

## First in a series of informative articles for an Update of the LWVC Energy Position

### KEEPING CALIFORNIA'S LIGHTS ON The League and Energy



electricity systems in California and their governance.

The LWVC recognizes that a full study of Energy would cover more than electricity. However, due to the timeliness and complexity of questions relating to Electrical Energy, and due to limited resources, the delegates at the 2003 Convention instructed that this Update should be restricted to

For one startling moment at LWVC convention 2003, the lights went out all over the auditorium. And for a long hot summer in 2001, the threat of rolling blackouts was part of the daily life of all Californians. And although the West Coast has not had a major multi-state transmission outage since August 1996, the August 2003 blackout of the eastern U.S. and Canada only serves to point up our vulnerability.

All of these warnings point up the crucial need in this new century to find the **best way to secure and deliver an adequate and reliable supply of electricity for our state. This needs to be done in a way that respects the social and natural environment.** New decisions will be made in Sacramento and in our local communities; new sources of energy and new techniques of delivering it will continue to evolve. The League must be in a position bring its principles to bear on public energy policy. Unfortunately, our Energy Position was last updated in 1980—a quarter of century ago! In its day it was a thoughtful position. Today we are critically aware of its limitations.

Our 1980 Position permits us to speak only on :

- **Conservation**
- **Public health and safety**
- **Environmental protection**
- **Renewable sources**
- **Siting of facilities**

- **Tax incentives for conservation and renewables**

This leaves a **number of areas that we have not studied in sufficient depth to be able to comment.** Before 2001 there was little concern in California about a shortage of generation capacity and of transmission facilities. Then came a *“perfect storm”* which peaked in 2001—drought in the northwest, extreme heat in the southwest, excessive and unregulated prices of natural gas from out of state, bottlenecks in related markets, unexpectedly high business growth in the technology sector, and a flawed attempt at deregulation. Through this experience we gained a new perspective on energy questions. We now see many additional areas calling for an updated Energy Position. We need to be able to address:

- **Integration of energy policy – from production to transmission to delivery**
- **Re-regulation or de-regulation - or something else**
- **State and federal regulatory conflicts**
- **Differing roles of investor-owned utilities (IOUs) and public utilities**
- **Issues of social equity**
- **Role of the public in planning**
- **Direct access for some users**
- **Distributed energy resources (DER)\***
- **Emerging sources of energy--solar, wind, fuel cells and more**

During the coming months we will be producing a series of articles expanding on all of these questions. We hope you will read them thoughtfully and bring **your light** to the League by joining in the Study to Update the LWVC Energy Position.

\*Distributed energy resources are small-scale power generation facilities (typically in the range of 3 to 10,000kW) located close to where electricity is used (e.g., a home or business) to provide an alternative to or an enhancement of the traditional electric power system.