



League of Women Voters Eden Area

V O T E R

Vol. 53 No. 2 *Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation* Feb. 2010

MEET YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS AND CELEBRATE

NATIONAL LEAGUE'S 90TH ANNIVERSARY

**Friday, February 5
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.**

Hayward City Hall
Foyer and Board Chambers

Join us and meet your elected officials who represent the Eden Area—Board of Supervisors, City Councils, School Districts and Special Districts.

also meet

Senator Ellen Corbett and
Assemblymember Mary Hayashi

In addition, we will be celebrating the National League's 90th Anniversary—an organization born of the suffrage movement and dedicated to "making democracy work.

To RSVP, email LWVEA@aol.com

EDUCATION—FINANCING AND LEGISLATIVE IMPACT--

TOPIC FOR FIRST BROWN BAG LUNCH

The League will kick off its first Brown Bag Lunch series with a discussion on:

- how school district's are handling their financial crisis as the result of the changes in the State Budget, and
- the impact on local school districts of the state legislation passed in order to meet the requirements of the federal Race to the Top program and receive additional funding.

Leading the discussion will be Jo Loss, President of the State PTA and a long-time Castro Valley School District Board member with Debbie Look, CA State PTA Director of Legislation.

February 19 Noon to 1:30 p.m.

San Lorenzo Village
Community Conference Room
377 Paseo Grande, San Lorenzo

Bring your own brown bag lunch
or sandwich/salad \$5.00
(if you RSVP by 2/17/10)

Please RSVP to LWVEA@aol.com

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Happy 90th Anniversary to the League of Women Voters of the United States—celebrating a long history of “making democracy work.”

In the past nine decades, the League has continued to educate and inform voters on important issues that impact their lives and their communities.

The League remains a strong voice in influencing policy and decision makers.

From the spirit of the suffrage movement and the shock of the first World War, came a great idea. The idea that a nonpartisan organization could provide political education and experience that would educate the public about the issues of government and ensure the success of democracy. The League of Women Voters was founded on that idea.

At the first League convention, 69 separate items were voted on as a statement of principles and recommendations for legislation. Among them was protection for women and children, rights of working women, food supply and American citizenship.

In the 1930's, League members worked successfully for enactment of the Social Security and Food and Drug Safety Acts.

During the postwar period, the League helped lead the effort to establish the United Nations. It focused on individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution and directed its energies to equality of opportunity. It built a solid foundation of support for equal access to education, employment and housing.

The League was in the forefront of the struggle to pass the Voting Rights Act Amendments and contributed significantly to the enactment of the Tax Reform Act, the Arms Control Act, and ratification of the Intermediate Nuclear Forces Treaty.

There is probably no other national volunteer organization in America that inspires such a great degree of

commitment from its members. The League has evolved from what it was in 1920—a political experiment designed to help 20 million newly enfranchised women carry out their new responsibilities—to what it is today: a unique, nonpartisan organization that is a recognized force in molding political leaders, shaping public policy, and promoting informed public participation at all levels of government.

I hope you will join me in congratulating the League of Women Voters of the United States as it celebrates its 90th year of “making democracy work” for all of us.

Suzanne Barba

Board Briefs –Jan. 20, 2010

- Membership - It was reported that we have 131 Active members and that the MGIK goal is to increase membership 5%. Discussed partnering with other groups with a similar mission as a way to increase our membership.
- Ranked Choice Voting – Representatives from the three Leagues—Oakland, Berkeley and San Leandro—spoke at the city council meeting in favor of implementing RCV in San Leandro. Leagues will help with educating the public about RCV and work with the Registrar of Voters in getting the information to the public.
- SmartVoter – Received a thank you letter from SmartVoter for the \$500 donation the Eden Area League made.
- Homeowner Association Election – Thanks to ten members who assisted with assembling ballots, 1608 were mailed out to Palomares residents.
- Brown Bag Lunches – Suggestion to do one on the recent legislation passed on education and its impact on local school districts.

- Change Annual Meeting Date – The Board agreed to change the annual meeting date from June 5 to June 19 to avoid the last minute election activity and National Convention date.

The next Board meeting will be Feb. 17 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the San Lorenzo Village Conference Room. All League meetings are open to the public.

Meet New Member: June Ann Cook by Connie Rusk

June Ann Cook decided to join our League after attending a recent program on climate change at Chabot College.

"It impressed me so much," she said. I thought that I should learn more about such issues, and about politics, and the League looked like the place to start."

She spent nine years developing a junior golf program, teaching, writing grants and bringing in a diverse group of experts and role models to inspire young people. This work ultimately gained her a place in the Alameda County Athletic Hall of Fame. "At the award ceremony, I dedicated the honor to my mother who died in 2008," she related.

"Kids will learn and listen. It only takes one person to influence them," is her philosophy. She holds a bachelor's degree in International Relations from San Francisco State University, and a master's in sports psychology from JFK University. One of her students will soon graduate from West Point. "Not bad for a kid from inner-city Oakland."

Now she's working as a consultant to businesses and athletes on goal setting. "They have similar goals. Business people want financial success, and athletes want to win a game, a season, an award. Both enjoy the fun of the game." The league is an inspiration to her. "I want to be strong and wise like the women I have met in the League," she said.

SUPREME COURT DECISION SETS OFF REVOLUTION IN CAMPAIGN FINANCE-- *Court Erred, Decision Undermines Basic Pillar of Democracy*

Washington, DC –The following is a statement by Mary G. Wilson, national president of the League of Women Voters on the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United v. FEC*. The League filed an amicus brief in this case:

"The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake. Their decision announced today in *Citizens United v. FEC* is onstitutionally irresponsible and will surely bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. Today, basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined – that elections should not be corrupted by vast corporate wealth and that the voters should be at the center of our democratic system.

"Justice Stevens had it right when he said, in his dissent, 'The Court's ruling threatens to undermine the integrity of elected institutions across the Nation. The path it has taken to reach its outcome will, I fear, do damage to this institution.'" "In creating a new constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of their shareholder's money to determine the outcome in candidate elections, the Court has unleashed into our elections tremendous sums of money from for-profit corporations that cannot possibly be matched in quantity by contributions from ordinary citizens.

The only possible outcome of this is that big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy. "Congress and the President enacted campaign finance laws over a series of decades for a reason – to protect our democracy from the perverse influence of big money in our elections. In making this decision, the Court has ignored the best interests of the American public and our representative form of government."

PROGRAM PLANNING RECAP

The Program Planning meeting on January 23, was completed successfully thanks to the 19 members—some veterans, some new—who came out on a rainy Saturday morning to participate in perhaps, one of the most important meetings that Leagues hold.

Program Planning is focused on the positions on issues at all levels—national, state, Bay Area and local. It is a time when Leagues review these positions to make sure they are relevant, need updating, should be used to educate or advocate or to prioritize what action should be taken.

Most of these positions are based on two or more years of study, input by experts in the field, and final consensus.

The group came to consensus on two of the 75 LWVUS positions—Health Care and Climate Change for continued public education and advocacy.

Attendees also reviewed three proposed studies, which were submitted by three other Leagues who recommended that the LWVUS consider them for study. None of the three were approved although most were considered important issues.

One was to study the Federal Role in Education. The group felt that education is a local and state issue and should be dealt with on that level.

A second was to consider a Peace Department at Cabinet Level. Although there were some favorable opinions, it was agreed that the proposal was not written clearly and it was hard to determine what this position would do.

A third was to consider Adult Civic Literacy. Again, the participants thought this was a commendable idea, but the proposal was not clear on how it was to be accomplished and that some local Leagues are already working on this.

The Bay Area League's positions were reviewed and no changes suggested. The attendees approved the

LWVBA proposed plans for monitoring, education and advocacy for 2010-2011.

Our local League's positions were also reviewed and it was agreed that we should update our Mental Health position. There was also consensus that we should implement some of the items in our Boards and Commissions position such as finding out and publicizing appointed position vacancies that Boards and Commissions have.

There was also a recommendation to establish a committee to discuss State and Local Finance issues. Volunteers included Nancy Van Huffel, Sara Lamnin, Rene Besold, Evelyn Gertler and Shelia Young.

Thank you to Nancy Van Huffel who coordinated the Program Planning event including the delicious breakfast and printing of materials. Also thanks to Eleanor Parker, June Cook and Rene Besold who helped with the room set up and distribution of materials. Rene also contributed her time and talents to developing the Leagopoly exercise.

Suzanne Barba

FEB. 12. DEADLINE TO APPLY FOR CA CITIZENS REDISTRICTING COM—

Are you a good listener? Are you a leader in your community? Can you be impartial? Do you have experience working with diverse communities? Do you have strong analytical skills? If you answered yes, then you should apply to a seat on the California Citizens Redistricting Commission. The deadline is Feb. 15.

Basic qualifications are: you must be a registered voter in California for at least the last five years with the same party; you must have voted in at least two of the last three statewide general elections; and you must have relevant analytical skills, be impartial, and appreciate California's diversity. For more information and to view the application form, go to www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov.

CONGRESS MUST FINISH HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION *League Urges Quick Response to Nation's Health Care Crisis*

Washington, DC –The following is a statement by Mary G. Wilson, national president of the League of Women Voters, on the fight for health care reform legislation in America.

“We have a health care crisis in America. Too many citizens lack adequate health insurance coverage and rising costs threaten everyone. The failure of Congress to act on these issues over decades has simply compounded the problems and undermined faith in government.

“The League of Women Voters urges our elected members of Congress to finish work on health care reform and send a bill quickly to the President for his signature. While many of the provisions of the House bill are preferable to those in the Senate version, we believe that the House of Representatives should step forward and pass the Senate bill.

“Both the House and Senate have now passed comprehensive health care legislation, and the bills share many essential elements: they greatly expand health care coverage to include millions more Americans; they protect the coverage that currently delivers care to most; they contain essential elements to reduce costs over the long term; and they achieve these goals at a fair cost.

“Opponents of health care reform, however, have been irresponsible in adopting a strategy of fear, delay and obfuscation. They have misled and lied about the provisions of the legislation and have relied on the 60-vote rule of the Senate to block progress. These fundamentally anti-democratic tactics cannot be allowed to prevail.

“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 environmental protection, were controversial when first adopted but have proven to be critical steps forward. Health care reform is part of that tradition.

“We understand that there may be a number of ways for health care reform to succeed. None of these possibilities will accomplish all that needs to be done, and Congress will need to revisit many issues in coming years. But any of these alternatives moves us toward successful health care reform and thus is better than the status quo. Congress should not miss this historic opportunity to enact comprehensive health care reform legislation.”

FAIR ELECTION ACT IS FIRST STEP FROM ABYSS, *Janis R. Hirohama, LWVC Pres*

Recent polls tell us that the Legislature's and governor's approval ratings are at record lows, but we don't need surveys to tell us that California has increasingly become a state that fails to represent the will of our people. We see it every day in our crumbling infrastructure, our failing schools and our packed emergency rooms. And now Sacramento has passed a budget that will put the California Dream further out of reach for a large swath of Californians. With the nation facing its deepest recession in decades, it was inevitable that our state would be forced to make painful choices to balance the budget. But the budget passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor is nothing short of disastrous, with average Californians left to shoulder most of the burden.

We've been handed a budget of cuts, borrowing and accounting gimmicks. This latest budget will decimate our safety net by making massive cuts to vitally important health and human services programs, and our public schools and colleges - the building blocks of California's golden age of prosperity - will be gutted. We've mortgaged our future.

An antiquated requirement for a two-thirds supermajority vote in the Legislature to pass a budget is partially responsible for bringing California to this point. This requirement - which only two other states have - allows a small minority of lawmakers to dictate the terms of the debate. It leads to budget gridlock. And it gives special interests the ability to co-opt the public interest by influencing just a small fraction of legislators.

But this broken budget process is merely a symptom of a broader problem. We need change in Sacramento.

The League of Women Voters, one of the state's oldest government reform organizations, has long advocated eliminating the outdated two-thirds vote requirement. And we will continue to champion sensible reforms such as the California Fair Elections Act, which will appear on the June 2010 ballot to reduce the influence of the special interests that use money to buy power in Sacramento.

Our current campaign finance system forces even the most well-intentioned elected officials to spend far too much of their time raising money from wealthy private donors and corporate interests, to the detriment of good public policy. At the conclusion of the legislative session this August - the very same time the fate of hundreds of bills will be decided in Sacramento - the money-raising frenzy will again kick into high gear.

If anything positive can come from this most recent budget fiasco, it's the growing awareness by Californians of the need for structural reform in the way our government operates.

Californians know the current campaign finance system doesn't have enough safeguards against the outside influence of special interests, and the dysfunctional budget just passed in Sacramento gives us all the more reason to do something about it. We must start by passing the California Fair Elections Act in June 2010.

The California Fair Elections Act is based on the simple notion that elected officials should be accountable to the voters, not donors. Authored by Sen. Loni Hancock, D-Oakland, and signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the initiative would establish a voluntary pilot project that allows candidates running for California secretary of state in 2014 and 2018 to qualify for public financing if they agree to strict spending prohibitions and can show they have a broad base of support by raising a large number of \$5 contributions.

The program would be funded primarily by fees on lobbyists, lobbying firms and lobbyist employers, with no taxpayer dollars going to candidates. The California Fair Elections Act represents the kind of change our state needs and voters want. It is an important first step toward breaking the toxic tie between campaign cash and public policy.

Ultimately, by implementing a fair elections system we can help ensure that California gets a government made up of public-spirited lawmakers who are looking out for the interests of their constituents rather than the interests of their donors - in short, the government that California deserves.

WATER, WATER EVERYWHERE BUT NOT.....

Leaguers are invited to attend a timely forum on "The California Water Plan: from Bottled Water to the State Water Bond." It will be held on Thursday, February 18 at 7 p.m. at the Westminster Presbyterian Church, 27287 Patrick Ave,

Hayward, sponsored by the Hayward Demos Club.

The featured speaker is Adam Scow, who currently serves on the planning committee for the annual California Water Policy Conference sponsored by Public Officials for Water and Environment Reform. He holds a Political Science degree from U.C. Berkeley.

League of Women Voters Files Amicus Brief Opposing Prop8

SACRAMENTO, CA – The League of Women Voters of California filed an amicus brief with the California Supreme Court supporting the legal challenge against Proposition 8. Proposition 8 amends the California Constitution to provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. The legal challenge to Proposition 8, which passed on November 4, 2008, seeks to invalidate the proposition. Among those spearheading the challenge are the City and County of San Francisco, the County of Santa Clara, the City of Los Angeles, the County of Los Angeles, and numerous individual Californians.

LWVC President Janis R. Hirohama said: “The League believes that Proposition 8 is unconstitutional and should be invalidated. It sets a dangerous precedent by singling out a particular group and depriving that group of a fundamental right. In doing so it threatens the rights of us all.” The League’s amicus brief argues that Proposition 8 is an invalid amendment to the California Constitution because it violates the overriding, fundamental constitutional principles of protection of equality and human dignity. The League also argues that Proposition 8 does not apply retroactively to invalidate same-sex marriages that took place before the measure took effect,

because there is no clear indication of voter intent that it apply retroactively.

The LWVC has long opposed measures that threaten individual rights, including Proposition 22 in 2000, which also limited marriage to only being between a man and a woman. “We oppose Proposition 8 because we believe in protecting individual rights and no person or group should suffer legal discrimination,” said Hirohama. The law firm of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP provided pro bono representation to the League in the filing of the amicus brief.

ELECTION SEASON IS UPON US

The election season is heating up. As we all know, the League never supports or opposes candidates, however, it does conduct candidate forums so that the public may come to see and hear candidates in order to make an informed decision on how they wish to vote. We also inform candidates about Smart Voter, an online service where they can post their candidacy and campaign information for free.

There will be elections for two County Board of Supervisor seats that represent the Eden Area, other County offices and the City of Hayward. There are also elections for State Assembly in District 18 and State Senate for District 10.

We will be doing pro and con presentations on the ballot measures and usually conduct trainings for those who would like to participate in this important program. For candidate forums we will need moderators, timers, and question runners.

For pros and cons, we will need presenters to participate in a training and then present the pro and con information on the propositions to various local groups who ask for our services. So if you are interested in participating in candidate forums or pros and cons presentations, please contact Nancy Van Huffel at lwvea@aol.com.

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, and San Lorenzo

IT'S EASY TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Just cut out and mail this coupon with your check to:
League of Women Voters of Eden Area
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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.*

CALENDER OF EVENTS

DATE & TIME

EVENT

PLACE

Feb. 5,
5:30 to 7:30 p.m.

Meet Your Elected Officials
& LWVUS 90th Celebration

Hayward City Hall

Feb. 17
6 to 8 p.m.

LWVEA Board Meeting

San Lorenzo Village Assoc.
Board Room

Feb. 18
7 p.m.

Forum on CA Water Issues

Westminster Church
27287 Patrick, Hayward

Feb. 19
Noon to 1:30 p.m.

Brown Bag on Education

San Lorenzo Village Assoc.
Conference Room

Cannot attend the Meet Your Elected Officials and LWVUS 90th Anniversary?
No worries...It will be broadcast live on Comcast's government channel and
replayed throughout the month. Contact us at lwvea@aol.com for more details.

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