such as timekeeper, question taker, moderator.
- distribute LWV Pros and Cons before election time at various sites in the Eden Area.
- register voters at various sites.
- check voter registration affidavit boxes to make sure that there are enough forms.

- learn the pros and cons of all or some of the upcoming initiatives and be able to give presentations in the community for various organizations.
- take digital photos to be used in our VOTER newsletter.
- layout the information for the VOTER newsletter.
- label and take VOTER to the post office.
- call and remind members about forums and events—telephone tree caller.

And More Needs

There are still a few open spots on the Board of Directors. If you would like to participate on the board, contact Nancy Van Huffel at 276-4554 X6. The Board meets the first Wednesday of the month from noon to 1:30 p.m. at the San Lorenzo Village Homes Association Community Hall.

STUDENT VOTER EDUCATION PROGRAM GEARING UP

Under the leadership of Patricia “Trish” Taylor, the Student Voter Education Program (SVEP) committee has been meeting to plan a continuation of this important and successful program.

Trish shared some letters from teachers who hosted college students trained by LWVEA into their classrooms to educate and encourage students who are future voters to take voting rights seriously.

The college students are being recruited again from Chabot Community College AmeriCorps and student government leaders with the assistance of Vanessa Cormier, Chabot administrator.

The committee hopes to expand the program into more classrooms in time for the November 2005 election. The committee is also recruiting League members to go into the classrooms with students as back up and to share giving the presentation.

If you are interested in working on the committee, getting trained to go into the classroom with the voting presentation and assisting, please contact Trish Taylor at 510/886-1711.

League of Women Voters of Eden Area

P. O. Box 2234 – Castro Valley, CA 94546, Phone: 510/538-9678

E-Mail: lwvea@aol.com MONTHLY PUBLICATION

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.

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.

August

- 3 LWVEA Board Meeting 12:00pm -1:30 pm**
San Lorenzo Village Community Hall

September

- 7 LWVEA Board Meeting 12:00pm -1:30 pm**
San Lorenzo Village Community Hall

- 24 Know Your Bay Area Day**
Protecting and Reforming CEQA
Fremont Library—10am-1pm

October

- 5 LWVEA Board Meeting 12:00pm -1:30 pm**
San Lorenzo Village Community Hall
- 7 Initiative Debate**

HAVE A QUESTION?

CONTACT A LWVEA BOARD MEMBER

- Nancy VanHuffel – President
562-4473 or lwvea@aol.com
- Trish Taylor – VP Admin
886-1711 or taylorfm@sbcglobal.net
- Jo Murdach – VP Membership
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- Suzanne Barba – Secretary
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537-6722 or gaylords51@aol.com
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- Eleanor Parker – Historian
925-837-2905 or eliparker@sbcglobal.net
- Pat Piras—Local Action Chair
278-1631 or piras@ix.netcom.com
- Beverly Reiford – Social Policy
887-0671 or relifordb@aol.com
- Angelina Reyes – Voter Service
583-4405 or angier@ci.hayward.ca.us

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