



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF EDEN AREA**

**V O T E R**

Vol. 51 No. 4 *Political Responsibility Through Informed and Active Participation* April, 2009

## **HEALTH CARE FORUM REMINDER**

The State of Health Care in Alameda County

Friday, April 3, 2009 - Noon to 2 p.m.

**RSVP:** Suzanne Barba (510) 538-9678 or email: [suzbarba@comcast.net](mailto:suzbarba@comcast.net)

**Keynote Speaker: David Kears,  
Director of Alameda County Health Care Services**

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?*

**SAVE THE DATE**

## **CLIMATE CHANGE ACTION SEMINAR**

**SATURDAY, JUNE 6, 2009, 8:30 a.m. to noon**  
**Chabot Community College – Little Theater**

We are inviting panelists who are experts in their field to give us the “ACTION PLANS” on how we, the public, can cut our greenhouse gas emissions, develop healthier communities and advocate for the change that must happen in order to combat people-induced climate change.

We are partnering with various local, regional and state organizations as well as business and environmental groups to put on a comprehensive seminar to provide the public with information on action plans that can be implemented in the home, in the boardroom and by policy makers.

Look for more information on this seminar including the names of panelists, partners and parking in the VOTER, by email if we have your address, in the newspapers and on our website - [LWVEA.org](http://LWVEA.org). **Funded by a grant from OxFam**

## PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Spring is a busy time for the League. April starts off with our Healthcare Forum and guest speaker Dave Kears. Mr. Kears, Director of Alameda County Health Care Services, will attempt to simplify the health care system and what's in store for us in the future under the new administration.

Training will be offered to Leaguers this month in preparation for presenting the Pros and Cons for the upcoming special election in May. Please let me know if you are interested in doing the League presentations. Several requests for our presentations have already come in from local organizations.

The nominating committee is hard at work this month looking for a few good people to join the board of directors. Our League welcomes new ideas and new perspectives. You can pick your area of interest and put it to work in our community your state or our country.

There is much work to be done for our upcoming Global Climate Forum in June. We are partnering with Chabot Community College to put on a half day forum for everything green. From carbon cap and trade to sustainable communities we hope to show you the green new world ahead of us.

With all these special events coming up locally, it's a great time to recruit new members. The state league and the national league are both involved in many other exciting issues, the National Popular Vote, the state Constitutional Convention, redistricting and global warming just to name a few. I know we all have friends that are interested in at least one of those topics, so let's all work to get them on board. You can easily forward your e-mailed VOTER to them that includes an application for the joining the League.

Marianne Dimick

## BOARD BRIEFS

March 11, 2009

- Received a report from the Treasurer that we received a check from the Registrar of Voters for \$876 for servicing voter registration boxes throughout the Eden Area.
- Reviewed report on the Health Care Forum including change of date to April 3.
- Received a report regarding ballot counting for the Palomares Hill Homeowner Association. Several Board members signed on to help with the ballot counting on April 7.
- Discussed putting information in the VOTER on the National Popular Vote Study which would change the electoral voting system we now use to elect the president.
- Reviewed the OxFam grant project to put on a Climate Change Action Seminar following their guidelines. We have applied for the grant of \$1200 and will proceed with planning as it an issue we have for emphasis.
- Canvassed the board to see if any member was able to attend the LWVC convention in Long Beach, May, 14-16. No one volunteered at this time.
- Received report that the two Nominating Committee members elected at the 2008 Annual Meeting are Sonya Howes and Angie Reyes. One more member has to be appointed by the president. The committee will contact members to see if any are willing to serve as Board members starting July 1, 2009.

**The next Board meeting is Wednesday, April 8 at 5:30 p.m. at the San Lorenzo Homes Assoc. conference room. Meetings open to public.**

## **WELCOME TO NEW MEMBERS**

We are pleased to welcome two new members to our League. They are Patricia Bass from Castro Valley and Dr. Jennifer Ong from Hayward.

Patricia joined through the National League and we haven't personally met her yet. Jennifer was impressed by the work the League does and looked us up on the website. Then she called, joined, and came to our last Board meeting where she got involved in several major projects. The Board was so impressed it elected her to become a member of the Board.

We hope that you, too, will make the decision to become more involved with the League and volunteer to help. The time commitment can be as short as registering people to vote, or as long as serving on the Board working on issues that you care about.

## **LWVEA AWARDED GRANT FOR CLIMATE CHANGE PUBLIC OUTREACH AND ACTION**

DATE: March 24, 2009  
TO: President Marianne Dimick  
LWV of Eden Area

Thank you for your interest in participating in "The State of Climate Change – Public Outreach and Action."

This project is the first of its kind for the League of Women Voters in that we can offer grants for both lobbying and education. A League wishing to participate in this project must agree to lobby their U.S. representatives or Senator – as directed by our national lobbyists – and at the same time must agree to organize an education activity in support of the League's ultimate goals in climate change.

You will receive more concrete information about the lobbying activity in a few days, but it will require that you distribute materials that address the

League's goals and that you write an email or other communication to your senators and representatives. Your educational activity looks great, and will cover the two important topics of Emission Reduction and Adaptation/Sustainability. We will work with you every step of the way – and will supply you with materials for distribution at the educational activity.

**We are happy to approve your proposal as submitted for a grant award of \$1200.**

Sergio España  
Global Democracy Program, LWVUS

## **NOMINATIONS FOR 2009-10 AND 2010-11 BOARD**

The elected and appointed League Nominating Committee—Alison Lewis, Angie Reyes and Sonya Howes—has been asked to contact members to seek officers and directors for Board positions for two-year terms.

If you are interested in being on the Board of one of the most respected organizations in the country—consider saying yes when called.

The first qualification is that you are a member in good standing—meaning you have paid your dues.

The second qualification is that you are a woman or man interested in making an impact on issues that are important to you—education, health care, environment, transportation, energy and good government.

The third qualification is that you have a few hours or more to spend, to make a positive difference in educating the public and influencing policy-makers on important issues.

Think about it. Ask questions. Go to our website and learn more about the League at [LWVEA.org](http://LWVEA.org).

## **SPECIAL STATE ELECTION MAY 19**

On May 19, there will be a special election on six propositions related to the recently based budget. LWVEA will be distributing Easy Voter Guides to help voters understand what they will be voting for or against.

Sometimes the ballot language is confusing and complex and many groups ask the League to come and present the Pros and Cons on these propositions. We will be having training sessions for presenters. If you are interested in participating, please contact Suzanne at [suzbarba@comcast.net](mailto:suzbarba@comcast.net) or 538-9678.

*The following are the state League's positions on the May 19 six Ballot Measures. This is the LWVC advocacy position, not their pro and con education position. The LWVC Easy Voter Guide which gives the pros and cons on each proposition will be on the League website in April.*

### **LWVC Announces Position on May 19 Ballot Measures**

Sacramento, CA – The League of Women Voters of California announced its opposition to Propositions 1A, 1C, 1D and 1E on the May 19 Special Election ballot and urged voters to reject them.

“We oppose these measures because they are NOT the solution to our long term financial crisis, with the continuing structural deficit in the state budget and flawed budget process,” said Janis R. Hirohama, president of the League.

“We make this decision with regret. We would support real reform to make the state budget process more accountable and give the Legislature and Governor effective tools to advance state priorities. However, these hurriedly drafted

propositions, produced at the end of a flawed process that kept both the public and most legislators in the dark, will only make our fiscal situation worse.”

**Proposition 1A** is touted by its proponents as the way to bring stability to the budget process. But what it will *really* do is tie the hands of the Legislature and Governor as they face changing needs for state and local government services. It will keep them from taking into account the state's changing demographics and growth in the actual cost of important services like health care.

“Although some claim there is an urgency to pass Prop. 1A to resolve our state's budget problems, we disagree,” said Hirohama. “Most of its provisions will not take effect for two years—two years that we should spend hammering out *real* solutions to our budget and fiscal challenges.”

The League believes elected officials should be allowed to carry out their responsibilities with flexibility. Years of “ballot-box budgeting” and formulas for auto-pilot spending have greatly eroded that flexibility. Prop. 1A, however, adds to the problem.

For example, it dictates how half the funds that must be transferred to the “Budget Stabilization Fund” are to be used; it removes the Governor's ability to suspend transfers to the fund in difficult years; and it imposes new formulas for calculating “unanticipated revenues” and specifies how they can be used in good years.

And, after the deep cuts made during these strapped times, it could lock in a reduced level of services by failing to properly take account of increased caseloads and program costs. If Prop. 1A passes, the Governor would be given new power to make mid-year cuts and suspend COLAs in state programs without legislative oversight.

The League believes that midyear budget adjustments should require joint action of the legislative and executive branches so that checks and balances are maintained.

**Proposition 1C.** This proposal attempts to raise money for the short term by selling bonds that would be paid off by future lottery revenue. In light of California's poor credit rating and the state of the economy, those bonds would have to be sold at very unfavorable interest rates, if they can be sold at all. The Legislative Analyst says that in the long term, lottery profits probably would not be enough to cover the higher payments to education required by Prop. 1C. We criticized this proposal as irresponsible last fall, and if anything, that criticism applies more than ever now.

**Propositions 1D and 1E.** On May 19, voters will also be asked to approve the temporary taking of funds from early childhood and mental health programs that were established by two previous initiatives. These are illusory, stopgap measures, and the League opposes these propositions as part of this objectionable package. It is ironic that these initiatives, which did what many consider "the right thing" by providing a source of funding, now face reductions.

**Proposition 1B .** The League is neutral on Prop1B. State responsibility for the funding of public education is essential, and we appreciate the need to pay back the devastating cuts that our schools and community colleges have sustained. On the other hand, the Legislature will have the ability to restore school funding without Prop. 1B, and it is not needed in this package of propositions.

**Proposition 1F.** Since the League has no position on setting salaries for public officials, we take no position on Proposition 1F, which would prevent pay raises for legislators and statewide constitutional officers during budget deficit years.

The League of Women Voters recognizes that California is facing the worst budget crisis in its history, with the worldwide recession severely affecting state revenues and the need for state services. Moreover, our budget system is broken and in desperate need of reform.

This year illustrates the need to abandon the two-thirds vote requirement for passing budgets and raising revenues, and we must also look at other budget reforms. In the meantime, a new tax commission is considering ways to broaden or stabilize our revenues.

"There is much that needs to be done," Hirohama stated, "but we are certain that the propositions on the May 19 ballot are not the answer."

## **Government Integrity Reform Agenda for the 111th Congress**

The following statement was issued by the Brennan Center for Justice, the Campaign Legal Center, Common Cause, Democracy 21, the **League of Women Voters**, Public Citizen and U.S. PIRG.

Our organizations worked hard to pass the landmark ethics and lobbying reforms that were enacted in the 110th Congress. At the time, we said that our next major battle would be to reform the way federal campaigns are financed.

A central theme of the 2008 presidential race was the need to fix Washington. President-elect Obama, for example, said during the campaign, "to fix health care we have to fix Washington."

In order to fix Washington, the fundamental problems caused by the undue influence of contributions over government decisions must be effectively addressed. While other issues on our reform agenda are important, the way

Washington works is not going to change until we fundamentally change the nation's campaign finance laws.

In order to accomplish this goal, the overriding priority on our reform agenda for the 111th Congress is to repair the presidential public financing system and to create a new public financing system for congressional races.

The key role that influence-money played in creating the national financial crisis provides just one more example of the enormous costs to citizens and taxpayers that come from federal candidates being dependent on special interest groups, lobbyists, bundlers and large contributions for their campaign funds.

It is widely acknowledged that the absence of effective regulation and oversight played a major role in the massive financial crisis that has occurred. Campaign contributions to federal officeholders from the financial sector played a major role in thwarting such effective regulation and oversight.

It is no coincidence that during the past decade, the financial sector contributed \$1.5 billion to federal candidates and their parties, according to the Center for Responsive Politics, with 56 percent of the funds going to Republicans and 44 of the funds going to Democrats - a bipartisan approach to influence-seeking.

Our organizations call on President-elect Obama and members of Congress to take action to fundamentally reform the nation's campaign finance laws. [LWVUS](#)

## **Ethics and Lobbying Reform**

The recent round of lobbying scandals demonstrates that current mechanisms, from the congressional ethics process to campaign finance regulation to gift and travel restrictions, are simply inadequate to protect against corruption.

Fundamental change is needed. The League of Women Voters supports legislation that would effectively reform the lobbying process and begin to rebuild public confidence in Congress.

We want Congress to enact lobby reform legislation that sets new contribution and fundraising limits on lobbyists and lobbying firms; fundamentally changes the gift, travel and employment relationships among Members of Congress, lobbyists and lobbying firms; and institutes new and effective enforcement mechanisms. Congress needs an independent office or commission to oversee and enforce ethics rules and lobbying laws, receive allegations and complaints, conduct investigations and present cases to congressional ethics committees. [LWVUS](#)

## **Health Care Reform**

The League believes that quality, affordable health care should be available to all U.S. residents. Other U.S. health care policy goals should include the equitable distribution of services, efficient and economical delivery of care, advancement of medical research and technology, and a reasonable total national expenditure level for health care.

Furthermore, the League believes that all Americans should have access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, health promotion and education, primary care (including prenatal and reproductive health), acute care, long-term care and mental health care.

Through decades of work in their communities, League members have learned that Americans believe that fairness and responsibility, as well as access, are important values for any health care system. We believe that healthcare reform can only succeed if it takes all these values into account.

## **Health-Care Battle Set to Focus on Public Plan**

By Laura Meckler, Wall Street Journal, March 24, 2009 (Excerpts)

WASHINGTON -- Congress is poised for a battle over whether an ambitious health-care overhaul should include a new government-run health plan to compete with private companies in the effort to cover the uninsured. The proposal for a public health plan inspires passion on both sides, as it gets to the heart of what government's role should be in the health-care system. Democrats typically see more government involvement as a good way to check the private sector and help control costs. Republicans fear the government will have unfair power over the market.

At the heart of the larger health plan being contemplated is a government-organized health-insurance exchange through which individuals and small businesses could purchase coverage. Private companies would compete for business under a new set of rules, such as a ban on rejecting applicants who are already sick. Subsidies would be available to many people based on their incomes.

During his presidential campaign, Mr. Obama proposed that a government-run plan be created to compete with private plans as part of the exchange. Sen. Baucus said last fall he, too, favored a public plan. The chairmen of the relevant House committees all favor it, too.

It could be structured in a variety of ways. Ideas range from creating a Medicare-like system, where government sets the benefits and the prices, to a system managed by a private contractor but in which government assumes the risk, much like large companies do with their insurance benefits.

Proponents say that will give people the choice of a nonprofit plan that will help keep costs low, particularly by controlling administrative costs. The government option will provide needed competition, they say.

But opponents say a public plan would be an unfair competitor because it could become big enough to drive down reimbursements to doctors and hospitals, much like Medicare does, putting more cost pressure on the private sector. Consumers would then flock to the public plan because its premiums would be cheaper, opponents fear, and ultimately no viable private plans would remain.

Insurance companies, many of which support other aspects of the health-system overhaul, strongly oppose a public plan.

## **LWVEA TO COUNT BALLOTS FOR HOMEOWNER GROUP**

Ten League members have volunteered to help count ballots for a Castro Valley homeowner association on April 7. The payment for this service goes into the League's budget and can then be used to support LWVEA's operations and education programs.

If you are interested in working on future elections for homeowners associations or know of one that could use this service, please contact Suzanne at [suzbarba@comcast.net](mailto:suzbarba@comcast.net) or 538-9678.

## **\$220 MILLION IN STIMULUS PACKAGE FOR CA CHILDREN**

*Excerpt from San Francisco Chronicle*

The new federal stimulus package will pump \$2 billion into a neglected part of the economy - childcare - to help working parents, reported Senator Nancy Pelosi. "Child care keeps parents working and children learning," Pelosi told parents and preschool workers in San Francisco in a phrase that said it all.

So dire is the childcare and preschool situation in California that 204,000 children are on a statewide waiting list and may never land a spot.

The stimulus money may help. California should see about \$220 million, or roughly 10 percent of the \$2 billion Congress approved for the childcare and development block grant, according to the state Department of Finance.



**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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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 EVENTS**

- April 3, Health Care Forum San Lorenzo Village Home Association
- April 4 Alameda County Council, 9-12 noon 20993 Redwood Rd., Castro Valley
- April 8 Board Meeting 5:30pm San Lorenzo Village Home Association
- May 13, Board Meeting, 5:30pm San Lorenzo Village Home Association
- May 15-17 State Convention Long Beach, California
- May 30 Bay Area League Day-Virtual Council On-line instructions to be announced
- June 6, Climate Change Action Seminar Chabot College
- June ? Annual Meeting - TBA

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