



League of Women Voters Eden Area

VOTER

Vol. 49 No. 1

Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation

January, 2006

NEW AND IMPROVED PROGRAM PLANNING WORKSHOP JAN. 21

Do you want to tell the National League what to do about issues that are important to you? Do you have an opinion on the Death Penalty? You'll have that chance on **Saturday, January 21 from 8:30 a.m. to noon** **Eden Medical Center - Conf. Room A**
Continental Breakfast Included

The LWVEA is trying a "new and improved" way of doing its annual Program Planning—something that will make it more interesting and more interactive. Members were surveyed to prioritize six of the 38 LWVUS positions to discuss. The result was:

- Health Care
- Citizens Right to Vote
- Campaign Finance
- Reproductive Choice
- Environmental Protection
- Natural Resources Management.

From these six, three will be picked by consensus to forward to LWVUS for education and advocacy.

Several Leagues in other states will be asking LWVUS, at convention in May, to take a stand on abolishing the Death Penalty. We need to discuss that issue in order to instruct our convention delegates on how we wish them to vote if it does come up.

We will also have a speaker from the LWV Bay Area to update us on the great work they have been doing on regional issues—transportation, the Bay, housing, air quality and water resources.

We'll also hit the highlights on our local positions that were just extensively updated and review a draft of the updated Unincorporated Area position.

Information on the materials that will be used for Program Planning are contained in this VOTER and on our website www.lwvea.org. If you need a hard copy of the full text, please call Suzanne at 538-9678.

Please RSVP by January 16 to Suzanne. Need a ride? Call Trish 886-1711.

SAVE THESE DATES

Saturday, January 7 –
Clean Money for Clean Elections Town Hall at Oakland City Hall, 150 Frank Ogawa Plaza. Assembly-member Loni Hancock will provide information on AB 583 to institute a clean money program for future state elections. Information, call Judy at 595-7402

Friday, January 27 –
"State of the San Francisco Bay: Restoration, Stewardship, Access" a symposium presented by the LWV Bay Area from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m., First Unitarian Church of Oakland, 685 – 14th Street. \$30 including lunch. RSVP by January 17. More info call Sandy Threlfall – 339-9233

**Friday,
March 17 –**
Sunshine
Week—



"Your Right to Know" conference. The purpose of Sunshine week, which is a LWVUS project, is to raise the awareness of the elected and appointed officials, as well as the public about the requirements of the Brown Act and the Freedom of Information Act which make government more transparent and accessible to the public.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Clean Money Supports Healthy Communities

"Healthy communities, institutions and societies -- perhaps even our collective survival -- depend on our ability to organize our collective affairs more wisely..." (WEB site of the Co-Intelligence Institute, Eugene Oregon.) In its own way, this expresses a primary motivation for the League's unwavering commitment to "clean money" in campaigns.

Clearly we need to be wiser about protecting our democratic system and our right and responsibility to vote; to assure that each citizen has the uninhibited opportunity to cast their own vote as they see fit based on accurate information. We need to assure that all important and contributory voices are heard among candidates, on issues, and from voters. We need to remove from our campaigns the corrupting force of big money supporting its self-interest on issues and candidates.

Big money determines who can run, what gets said most widely and who says it, who receives the message, and how well the message (right or wrong) is crafted; and it determines what issues get on the ballot. Money buys candidates, issues, signatures, media time, and voter contact/messaging; and ultimately buys the election and the elected. Even before the election, money excludes candidates, viewpoints, and issues from ever reaching the ballot, from ever coming before the voters. Even elected officials determined to do the right thing and follow their conscience and ethics must show deference to the "deep pockets" if they want to get elected or stay elected. It is simply a matter of survival; and it falsely and dangerously skews the issues, the debate, and the outcomes.

Some voting rights activists say that getting private money out of public elections is the unfinished business of the voting rights movement. The Clean Money efforts going on in California and Alameda County are important in keeping our communities healthy, our democratic process strong, and our voters presented with accurate and complete information on voting day.

On January 7, Loni Hancock will be sponsoring a town meeting at Oakland City Hall regarding her Clean Money bill (AB583), which will be going to the Legislature in January. I would encourage everyone to attend this event—call 562-4473 for details or check out our website to learn more.

Special thanks go to our League members who conducted a candidate forum in December for the San Lorenzo Village Homes Association. Mary Reynolds moderated, Kevin Dowling sorted questions, and long time Leaguer Lois Mahaney, acted as timekeeper.

Nancy Van Huffel

BOARD BRIEFS Dec. 7, 2005

* Discussed Program Planning and need to prioritize just six of 38 LWVUS positions.

* Voted to spend up to \$500 to support Sunshine Week event if grant money insufficient.

* Reviewed New Member Orientation and agreed that it was very successful with ten new members attending.

* Heard report on LWVC Energy Study regarding complex materials and consensus questions.

* Critiqued LWVEA Holiday Party as a success with auction netting approximately \$1500.

* Volunteered to call members who have not renewed.

* Reported that Registrar of Voters held a workshop where interested members of public could rate four types of voting machines.

* Agreed to do a presentation for childcare providers.

* Reported that Unincorporated Area position has been updated and draft will be circulated to committee and board.

* Next Board meeting will be January 4, 2006 at 11:45 at SLVHA. All meetings are open to the public.

HAPPY NEW YEAR

LWVUS PUBLIC POLICY POSITION SUMMARIES

At our Program Planning meeting on January 21, we will have a full discussion on six of the 38 LWVUS positions. Those six are in bold. To view or download the full text, go to lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm. Copies will be available at the meeting.

REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT

Promote an open governmental system that is representative, accountable and responsive.

- * **Voting Rights Citizen's Right to Vote. Protect the right of all citizens to vote; encourage all citizens to vote.**
- DC Self-Government and Full Voting Representation. Secure for the citizens of the District of Columbia the rights of self-government and full voting representation in both houses of Congress.
- Election Process Apportionment. Support apportionment of congressional districts and elected legislative bodies at all levels of government based substantially on population.

- * **Campaign Finance. Improve methods of financing political campaigns in order to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and promote citizen participation in the political process.**

- Election of the President. Promote the election of the President and Vice-President by direct popular vote and work to abolish the Electoral College; support uniform national voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections.
- Citizen Rights Citizen's Right to Know/Citizen Participation. Protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision making.

- * **Individual Liberties. Oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights. Public Policy on Reproductive Choices. Protect the constitutional right of privacy of the individual to make reproductive choices.**

- Congress and the Presidency Congress. Support responsive legislative processes characterized by accountability, representativeness, decision-making capability and effective performance.
- The Presidency. Promote a dynamic balance of power between the executive and legislative branches within the framework set by the Constitution.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS Promote peace in an interdependent world by working cooperatively with other nations and strengthening international organizations.

- United Nations Support a strong, effective United Nations to promote international peace and security and to address the social, economic and humanitarian needs of all people.
- Trade - Support U.S. trade policies that reduce trade barriers achievement of humanitarian, environmental, and social goals.
- U.S. Relations with Developing Countries Promote U.S. policies that meet long-term social and economic needs of developing countries.
- Arms Control Reduce the risk of war through support of arms control measures.
- Military Policy and Defense Spending Work to limit reliance on military force. Examine defense spending in the context of total national needs.

NATURAL RESOURCES Promote an environment beneficial to life through the protection and wise management of natural resources in the public interest.

- * **Natural Resources - Promote the management of natural resources as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems.**

- Resource Management Promote resource conservation, stewardship and long-range planning, with the responsibility for managing natural resources shared by all levels of government.

- * **Environmental Protection and Pollution Control - Preserve the physical, chemical and biological integrity of the ecosystem, with maximum protection of public health and the environment.**

- Air Quality. Promote measures to reduce pollution from mobile and stationary sources.
- Energy. Support environmentally sound policies that reduce energy growth rates, emphasize energy conservation and encourage the use of renewable resources.
- Land Use. Promote policies that manage land as a finite resource and that incorporate principles of stewardship.
- Water Resources. Support measures to reduce pollution in order to protect surface water, groundwater and drinking water.
- Waste Management. Promote policies to reduce the generation and promote the reuse and recycling of solid and hazardous wastes.
- Nuclear Issues. Promote the maximum protection of public health and safety and the environment.
- Public Participation Promote public understanding and participation in decision making as essential elements of responsible and responsive management of our natural resources.
- Agricultural Policy Promote adequate supplies of food and fiber at reasonable prices to consumers and support economically viable farms, environmentally sound farm practices and increased reliance on the free market.

SOCIAL POLICY Secure equal rights and equal opportunity for all. Promote social and economic justice and the health and safety of all Americans.

- Equality of Opportunity
- Equal Rights. Support ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and efforts to bring laws into compliance with the goals of the ERA.
- Education, Employment, Housing. Support equal access to education, employment and housing.
- Fiscal Policy
- Tax Policy. Support adequate and flexible funding of federal government programs through an equitable tax system that is progressive overall and that relies primarily on a broad-based income tax.
- Federal Deficit. Promote responsible deficit policies.
- Funding of Entitlements. Support a federal role in providing mandatory, universal, old age, disability and health insurance.

*** Health Care Promote a health care system for the United States that provides access to a basic level of quality care for all U.S. residents and controls health care costs.**

- Meeting Basic Human Needs Support programs and policies to prevent or reduce poverty and to promote self-sufficiency for individuals and families.
- Income Assistance. Support income assistance programs, based on need, that provide decent, adequate standards for food, clothing and shelter.
- Support Services. Provide for essential support services.
- Housing Supply. Support policies to provide a decent home and a suitable living environment for every American family.
- Child Care Support programs and policies to expand the supply of affordable, quality child care for all who need it.
- Early Intervention for Children at Risk Support policies and programs that promote the well-being, development and safety of all children.
- Violence Prevention Support violence prevention programs in communities.
- Gun Control Protect the health and safety of citizens through limiting the accessibility and regulating the ownership of handguns and semi-automatic weapons. Support regulation of firearms for consumer safety.
- Urban Policy Promote the economic health of cities and improve the quality of urban life.

Just as a reminder, our local League can educate and advocate using any of these positions. For example, we are presently working with the other six Leagues in Alameda County to present a conference on Clean Money Elections that is covered under one of the LWVUS positions—one that was cited among the six priorities.

In addition, we are using the LWVUS position on Health Care because it is more comprehensive than our local position and includes universal health care.

That is the beauty of League—members at every level—local, county, by area, state or national can use any of the vertical positions to educate, advocate or oppose legislation or government regulation that is proposed.

LWVBA POSITIONS AND WORK PROGRAM - 2004 - 2006

GOVERNANCE AND REGIONAL PLANNING

- Monitor proposed new legislation that relates to LWVBA positions.
- Build a regional constituency for an integrated land-use transportation plan.
- Join with LWV California in securing fiscal reforms that will encourage responsible long range planning for sustainable development patterns.
- Comment on regional governance and planning policy proposals.

ENVIRONMENT (Air Land Use Water Solid Waste CEQA Hazardous Materials)

- Continue monitoring BAAQMD and the regulation of refinery flares.
- Continue participating in the preparation, adoption, and implementation of plans for attaining national and state ozone and particulate matter standards.
- Continue to monitor proposed legislation and multi-county ballot measures for parks and protection of natural resources, open space and agricultural land and support as appropriate.
- Monitor hazardous materials disposal, especially where it threatens subsurface water flows

HOUSING

- Review land use plans for planned density and built densities of recent projects; report findings
- Emphasize integration of housing with transit-oriented development and support local Leagues in advocating for approval of affordable housing and increased density.
- Continue monitoring of state and federal legislation and urging support as appropriate.
- Continue information on the variety of funding programs available to communities and obstacles to Bay Area communities' ability to utilize certain federal housing assistance programs.

TRANSPORTATION

- Continue efforts to improve regional coordination of transit systems with land use planning
- Support efforts to improve funding for transit systems
- Monitor planning for High-Speed Rail in the Bay Area
- Monitor the Regional Transportation Plan Update--RTP 2030

LWVEA POSITION SUMMARIES

BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

- The League of Women Voters of the Eden Area supports a responsive, visible system of county and city boards and commissions as a means of ensuring effective resident involvement in the government decision-making process.

UNINCORPORATED AREAS

- A re-study of this position was recommended in the 2004 Program Planning. A draft update of the changes being proposed is included separately in this VOTER

LAND USE AND PLANNING

- The LWVEA supports positive planning policies to achieve a livable and harmonious physical environment for a diverse population with a healthy balance of residential, commercial, industrial, public uses and open space; a variety of densities and housing types; and the necessary services and amenities for all residents.
- The LWVEA supports measures which ensure protection for parks, open space, agricultural land, and baylands with emphasis on comprehensive regional land use planning, control of urban sprawl, transportation and increased inclusive public participation and review in land use decisions.

PARKS AND RECREATION

- The League of Women Voters of the Eden Area supports measures that ensure that adequate parks and recreational facilities are provided for all the communities served by the various recreation and park districts in the Eden Area. Protection should be provided for natural resources, open space and environmentally sensitive areas. Adequate funding should be available to provide a variety of recreational opportunities.



MENTAL HEALTH CARE SERVICES

- The League of Women Voters of the Eden Area supports the availability of comprehensive mental health care for all residents of Alameda County, regardless of their ability to pay for these services.

LIBRARY SERVICES

- The League of Women Voters of the Eden Area supports a free public library system that meets the informational, educational, technological, and recreational needs of all Eden Area residents and that is financed with long-term, assured, stable and adequate public funding. The LWVEA supports access by all persons to free library services/functions that educate and inform on a wide variety of issues to facilitate citizen participation in government decision-making.



PROPOSED CHANGES TO LWVEA UNINCORPORATED AREAS POSITION

The complete draft of the proposed changes to LWVEA Unincorporated Areas positions are on our website www.lwvea.org under local positions. The draft will be discussed at the Program Planning meeting on January 21. The main change follow:

A. The LWVEA supports the policy that all urbanized unincorporated areas within Eden Township ~~become municipal, that payment for property-related services be equitable, and that there be active participation by residents of the unincorporated areas in development of policies which will affect them.~~ should be enabled to choose the type of governance best suited for their particular area. Those choices could be municipal incorporation, municipal annexation, special district formation, or informal government organization.

1. Municipal Incorporation – Incorporated community with its own government that meets requirements of California law.

2. Municipal Annexation – The process by which an incorporated local government may extend its legal control over surrounding areas. Within the legislation, the Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCo) is given the sole and exclusive authority for the annexation of additional territory to a city.

3. Special District Formation – Special districts are a form of local government created by a local community to meet a specific need:

a. Independent Districts – Have their own separate boards of directors elected by the districts' own voters. Larger independent districts have a professional manager, similar to county administrator to assist the governing officials.

b. Dependent Districts (all County Service Areas like Flood Control and Mosquito Abatement) are governed by legislative bodies like board of supervisors.

4. Informal Government Organization - Unincorporated community with a Community Planning Organization, such as Castro Valley's MAC that reacts to land use proposals. They may also engage in long-range planning and advocate for community interests. Advisory boards may be elected or chosen by residents.

B. Before an urbanized unincorporated area changes its governance model, there needs to be evidence that:

1. Change would be fiscally viable to sustain the new entity.

2. Residents have been informed and have participated in the action to make the change in governance model.

3. No significant negative impact to the County.

4. No significant negative impact to adjoining incorporated areas.

5. The new model meets all legal standards for governance.

6. There is leadership to implement the new model.

C. When the residents of the unincorporated area have chosen a new governance model, payment for property-related services shall be equitable to those of similar governance types in the county, and there shall be active participation by residents of the unincorporated areas in development of policies which will affect them.

Policies to Promote:

1. Ensure that urban unincorporated areas should incorporate or annex to an existing municipality. This policy does not assume automatic dissolution of special districts. have the opportunity to explore the various types of governance models that may be suitable for their community.

Overhaul of state electoral system sought

By Andy Furillo – Sac Bee 12-20-05
(Excerpt from article)

Two California assemblymen known for their efforts at bipartisan cooperation have joined forces on a bill that seeks to fundamentally overhaul the state's electoral system in a search for its political center.

Under the legislation to be submitted next year by Democrat Joe Canciamilla of Pittsburg and Republican Keith Richman of Northridge, a "citizens assembly" would be created to come up with a new electoral system and place it in the form of a constitutional amendment on the November 2008 ballot.

A draft of the bill doesn't mention what kind of changes might be proposed. But Canciamilla and Richman said in interviews that they strongly favor such changes as proportional representation, independent redistricting, term-limit modification and campaign finance reform.

"We recognize that the state is in trouble, that there are a lot of questions being asked (about) whether California is still governable, about the growing influence of special interests and money in the politics of the state," Canciamilla said. "And we also believe that the system is dysfunctional."

Richman, who teamed with Canciamilla in previous efforts to forge compromises on the budget and on energy legislation, said "people don't have trust in the government to solve the problems that we face, and so there is currently a lot of cynicism and apathy toward government, and rightfully so. So it's important that we have a process that at least begins to try and re-engage the citizenry."

Richman and Canciamilla came up with the "citizens assembly" idea this year in the background of the special election, away from the fury of Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger's "year of reform" campaign that saw his four hotly contested government overhaul initiatives go down to defeat.

The two members' proposed re-engagement

of the electorate would start with the creation of a citizens assembly in California. If it gets off the ground, the group would begin investigating California's government and political structure in January 2007, hold public hearings up and down the state, and come up with recommendations by the end of the year that would be presented to the Legislature. Any proposed constitutional changes would then be placed on the November 2008 ballot.

The body would be made up of two members from each of the 80 state Assembly districts, selected by a task force of academic experts from a pool of volunteers representing the state's adult population according to age, gender, race and geography.

Canciamilla and Richman are seeking \$20 million from the Legislature to fund the citizens assembly. If they are rebuffed, they said they will try to place an initiative on the ballot in November 2006 to get the panel up and running.

"I think the confluence of gerrymandered districts, short term limits and campaign finance have resulted in legislators being unwilling to do anything other than vote for the agendas of the special interest groups that are going to help them get re-elected or elected to their next office," Richman said.

Although the draft legislation does not recommend any specific changes in the electoral system, those involved say they are interested in exploring a proportional voting system along the lines of the parliamentary systems of Europe.

"One of the problems in Sacramento is that the Legislature is too polarized and that there is a great, vast center in California that is not adequately represented," Leshner said. "When you think about political reform, it's how do you create a legislative body that reflects its constituents better than Sacramento does today?"

Stern, author of the state's Political Reform Act of 1974 and currently head of the Center for Governmental Studies in Los Angeles, called the idea of a citizens assembly "creative and far-reaching."

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 policy through education
 and advocacy.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

All members and the public are welcome.

JAN 06	
4	LWVEA Board Meeting, 11:45 to noon, SLVHA
7	Clean Money Town Hall, Oakland City Hall 9 to noon
21	LWVEA Program Planning, 8:30 to Noon, Eden Medical Center, CV
27	LWV Bay Area Day – 8:30 to 2 p.m. First Unitarian Church, Oakland
FEB	Energy Study date/time TBA
1	LWVEA Board Meeting, 11:45 to Noon, SLVHA
MAR	
17	Sunshine Week Forum time/place TBA
17	EdSource Conference on Education Fremont

**HAVE A QUESTION?
 CONTACT A LWVEA BOARD MEMBER**

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