



LWV/LACounty

An Interleague Organization

VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF LOS ANGELES COUNTY

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www.lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org

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February/ March 2014

Calendar 2013

Sat. Feb 22	Candidate Forum Workshop	LWVLA Office
Wed. Mar 5	LWV LAC Board Meeting	LWV Pasadena Area Office
Sat. Mar. 22	SoCal Regional Workshop	San Diego Area
Sat. Mar 29	County Convention	Rio Hondo Country Club,

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From Our President’s Desk...

Welcome to 2014! A new year is beginning, but the County League is winding down its fiscal year, which runs from April 1 to March 30. We finish the year with our annual convention – always on the last Saturday in March - on March 29 this year. The event will be held at Rio Hondo Country Club in Downey. It will include morning coffee, our business meeting, buffet lunch, and a speaker. Our speaker has not been confirmed as this goes to print, but we are hoping to focus on inequality issues in LA County. Look for a flyer to come soon by email, and the Convention Kit to arrive by mail at the end of February.

Our Winter League Day in January was well attended, with just over 50 participants. Please read the write-up by Joan Arias of LWV Beach Cities in this Voter. Thanks to all who worked to make the day a success: Phyllis O’Connor, LWVLBA; Lois Ledger, LWVLBA; Dorothy Stewart, LWVTA; Linda Herman, LWVPVP; Lola Ungar, LWVTA; and, of course, our speakers, who are named in Joan’s article.

Lola Ungar has produced and distributed the latest County Yearbook (roster). Thanks to Lola for a great job – and a very time consuming one! Please check with Lola if you need extras. The County Board will be reviewing the program-planning reports received from Local Leagues. We did not get a 100% return, but we will work with what we have. Thanks to those who sent them in. The March County Convention delegates will vote on County program for the coming biennium. It’s time to gear up for the coming Voter Service activities. There may be ballot measures in June from the Legislature. There are interesting races coming up. Please remember that if you plan to hold a candidate forum for a countywide office, you need to obtain permission from LWVLAC – most likely we will co-sponsor with you for that event.

Finally, mark your calendars for the County’s Summer League Day – “Popovers in Pasadena.” County League Days are usually held on the last Saturday of September, January and July (with Convention the last Saturday in March). However, this year is an exception. Based on a cost factor, Popovers will be held on Saturday, July 19, 2014 – the third Saturday, instead of the usual fourth Saturday.

Hope to see you at County Convention on March 29.

Nancy

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The County Department of Mental Health

By Viola Iungerich, Portfolio Mental Health

The Department of Mental Health is one of the largest departments in the county that is supervised by the Board of Supervisors (BOS). It was made a separate department from the Department of Health and the Department of Public Health in 1960 at a time when mental hospitals were being closed. Today it is the largest county mental health department in the country providing services to over 250,000 people. It operates 75 program sites, and more than 100 co-located sites. It contracts with about 1000 providers, including individual practitioners and non-governmental agencies. The diverse workforce includes nurses, psychiatrists, social workers, marriage and family counselors, medical doctors, community workers, trained family members and trained mental health consumers.

Several new laws as well as the expanded Health Care Act have made it possible for this department to begin to provide services to many in this vulnerable population of the mentally ill. Proposition 63 in 2004 created the Mental Health Services Act which expanded the services and partnerships of the mental health system. In 2003 a settlement in a lawsuit called Katie A. resulted in programs to assess and treat children with behavioral or mental health issues in the Department of Family and Children Services. In 2011 the implementation of the Low Income Health Plan under the 1115 Waiver allowed the Department of Health and the Department of Mental Health to join forces to cover behavioral health services through Healthy Way LA- an expanded Medi-Cal program, supported by the federal government. In spite of these programs, there are still hurdles in our society that leave some mentally ill without adequate support. One would think most severely mentally ill would qualify for SSI; however, mental illness does not follow a straight-forward path. If a person has been working recently but then is unable to work for a period due to reoccurring mental illness, they do not qualify for SSI. This puts the burden of support and often their care on the non-ill family or society. It remains to be seen how the new health care laws will alleviate some of this burden.

A sampling of the current mental health programs should give one a sense of the multitude of work in the County Department of Mental Health. Starting with children, ages 3 to 16, there are several programs. The Comprehensive Children's Services

Program provides intensive case management and access to specialized care for children. The Multidisciplinary Assessment Team provides a complete assessment of the needs of children who are entering foster care through DCFS. The Specialized Foster Care Co-located Program provides foster care homes (usually for only one child) specially trained and closely monitored for therapeutic behavioral modification. A child stays in such a home for both voluntarily placed and court ordered children for about six to nine months. A further Intensive Treatment Foster Care program is for a child who is at risk for placement in a group facility. Quality Review Services provides assessment of these programs for successful program outcomes.

DMH also provides a series of programs for Transitional Youth—those ages 16 through 25. Priority of services are given to: 1.) youths who are struggling with substance abuse, 2.) those who are homeless or at risk of being homeless, 3.) youth who are aging out of children's mental health services, child welfare or the juvenile justice system, 4.) those leaving long-term institutional care and 5.) those having a first time episode of a major mental illness. For adults there is a broad array of services from assessment, to medication support, to crisis intervention and employment and/or housing help. Some of these services, such as giving the mentally ill homeless housing, before starting other services have been successful in stabilizing this population. Older adults are served in similar ways with an emphasis on their specific needs.

In addition to these programs, The Department of Mental Health also has a program to care for the public with a Disaster Service. Lastly it provides a Public Guardian for those unable to care for themselves. They also run clinics with specialized personal for other languages and cultures including Spanish, Chinese, Farsi, Russian and Tagalog, etc. Sensitivity to veteran's issues and/or cultural issues in such populations as immigrants, American Indians/Alaska Natives and other common populations in our county are concerns where over 140 languages are spoken. It is a large complex task. However, the department is attempting to cover all the bases with innovative programs and a constant review of what works and what doesn't.

State of the Union Address Touches on All of League's Priority Issues

by Elisabeth MacNamara, President, LWVUS

The annual [State of the Union \(SOTU\) address](#), President Obama laid out his priorities for the coming year. His words addressed a range of critical issues affecting the country – including a number of the League's priority issues. Here's the rundown of what he said on our issues and how it aligns with League positions.

CLIMATE CHANGE [In his State of the Union address last year](#), the President promised to use his executive power to take action if Congress did not take action against climate change – and he's done just that by [taking historical action to cut carbon pollution from power plants](#). We're pleased that Obama once again underscored his commitment to protecting our environment for future generations in last night's speech, saying "Climate change is a fact. And when our children's children look us in the eye and ask if we did all we could to leave them a safer, more stable world, with new sources of energy, I want us to be able to say yes, we did."

Urgent action is needed to defend both our natural resources and our public health. The Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) recently proposed a first-ever federal carbon pollution standard for new power plants. This is a game changer; the unlimited dumping of carbon pollution is a chief cause of climate change. [Join with the League and take action today by calling on the Environmental Protection Agency \(EPA\) to limit carbon pollution and help ensure a cleaner, healthier future for everyone.](#)

IMMIGRATION President Obama renewed his commitment to fix our broken immigration system and to push for much needed reforms. Citizenship is the fundamental sign of allegiance to the U.S., our Constitution and our way of life. The League is pleased that Obama highlighted the economic benefits immigrants bring to our country.

Rooted in the belief that our democracy is enhanced by a diversity of voices, the League is committed to helping those living in the shadows become a part of our great nation. [Join with us](#)

[and tell your Representatives to take action on the bill that the Senate passed earlier this summer.](#)

VOTING RIGHTS President Obama also mentioned the two recent bipartisan efforts to improve our elections and to increase access to the polls. We're excited that Obama highlighted [the bipartisan bill that was recently introduced in both chambers of Congress to modernize the Voting Rights Act](#), and we look forward to working with Congress to pass a strong bill quickly.

In last year's SOTU, Obama called for the convening of a bipartisan Commission to address challenges in election administration. Last night, he highlighted the recent release of recommendations by the Presidential Commission on Election Administration (PCEA). [The League applauds the recommendations issued by the PCEA](#), and welcomes improvements to the basic administration of elections across the country. However, it remains critical that Congress acts this year on a distinct opportunity to protect voters from discrimination in a common sense, bipartisan way through passage of the Voting Rights Amendment Act of 2014. [Tell Congress to act swiftly to repair and restore the Voting Rights Act.](#)

MONEY IN POLITICS We're pleased that the President briefly touched on the grave issue of money in politics when he said "It should be the power of our vote, not the size of our bank account, that drives our democracy." The timing is apt: [last week marked the fourth anniversary of the Supreme Court's ruling on Citizens United](#), a move that opened the floodgates for big money and special interest influence to overtake our political system. We also continue to wait for a decision in [McCutcheon v. FEC, a case that challenges aggregate spending limits](#) that are imposed on individual donors in order to prevent corruption and the appearance of corruption.

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LWVUS President on SOTU
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For decades, the League has supported efforts to stop the flood of secret money in elections. We will continue to advocate at all levels of government to prevent special interest in elections and ensure that the voices of voters across the country are heard.

GUN SAFETY Towards the end of this address, the President briefly addressed the need for stronger gun control measures, saying he intends to use his executive power to help prevent future gun violence. Millions of Americans are at risk every day from senseless gun violence. The League believes it is long past time for [common sense solutions to prevent gun violence](#).

We were also pleased that the President's address covered other important issues, including income inequality, the wage gap and improvements to our health care system.

As the President said at the start of his address last night – **Let's make this a year of action**. Members of the League look forward to rolling up their sleeves in getting to work on these important issues.

A Candidate Forum Workshop

February 22, 2014 at the LWVLA Office

A Candidate Forum Workshop will take place on Saturday, February 22, 2014 from 10:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m. at the LWVLA office at 3303 Wilshire Blvd., Los Angeles.

The first segment from 10 to 11:30 a.m. will focus on how to structure and conduct a candidate forum and will provide guidance on League practice on topics such as co-sponsorship responsibilities, format, non-partisan objectivity, and screening audience questions. The second segment from noon to 2:00 p.m. will be more specifically aimed at those individuals who will moderate candidate forums.

Participants will see a variety of routine and problematic scenarios that moderators may face, and will learn how to address the issues most effectively.

Featured presenters will be Tom and Chris Carson, Rita Zwern and Liza White. Participants should plan to bring a brown bag lunch or buy a quick sandwich at the Subway restaurant downstairs. Space is limited; to sign up, please contact LWVLA Voter Service Co-Chair Rosalind Tyson at roztyson@pacbell.net or phone her at 818-255-8465.

Southern California Regional Workshop on Civil Discourse 3/22

All Southern California Leagues are invited to join San Diego area Leagues for a day of learning and collaboration on **Saturday, March 22, 2014**.

- Contact [Martha Cox](#) or [Mary Thompson](#) to get involved.
- Attend
- Promote the event to your members, partners, funders, and the public

Unlike traditional Regional Workshops, this is a [locally-driven program](#) that welcomes League members and non-Leaguers alike while bringing community groups together to study how the League's mission of *Making Democracy Work* can use the deliberative democracy process to promote citizen participation and build common ground to address persistent, even controversial community issues.

Keynote speaker Dr. Martin Carcasson, Professor of Communications at Colorado State University and Director of the Center for Public Deliberation, will discuss the inclusive process of moving from "expert rule" to shared governance. A panel including Dr. Lisa Shaffer, Encinitas City Council Member, will share how citizen participation brings communities together to solve tough problems. Participants will discuss the ideas and concepts introduced and create a plan to bring them back to their own communities.

Contact [Martha Cox](#) or [Mary Thompson](#) of the North County San Diego League for more information.

Winter League Day

**Saturday, January 25, 2014 at the Lakewood Country Club
by Joan Arias – Beach Cities**

LWV BC was well represented among the more than 50 attendees at the LA County League of Women Voters Winter League Day focused on The Affordable Care Act: Where are We Now?

After President of the LWV of LA County Nancy Mahr thanked the team that put together the event, Moderator Rita Zwern, LWV Glendale/Burbank introduced the panelists:

- Angelina Valencia, Information Officer, Covered California
- Connie Salgado-Sanchez, M.P.H., Legislative Analyst LA County Dept. of Health Services
- Michael Wilson, MHA, FACHE, Director of Communications, LA County Department of Health Services
- Anthony Ly, Program Coordinator, Long Beach Dept. of Health and Human Services, Medi-Cal Outreach and Health Access Program
- Laura Cosentino, Certified Educator, Covered California Outreach and Education Program

In turn, the panelists described the current situation in California that is leading the way in enrollments. They described the programs underway to increase Latino enrollment and to increase the enrollments of the 18-34 year old group called “Young Invincibles!”

Some of the innovations introduced by the Affordable Care Act include coverage of pre-existing conditions, inclusion of checkups in coverage and no financial caps to reimbursements as well as the elimination of the “doughnut hole.”

The panelists described the Los Angeles County health services including four hospitals, two ambulatory service centers and six community health centers serving 830,000 patients per year with 2.8 million outpatient visits and 330,000 emergency visits. Many of those served are well below poverty levels. The County is working to improve services with special programs for low income patients, patient-centered homes in which patients are assigned care with a single point of contact, electronic health records and a new phone

system with a “personal touch.” The goal of the County is to move from being the “provider of default” to becoming a “provider of choice,” although they will continue to provide health care services to undocumented, homeless and other people who are either ineligible for coverage or refuse to sign up for coverage.

Representing Long Beach, Anthony Ly described his efforts in getting people enrolled in programs, extending beyond Long Beach and with special programs for children of undocumented workers. He described Long Beach’s approach in looking at the broad issues of health care. He also stressed his efforts to educate health workers and allied professionals such as social workers and school counselors.

Laura Cosentino described the ways in which enrollment counselors might receive training through online courses and public education efforts.

During the Question and Answer session that followed the brief presentations, the panelists fielded questions such as:

- **What is being done for Latinos and Invincibles?**
 - The County is working to certify more people, use Spanish language media, mailers and special call centers.
 - The County is working with community groups to hold special events that focus on health care and assist with enrollment through churches and colleges.
 - There are enormous outreach efforts including bilingual presentations
 - The panelists noted that reaching women was a tough effort because of the current political issues involved in birth control and contraception although the County does provide help in those areas.

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- What about the high cost of care for the invincibles?
 - There really is no answer about future costs. There are many people working on such concerns and time will tell.
 - Insurers are working on costs but they must get the young invincibles so that the problems will resolve themselves over time.
- What about the difficult process of enrollment? (many people cited examples of the difficulties inherent in the online process)
 - The difficulties are in large part a result of the system being inundated! This is a new system that will get better.
 - There is an active hiring process so that more counselors become available and the County is hiring staff.
 - Kiosks are being set up in malls with trained staff designed to help people get enrolled.
- What about doctors and hospitals which refuse to provide service through Covered California?
 - The health plans determine the doctors and hospitals.
 - It is true that to keep premiums down, plans can't include all doctors. However, over 80% of doctors and hospitals are included.
 - Many of the plans have narrowed networks to control costs.
 - The public needs to put pressure on health plans and insurers but we are all trying to work it out!
- Where should we refer people who would like to be trained?
 - Go to <https://www.coveredca.com/hbex/employment/> and click on JOBS for information or look at the certified entities in your area (all available through the web site www.coveredca.com)
- What is the role of insurers and insurance agents?
 - Our outreach uses certified insurance agents. One of the problems we have is that not all counselors have strong backgrounds in existing care and we are trying to fix that especially for Medical clients.
- What about Pharmacies?
 - Most pharmacies will accept Covered California coverage. The plans determine which ones do and do not.
- Why is there such a heavy focus on Latinos? What about the undocumented?
 - There is such a large population (46% of LA County population) and many are eligible for subsidies. However, we are also working with other populations: African-American, Asian-American and other populations.
 - One interesting innovation is that the Affordable Care Act eliminated the required "linkage" to qualify for Medi-Cal. Now it is based only on modified adjusted gross income so that should help many people.

As for the undocumented people, that is a political issue but the County Health System treats everyone and will continue to treat the "residually uninsured" which include the homeless and undocumented population and others who have refused to sign up. Most counties have programs for indigent and others

We all thanked the panelists with our applause and agreed that it had been an interesting discussion and that we had all learned a great deal. With thanks to the team that put together this valuable program, the meeting was adjourned at 1:00 PM

**Save the Date - Saturday March 29
County Convention**

**Rio Hondo Country Club, Downey
9:30 a.m. to 2 p.m.
Buffet lunch**

Watch for a flyer - coming soon!



LWVC

ASK BEFORE YOU SIGN – OR, THINK BEFORE YOU INK

The League of Women Voters of California encourages its members and the public to be cautious during this period of circulation of initiative and referendum petitions.

Voters are often asked to sign a petition “just to get it on the ballot so people can vote on it.” The League says to voters, “**Your signature is valuable**, perhaps even more valuable than your vote. Why? Because far fewer signatures are required to qualify a measure for the ballot than votes needed to pass it once it’s on the ballot. Only sign a petition for an initiative or referendum that you believe belongs on the ballot.”

The LWVC suggests six questions voters should ask themselves to help determine whether or not to sign an initiative petition:

1. **Is it complex?** Some issues can be decided by a simple yes or no vote. More complex issues may be better handled by thorough examination and debate in a legislative arena.
2. **Is it confusing?** Some initiatives are not well written or contain conflicts that may require court resolution or interpretation.
3. **Does it belong in the Constitution?** If an initiative amends the Constitution, consider whether it really belongs there. Is it a fundamental law that should be protected from change? Correcting a constitutional amendment later would also require amending the Constitution, is cumbersome and costly, and requires another vote of the people.
4. **How will it be funded?** Is it an “unfunded mandate” that would require the legislature to take funds from other essential programs? Consider the effect on the overall flexibility of a government budget with already limited revenue. An initiative should generally define its own revenue source, and not earmark, restrict, or obligate a specific percentage of the General Fund revenues.
5. **Before you sign, ask about who is circulating the petition.** Many initiative campaigns use paid signature gatherers. The only requirement in California is that the petition itself have a disclaimer that it may be circulated by a paid signature gatherer. You can ask whether the person requesting your signature is paid, and if so, how much.
6. **Who is behind it?** It can be difficult to find out who the real sponsors and opponents of a petition are. Sometimes there are news reports, or a Web site that can help you. Contribution and expenditure reports of committees organized for action on ballot measures are available through Cal-Access, the automated lobbying and campaign disclosure system sponsored by the California Secretary of State’s office. Go to this site—www.cal-access.ss.ca.gov—to read the financial reports of campaign committees.

The League of Women Voters is a trusted, nonpartisan political organization. Our members do the hands-on work that safeguards democracy and leads to civic improvement. More information about the League, including membership information, can be found on the League’s Web site, www.lwvc.org.

LWV/LA County VOTER

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.

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Send your email address to the Voter editor to be notified of the latest VOTER posted on our website at: www.lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org and to be included on the email distribution list.

Send to: mebarnes@aol.com

Join Us

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. **Find a local League below :**

Beach Cities - beachcities.ca.lwvnet.org

Claremont Area- claremont.ca.lwvnet.org

East San Gabriel Valley- esgv.ca.lwvnet.org

Glendale-Burbank - gb.ca.lwvnet.org

Long Beach Area - lba.ca.lwvnet.org

Los Angeles - lwvlosangeles.org

Palos Verdes Peninsula - lwvpalosverdes.org

Pasadena Area - lwv-pa.org

Santa Monica - lwvsantamonica.org

Torrance Area - lwvtorrancearea.org

Whittier - whittier.ca.lwvnet.org

February / March 2014

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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