



League of Women Voters Eden Area

VOTER

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Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation

October, 2005

REMINDER MEMBERSHIP LUNCH PRO & CON DISCUSSION

Friday, October 7
Noon to 2 p.m.

**San Lorenzo Village Community Hall
377 Paseo Grande, San Lorenzo**

Don't miss the League's presentations on the Pros and Cons of each of the eight propositions that will be on your ballot for the November 8 special election.

There has already been lots of campaigning on both sides of each of these issues which can be confusing to voters. This year, as in years past, there are dueling propositions such as the two on Drug Prescriptions and some that are asking voters to make changes on complex issues such as the expansion of the Public Utilities Commission's powers.

Hopefully, after hearing both sides of each issue and receiving a copy of the LWVC Pros and Cons, you will have the information on which to take action at the polls.

Luncheon cost is \$10. New members who join at luncheon, the cost is \$5. If you haven't RSVP'd yet, call Suzanne at 538-9678 or email lwvea@aol.com

SPECIAL LWV EDUCATIONAL FORUM ON PROP 76 – “Live within our Means” SCHOOL FUNDING, STATE SPENDING CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT

**Monday, Oct. 17, 7 to 9 p.m.
San Lorenzo Village Community Hall
(between fire department and SLZ library)**

Advocates such as Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger and the California State Association of Counties believe that if the proposition passes it will balance the State budget without raising taxes; promote bipartisan cooperation between the Governor and Legislature; eliminate wasteful spending; and provide more money for roads, health care, law enforcement, and other critical programs.

Opponents including forum speakers Assembly-member Johan Klehs and Chabot-Los Positas College District Trustee, Isobel Dvorsky, believe that if the Proposition passes, it will cut funding for health care, police, and fire; overturn Prop 98, which mandates a minimum for school funding; and undermine our democratic system of checks and balances by giving the Governor new powers.

We have invited a distinguished panel of experts to discuss the pros and cons of Prop 76. Come and listen to their perspectives and decide for yourself.

This free forum is open to the public. Rides, refreshments, and babysitting will be provided. Questions -- Call Suzanne at 538-9678, Need a ride or/babysitting services call Trish Taylor at 886-1711.

Funding for this forum is made possible by the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund to the Eden Area LWV through a grant by the William & Flora Hewlett Foundation

PRESIDENT'S REPORT—Nancy Van Huffel

Last weekend I attended “Know Your Bay Area Day” sponsored by the Bay Area League. The topic was Reforming the California Environment Quality Act: How Has it Worked, Does It Need to Be Changed? There were excellent speakers and panelists, all very knowledgeable in their field. Many relevant items were discussed and received good discussion by the group. However, as someone who has reviewed EIRs, I was disappointed that one critical topic was not addressed.

The California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) requires City or County planning departments to evaluate whether proposed development and other types of projects will have any significant adverse environmental impacts, and whether or not identified impacts can be mitigated. In order to provide sufficient detail to local agencies and the affected communities for this review, CEQA mandates the preparation of an “Environmental Impact Report” (EIR).

In Alameda County, EIR's are generally prepared by private consulting firms rather than by Planning Staff directly; and the County process provides that the entity/applicant proposing the project must pay for the EIR. This leads to an inherent and unintentional conflict of interest built into the process.

EIR's are part science and part art: data is collected and provides the “hard” facts, but then these facts and the interrelationships among them must be interpreted, which is a subjective process and open to the perspectives and biases of the preparer. Thus, it is logical that developer/applicants want to hire consultants that are most likely to write favorable reports on their projects; and EIR firms must walk a fine line between the CEQA requirements and intent and getting future business from developers.

In my experience with Alameda County, the same consulting firms are used again and again because of this relationship. The situation can be addressed to some degree by continuing to require that applicants pay for preparation of the EIR; having the County maintain a list of qualified environmental firms (refreshed every 3 years through a competitive process); and by assigning the next firm on the list to a new project as it comes up.

This approach requires a proactive, professional, and resource-intensive participation from County Planning staff – they must be the managers of the EIR process and assume direct responsibility for quality control on the final report. EIR firms may have a more difficult time getting project details from applicants and will have to assume more responsibility for finding the site-related and site-impact information. However, these changes will give us better EIR's and provide the community with less biased and more complete information on proposed projects.

I believe that the League's commitment to open public processes and full disclosure in public-decision-making make this improvement in the County EIR process a clear objective for our efforts, and worth expending our limited resources in the coming year.

BOARD BRIEFS 9/7/ 2005

Discussed upcoming televised candidate forum for Hayward School District Board—four candidates. Angie will get date from Comcast.

Request received for a presentation on Castro Valley School District Bond Measure for June 2006. We would like a pro and con on the measure.

Reviewed requests for presentation of LWVC Pros and Cons. Angie will contact presenters and set a date for a training.

Recommended we seek more sites to place affidavit boxes with voter registration forms.

Planned luncheon forum for Oct. 7 on the pros and cons of the eight ballot measures. Four presenters will be used.

Discussed planning for evening forum on Oct. 17 to debate Prop 76 on State Spending ballot measure. Nancy will contact possible speakers.

Voted to participate as a co-sponsor for AAUW Health Fair in February 2006.

Approved request for \$250 to purchase incentive items with League logo on them for increasing membership.

Reviewed request for voter registration at 4 C's Fair and Harmony Festival in Hayward.

Next Meeting, October 5.

MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

At the last Board Retreat, a membership goal was set at 200. We were at 160 then and recruitment is going well. However, whether we reach that goal depends on how good the membership renewal rate is.



Membership invoices were sent out a month ago and reminder notes followed. A call is next.

Many of you have already renewed and we appreciate that so much. For the rest of you—we hope you've just procrastinated up to now and will take care of it soon.

Even though you may not be able to be an "active" member by participating in any of the many tasks we have, your dues do support the work of our League at every level—national, state, Bay Area, and local.

There is an application on the last page of every VOTER. If you have not renewed yet, please do so today.

CANDIDATE FORUM TO BE TELEVISED

The LWVEA will hold a candidate debate for the four candidates running for two seats on the Hayward Unified School District Board.

The candidates are incumbents Paul Frumkin, III, and Myrna Truehill. The challengers are: Roger Treskunoff and Chuck Homer.

The forum will be conducted at Comcast Studios on Oct 3rd . . .

Questions will be taken from the audience during the televised debate.

REGISTRAR OF VOTERS ELECTION ADVISORY COMMITTEE SUMMARY 9-23-05

The following is a summary of a presentation on usability of voting equipment by Bill Killam, President, User Centered Design, Inc in VA. and a participant in the National Institute of Standards and Technology study on usability of voting equipment.

New technologies have inadvertently introduced new issues such as: security, loss of paper trails, usability issues, and different support needs.

Ballot usability issues across the U.S. involve congressional races labeled in various ways, some ballots do not include whether one is an incumbent or not, and

some ballots did not show the parties for candidates and the "butterfly ballot" which included a layout issue that caused an unknown number of people to vote for an unintended candidate.

Equipment usability issues include errors in different vote counts, inability to select a language, interlocks in NYC may have led to ballots never being cast, cast button to close to scroll bar in multiple states resulted in ballots being cast while the voter was reviewing.

Poll Worker usability issues show difficulty in initializing smart cards resulting in lost voters, and across the country have reported having difficulty provided help on computer-based voting machines

Things that are being done to correct these problems include new standards at the vendor level and at the Federal level refining standards and developing a set of pass/fail guidelines.

LWVEA SCHEDULES PROS & CONS FOR ORGANIZATIONS

Last year, LWVEA conducted more than 20 Pros and Cons presentations at the request of various organizations. Requests are starting to come in for this year and LWVEA is recruiting more people to handle these presentations.

If you are interested in getting training on the Pros and Cons of the eight ballot measures and doing one or more presentations during October, please contact Angelina Reyes at 483-4405.

- Oct. 4 - Bermuda Gardens 2 p.m.
- Oct. 4 or 6th - Josephine Lum Lodge
- Oct. 11 - Eden East Bay Terrace 10:30 a.m.
- Oct. 12 - Eden Lodge, Hayward, at 2 p.m.
- Oct. 28 – San LeandroL/San Lorenzo Teachers' Group Delta Kappa Gamma 4 p.m.
- Oct. 28 - Baywood Court Senior Residence at 11 am

ARE YOU SUFFERING FROM VOTER ELECTION FATIGUE?

Just wait--24 proposed ballot measures are now being circulated for the 2006 ballot.

A recent Daily Review newspaper article pointed out that there are 24 proposed ballot measures being circulated for signature for the 2006 ballot and we haven't even voted on the eight that are coming up on November 8 this year. The article highlighted some of the controversial ones as follows:

- California Border Police creating a state-run police force to patrol the border and guard against illegal immigration.
- Corporate contributions. The state's public unions have responded to the "paycheck protection" measure on the Nov. 8 special election ballot which would ban them from using dues for political purposes without annual consent from their members. The measure would ban corporations from making political contributions without similar consent from shareholders.
- Unborn Persons - Would amend the state Constitution so that "each unborn person, upon conception, has the inalienable right to life while in the womb."
- Electronic Voting Machines - Bans electronic voting, with some exceptions, and allows paroled felons to vote.
- Fees - Several versions of measures seek to redefine most fees as taxes, meaning they need a two-thirds vote by the Legislature rather than the current simple majority requirement.
- Election Holidays - Declares statewide general election days as statewide holidays.
- Marriage - Several measures seek to ban not only gay marriage, but also domestic partnerships.

Citizens Want More Information from Government

"Local Voices" Report Examines Public Views on Civil Liberties & Homeland Security

WASHINGTON, D.C. – The League of Women Voters (LWV) today released the findings and recommendations from its *Local Voices: Citizen Conversations on Civil Liberties and Secure Communities* project. *Local Voices* is a multi-faceted

initiative to foster a public dialogue about the balance between civil liberties and homeland security, and share the results with decision-makers.

"When it comes to the critically important relationship between our civil liberties and our nation's security, public input and involvement are not just desirable – they are essential," said Kay J. Maxwell, president of the League of Women Voters. "For too long, the citizen's voice has been missing from the debate over these issues. The *Local Voices* project examines the public's views and argues that they should be a vital part of our national conversation," Maxwell stated.

"According to our findings, Americans struggle with the relationship between homeland security and civil liberties because they don't have a full understanding of the issues and how they relate to each other," stated Maxwell. "This is not an easy set of issues to understand and the public wants and needs more information from their government officials, the media and others," Maxwell said.

"As the *Local Voices* report reveals, Americans feel that more openness in government is a key to striking the proper balance between security and individual liberty. It's a finding that underscores an important point: Our nation is demonstrably more secure when government is more transparent," said Andy Alexander, Washington Bureau Chief for Cox Newspapers and Chairman of the Freedom of Information Committee of the American Society of Newspaper Editors. Alexander was also a participant at the League's event.

Additional key findings announced are that people deeply value the system of checks and balances and are concerned about a “slippery slope” toward policies favoring greater security at the expense of our basic freedoms and rights. The League also discovered that public deliberation has a major impact on people’s views and thinking in these areas. The League’s findings are drawn from a combination of methodologies, including recent public opinion polls, focus groups and public dialogues in 10 communities.

“The League of Women Voters is the right organization, at the right time, to call for a conversation that is open to all Americans. This report does that by offering recommendations for action,” said Maxwell. “Government needs to share information with and listen to the public. The public needs to make efforts to keep informed and to make their voices known. And the media and other organizations need to facilitate and monitor activities that achieve these ends,” concluded Maxwell.

Local Voices is a League of Women Voters Education Fund project made possible by the generous support of the John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation. Other partners in the project were Lake Snell Perry Mermin/Decision Research, the Study Circles Resource Center and The Constitution Project.

Copies of the report are available online at the League’s Web site: [Local Voices report](#).

LEAGUES AND LEAGUERS AT WORK AT THE COUNTY LEVEL

ELECTIONS AND HEALTH SERVICES

Elaine Ginnold, Acting Registrar of Voters for Alameda County, has recruited many League members for two new committees to advise her and her office—on Instant Runoff Voting and on Elections.

The Election Advisory Committee, which first met in August, was formed to help the Registrar’s office understand election issues from the point of view of County voters. The initial focus of the committee has been voting equipment decisions. As Registrar Ginnold pointed out at the meeting, two laws that go into effect on January 1, 2006 require the County to make decisions regarding its voting equipment.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA), requires each polling place to have accessible voting equipment so that all voters can vote independently and privately. The current touch screen voting equipment used by the County meets this requirement. The second is the State law that requires each touch screen to have a voter verified paper audit trail printer. The Diebold touch screens with printers have not yet been certified by the Secretary of State. Diebold’s and the other touch screen equipment is due to be certified between September and December 2005.

Ginnold, with approval by the Board of Supervisors, is issuing a new Request for Proposals (RFP) for a single vendor to provide a mix of equipment at each polling place—touch screens with a paper audit trail, and an optical scan voting system. This would give voters a choice of systems. Vendors who respond to the RFP will have to meet rigorous contract provisions that should avoid many of the difficulties that the County, as an early adopter of touch screens, endured with its vendor Diebold.

Early meetings have focused on the erosion of public confidence in the accuracy and reliability of our elections. How can public trust be improved by improving the machines and programs themselves? By improving the testing by elections officials? Should elections be programmed in “open source code”, and what does that mean? How can public trust be improved by making all aspects of the election process open and visible to all interested citizens—“transparent”, in the current phrase.

The Committee is broadly drawn, including citizens who believe or fear that the vendors and their computerized voting machines are

stealing elections, to a UCB professor who is part of a new national consortium called ACCURATE

(A Center for Correct, Usable, Reliable, Auditable, and Transparent Elections). [For details, see http://www.berkeley.edu/news/media/releases/2005/08/15_evoting.shtml]

Many League members and spouses serve on this committee, as League reps or wearing other hats, among them *Nancy Bickel*, Chair, ACCLWV; **Evelyn Cormier**, LWV Eden Area; Helen Hutchison, President, LWVO; Kate Quick, Communications Director, LWVC Board; and Nancy Van Huffel, President, LWV Eden Area.

The Instant Runoff Voting Committee, which first met in June, also includes many Leaguers: Anne Spanier, LWVO, Jean Safir, LWVBAE, Nancy Bickel, Sherry Smith, President, LWVBAE, Bonnie Hamlin, LWVO, and Leaguers like **Angelina Reyes**, Judy Bertelsen and Joanne McKray, representing other organizations.



Registrar Ginnold has worked with the committee to develop a uniform protocol or format that might be used for IRV elections within the County. A uniform "roadmap" or protocol would enable the county to

instruct vendors of election services about exactly what kind of IRV election for which they should develop a computer program and seek to have certified by the Secretary of State. If the same "roadmap" were adopted by cities within the County that wished to run IRV elections, the Registrar and the vendor would be able to move forward with incorporating IRV elections as part of consolidated elections. At present Berkeley, Oakland and San Leandro permit IRV elections in some cases.

The "roadmap" for IRV is currently being reviewed by the City Attorneys of the three cities, and the County Counsel.

Funding Health Services in the County has been a continuing League concern. At its August meeting, the ACCLWV confirmed creation of the ACC Health Committee and the nomination of two League members, Dr. Ken Ballard and Sal Tedesco to the

Measure A Oversight Committee. The County Leagues strongly supported passage of Measure A in 2004 to bail out the heavily indebted County Medical Center, which runs Highland Hospital and other County services, the safety net for those without health insurance.

Grand Jury reports on the progress of the Medical Center toward good fiscal and administrative management have continued to be very critical after passage of Measure A. The ACC has written several letters urging improvement.

ACC was glad to be asked to nominate two members to the oversight committee and delighted to find two extremely expert and able members to serve. To support Ken Ballard and **Sal Tedesco** in their work, Susan Schroeder, LWV Piedmont representative to ACC, will chair the newly formed ACC Health Committee. Susan and Dr. Ursula Rolfe of LWVBAE will share observing of the Alameda County Medical Center Board.

Join the Committee? The ACC Health Committee will communicate by e-mail, with meetings from time to time, so Leaguers who would like to participate in the committee's communications should contact Susan Schroeder at srschroede@aol.com.

ACC on the Web: League Action at the County level is often invisible to members so LWVBAE has agreed to host the Alameda County Council of LWV's web pages. We'll be posting our letters to elected officials and other info. Take a look at www.lwvbae.org/acc.htm or just go to the lwvbae.org site and click the Alameda County Leagues items.

Nancy Bickel, Chair, Alameda County Council

PORTFOLIO SURVEY

As many of you know, over the summer, I made it a project to call everyone in our LWVEA to have a conversation about your history with the League and your particular interests. I kept you to your top three issues of concern, which was hard for some of you. Thank you, all, who took time to talk with me. I learned what a caring and dedicated community LWVEA is.

It is wonderful just to look at the list, as there are so many names under each of these issues, of which there are so many. Of course, we are looking for leadership as well as interest groups. Here are the portfolios we discussed:

- ▶ Childcare
- ▶ education
- ▶ energy
- ▶ state and local financing
- ▶ health care
- ▶ housing
- ▶ juvenile justice
- ▶ libraries
- ▶ mental health care
- ▶ natural resources and environment
- ▶ parks & recreation and shoreline
- ▶ local planning and land use
- ▶ ERA and pro-choice
- ▶ redistricting
- ▶ transportation
- ▶ unincorporated issues

In the next year, I look forward helping organize educational unit meetings on many of these important issues.

Trish Taylor, VP Program

UPDATE ON STUDENT VOTER EDUCATION PROJECT

The Student Voter Education Program (SVEP) has changed a bit in its second year. We have gone to a very interactive format, including a simulation that lets students feel the bit of disenfranchisement which results from being excluded from the polls. We think it will go over well.



Also, we have a great team of SVEP presenters and assistants. Thanks to all who are participating. A special thanks to Ursula Batz for bringing her AAUW friends into our team. If you know of any teachers, ask them if they've heard of the Student Voter Education Program. Its good for the students. Its good for democracy.

Trish Taylor, VP Program

We realize that some of our memberships need a ride in order to attend a program or unit meeting. At the other end of the spectrum, some of our members need some type of babysitting so they can attend. If you have either of these problems, please call Trish Taylor at 886-1711.

Want to know where the Pro and Con Presentations are scheduled?

Want to know what the League positions are or activities that we are involved in?

Want to know the website addresses for other government agencies?

Want to know what LWV related activities are going on in the area?

Want to read past Voters?

Want to read community news about your members?

All this info is on our website:

WWW.LWVEA.ORG

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, 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
to the extent allowed by the law.

**The League of Women Voters, a
nonpartisan political organization,
encourages the informed and active
participation of citizens in
government and influences public**

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

All members and the public are welcome.

OCT

7 LWVEA Luncheon Forum, Pros and Cons
on November Ballot Initiatives. See page 1

8 LWV Alameda County Council meeting, 8:30 to 11:30 a.m.,
Eden Medical Center. 538-9678

14 Children's Memorial Grove Ceremony in memory of children
who have died by violence in 2004. Fairmont Ridge, 3 p.m.
RSVP to Gail Steele 272-6692

17 LWVEA Forum on Prop 76. See page 1

20 Alameda County School Boards Assoc. program on
special election educational issues.
At County Office of Education. 670-4161

26 Unincorporated Services Area meeting. SLVHA, 6:30 p.m.

NOV.

2 LWVEA Board meeting, 11:45 to 1:30 p.m., SLVHA

8 ELECTION DAY

HAVE A QUESTION?

CONTACT A LWVEA BOARD MEMBER

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Go to WWW.LWVEA.org for Further Information