



VOTER

LWV of Eden Area—July 8, 2006 – Summary of Retreat Activities

Voter Service Activities:

Discussed best way to register voters. Consensus was that voting registration would be best if done during Festivals where there are large groups of people. Suggestion to use the AC Transit bus during the Festivals for voter registration.

Target employee groups, child care providers and homeowner associations and offer to give pro and cons presentation and register voters at the same time. We will be sending letters to these various groups and organizations and letting them know of the variety of services the League provides.

Discussion on Voter Registration boxes and where they should be placed.

Planning calendar dates:

Board Meetings—

1st Wednesday from 5:00 p.m.-6:30 p.m.

September 2006—

Universal Health Insurance Forum

September 28 2006—

New Member Orientation—5 to 7pm

October 6, 2006 –

Membership pros and cons luncheon

December 1, 2006—

Holiday Party and Auction

January 20 2007—

Annual Program Planning Meeting

March 16, 2007—

Education Forum on global warming

April 13, 2007—50th Anniversary Party

June 2, 2007—Annual Meeting

June 28, 2006 – Meet your elected officials.

VOTER Newsletter

Discussed the VOTER newsletter. Some Board members suggested that newsletter be via e-mail. Discussion ensued on newsletter hardcopies or e-mail. Consensus was that a survey be taken of all members before taking an action on this issue.

SURVEY ON NEXT PAGE

New Members

We discussed a policy that Board members call new members and welcome them into the organization. We agreed to rotate this function. We will also have a new member orientation.

Issues to be considered:

Discussion on the ranking of issues to be taken up by the League. The top two issues per 26 members were global warming and universal health insurance. The Board concluded we should emphasize both issues if we can. The idea for the One Care Now campaign is to identify the 364 largest cities in California and gather people there to push for universal health care insurance with the City, schools, officials, officeholders, etc. This activity will continue all year, with a new city becoming a part of the movement each day.

Everyone believed global warming was a critical issue, but differed on whether we should be tackling this on a local level. It was decided to have at least one educational forum to discuss what members and local jurisdictions could do.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT—

by Nancy Van Huffel

As your President for a third term, I want to recognize what a wonderful organization we have. Over my years on the Board and as your President, I have been fortunate to receive the support of a terrific group of volunteers. However, lives change and people move on to other things, and those that we depended on are giving of their time and effort in other places. In order to keep the vitality of our organization and to keep doing the quality of work we do, we must constantly revitalize this pool of active volunteers.

This past month, we had our retreat (summary on page 1) and our Board members volunteered for many of the activities for the upcoming year. However, we still have no editor for the "VOTER" our regular newsletter. The board discussed several alternatives for handling things going forward:

- 1) Discontinue the "VOTER" all together;
- 2) Publish the "VOTER" on a quarterly schedule, with possible monthly email supplements;
- 3) Publish the "VOTER" electronically only ;
- 4) Pay someone to edit and publish the "VOTER"

Obviously, of these alternatives, only total discontinuance eliminates the need for an Editor. However, after discussion, it appears to me that publishing the "VOTER" electronically on a quarterly basis, supplemented by emailed "bulletins" when appropriate appears to be a way to keep publishing and ease the job on a volunteer editor.

Advantages of an email publication: Decreased production and distribution time: far less expensive; and allows for more creativity such as using many colors or photos as we want without costs. Finally, we won't be wasting paper or postage on individuals who choose not to read the "VOTER".

Disadvantages of an email publication: Not everyone has email so some members would not have access to an electronic-only publication; folks don't always read their email in a timely fashion; not everyone's computer is capable of downloading files of a larger size or that include graphics; and personal and system spam filters prevent newsletters from getting through. In order to determine the wishes of our membership, please complete the survey below; and keep in mind that even if we go forward with an electronic version, we still need a volunteer Editor!

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY --Please respond with a Yes or No

_____ I read the newsletter monthly and do not want to see it discontinued

_____ I don't read the "VOTER" because of time and think we should conserve resources.

_____ Hire someone: The "VOTER" is worth it. I am willing to pay an additional \$12/yr

_____ Please try a quarterly publication schedule with emailed bulletins as appropriate.

_____ I am willing to volunteer for the following: (Please include your name and phone #)

_____ writing articles _____ VOTER layout _____ VOTER distribution

TO RETURN THIS SURVEY: Mail to LWVEA, P.O. Box 2234 Castro Valley, CA 94546
FAX (510) 481-5627 E-Mail: lwvea@aol.com Info will be sent to you via email

Excerpts from Kay Maxwell's Speech (past LWV President) from the LWVC Leadership Council Banquet

DEMOCRACY AGENDA

The League believes that American democracy is at risk and that now is the time to act. Years of band-aid solutions and neglect have allowed many of our government systems to grow weak. Our Democracy Agenda offers viable solutions to help overcome those weaknesses, and educate communities and citizens nationwide, on how to improve things. This effort is about protecting our electoral processes through election reform efforts and reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act; advancing our representative government through nonpartisan redistricting; preserving our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties; and protecting against government corruption through campaign finance and lobbying reform.

Democracy is at risk when long lines and faulty voting processes keep Americans from voting and having their votes counted.

Democracy is at risk when partisan gerrymandering ensures that elections are over before the people vote. Democracy is at risk when government actions threaten basic civil liberties. And, democracy is at risk when special interest money plays a dominant role. We believe we must renew and repair our democracy so that it works for all citizens.

Election Reform

The first item on our Democracy Agenda is election reform. The 2000 election exposed major flaws in our election system. Those flaws had been there for a while, but they were only exposed because of that very close election. This sparked an outpouring of concern, and Congress finally acted by passing a bi-partisan, compromise bill--the Help America Vote Act, better known as HAVA. Its goal was, and is, to make sure that all voters can participate in elections and that all votes of eligible voters are counted. We in the League

have identified four steps that need to be taken to improve the administration of our elections:

The first step we recommend is professionalization of election administration. Why did many people have to wait four, five, six, even 10 hours to vote? We need to rethink how we recruit and train poll workers, and we need to redesign the polling place.

The second step needed is to put the "service" back in "voter service." How long would a fast food chain survive if its workers regularly allowed long lines to form without opening up more registers?

Third, we need to launch a wide-ranging research and development effort to apply 21st Century systems and technologies to the election process. The redesign of polling place operations to accommodate modern technology would clearly benefit from additional research and development. The process of change in election management is ongoing, and continued research and development must be part of that process.

Fourth, we need a substantial and sustained investment on the part of the federal government. We need to get real about the resources that are required to run elections in a way that is consistent with this nation's democratic ideals.

Redistricting

Another issue that goes to the heart of the democratic system is the controversy over partisan redistricting, or gerrymandering. This controversy is as old as the Republic. You probably know that the term gerrymander itself comes from Governor Gerry of Massachusetts, who created an election district so long and misshapen that it looked like a salamander - hence the name Gerry - mander. Today, with the advent of modern computers and growing partisanship, it is possible to create legislative districts where the results of an election will be known before any votes are cast or counted. This is just what is happening

across the nation. And it threatens our democracy. To that end, the League espouses four basic redistricting principles for protecting the integrity of the electoral process. First, we support the bedrock constitutional guarantee of "one person, one vote." Second, the redistricting process should promote full political participation by minority voters. Third, the redistricting process should be transparent and open to public participation. Finally, we oppose partisan gerrymandering because it subverts our democratic system. Representative democracy depends on the voters freely choosing their representatives rather than politicians choosing their voters.

Civil Liberties

A third focus of the League's democracy agenda involves the basic civil liberties that under gird our entire system of representative democracy. The right to speak freely, to assemble freely, to read and debate freely on all subjects is the prerequisite for a vibrant democracy. When the government can investigate what books you read or take out of the library, when the government can carry out secret wiretapping without court approval, when the government monitors the meetings of citizens who speak out against government policy, and when the Executive Branch asserts the inherent right to disregard both international and domestic laws, then basic civil liberties have been called into question.

Many of the key provisions of the USA PATRIOT Act undermine civil liberties, including the "sneak and peek" warrants that allow the government to search your home or business without notifying you or without a search warrant ahead of time. Protecting against terrorism is important, but so too is protecting against the possibility of government intimidation. The League was active in seeking changes to the USA PATRIOT Act to bring it more in line with basic civil liberties. We fought the good fight, and succeeded in making some modest changes in the PATRIOT ACT, but the act has now been reauthorized.

Campaign Finance and Lobbying Reform



The fourth and final item on our Democracy Agenda concerns the role of money and special interests in American politics. We know that "he who pays the piper calls the tune." That's why campaign finance and lobbying reform are so important to protecting our democracy. When special interests are the dominant source of campaign funding, when special interests have special access to Congress, indeed when special interest lobbyists can call the tune on Capitol Hill, then it is time for fundamental reform.

The League has joined with other public interest groups to call on Congress to enact new safeguards against abuses in the lobbying process. Congressional travel -- golf trips and foreign vacations -- should not be funded by special interests. We need new enforcement mechanisms to guard against congressional abuses. And, perhaps most importantly, we must attack a fundamental issue - campaign funding. We need to ensure that lobbyists cannot deliver huge sums of campaign cash to the very members of Congress they are lobbying. We need to reform our campaign financing systems.

The League has been involved in campaign finance reform efforts for years and worked hard for the passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002, better known as McCain-Feingold, which closed the most significant "soft money" and "sham issue" loopholes. We also filed a friend of the court brief with the Supreme Court when the law was challenged.

But much, much more needs to be done! We need public financing of congressional elections, and we need to renew the presidential public financing system. The election of a President of the United States is the single most important election in our country, and perhaps the world. The election obviously results in the selection of this

powerful official. But it also affects every voter's perception about our election system generally, and about how our government really works. The presidential election system sets the tone for American democracy.

It is not an exaggeration to suggest that the public financing system for presidential elections, enacted in the 1970s, played a key role in rescuing the presidency from the dark days of Watergate, when many citizens believed that our political system was corrupt at its core.

We have seen the presidential public financing system wither away, as needed updates and improvements have not been put in place. In 2004, three major candidates, including the two party's nominees, did not participate in public funding. This system needs to be fixed, and fixed soon. We continue to work with Representatives Shays and Meehan, and Senators McCain and Feingold on legislation that will fix the presidential public financing system with the kind of reforms that will bring it up to date.

But we also face ongoing threats in Congress. Several times in the past year we have had to mobilize to fight against attempts to undermine campaign finance laws. Incredibly, some members have sought to INCREASE the size of special interest contributions to candidates or to create new loopholes. We have succeeded thus far, and we want to thank all those League members who have responded to action alerts on this issue, as well as our other key issues.

There are some promising signs on campaign finance reform at the grassroots level. In fact, in Connecticut - my home state - the Democratic controlled General Assembly recently passed landmark campaign finance legislation. It includes public financing of all state legislative campaigns, as well as for our statewide constitutional offices, and made Connecticut the first state in the country to have its legislature enact public financing. And

the Republican Governor signed it into law. Americans have said time and time again that special interest groups have too much influence over Washington. They want the average citizen to have just as much say in who becomes President as large corporations, lobbying organizations and wealthy donors. Our system belongs in the hands of its rightful owners--the American voters--and the League will continue to do its part, both at the grassroots level and nationally, to see that it happens.



CONCLUSION

The League's Democracy Agenda--election reform and reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act; non-partisan redistricting; safeguarding civil liberties; and campaign finance and lobbying reform - is also a citizen's agenda. Neither the League nor any other organization can accomplish change without the involvement of citizens; and that means every one of you.

Citizen involvement is the key to making democracy work. And, non-partisan action is essential if we're going to reduce polarization, have real dialogues on issues and get something done. Citizens across the country must get involved. For anyone here who is not yet a member of the League of Women Voters, I ask you to join us. For those of you who are members, please redouble your efforts for the values we share.

Thomas Jefferson once observed that it is the responsibility of each generation to give new definition to American democracy. For those of us who believe that the active and informed participation of citizens is essential to our government, for those of us who work every day to engage our communities and the nation in the critical issues of the day, America is at a crossroads. We need every concerned citizen to join with us in protecting our representative system of government, and we need every concerned citizen to reach out and encourage others to participate in our cause.

Bay Area League Day. CHALLENGES of OUR REGIONAL WATER SYSTEMS:
Saturday, September 16, 2006 --9AM - 1PM
 Marines Memorial Club, 609 Sutter Street SF

- The San Francisco Water System, the Water Supply Improvement Program , and Emergency Water Supply Plans
- Political Concerns of the Regional Water Agencies, Emergency Water Supply Plans, and the Demographics of Water Users;
- The Economic Importance of Water to the Bay Area;
- Bay Area Water Supply and Conservation Agency: Keeping the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission on Track;
- Emergency Preparedness for the Water Supply: What If?



Voter Information—
www.Smartvoter.org

Smart Voter: Key in your address and zip code, see the contests on your ballot. Then click away and find information on candidates and ballot measures -- from the League and other nonpartisan sources. Archives of past elections available with election results.

Attention Candidates: What is Smart Voter? Will it help me in my candidacy?

Are you running for your local School Board or Sanitation District? Where will voters find out about your candidacy? Smart Voter may be the only ready means voters have to find substantive information about you. If you are running for a race that gets more newspaper coverage, Smart Voter is a means to get the information about you directly to the voters.

A very large percentage of Smart Voter users visit on Monday before Election Day

and on that Tuesday. They don't have time to wade through information that does not help them decide for whom to vote. That's one reason they appreciate our Web site. By filling out our simple web forms, you will raise your visibility in the community. And Smart Voter costs you only a little time -- not money.

**IMPORTANT WEB SITES:
 League of Women Voters—**

Eden Area: www.lwvea.org

Bay Area: lwvba.ca.lwvnet.org

State: www.lwvc.org

National: www.lwv.org

**WARMEST WELCOME TO
 OUR NEWEST MEMBERS:**

Crystal Hishida-Graff, Hal Gin, Jean Hanchett, Eileen Mc Donald, Diana Souza



**THANKS TO OUR
 GENEROUS DONORS**

Let me personally thank everyone who bought /sold tickets for our Skybox Raffle or just donated money. These funds allow us to continue our many League services with-out an increase in dues. This year County Supervisor Nate Miley donated the Skybox, thus, our heartfelt recognition to him. Also, I wish to acknowledge the following Leaguers for donating above the \$25.00 requested:

GOLD DONORS-- Maria Palmeri, Donald Smart, Nancy VanHuffel

SILVER DONORS—Suzanne Barba, Linda Bennett, Brian Foster, Marian Handa, Tona Henninger, Pat Piras, Sal Tedesco

MEET YOUR ELECTED OFFICIALS EVENT—June 29, 2006



Photos by Patrisha Piras

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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Treasurer, P.O. Box 2234
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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.

CALENDAR OF COMING EVENTS

All members and the public are welcome.

AUGUST 2006

2 LWVEA Board Meeting

SEPTEMBER 2006

6 LWVEA Board Meeting

16 LWVBA forum—Info on website
<http://lwwba.ca.lwvnet.org>

28 New Member Orientation

OCTOBER 2006

4 LWVEA Board Meeting

6 Pros and Cons—Membership Lunch

Please take a few moments to
complete the member survey on
our VOTER—Page 2

HAVE A QUESTION?

CONTACT A LWVEA BOARD MEMBER

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