



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF EDEN AREA

VOTER

Vol. 51 No. 3 *Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation* March, 2009

HEALTH CARE FORUM

The State of Health Care
in Alameda County

Friday, April 3, 2009 + Noon to 2 p.m.
(Please note date and time change from that previously announced.)

Keynote Speaker

David Kears, Director of Alameda County
Health Care Services

Mr. Kears is responsible for coordinating, developing and implementing county and state health care policies.

Improving the Health Care System is a priority at the national, state and local level. Mr. Kears will give us a comparison of health care policies at each level as well as the state of Health Care in Alameda County.

- *How can we make sense of all these different plans?*
- *Has Measure A (local sales tax increase in Alameda County) made a difference?*

The Health Care Forum is co-sponsored by the local chapter of the American Association of University Women. It will be held at the San Lorenzo Village Association Hall at 377 Paseo Grande, San Lorenzo.

Lunch will be provided. The cost is \$10 in advance. There will be no cost for those who come just for the program, without lunch. RSVPs are essential.

The registration form is the last page of this VOTER.

Questions? Call Suzanne at 510.538.9678 or email suzbarba@comcast.net.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As everyone probably knows by now, the Legislature passed, and after exercising his line-item veto the Governor signed, a State budget. However, it is not effective until the various budget-balancing proposals go to, and are passed by, the voters of the State in a Special Election. What makes it even more convoluted is that the Governor is required to issue his May revision of the budget (i.e., what would ordinarily be the mid-year adjustments of a "normal" budget year and introduction of the proposed budget for the coming fiscal year.) This is commonly referred to as "the Governor's May Revise".

Beginning next week, several groups (e.g., the Bay Area Council—www.bayareacouncil.org) begin meeting to explore the value of, process for, and purpose of revising the State's Constitution. Whether or not this will help to resolve the budget insanity we have witnessed this last ten months remains to be seen. Whatever it takes, it is highly unlikely that the State can sustain another dysfunctional and radically partisan budget process as we were subjected to this year.

Special Election: The budget package includes ABXXX 11, which calls for a statewide special election to be held on May 19, 2009. Any local June elections will likely be consolidated with the State's May 19th special election. The bill waives the statutory deadlines to allow the Legislature to place the following proposals on the ballot:

State lottery - Would allow the state to borrow \$5 billion against future lottery revenue and use the funds for something other than schools.

Proposition 98 - Would revise the school funding requirement to change where some of the money will come from and what it covers.

Proposition 63 - Would allow \$460 million to be spent on existing mental health programs for two years, overturning the measure's ban on using the money for current programs.

Proposition 10 - Would eliminate the state's First 5 commission and take \$340 million from the program to use for existing children's programs.

Spending cap - A constitutional amendment would limit spending and put excess revenue into a rainy-day fund for lean years.

For specific details on the budget go to:
<http://www.ebudget.ca.gov/>

Marianne Dimick, President

BOARD BRIEFS

February 11, 2009

- Confirmed the canceling bulk mail permit since VOTER is emailed and we now don't meet the 200-piece requirement.
- Approved the appointment of Alison Lewis as Secretary and Helen Oertle as Chair of the Voter Service Committee. Alison will remain on the VSC.
- Approved the appointment of Suzanne Barba as a Board Director with the continued portfolio of Health Care Committee Chair.
- Approved the submission of the Program Planning report to LWVC of the results of the PP meeting held on January 24.
- Received a report that member Steve Dimick attended the League Legislator Interview with Congresswoman Barbara Lee.
- Discussed the logistics for the Health Care Forum on Friday, April 2, including change of date and time.
- Discussed the National Popular Vote Study to be done by LWVUS and who would be interested in participating. Sherman Lewis was suggested and he will be contacted.
- Discussed need for the Bylaws Update Committee to meet and suggests changes for the annual meeting.
- Discussed the need to contact the Nominating Committee for 2009 that were elected in 2008.

Next Board meeting is March 11 and will probably be held at the SLVHA conference room in San Lorenzo. All meetings are open to the public.

WELCOME NEW MEMBERS

Welcome to our two newest members – Jennifer Grippe Frates and Rene Besold. Jennifer joined when she attended the Program Planning meeting in January as a guest of member Beverly Reliford. She is interested in the programs, policies and the funding that the state develops for child care and education providers. Rene became interested in the League after talking to Sal Tedesco at a Rotary function. She followed up with a look at our League's goals and accomplishments on the website. Rene is interested in the League's work in the Health Care policy and the Single Payer proposals.

"A Powerful Noise" – One Night Movie Event - March 5, 2009

To celebrate International Women's Day and highlight the important role that women play in bringing lasting solutions to global poverty Fathom, CARE and ONE present a one-night event featuring the acclaimed documentary "A Powerful Noise," followed by a town hall discussion with leading humanitarian experts and activists.

"A Powerful Noise", takes you inside the lives of three women from different countries to witness their daily efforts to fight HIV/AIDS, champion girls' education and unite ethnically divided communities. The presentation will conclude with a live panel of renowned advocates discussing how women, equipped with proper resources, have the power to help families and entire

communities escape poverty.

Broadcast live from New York City this inspiring event will take place in select movie theatres nationwide on Thursday, March 5, 2009 at) at 8 p.m. Pacific Time. (*Tape delayed.*)

The new Century Theater in Hayward at Foothill Blvd. and B St. is a participating site. Ticket prices are \$15.00 for adults; \$12.50 for children. Tickets can be purchased ahead of time at www.fandango.com.

Madeleine Albright, former U.S. Secretary of State and Principal of The Albright Group LLC will join the live panel. The panel also will include Pulitzer Prize-winning journalist, *New York Times* columnist and acclaimed author Nicholas Kristof.

JUDGE PEGGY HORA (Ret.) TO GET AWARD

Friends of former Superior Court Judge Peggy Hora will be gathering at her reception on Friday, March 20 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. to



congratulate her as she is presented with the 2009 Rose Bird memorial Award from the California Women Lawyers'.

Leaguers may remember Judge Hora as the one who started the successful "Drug Court" in Alameda County to divert some drug offenders from jail into programs where they could get the necessary help they needed. Her program is now duplicated throughout the state.

The reception will be held at the Wendel, Rosen, Black and Dean Law Offices at 1111 Broadway, 19th Floor, Oakland. The cost is \$55. Further info can be obtained from League member, Cossette Sun, csun12@comcast.net.

HEALTH CARE REFORM TOPS REP. LEE'S AGENDA

By Steven C. Dimick (League
Interviewer)

Health care reform is at the top of U.S. Rep. Barbara Lee's wish list for the current Congress, she told League representatives in a meeting in her Oakland headquarters on February 2, 2009.

"I'm not sure we can [get a health care bill passed,]" Lee said, "but people are dying out there every day."

Lee agreed to meet with, and answer questions from, representatives of LWV Oakland (Helen Hutchinson), LWV Berkeley-Albany-Emeryville (Linda Swift), LWV Piedmont (Tam Hege) and LWV Eden Area (Steven Dimick.) League officials charged the four representatives with three broad questions (and unlimited follow-up questions, Rep. Lee's schedule permitting):

1. What should the federal government do to ensure that every American has health coverage?

2. Do you support legislation to set a declining cap on greenhouse gas emissions, based on the best-available science, in order to combat global climate change?

3. What will you do to help reduce the level of partisanship at the federal level that has blocked progress on a number of important national issues in recent years?

Although the questions (particularly 2 and 3) were simplistic, Lee managed to address them without the slightest hint of condescension.

She said she supports the "Waxman Bill" (H.R. 1590, the "Safe Climate Act of 2007",) and agrees with the League's position on global warming and a cap on greenhouse emissions, but saved most of her comments for the subjects of health care and partisanship.

Lee is a long-time champion of the single-payer system for health care and is a co-sponsor of H.R. 676, the "United States National Health Insurance Act," introduced by Rep. John Conyers, Jr. (D., MI), which would establish a true single-payer system in the country. She has also authored her own health care bill, H.R. 3000, the "Josephine Butler U.S. Universal Health Service Act."

"Face it," Lee explained, "health care is a basic human right." Although she supports a single-payer system, she admitted "I don't think we'll get it soon." She expressed hope that Congress will pass something "that is better than what we have now," but declined to predict what type of reform may actually be passed.

"We're waiting for a signal from the President," she said.

On the partisanship issue, Lee expressed extreme frustration.

"[Democrats] have done everything we can do," she said. "The President gave up a lot – gave up too much – in the economic stimulus bill and still, not one single [Republican] vote. And I don't know how you break that.

“I don’t want to say ‘ask them,’ [to reduce partisanship,]” she continued, “but it’s really hard” when Democrats are the only ones reaching across the aisle.

Lee agreed that Democrats have to continue to be civil to Republicans. “We are being civil. But it’s not getting us anywhere.”

She predicted that the Republican Party’s own constituents need the help the stimulus bill is intended to achieve, and might eventually call their representatives to account.

“Their constituents need these things, too. Economic stimulus needs to cover the greatest amount of people. When you argue about more money for day care? There are people who can’t look for work because they don’t have day care. Food stamps? People are hungry and can’t look for a job because they’re hungry.”

Lee suggested that a good project for the League would be for it to take on the challenge of promoting civil discourse in politics.

LWVC Views On California Budget Crisis

LWVC believes **California’s budget should invest** in services and infrastructure for the future. We oppose arbitrary across-the-board budget cuts and believe that **all options, including revenue increases**, must be on the table. The Governor and the Legislature have an obligation to protect California’s people and our future.

The economic meltdown has revealed that California’s finance system and budget process can’t deal with a real

crisis.

On February 10, 2009, the League of Women Voters of California sent [a letter](#) to the four legislative leaders and the Governor **strongly opposing a “hard” spending cap as part of a budget deal**. We believe imposing such a limit would do nothing to solve the current situation, but would mean that future budgets could not repair the damage now being done to needed state services, let alone meet future needs.

The United States National Health Care Act, H.R. 676

(The following information is provided as partial background for the Health Care Forum on April 3, 2009 as described on page 1)

Brief Summary of the Legislation

The United States National Health Care Act establishes a unique American national universal health insurance program. The bill would create a publicly financed, privately delivered healthcare system that uses the already existing Medicare program by expanding and improving it to all U.S. residents, and all residents living in U.S. territories. The goal of the legislation is to ensure that all Americans will have access, guaranteed by law, to the highest quality and most cost effective healthcare services regardless of their employment, income, or healthcare status. With over 45-75 million uninsured Americans, and another 50 million who are under-insured, the time has come to change our inefficient and costly fragmented non-healthcare system.

Who is Eligible?

Every person living or visiting in the United States and the U.S. Territories would receive a United States National Health Insurance Card and ID number once they enroll at the appropriate location. Social Security numbers may not be used when assigning ID cards.

Healthcare Services Covered

This program will cover all medically necessary services, including primary care, inpatient care, outpatient care, emergency care, prescription drugs, durable medical equipment, long term care, mental health services, dentistry, eye care, chiropractic, and substance abuse treatment. Patients have their choice of physicians, providers, hospitals, clinics, and practices. No co-pays or deductibles are permissible under this act.

Conversion To A Non-Profit Healthcare System

Private health insurers shall be prohibited under this act from selling coverage that duplicates the benefits of the USNHI program. Exceptions to this rule include coverage for cosmetic surgery, and other medically unnecessary treatments. Those who are displaced as the result of the transition to a non-profit healthcare system are the first to be hired and retrained under this act.

Cost Containment Provisions/Reimbursement

The National USNHI program will set reimbursement rates annually for physicians, allow for global budgets (annual lump sums for operating expenses) for healthcare providers; and

negotiate prescription drug prices. A "Medicare For All Trust Fund" will be established to ensure a dedicated stream of funding, as well as an annual appropriation to ensure optimal levels of funding for the program. The conversion to a not-for-profit healthcare system will take place over a 15-year period, through the sale of U.S. treasury bonds.

Families Pay Less

A study by nationally recognized economist, Dean Baker, of the Center for Economic Research and Policy concluded that under H.R. 676, a family of three making \$40,000 per year would spend approximately \$1900 per year for healthcare coverage. Currently, (in 2007) the average annual premium for families covered under an employee health plan is \$11,000. (National Coalition on Health Care.)

Businesses Pays Less

In 2005, without reform, the average employer that offers coverage was contributing \$2,600 to healthcare per employee (for much skimpier benefits), or 217.00 per month. Under HR 676, the average costs to employers for an employee making \$30,000 per year will be reduced to \$1,425 per year; or about \$119.00 per month. Baker's study reported that HR 676 would reduce health spending in 2005 from \$1 trillion, 918 billion dollars to 1 trillion, 861.3 billion dollars, which translates into a saving of \$56 billion in overall healthcare spending while covering all of the uninsured. This is a 3% reduction in over-all healthcare spending.

Proposed Funding For HR 676 Program

Maintain current federal and state funding for existing healthcare programs; employer payroll tax of 4.5%, an employee payroll tax of 3.3%, in addition to the already existing 1.45% for Medicare; establish a 5% health tax on the top 5% of income earners; 10% tax on top 1% of wage earners, 1/3rd of 1% stock transaction tax, closing corporate tax loop-holes; repeal the Bush tax cut for the highest income earners.

More detailed information and a Q & A format will be placed on our LWVEA.org website in the near future.

LWVUS Study on the National Popular Vote Compact Selection of the President

A League study of the presidential electoral process culminated in its 1970 position supporting direct election of the President by popular vote as an essential element of representative government. At the 2008 Convention, the delegates voted to adopt a new study, "The Advisability of Using the National Popular Vote Compact among the States as a Method for Electing the President."

The League's Position

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the

President and Vice-President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished. The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system – from the candidate selection process to the general election. We support efforts to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

The National Popular Vote Compact Proposal

The National Popular Vote Compact proposal offers a method of achieving the result of election of the President by popular vote without amending the Constitution to eliminate the Electoral College. Instead, this method uses the mechanism of the Electoral College to ensure that the candidate who receives the most popular votes is elected President of the United States.

Under the proposed legislation to enact the National Popular Vote Compact, all of the state's electoral votes would be awarded to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The bill would take effect only when enacted, in identical form, by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes—that is, enough electoral votes to elect a President (270 of 538)

The states have the right to decide how to select their electors and award their electoral votes. Thus, proponents of the NPV Compact claim that the U.S. Constitution need not be changed in order to implement nationwide NPV. Rather, they maintain, this change can be accomplished in the same way that the current system evolved—namely, the states will use their exclusive and plenary power to decide the manner of awarding their electoral votes. The full text of the compact is available at www.lwv.org.

Current Status of the National Popular Vote Compact

Since passage of the National Popular Vote Compact is accomplished on a state-by-state basis, its status is fluid. As of September 1, 2008, the legislation necessary to activate the compact has been signed into law in four states: Maryland, New Jersey, Hawaii and Illinois, for a total of 50 of the 270 electoral votes required to activate the NPV Compact. NPV Compact bills have been introduced in 15 other states, where some have passed committee and others have passed one house.

For more background information on the League position and on NPV Compact go to LWVUS.org.

Pass-Through Grants for the 2009 Civic Hosting Program

The LWVUS Global Democracy Program is now accepting letters of

interest from state and local Leagues for the 2009 Civic Hosting Program. The League seeks to host several delegations from Ukraine, Russia, Azerbaijan and other former Soviet Republics with funding from the Open World Leadership Center. Leagues chosen to host visitors will organize eight-day programs that provide an overview of U.S. democratic processes and American culture. The proposed themes are accountable governance and civic rule of law. Pass-through grants to cover 100 percent of the incurred expenses are available. [Click here for details](#). If you have questions, please contact Manuela Campbell at mcampbell@lwv.org or Zaida Arguedas at zarguedas@lwv.org.

LWVUS 2009 Legislative Priorities

The LWVUS Board announces Global Climate Change and Health Care to be the top legislative priorities for the upcoming year. Top priority issues are ones on which major congressional action is expected and on which the LWVUS will seek to be an active player.

Tier two priorities are Election Reform and DC Voting Rights. Tier two issues will be acted upon if significant success is possible, though top priorities will take precedence. Tier three issues could be subject for LWVUS action only if good opportunities present themselves, and there is no pressing action on top priority and tier two issues. Tier three issues we are watching are: Campaign Finance

Reform; CEDAW (the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women); Civil Liberties; Ethics; and Redistricting. The LWVUS prioritizes legislative issues for advocacy in order to focus limited resources on those issues where it is considered the League can have a meaningful impact and there is member interest and opportunity for progress.

LWV members were encouraged to submit their suggestions for LWVUS 2009 legislative priorities. League members overwhelmingly called for Health Care and Global Climate Change to be top priorities. [Click here to read the Summary Report.](#)

League of Women Voters Celebrates 89th Birthday

Washington, DC— The League of Women Voters celebrated its 89th birthday on February 14. We celebrate this year with a strong commitment to build on the civic energy generated during the 2008 election season by continuing our 89-year history of fostering meaningful citizen participation in our government processes and vigorous public dialogue about public policy issues.



MORE ON PROP 11 REDISTRICTING

As reported in last month's VOTER, the State Auditor is conducting hearings through California regarding creating

policy on how to select the commissioners who will implement the changes in the Redistricting Process (Prop 11). Below are some questions that you as a community leader could testify about:

1. Prop 11 requires selection based in part on qualifications. What qualifications do you think are helpful to serving on this commission? (e.g. service on a local planning board, experience chairing public meetings, academic background or research?)
2. How would you go about doing outreach to make sure that a diverse, qualified pool of people applies? (e.g. are there certain ethnic media outlets, community leaders, academic listservs, etc. that you would suggest?)
3. Are there organizations you can suggest that should be added to receive notices for interested persons? (Be specific-- people can come with a list of names and contact information.)
4. Are there people you can suggest who should be added to receive notices for interested persons? They want to outreach to people who might be interested in serving on the commission.

If you want to be added to the State Auditor's list for updates and/or get your name on a list as a potential commissioner or just want to stay informed, contact Barbara Paget at BarbaraP@bsa.ca.gov. Eventually a formal application process for commission applicants will be created.

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 \$50 Same Household \$25, Student \$20

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.

DATE	TIME	CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS
March 5		A Powerful Noise, Movie
March 6		The Big Read—Hayward Library
March 11	5:30	LWVEA Board Meeting—SLVHA, 377 Paseo Grande, SLZ
April 3	Noon-2pm	Health care Forum—David Kears
April 8	5:30pm	LWVEA Board Meeting—SLVHA, 377 Paseo Grande, SLZ

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

**PLEASE RETURN THIS RESERVATION FORM IF YOU PLAN TO ATTEND:
HEALTH CARE FORUM & LUNCHEON FRIDAY, APRIL 3, 2009 NOON TO 2 P.M.**

Name: _____ Phone: _____

Guests: _____

Total number staying for lunch : _____ Total number not having lunch: _____
Check enclosed for \$ _____

Mail RSVP form and check made out to LWVEA to LWVEA Treasurer, P. O. Box 2234,
Castro Valley, CA 94546. **Deadline for RSVP is Friday, March 27.**