

April
2004

LWV/LAC InterLeague Newsletter

President's Message

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.

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First I would like to express my gratitude to all the members of the County Board and the local leagues for their confidence in electing me to chair the League for the next two years. I will try to live up to your expectations in both action and activities.

During the next year I envision the County League facilitating cooperation among the local leagues on countywide voter service projects including SmartVoter and judicial forums. Both the SmartVoter website and the judicial forums provide voters a service not available through other organizations.

Cooperation among the leagues in sharing programs that work in membership, leadership, program and voter service is another goal. With the help of the Management Training Advisors we should be able to mentor each other and share program teams that will enrich many leagues.

Action on the County budget to try to protect vital county-run social services from devastating cuts will be a priority in the coming months. County probation and county health services are in particular jeopardy today. As the League we can work with other organizations and our state board to plead for adequate funding to keep our facilities functioning and to avoid costlier alternatives. The LWVC supports the option of increasing revenue to support vital services, a message our elected officials need to hear. Delegates to convention voted to add Education and Action on Health Care to the program for the next two years.

Delegates to the county convention voted to adopt a study of Land Use in LA County focusing on both on developed areas adjacent to cities and undeveloped areas. A committee is forming to research material on both aspects. Currently, preliminary work is being done to monitor the proposal to develop Tejon Ranch on the LA county Kern county border which will have implications for traffic congestion, open space and wildlife impacts and a large housing element.

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I look forward to working with the fine League members you elected to serve on the County Board and to interact and cooperate with individual leagues in mutual efforts to improve the League's impact in LA County.

Margo Reeg

COUNTY CONVENTION

OUR NEWLY ELECTED LWV/LAC BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2004-2006

President	Margo Reeg (Whittier)
1st Vice President	Sally Seven (Claremont Area)
Treasurer	Gwen Cochran (Glendale/ Burbank)

Directors:	
2-year terms	Sally Rivera (Whittier) Lola Ungar (Torrance) Ellen Taylor (Claremont Area)
1-year term	Sheila Hoff (Palos Verdes Peninsula)

Nominating Committee	
Chair	Joanne Leavitt (Santa Monica)
2-year terms	Liz Allen (Claremont Area) Lois Ledger (Long Beach Area)

NEW POSITION ON COUNTY GOVERNMENT (expanded form)

Support for the following:

1. A more efficient, economical, representative, responsive, accountable and visible county government.
2. Incorporation of the position of Chief Administrative Officer (CAO. a.k.a. CEO, County Manager) in the County Charter, with appointment by the Board of Supervisors, and with powers and duties stipulated in the charter. The League does not

support the election of a chief executive nor linking the CEO position with expansion of the Board of Supervisors.

3. Careful consideration of increased costs should an enlarged Board of Supervisors be proposed.

4. An independent and separate audit department that would report directly to the Board of Supervisors acting in its legislative capacity. This department would provide an independent review of the executive functions of the county government.

5. Certain changes in the present procedures for establishing boards, commissions and committees:

a. Periodic review and reappraisal of each commission to assure its continued relevance.

b. A limit on the number of terms a person may serve on any one commission.

c. The widest possible notice of vacancies on commissions to assure the broadest participation of citizens in county government.

d. Strict conflict of interest provisions, especially when the commission has regulatory powers.

6. Basing any division of Los Angeles County on rational boundaries and social and economic equity; however, the League does not favor division of or secession from the County.

7. Mandatory membership in SCAG; however, the League opposes direct election of SCAG officials.

8. Developed unincorporated areas of L.A. County either incorporating or annexing to adjacent incorporated areas.

PROGRAM ADOPTED FOR 2004-2006

"Study of Land Use Planning with focus on the status of unincorporated areas in Los Angeles County-as Program for 2004-2006."

Issue for Emphasis – Health Care: Education and Action

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JUVENILE JUSTICE

Sally Rivera of the Working Party for Children reports on recent news stories related to juvenile justice in California. She stated that many do not understand that California differs from the rest of the nation in its treatment of the youthful offender. Unlike other states, the California Youth Authority can detain its juvenile court commitments up to age 25 (the average age of a Youth Authority ward has been reported as 19). Most other states routinely release the juvenile offender no later than age 18. California's 58 counties also recognize age 18 as the end of detention for juvenile commitments (exceptions exist for probation violations to age 21).

During the last few years several events have occurred to change the Youth Authority population: youth crime has declined; county commitments to the Youth Authority have declined due to the charging of counties for more costs associated with sending wards to the Youth Authority who are at a lower level of serious crime (minimal costs are charged for wards who have committed high-level crimes); and Proposition 21 has caused many offenders to be prosecuted as adults rather than juveniles, resulting in conviction as adults and sentencing to the Department of Corrections (state prison) rather than the Youth Authority. The population of the Youth Authority has declined dramatically and costs have risen substantially per ward due to, among other things, fixed costs that are now spread among fewer wards (five years ago there were approximately 9,000 wards in 11 institutions (some severely aging) and 4 camps - about \$40,000 per ward; today there are approximately 4,600 wards - variously reported as \$60,000 - \$80,000 per ward). Some Youth Authority facilities are now scheduled to be closed due to population changes and as an economy measure.

Many requests have been made to the Legislature by the Youth Authority for additional resources to provide expanded services to wards, including the hiring of more psychologists and more intensive staff training programs for crisis intervention. Funding has been inadequate to meet the needs that

have been presented.

Based on events of the last few years, California is re-evaluating its approach to juvenile justice. The youthful offender may be more narrowly redefined as the juvenile offender suitable for county programs (typically camps or juvenile facilities) or the juvenile offender suitable for prosecution as an adult (by statute or the prosecutor's discretion) and state prison commitment. The inevitable result would be the dismantling of the Youth Authority. Sally raised the concern that if the Youth Authority were dismantled, counties may not receive adequate subsidies to serve the range of problems found in their current population along with the severe problems, including extreme violence, found in many Youth Authority wards who would remain in county custody and programs.

*Sally Rivera,
LWV/LAAC Social Policy Director*

LWVUS NEWS

LWV Supported the Security and Freedom Ensured Act of 2003—The League believes that basic civil liberties must be preserved and protected as the nation seeks to guard against terrorism and other threats to national security. We therefore asked the Senate to support and sponsor the SAFE Act (Security and Freedom Ensured Act of 2003), sponsored by Senator Larry Craig (R ID) and Senator Richard Durbin (D IL). Read the letter to the Senate located at the LWVUS website.

LWV Opposed the "Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act"—The League urged the Senate to oppose the Protection of Lawful Commerce in Arms Act. We were concerned that this legislation provided the firearms industry with special legal immunity that undermined public safety and blocked efforts to improve gun safety. Read the letter to the Senate at the LWVUS website

NOTICE

The Working Party for Children has moved its meeting date to the first Wednesday of each month.

April

**League of Women Voters
of Los Angeles County**

Margo Reeg, President
Chris Carson, Editor
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We're on the Web!!
<http://lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org>

Calendar

April 14—LWVLAC Board Meeting, Women's City Club, Pasadena

May 5—WPC Meeting, LA League Office

May 12—LWVLAC Board Meeting, LA League Office

May 15-16—LWVC Leadership Council, Sacramento

July 24—Popovers in Pasadena, Women's City Club

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