



LWV/LACounty

An Interleague Organization

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

An Interleague Organization — Beach Cities • Claremont Area • East San Gabriel Valley • Glendale-Burbank • Long Beach Area
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Editor: Mary Ellen Barnes Website:<http://lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org> Email:LWVLACounty@msn.com January 2011

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Calendar 2011

Wednesday, January 5 - LWV/LAC Board Meeting

Saturday, January 29 - Winter League Day (see flyer inside)

Wednesday, February 2 - LWV/LAC Board Meeting

Wednesday, March 2 - LWV/LAC Board Meeting

Saturday, March 26 - LWV/LAC Convention in Long Beach

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From the President's Desk...

Each January we watch developments in Sacramento as the annual budget process begins with the Governor offering his proposed budget for the coming year. It will be many months of negotiations before the final version is determined. This year, as in the past several years, California's finances are out of balance. We are waiting to see what will be proposed to address this.

The County League's Winter League Day is focused on the state budget. We will play the "Budget Game" in the morning, then hear remarks from Jean Ross, Director of the State Budget Project, in the afternoon. She will be ready to answer your questions. Don't miss this very timely and important program. Bring your League and non-League friends. A flyer is in this Voter for registration.

I want to remind you all of program planning for LWVC. Your responses are due by Feb. 11, 2011. There is a helpful program planning kit on the LWVC website. As you hold your local program planning meetings, consider where there is the most need, where the League will be most effective, and what activities best serve our mission. And consider what resources are available to carry out program ideas that you discuss – including local resources. If you want to keep up with what other Leagues are considering, join the program planning listserv.

Circle March 26 on your calendars. That is the date of the County Convention. This year it will be a half-day session and will be held in Long Beach.

Thank you all for the work you do with and for the League of Women Voters. You are the face of the League in the communities you serve.

Nancy

Save the Date!

Saturday, March 26th is County Convention!

In Long Beach. Details soon.

**NEW LEGISLATION TO IMPROVE CALIFORNIA'S FOSTER CARE SYSTEM
ASSEMBLY BILL 12**

By Harriet Chase, Legislative Consultant – Foster Care

“This is the most significant child welfare legislation in at least a decade,” says Janis Spire, President & CEO of The Alliance for Children’s Rights.

On September 30, Governor Schwarzenegger signed into law **AB 12 California Fostering Connections to Success Act** (A bill supported by the League of Women Voters California) that will enable California to take advantage of the following components of the federal 2008 **Fostering Connections to Success and Adoptions Act**:

1. Convert California’s kinship guardian assistance program (Kin-Gap”) which allows foster children to exit the child welfare system to stable and permanent relative guardianships, into a federally subsidized program. The federal government will pay 50% of the cost for federally eligible participants. (This, in turn, will provide a potential savings to the state of tens of millions of dollars from its General Fund.)
2. Extend foster care for eligible youth beyond age 18 and, at full implementation, up until the age of 21.
3. Provide transitional Kin-Gap or adoption Assistance Program (AAP) assistance to youth up until age 21, provided the youth entered guardianship at age 16 or later per federal law.

The conversion of Kin-Gap from a state and county-funded program to a federally subsidized program will begin January 1, 2011. The provision to extend foster care benefits past age 18 will be phased-in over 3 years starting January 1, 2012.

The next step is up to the California Department of Social Services, along with stakeholders, to develop the rules and

regulations required to carry out the changes described above and obtain federal approval to amendments in the State IV-E Plan. This will be accomplished through a series of workgroups.

Importance of extending foster care to age 21

Each year between 4,000 and 5,000 of California’s young people “emancipate” from the foster care system and are left to fend for themselves at age 18 or 19, when federal and state funding cease to be available. By contrast, most other young people receive financial and emotional support from a parent well past age 18. As a result of being left on their own at age 18, former foster youth are far more likely than other youth to experience homelessness, unemployment, unplanned pregnancy and involvement with the legal system. Research from other states has demonstrated that providing foster care support until age 21 dramatically improves outcomes for these youth.

For more information go to:
www.cafosteringconnection.org.

NATURAL RESOURCE NOTES

John Sullivan, LWV/LAC

The L. A. basin is blessed with moderate weather—never too cold or too hot—and with an interesting topography. The basin is ringed with dramatic mountain ranges that afford both recreational opportunities and many pleasing vistas. The bowl-like nature of the basin, however, also makes it prone to severe air pollution due to emissions from driving, manufacturing, and other activities.

The South Coast Air Quality Management District (AQMD) keeps track of air quality conditions and develops policies designed to keep our air as clean as possible. Increases in population, manufacturing, and vehicle miles traveled all have made the AQMD's job difficult. One can go to the AQMD Web page and get updates on air quality in the basin (<http://www.aqmd.gov/>).

For example, on October 28, 2010, the AQMD site indicated that air quality was good in most of the basin and moderate in the southwestern part. The AQMD site also has information on its activities and many aspects of air quality.

It has been clear for many years that air pollution is a threat to people and that children and infants are particularly vulnerable. It is also becoming quite clear that climate change in the form of global warming is both a threat to our environment and to the health of humans. We all need to consider what kinds of actions we can take at the individual, community, and national level to reduce our contributions to air pollution and climate change.

To this end, The League of Women Voters of the U. S. (LWVUS) has developed a Climate Change Kit for use by individuals, groups and leagues around the country. Part of the point of the kit is to help us all both save energy and reduce our carbon footprint. The Kit has a range of resources for individuals and local leagues and includes a component on the basics of climate change. In addition, the Kit outlines things that local leagues can do to work on climate change issues.

These activities include putting articles in local VOTERS, forming local League Eco-teams, organizing community events around climate change issues, and developing foot print calculator meetings. The kit directs league members to three different car-

bon footprint calculators. Local Leagues are encouraged to work with the Kit in developing strategies to deal with Climate change. The Kit can be found on the main web page for LWVUS (<http://www.lwv.org>) or go to:

http://participate.lwv.org/c/9217/t/6398/p/salsa/web/common/public/content?content_item_KEY=3766

Southern California did receive some rain in October and November (and lots of rain in December) but Ken Clark, weather blogger at Accuweather.com, is holding to his prediction that La Nina will prevail this winter season. This means less rainfall for the L. A. Basin. It is also important to remember that rainfall provides only about half of the water consumed in Southern California. The remainder is imported from the Owens Valley, Northern California, and the Colorado River (which means the entire Colorado River watershed). Given the region's dependence on imported water, and fact that California's water is over-committed, people in the L. A. Basin will always need to focus on their water consumption to insure regular water supplies.

The Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta is an important part of the system that delivers water from the north to Southern California. It is generally acknowledged that the Delta is a declining ecosystem, with fish populations, farming, and water-based recreation threatened. The causes of the Delta's decline are complicated but water withdrawals and pollution from upstream are two important factors. In addition, levies in the Delta are seen as unstable and could collapse in a major earthquake. Thus, the Delta needs attention if it is to serve as source of water for the southern part of the State and not become a "chokepoint."

The Bay Delta Conservation Plan (BDCP) is one effort to provide a "fix" for the Delta. (Go to:

<http://baydeltaconservationplan.com/Home.aspx>.)

However, it is a process fraught with problems.

Concluding that the BDCP will provide no new water for farmers, Westlands Water District recently pulled out of the process. Some environmental groups oppose the BDCP process because they judge that it will not save enough water for the Delta. As dire as the outlook seems, it is essential that some solution for the Delta be found to insure continued flow of water to the southern part of the State.

"Rebooting California: Initiatives, Conventions and Government Reform

By Phyllis O'Connor

This is a belated – but still timely – report on this seminar which several County League members attended at Loyola Law School a few months ago. There were four panels featuring distinguished experts in the field of constitutional reform, who addressed issues related to various aspects of reform. The keynote speaker at lunch was former Governor Grey Davis; panel topics, moderators and panelists are listed below. (In the interest of space, only the participants' names are listed – but many are fairly well known and all have impressive credentials.)

Panel 1: Fiscal & Budgetary Problems/Reforms:

Dan Walters, Moderator; panelists Jon Coupal, John Heilman, Robert Hertzberg, Sheila Kuehl.

Panel 2: Electoral & Structural Reforms:

Sherry Bebitch Jeffe, Moderator; panelists Jessica Levinson, Justin Levitt, Bruce McPherson, Allan Ides.

Panel 3: Mechanisms for Constitutional

Reform: Karen Grigsby Bates, Moderator; panelists Joseph Grodin, Thad Kousser, Ann Lousin, Steven Miller, Raphael Sonenshein

Panel 4: The Future of Direct Democracy – Reforming the Initiative Process: Warren Olney,

Moderator; panelists Bruce Cain, Christopher Elmendorf, Robert Stern, Gerald Uelmen

Despite the fact that the fairly obvious consensus was that a full blown constitutional convention was highly problematic and had virtually no chance of being convened, let alone accomplishing whatever objectives were set for it, the overall tone of the discussions were remarkably upbeat. Some of the comments were as follows:

Panel 1: Coupal recommended retaining the 2/3 vote for budget and taxes, a part time legislature and a spending limit; on how the state budget impacts California's cities, Heilman called the state-local relationship "a mess", and noted that the state keeps taking funds from local

governments even after all budgets have been set; Kuehl, addressing tax and budget issues, is concerned that now serious budget discussions don't even start until June or later and that the "big 5" (governor and both party leaders from Senate and Assembly) make all the decisions; Hertzberg discussed bipartisan fiscal reforms, recommended a two year budget and a bigger rainy day fund.

Panel 2: Levinson examined the constitutionality of open primaries, especially with respect to how they affect minor parties; Levitt looked at the potential of citizen redistricting and said the new Redistricting Commission shouldn't be looked on as a "magic bullet"; McPherson suggested a 3-legged stool of reform – redistricting, open primaries and elimination or extension of term limits; Ides presented a provocative recommendation for a unicameral legislature of 320 members (now 120), half elected by the current plurality/majority system and half in proportional, multimember districts.

Panel 3: The panelists noted that the requirements for a Constitutional Convention include a 2/3 vote of the legislature and voter approval, which is unlikely to happen. Lousin, speaking from Chicago, told how Illinois did a successful convention, with the keys being preparation and transparency. Sonenshein recommended looking at cities which have successfully undertaken reform in the last few years and using a city's Charter Reform Commission as a model.

Panel 4: Panelists addressed the initiative process, and how it might be improved. "Nothing is more important than revising the initiative process in California – and nothing is less likely." (Bruce Cain). One of the problems is that by a large majority, Californians like the initiative process.

During lunch we heard Grey Davis' take on getting the state back on track. He noted that budgets are usually late because legislative interests are not aligned with public interests. But we can't solve the problem unless both Democratic and Republican legislators can challenge their party's stance on cutting expenditures vs. raising revenues. *Continued on pg. 6*

Rebooting California - continued from pg. 5

Davis is strongly in favor of redistricting reform and open primaries, and also recommends a rainy day fund and spending cap, “because no one can repeal the business cycle”. In good years we both increase spending and lower taxes, when we should be putting \$10 billion in reserves. The excess could be used for one-time projects or to pay down debt.

Other ideas were:

- a ban on legislative fundraising from May 15 until the budget passes;

- a “part time” legislature, with representatives who work (in Sacramento) 4 months each year, not 7 months, and spend more time in their districts on constituent work;
- a requirement that any ballot initiative must identify new funding sources or what programs would be cut. Unfunded items are “like an extra straw in the glass.”
- state employee pension reform.

In closing, Davis said that what makes a good governor is “a strong economy and rain in the north.”

Desalination – Water Source in Our Future

By Nancy Mahr

On Dec 11, a group of about 20 League members and friends visited Sea Lab, a desalination (desal) demonstration facility in Redondo Beach operated by the West Basin Water District. This is a facility that combines research, testing, and public education. The facility is set up to process 100,000 gallons of sea water each day, and from this produces 50,000 gallons of drinkable water.

As this is a demonstration lab, the purpose is not to produce water for actual consumption at this time. The treated water is not used, but is returned to the ocean. But the process is tested and refined, and the lab helps the public understand the benefits of desalination as a viable water source.

First we walked through displays regarding water sources and water usage. Then our guide explained the desal process used at the facility and took us to view the complex system of pipes, filters, and motors that do the work. At this time, desal has a higher cost than the cost of pumping the water down from northern California. However, the water from the north and from the Colorado River is likely to become less plentiful and more costly in the future. We need to develop alternate water sources.

Recycled water is another alternate source that West Basin is exploring. Their water reclamation plant in El Segundo is currently producing water that is used for industrial purposes, such as cooling machinery. But the technology has the potential of producing water that could be used more broadly. That plant provides public tours on the weekends.

The desalinated water that Sea Lab produces is actually more pure than our tap water, which is itself of very high quality. The tour group did a blind taste test of desal water and tap water. All but one of the group chose the desal water as having the better taste. One reason for the taste difference is that tap water, by law, includes chlorine. The desal water, because it is not for public use, doesn't have to meet that requirement.

Sea Lab gets its power off the grid. Our guide said that if a desal plant were to be constructed in the South Bay area, it would likely use the grid as its power source. Nationally, many desal plants use natural gas for power.



Can California's Budget Be Balanced?

League of Women Voters/Los Angeles County

Saturday, January 29, 2011

9:30 AM to 2:00 PM

Rio Hondo Event Center

10627 Old River School Road, Downey, 902541, (562) 806-5020
Close to the 710, 105, and 5 freeways, between Firestone and Florence and near Paramount Blvd. in Downey



Guest Speaker
Jean Ross
Executive Director
California Budget Project

Take part in the ***Budget Game***
with County Board members
Sally Seven and Jack Sullivan

Please send form and check payable to **LWV/LAC**
Mail to **LWV/LAC Treasurer, 427 E. Walnut Ave., Burbank 91501**

League Name _____

Attendee Name(s) _____

Deadline is January 15, 2010

Reservations # _____ @\$25.00 Total enclosed \$ _____

If postmarked January 16th or later—

Reservations # _____ @\$30.00 Total enclosed \$ _____

Chicken Luncheon # _____ Vegetarian Luncheon # _____ W/O NUTS or other allergens # _____
(name food)

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County in both its values and practices affirms its belief and commitment to diversity, pluralism and affirmative action.

The League of Women Voters welcomes new members, both men and women, who are citizens of voting age. Associate membership is open to all others.

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427 E. Walnut Avenue, Burbank, CA 91501.

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Internet Election Resources

Smart Voter www.smartvoter.org

Statewide propositions plus local candidates & issues on your ballot, with extensive

Background materials and media links from LWV California Ed Fund

LA County Registrar-Recorder www.lavote.net

Election calendar, polling place look-up, absentee voting info, multilingual voting materials, Locations for Touchscreen early voting

Easy Voter Guide www.easyvoter.org

Concise facts on statewide propositions; Chinese, Korean, Spanish, Vietnamese, and English

Secretary of State www.ss.ca.gov

Official text of ballot measures

CA Legislative Analyst www.lao.ca.gov

Analysis of all ballot measures

CA Voter Foundation www.calvoter.org

Data on campaign contributions to candidates and measures

CA Budget Project www.cbp.org

Analyzes the fiscal effects of statewide ballot measures

This VOTER is ready for viewing on our website: www.lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org



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