

FOOD FIGHT – LWVUS Agriculture Position Update Feb 28 (Friday) 6-8 pm. Place TBD

The LWVUS has asked local and state Leagues to participate in an update study of its present position on Agriculture, considering the many changes that have occurred in the field since it was adopted in 1988.

The update study will focus on: current technology issues in agriculture including genetically modified organisms (GMO's), herbicides, pesticides, water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock and accurate food labeling.

The following is the LWVUS agricultural policy history by Gretchen Knell

In 1986, the League undertook a two-year study on the role of the federal government in US agricultural policy, examining elements of federal farm program. The resulting 1988 position supports agricultural policies for sustainable agriculture and action to reduce the use of toxic chemicals on the farm.

The position supports “decoupling” (moving away from direct payments based on production) as consistent with the strong League consensus in favor of greater reliance on the free market to determine prices. The League does not envision total reliance on the free market to determine agriculture prices. In assessing programs that move agriculture toward greater reliance on the free market, consideration would include problems peculiar to agriculture, such as severe climate or natural disasters. In 1989, the League opposed legislation that would have preempted stricter state laws on the regulation of pesticides. In 1990, it urged the House to pass a farm bill that would protect land and water resources, reduce the use of toxic chemicals and target research and technical assistance to developing

environmentally sound agriculture practices.

The League called for measures to strengthen conservation provisions and for national standards of organic production and opposed the export of pesticides that are illegal in the United States.

LWVEA Local Study to Update LWVUS Agriculture Position



There was consensus at the recent Program Planning group meeting on January 25, to participate in this LWVUS update study.

Eleven members signed up at that meeting, but we welcome anyone else who would like to join the study group. We plan to have one meeting to come to consensus on questions that LWVUS has provided. We will put these questions on the LWVEA website and email copies to group members.

LWVUS has also recommended many articles for study group members to read ahead of time. The resource documents and websites are listed on the following page.

Or you can access them at <http://www.lwv.org/member-resources/agriculture-update>

**If you would like to attend the
Agriculture Update Study
committee meeting on Feb. 28,
please contact Suzanne at
510-538-9678 or
suzbarba@comcast.net**

Agriculture Update Study: Suggested Readings

Documents

1. The administration's perspective on the key agricultural policy issues that need to be addressed in 2013 as reported in *Challenges and Opportunities in U.S. Agriculture* (Chapter 8 of the *Economic Report of the President- 2013*). The document can be downloaded in PDF using the following link:

<http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/granule/ERP-2013/ERP-2013-chapter8/content-detail.html>

2. A Union of Concerned Scientists policy brief entitled *The Healthy Farm: A Vision for U.S. Agriculture*. This is an 8-page position statement by the UCS and is, therefore, not entirely neutral.

http://www.ucsus.org/assets/documents/food_and_agriculture/The-Healthy-Farm-A-Vision-for-US-Agriculture.pdf

3. Article from *Scientific American* entitled *Will Organic Fail to Feed the World?* The article presents a summary of a recent analysis of 66 studies comparing conventional and organic methods for 34 different crop species.

<http://www.scientificamerican.com/article.cfm?id=organic-farming-yields-and-feeding-the-world-under-climate-change&page=2>

Websites

1. *Know Your Farmer* is a site supported by USDA in their effort to inform the public about local food systems.

http://www.usda.gov/wps/portal/usda/usda/home?navid=KYF_RESOURCES

2. The National Sustainable Agriculture Council supports the promotion of "sustainable" agriculture. Although the materials on their website do support their mission, we find that their articles are well documented and do a good job of following Farm Bill legislative efforts that

would help or hinder the sustainable agriculture movement.

<http://sustainableagriculture.net/about-us/what-is-sustainable-ag/>

3. The "Food Dialogues" is a creation of the U.S. Farmers and Ranchers Alliance and brings together thought leaders and practitioners from all points of view for moderated, civil webinar discussions. It could be characterized as presenting the "farmer/rancher" point of view; but in moving around the site it becomes clear that there is no "single" farmer/rancher point of view. Facebook page:

<http://www.fooddialogues.com/>