



League of Women Voters Eden Area

VOTER

Vol. 58 No 4 *Political Responsibility through Informed and Active Participation* April 2015

SAVE THE DATE

League Annual Meeting

Saturday, June 13
10:15 a.m. to 1 p.m.

Castro Valley Library

Speaker –
Cong. Eric Swalwell

Forecast of Federal Budget
Impact

Business Meeting 10:15 am to noon
Speaker - noon to 1 p.m.

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Income Inequality

State, County &
Regional Efforts

Saturday
April 25, 1 to 3 p.m.

San Leandro Main Library
Lecture Hall
300 Estudillo Ave., San Leandro

Distinguished Speakers

Director Christine Baker
California Dept. of Industrial Relations (DIR)

James Paxson
Chair, Alameda County
Workforce Investment Board

Sasha Werblin
Director, Economic Equity,
Greenlining Institute

This is a free event, but attendees should
RSVP as follows:

<https://www.eventbrite.com/edit?eid=15699486587>

or email lwvea@aol.com or call
(510)394-4082

Co-sponsored by

League of Women Eden Area (LWVEA),
American Assoc. of Univ. Women (AAUW) and

Asian Pacific Islander
American Public Affairs (APAPA)



PRESIDENT'S REPORT



Three events I want to note took place on February 27, March 15 and March 26. In February we sponsored the "Meet Your Electeds" session that was attended by 90-100 people. Everyone there seemed pleased to meet informally with the officials, their constituents, with other elected officials, and with members of the League. Some of our members invited their friends. I suggest all of you consider doing that for the programs we sponsor. It broadens the range of our advocacy efforts and may encourage others to join. Leaders for this program were Penny Peck (Event Chair), Cimberly Eng-Tamura (Refreshments) and Nancy Van Huffel (Registration).

Our March 15 event was a new venture for us. It served several purposes, like the opportunity to socialize among members attending, recruiting new members, and wine tasting - all at Doc's Winery on Foothill. Participants seemed to be happy when they arrived and perhaps more so after doing some wine tasting. It's good to try out new approaches and this turned out well, thanks primarily to Event Chair Gail Lundholm and relatively new Board member Joanne Young.

One other program of particular interest to me was "Hayward Honors Women", on March 26. It wasn't sponsored by us but we were highly praised in comments made by LWVEA member and panelist Gail Steele. When all four program panelists were asked to name important mentors in their lives, the three other panelists named particular men or women. Gail said it was the League of Women Voters who served as her major mentor. That was high praise indeed from one of the best of the best of our community leaders.

Our next program takes place on April 25 and the forum topic is "Income Inequality". Former LWVEA President Jennifer Ong is the Event Chair. I recently saw a PBS program called "Inequality for All" featuring Robert Reich, former Secretary of Labor under Clinton. It's very well done and complements what you will hear at our April 25 program. See it on your TV set or buy the DVD. See you in April.

Delmo Della-Dora, LWVEA President

BOARD BRIEFS March 23, 2015

- **Hayward Honors Women** - We will have an interest table at the event as well as attendees from the Board.
- **Bay Area League Board Opening** – Discussed BAL's request for nominees for Vice President.
- **Law Day Participation** – Reviewed ongoing 60by50 campaign by Chabot Community College to increase student voting in elections and agreed to co-sponsor again in April when a date and speaker is confirmed.
- **Meeting Date** - Since regular meeting date on May 25 falls on Memorial Day, Board agreed to move the meeting date to May 18.
- **Income Inequality** – Jennifer Ong is chairing this event and reported that our online registration is being used and publicity being sent out. There was a request for videotaping the event. Aiwa Zelinsky said she would ask APAPA if they would want to co-sponsor the event and contribute toward the cost of videotaping. She will report back.
- **Annual Meeting** – We will begin our business meeting at 10:15 a.m. and end at noon when Cong. Eric Swalwell will speak.
- **Winetasting Membership Recruitment Event** – Gail Lundholm reported that this first time event was successful with 30 people attending and at least two people signing up as new members.
- **Nominating Committee** – Nancy Van Huffel reported that we might have two new board members soon—Aiwa Zelinsky who has helped on several league events and Marian Handa who is retiring as San Leandro City Clerk soon.

LWVEA board meetings are open to the public and held on the 4th Monday of the month at 5:45 p.m. Email lwvea@aol.com for agenda

WELCOME TO NEWEST 2015 LWVEA MEMBERS

We want to thank the following people for deciding to join the League, a leader in educating the public on the important issues of day. Our League is only as strong as its members.

By joining, you have taken the first step in helping us meet our Mission. We hope you will take the next step and become an active member by attending our programs and volunteering for one of the many tasks with which the League needs help.

Assemblyman Rob Bonta
Carolyn Darcey
Deirdre Fennessy
Amy Madsen
John Maher
Ronald Moore
Rosalee Ojeda



State League Advocacy on Money in Politics in 2015

Summary - Over the past several years, Money in Politics (Campaign Finance Reform) has been a focus of LWVC legislative advocacy. In the coming year, the time and energy spent on this will change. Our current plan is that League advocacy work will center on the work to rebuild the Cal-Access campaign and lobbying disclosure system. This means

we will support a limited number of bills in the area of campaign finance.

The League has almost 100 years of hands-on experience advocating for and implementing effective government systems. We will continue to work on both good data and reliable, easy access for the public to that data.

Background - In the 2013-2014 legislative session several substantial proposals were introduced, including bills sponsored by the LWVC. In 2014, bills were introduced specifically in response to the scandals involving legislators accused of bribery, etc. The climate was definitely one of inviting reform.

There were some significant successes, such as SB 27 to require the disclosure of the true source of “dark money” campaign contributions from organizations that are not generally required to reveal their donors. However, there were also some setbacks. The governor vetoed several bills we supported. Look at our 2013-2014 Bill Status Report [<http://lwvc.org/act-now/bill-status-report>] for the veto messages and more information on the bills we supported.

We also saw the difficulty both of crafting good language and of getting support from the wide community needed to reach a 2/3 vote in each house. SB 52 (the California Disclose Act) was a notable example of this. Its sponsors had significant problems drafting sound “follow the money” provisions that could garner the supermajority support needed.

The coming year and Cal-Access—Based on early discussions, the prospects for passing significant campaign financing legislation will be smaller in 2015. This is in part because legislators are turning their attention to other issues. However, in no small part it reflects the recognition that rebuilding the Cal-Access campaign and

lobbying disclosure system is a first crucial step toward the transparency and public awareness needed for any regulation of campaign fundraising and spending to work.



We agree that California's good campaign disclosure laws can still be improved, but unless there is easy public access to the data reported about campaign fundraising and spending, "reform" doesn't work and people lose confidence in their government. A basic part of being transparent is having good, reliable and consistent data from the beginning.

Moving Cal-Access forward will be a major League focus this year. We have committed to work with the Secretary of State, the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), and other stakeholder groups to find effective ways to fund and advance this project. League members are interviewing their legislators about their support for it, and we will continue to educate and advocate at both state and local levels.

What does this mean about specific legislation? We will support a limited number of bills this session to improve the regulation of money in politics. This will probably not include all the bills we have supported in the past. We do not plan to work for changes that would best be made after the rebuilt Cal-Access is in place.

We will also take care to consider the viability of proposals as we invest our limited resources of time and effort. Considering the difficulties its sponsors have had in drafting sound "follow the

money" provisions that can garner the supermajority support needed, we do not anticipate major League effort in support of the California Disclose Act.

Questions? Contact LWVC Joanne Leavitt, jleavitt@lwvc.org, or Trudy Schafer, tschafer@lwvc.org.

Letter to the Federal Election Commission

Only you, the Federal Election Commission, can stop the Big PAC attack! Only you have the power to stop the insidious money glut that has been unleashed on us ever since the Citizen's United ruling.

You must stop the dark money polluting our elections and the so-called "independent" spending by outside groups that is poisoning our political system. You have the authority under existing law to require disclosure of election spending and to rigorously define "coordination" to prevent millions of dollars of special interest spending by outside groups that is not really "independent." Do your duty and enforce the law.

Our American democracy depends on having well-informed voters, and your refusal to require disclosure is undermining our representative democracy. Voters have a right to know who is funding political campaigns – whether it is corporations, wealthy individuals or labor unions.

I am tired of big-money special interests overwhelming our elections. Super PACs and other outside groups are raising and spending unlimited sums, which reached more than \$600 million dollars in 2014. The rationale that allows this to continue is that the spending is somehow "independent." But we know that Super PACs and others have many ways to coordinate with candidate campaigns – leading to inevitable corruption. Your regulations need to rigorously define "coordination" to end the charade of "independent" expenditures.

Fair and clean elections, determined by the votes of American citizens, should be at the center of our democracy – not big money from secret sources. As long as dark money groups hide the names of their funders and outside special interest groups can spend unlimited amounts behind the mask of "independent" spending, our democratic principles are at risk.

I urge you to restore transparency and enforce robust disclosure rules. Thank you so much.

Rene' Besold, LWVEA Director

The 2015-16 Budget: Higher Education Analysis – Legislative Analyst Office (LAO)

The Governor's budget includes a total of \$21.6 billion in core funding for higher education, \$1.2 billion (6 percent) more than the 2014-15 level. As the Governor assumes tuition rates will be flat in 2015-16, the bulk of the increase is covered by the state. State funding rises from \$13 billion to \$14.1 billion—an increase of \$1.1 billion (9 percent).



Under the Governor's budget, the California Community Colleges (CCC) receive a relatively large increase in core funding (9 percent), though about two-thirds is attributable to a large augmentation for new adult education consortia. The University of California (UC), California State University (CSU), and Hastings College of the Law receive smaller increases (ranging from 2 percent to 4 percent).

We find little to warrant additional enrollment growth at UC and CSU, and available data indicate CCC likely will not use all the growth funding provided in 2014-15. We recommend against unallocated budget increases, instead recommend that the Legislature link base increases to a cost-of-living adjustment and any additional increases to specified state priorities.

We review several facility proposals and make various related recommendations, including recommending the Legislature establish state facility priorities and require the segments to submit a report describing how they plan to eliminate their maintenance backlogs.

This report is available using the following link:
<http://lao.ca.gov/Publications/Detail/3188>

LAURA'S LAW -- An Overview

Laura's Law went into effect in 2002. It is an Assisted Outpatient Treatment (AOT) program for people with severe mental illnesses who refuse medication because their illness impairs their ability to make rational decisions.

The law was named after a young woman who was killed by a patient with severe mental illness who refused to use the prescribed medication for his condition.

However, before the law can go into effect, each county is supposed to pass a resolution and send it to the State Dept. of Health Service concerning its ability to participate. Alameda County is one of many counties in CA that is not participating. The AC Health Care Services Agency reviewed the program and recommended that the Board of Supervisors not adopt the AOT but try to solve the problem another way based on information they gathered from stakeholder groups.

The AC Board of Supervisors postponed action on Laura's Law and has not rescheduled consideration at the time of this publication. However, Supervisor Wilma Chan wrote an Opinion article last January which appeared in the SF Chronicle and other East Bay papers, which stated:

"It's time that we listen to those families who have a loved one with serious mental illness. We cannot afford to wait any longer. All of our counties must seize the opportunity to bring this lifeline to our most vulnerable citizens and their families."

To find out more about Laura's Law, go to our www.LWVEA.org website to read Supervisor Chan's Opinion article, the Alameda County Health Care Services agency report to the Board of Supervisors, a description of Laura's law, and Laura's Law Home Page.

VOTING RIGHTS GROUPS MOVE TO ENFORCE 'MOTOR VOTER' IN CA

Recently, citing clear evidence that the State of California is violating its federally-mandated responsibility to offer California drivers and ID card holders the opportunity to register to vote, attorneys from numerous national law firms, sent a pre-litigation notice letter to the California Secretary of State on behalf of the League of Women Voters of California, ACCE Institute, California Common Cause, the National Council of La Raza, and several individual California citizens.

"It's time for the Department of Motor Vehicles to stop dragging its feet and make voter registration easy and accessible for the millions of Californians who apply for or renew their driver's licenses or ID cards every year," said Helen Hutchison, President of the League of Women Voters of California.

Under the National Voter Registration Act ("NVRA"), California and most other U.S. states are required to treat a driver's license application or renewal as a voter registration application if the applicant chooses to register to vote. If the applicant is already a registered voter, the State must update the existing voter registration with any new information supplied on a driver's license application, renewal, or change of address form. Such new information might be a name change, address change, or new political party affiliation.

According to the attorneys, the NVRA violations in California are part of a national problem. The report finds that these "Motor Voter" requirements are widely ignored in states all across the country, with the result, in many states, that only a small number of voters are registering through motor vehicles departments (DMVs). According to the report, California has one of the lowest levels of DMV voter registration in the country.

WHAT'S UP WITH WATER? – LWVC

Department of Water Resources has announced "significant refinements" to the Bay Delta Conservation Plan. Here's a summary:

- There is no change in the number, size, capacity, or route of the twin tunnels or in the number of intakes (three) on the Sacramento River, but the tunnels reportedly will operate using gravity flow rather than pumps. This will reduce the



construction footprint in the North Delta.

- The absence of pumps means that permanent

high voltage power lines will not be necessary in the North Delta.

- The tunnel terminus has been moved to reduce environmental impacts.
- Soil excavated on Staten Island in the North Delta, which is owned by The Nature Conservancy and managed for winter habitat for greater sandhill cranes, will be deposited farther south in the Delta.

Matt Weiser, writing in the Sacramento Bee on Dec. 19, spoke of changes "aimed at appeasing local residents," who were concerned about the industrial appearance of the pumping facilities and power lines. The Nature Conservancy was concerned about impacts of tunnel muck and power lines on crane habitat.

Not clear at this point is how the gravity flow system will operate over the 30-mile tunnel route; or how fish screening will be dealt with in the South Delta, where the fish screens are already inadequate. Still unresolved is how the project will ensure adequate water quantity, quality, and flows for fisheries and the ecosystem of the Delta, Estuary, and Bay.

ROLE OF A NEW STATE AGENCY

From EdSource

A small agency with a big mission will make the final decision on which schools and districts will need assistance and ultimately state intervention. Created two years ago with a \$10 million initial budget, the California Collaborative for Educational Excellence held its first meeting recently. It will determine which consultants, county offices and school leaders have the expertise in areas such as parent engagement, career and technical education or working with English language learners and then assign them to schools needing help. It also will decide if a persistently low-performing school or district needs state oversight.

The Legislature signaled its intentions when it chose the agency's name. It should be a place where districts go to collaborate for assistance and referrals; intervention should be the last resort. Its first role should be a "repository of learning" that collects and disseminates best practices.

In writing the rules for intervention, however, the state board will also determine when and how often the collaborative must take a harder line on intervention.

The new accountability model will focus on "trust, patience and adaptability." New state board members said there is a need to build in self-reflection and examine goals and the evaluation rubrics every five years or so, something not done with the API."

But what one person views as needed patience, another person views as needless inaction. Ted Lempert, president of the advocacy group Children Now, said he worries that the pendulum may swing too far in response to past problems.

"There's no question our previous accountability system was flawed," he wrote in an email. "There's also no question that it shined a light on the achievement gap and was critical to the

gains we've seen among kids of color over the last decade plus. In constructing the new system, California leaders shouldn't overreact to past flaws by shying away from the state's role in ensuring that all students and their progress are tracked each year."

That tension will shape what the next school accountability system looks like.

**THE HIGH
PRICE OF
HIGHER
EDUCATION**



LWVC HIGHER ED STUDY THIS SUMMER

We are still looking for members who would like to participate in a state study on **Access to Higher Education**. The scope of the study has been developed as follows:

"A study examining access to quality public higher education in California including funding, affordability, preparedness, equity, and opportunities and barriers to success."

Materials are being sent to local League presidents to distribute to those who would like to participate in the study. Some articles are on the Master Plan for Higher Education and others concern questions regarding the future of higher education in the state.

Study meeting dates and times will be decided by the study group itself. Only one or two meetings are being considered.

If you are interested in learning more about the study and/or are would like to join the study, please contact Delmo Della-Dora at d3nd@comcast.net or call 510-582-0904.

League of Women Voters of Eden Area

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*The League of Women Voters, a
nonpartisan political organization,
encourages the informed and active
participation of the public in
government and influences public
policy through education and advocacy.*

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CALENDAR

DATE	TIME	EVENT
Apr. 4	12-2 p.m.	APAPA Appreciation Luncheon, Skywest Restaurant, Hayward
Apr. 18	9-noon	LWV County Council, Miley’s Office, Castro Valley
Apr. 25	1-3 p.m.	Income Inequality Forum (See page 1)
Apr. 27	5:45 p.m.	LWVEA Board Meeting (See page 2)
June 13	10-1 p.m.	LWVEA Annual Meeting (See page 1)

**For up-to-date info and specific details on events,
email: lwvea@aol.com or check out www.LWVEA.org**