

August
2003

LWV/LAC InterLeague Newsletter

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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President's Message

Hello all!

What ever happened to those lazy, hazy days of summer? This summer has been hazy (really foggy) here but there has been nothing lazy. And it doesn't look like there will be a chance for many lazy days in what is left of it.

The number one topic on everyone's political mind is recall. By the time you read this you will have updates from the State Board including a paper on recall. Some of you have contacted me about what your League can do to educate both your membership and your communities.

I am talking to both the LWV/LAC Government Director, Sally Seven and the Voters Service Director, Margo Reeg about this. There is much misinformation circulating. Before we do anything we need to wait for a few actions. We need to get the directions from the State Board. We need to know how many candidates will be on the ballot. With no filtering of primaries and with anyone who can pay the \$3500 bill and get 65 signatures being able to run it would not be surprising if there are 30+ names on the ballot. Our challenge is to get good solid information out to the public about the

process, what is happening and how it works. If you need help in planning something, please contact us. Smart Voter is up and running for this election. They have a FAQ (frequently asked questions) page up now that is worth checking out.

Many of you will be having local elections in November. Make sure your candidates are aware of the services Smart Voter will offer them. Frances Talbott-White will be contacting you about this, but if you need to reach her contact information is available in your County Yearbook.

When I last wrote to you I was just getting ready to leave for President's Council in Washington, D.C. This was a great experience, lots of learning, lots of fun. The real news is the national office is quickly moving into the 21st Century. Instead of coming home with reams of paper (killing who knows how many trees), I came home with a little CD disk. Each League should have two copies of it, one for the president, one for the membership director.

For the President, this has reams of information. The idea started in the fund development area and they have lots of ideas there, but what is most

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exciting is the whole text of "In League" is there. In addition you have the text of "Impact on Issues" plus information for treasurers and a whole lot more.

We made an extra copy for the membership director because the membership department is moving on line. You will soon be able to keep your membership records up to date without having to do a lot of paper work. Just go on line and make your updates. All of the instructions are there.

Another electronic service that is being offered is a monthly newsletter to every member who puts their email address in the roster. This is in addition to the three times a year National Voter that is mailed to every member. This is a cost effective way to improve communications - the same reason why we deliver most of these Newsletters electronically and post them on our website.

July 26 was our Summer League Day, affectionately known as "Popovers in Pasadena". Our lunchtime speaker was Dr. Raphael Sonenshein who was referred to in one evaluation as "Both smart and funny, a rare combination" Georganne Thomsen has condensed his remarks elsewhere in this newsletter. This is one of my favorite League activities. Part if it is the beautiful old building, the sense of tradition, going back to the same place every July for so many years. Part if it is the structure of the day, we have little official business, it is a day of learning and sharing. I will repeat what I said that day, we are our own best resource, we learn by sharing.

As I hope all of you know, the League is actively opposing Prop. 54, commonly known as the Connerly Initiative. This would prohibit the collection of racial and ethnic data in areas of health care, education, hate crimes and many other areas. I am please to report that at the July 29th meeting our Board of Supervisors agreed to oppose this and direct their staff to help educate the public as to the negative impacts of this measure. The vote was 4/1 with only Antonovitch voting "No". Barbara Inatsugu, a member of the state wide steering committee for the opposition, attended the meeting and

I was one of the speakers.

Another issue that has a high priority is the Budget Accountability Act. Every member who attended Popovers went home with a petition to be filled out. I hope you have done this. These are due into the state office on August 5, soon after you receive this.

We have many exciting things coming up besides the recall election. On September 20th there are the state sponsored Workshops in Orange. October 4th will be the Fall County League Day with a continued focus on County Government. November 15th will be the first League Day jointly sponsored by the County ILO and the L.A. City League. The topic is "Prop. 13, 25 Years Later" and Ed Edelman and Joel Fox are scheduled for lunchtime speakers. This should be fun.

No, this has not been a lazy summer, but I would not have it any other way. We are doing what we organized 80+ years ago to do, we are educating our members and the public about issues that affect them and influencing public policy at all levels. That is the League way.

Joanne Leavitt
ac997@lafn.org

COUNTY GOVERNMENT

At Popovers in Pasadena on July 26th members from Leagues throughout Los Angeles County heard what Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, professor of political science at CSU Fullerton had to say was wrong in L.A. County government. His words about the county Board of Supervisors included: un-democratic, un-checked, un-observed, un-accountable, un-organized and more.

In this county nearly 10 million residents are under-represented by just five supervisors, who are in-accessible to the average citizen. The Board has a "dreadful record of public access" and it is un-responsive to the nearly two million residents in each district. Decisions have been made in secret meetings that violate the Brown Act, according to

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Dr. Sonenshein.

"California has the worst system of county government of any state in the union. The state treats counties with utter contempt" taking revenue from them and mandating responsibilities without adequate funding. He believes county morale is very low and that most states have done a better job than California in county reform.

Out of the 58 counties, only one (San Francisco City/County) has an elected executive to lead and to be held accountable. However, Dr. Sonenshein gave credit to Los Angeles County Chief Administrative Officer David Jansen for the efficiency of county government and said it is well run.

An elected Chief Executive Officer (CEO) in Los Angeles County would have tremendous political power, according to Dr. Sonenshein. He would probably be next to the governor in importance. In fact, an elected CEO would "dramatically change every-thing in county government. The Board of Supervisors would no longer be an exclusive club. The CEO would provide regional leadership, visibility and fiscal control."

"It may take 20 years to achieve expansion of the Board of Supervisors, but Dr. Sonenshein encouraged the League in its research, study and reform action. He urged members to become visible and to give citizens proposals to improve home rule in Los Angeles County. He said the League should see that the Board follows its own rules, particularly guaranteeing greater public access.

"Show dissatisfaction and PUSH for reform," he urged members, "but reform must be saleable. People don't like big government in California because smaller government is more responsive. Give people something to reform," such as neighborhood councils are doing in the City of Los Angeles. Seek media attention on such things as county controller audits. "Try anything that gets them out of the Hall of Administration where they are too protected," he concluded.

Georganne Thomsen, LWVLAC Study Member

HAVA NEWS

NEW VOTER REGISTRATION REGULATIONS

Only those who have not been registered before will be affected by new voter registration requirements contained in the Help America Vote Act (HAVA). California's Secretary of State has not yet provided the exact definition of a "first time voter" but new registration forms have now been printed to bring Los Angeles County into compliance with the law. Applicants are now required to supply a driver's license or California I.D. number. If applicants do not have either of these numbers, they are required to list the last four digits of their Social Security number. These numbers will allow the Statewide Voter Database to check identification. If the applicant is unable or unwilling to provide this information, he/she can still register to vote, but will be required to provide identification the first time he/she goes to the polls to vote. The form of identification that will be accepted is still being discussed, but such items as a current utility bill, bank statement, government check, government paycheck, or government document have been suggested. Voters will be allowed to vote by provisional ballot in case of questions. First time voters who vote by absentee ballot and have not provided the required information when they registered will need to include copies of authorized identification in the absentee ballot envelope. It will be important for voters who are re-registering to change their address, name, political party, etc. to fill in the portion of the form which asks if they have ever been registered to vote, even if they can't remember all of the information required. Otherwise, they will be considered "first time voters." The new voter registration form also asks, "Are you a citizen of the United States of America?" and "Will you be 18 years of age on or before election day?" and states, "If you check 'no' in response to either of these questions, do not complete this form." and "It is a felony if you sign this statement even though you know it is untrue; you can be fined and jailed for up to three years." This information is required by HAVA.

Arline Ames, LWVLAC Government Consultant

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VOTER OUTREACH UPDATE

A subcommittee of the Community Voter Outreach Committee of the L.A. County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk (RR/CC) has been formed to work with the County in implementing the federal Help America Vote Act (HAVA). There are five representatives on this subcommittee from local, county, and state League of Women Voters: Arline Ames, Thea Brodtkin, Phyllis O'Connor, Jean Thompson, and Liza White. There are also representatives from various activist groups and employees of the RR/CC. League representatives have been helpful in clarifying some of the questions regarding voter registration and providing practical input. A great deal of money has been provided in the legislation for voter education, poll worker training, and voting equipment. Decisions will need to be made regarding how this money will be allocated. Los Angeles County has been required to eliminate punch card voting and will hold the November election using a system called InkaVote. This system will continue to be used until the County can purchase sufficient Touchscreen devices for the entire county, which it is estimated will cost \$100 million dollars. New electronic equipment is required to be installed before 2006 and, in addition to the cost of the equipment, many facilities will have to be retrofitted to accommodate them. There are presently enough Touchscreen devices in the County for use in small local elections and for early voting. Questions have been raised regarding the necessity for a paper trail. There appears to be no scientific evidence that paper ballots are more secure than Direct Recording Electronic equipment, which can provide printed ballots if required. There have been many examples in Los Angeles County of successful recounts and verifications of accuracy. Every ballot cast electronically must be accounted for. The many advantages of Touchscreen voting are evidenced by feedback from users. A recent Voting Machine Report Card survey by the California Voter Empowerment Circle gave an "A" in all of the following categories:

-Easy to understand

- Easy for people with physical disabilities
- Easy for people with vision impairment and/or blind
- Easy for people with cognitive impairment or limited literacy
- Easy for people with language assistance needs
- Ensures accurate voting for all voters
- Allows instant runoff voting or other voting alternatives
- Allows a fair audit

These machines can also be used for recall elections, which it appears likely that California will have in September or October.

Arline Ames, LWVLAC Government Consultant

STATEMENT FROM LWVUS

Direct Recording Electronic (DRE) Voting Machines and HAVA Implementation

The possibility of election fraud resulting from the use of DRE voting machines has been a topic of discussion as part of the implementation of the new Help America Vote Act. In an effort to address the concerns that have arisen, the League has considered expert opinions from all sides of the debate.

First, it is important to consider the concerns in the full context of election reform efforts. The MIT/CalTech study following the 2000 election indicated that voter registration issues are the number one problem in election reform. Problems with voting systems (machines, such as punch card and lever systems) properly recording the voter's intent were a close second. The League has focused its HAVA implementation work on achieving practical solutions to the most important problems: accurate and accessible registration lists, protections against erroneous purges, provisional balloting systems that protect the right of every eligible voter to cast a ballot and have it counted, machines that protect the right of people with disabilities to cast an independent and secret ballot, poll worker training that is adequate and uniform, and machines that assist individuals with limited English.

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In this context, it is important to make sure that purchase or leasing of voting machines proceeds in ways that will protect voters. There are several key ways this must be done. First, disability and language access. Second, "second chance" voting whereby the voter can check and get a new ballot if necessary. Third, management systems to ensure reliability.

It has been suggested that DRE machines are inherently subject to fraud unless there is an individual paper record of each vote. This seems extreme. DREs are extremely sophisticated machines and most DREs store information in multiple formats and in multiple places within its program. To tamper with a DRE someone would need to know each and every format and storage capacity and be able to manipulate it undetected. Additionally, it must be remembered that DREs are not an election system unto themselves; they are simply an instrument within a complex election system. The key is to design an overall system that builds in multiple checks making it improbable that the system will be tampered with.

The LWVUS does support an individual audit capacity for the purposes of recounts and authentication of elections for all voting systems, including, but not limited to, DREs. The LWVUS does not believe that an individual paper confirmation for each ballot is required to achieve those goals; in fact this is unnecessary and can be counterproductive. An individual paper confirmation for each ballot would undermine disability access requirements, raise costs, and slow down the purchase or lease of machines that might be needed to replace machines that don't work. Simply because a voter verifies their vote on a piece of paper does not guarantee the same results have been recorded within the machine and vice versa. And why would we assume that, if the total from a paper count and the total from a machine count are different, the paper count is accurate? Is it not just as easy to tamper with an election by "losing" a couple of paper ballots or miscounting them during a recount? And what about the number of ballots involved? In Florida, in the 2000 presidential elec-

tion, nearly 6 million votes were cast. Do we really believe that recounting that many paper ballots is more accurate than using certified electronic equipment?

The legitimacy of elections is not only dependent upon the ability to verify results if they are in question but also upon implementing good systems that protect the individual's right to vote. This means putting appropriate policies and processes in place that:

- 1) stop individuals from being purged from voter lists unless there is an exact match of voter information;
- 2) protect the rights of voters who are unintentionally at the wrong polling place due to such things as a last minute change in polling place assignment;
- 3) provide poll workers with the necessary training and tools to administer elections, thereby reducing the number of people who leave the polls without voting due to frustration or long lines;
- 4) give election officials - not the DRE manufacturers - control over ballot creation;
- 5) at the appropriate level of government obtain a copy of the source code that operates the machines;
- 6) ensure the DREs record information by voter;
- 7) ensure the DREs store multiple copies of the information;
- 8) mandate that voting systems are randomly tested as they come off the assembly lines, upon delivery, prior to opening the polls, during election day and post election;
- 9) protect the rights of voters by ensuring ID requirements are adhered to in a uniform and nondiscriminatory fashion; and
- 10) alert voters if they have over voted or under voted for an office and give them the opportunity to "fix" their ballot prior to casting the ballot.

In Summary

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STATEMENT FROM LWVC

RECALL PROCESS UNDER SCRUTINY

In recent months, efforts to recall Governor Gray Davis from office have drawn attention to the recall process in California. The recall is the power of the voters to remove elected officers before their terms expire. It was added to the state constitution in 1911, along with the initiative and referendum and other changes resulting from the Progressive movement.

Recall elections combine features of both a ballot measure and a candidate election. A question of recalling an elected official is placed on the ballot by filing petitions containing the signatures of the required number of registered voters. For a statewide officer, this is 12 percent of the number who last voted for the office, or in this case 897,158 signatures, based on the approximately 7.5 million who voted in the November 2002 gubernatorial election. As in other cases where signatures are gathered, such as to qualify initiatives for the ballot, more than the minimum number of signatures are obtained to allow for ineligible ones. The goal of recall proponents is likely to be roughly 1.2 to 1.3 million.

Proponents of the recall have 160 days for circulating petitions. Every 30 days, county elections officials certify the number of qualified signatures they have received to that point. Once the Secretary of State certifies that sufficient signatures have been obtained, a special election is set to take place within 60 to 80 days. However, if a regularly scheduled statewide election will take place within 180 days of certification, the recall election can be consolidated with it.

Thus, if enough signatures are certified for the recall of the governor by September 3, 2003, a special election must be called for a date in the fall of

2003. If signatures for a recall election are certified after that date, the election would be consolidated with the March 2, 2004 statewide primary election. Accounting for the time required for the certification process, recall proponents believe they must turn in signatures by July 16, 2003 to ensure a fall 2003 special election.

Before 1994, the only question at the recall election was whether the official should be recalled; if the recall was approved by a majority of the voters, a subsequent election was held to elect a successor. However, in November 1994 the law was amended to consolidate those two elections. Now the question of the recall and a list of candidates to succeed the official appear on the same ballot.

Candidates must file nomination papers and a declaration of candidacy 59 days prior to the election. For governor, a filing fee of \$3,500 and 65 valid signatures of registered voters of the same party as the candidate are required. Candidates not affiliated with a party may submit 65 valid signatures of registered voters of any party affiliation. Candidates may apply for a fee waiver by submitting additional signatures.

If the recall succeeds, the candidate with the largest number of votes is elected to the office and takes office the following day. There are no party primaries to select candidates, and no provision for a runoff if no candidate receives a majority of the vote. There is no limit on the number of candidates who can run. If there are a number of candidates running, the winner could be elected with a relatively low percentage of the vote.

The proponents' statement of reasons for recall and the response, if any, filed by the official whose recall is sought are printed on the recall petitions and on the sample ballots mailed to voters.

According to a Fair Political Practices Commission fact sheet (www.fppc.ca.gov/index.html?id=102), the recall part of the election would be classified as a ballot measure, for which there are no contribution limits under the state Political Reform Act. Thus, the contribution limits of Proposition 34

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would not apply either to the proponents of the recall measure or to the elected official who is the target of the recall. However, Proposition 34 contribution limits would apply to the campaigns of the candidates running to succeed the recalled official. As with other elections in California, all candidates and campaign committees have reporting and disclosure obligations under the Political Reform Act.

If a special statewide recall election is called, the cost to taxpayers is estimated at \$25-35 million. If the elected official is not recalled, his or her campaign expenses are reimbursed by the state. This potential cost to taxpayers is unknown.

For more information:

Recall process: Secretary of State's Web site: www.ss.ca.gov/elections/elections_recall_faqs.htm for Frequently Asked Questions about Recalls www.ss.ca.gov/elections/recall.pdf for a publication, Procedure for Recalling State and Local Officials

Recall proponents: Rescue California, 916-443-6703, www.rescuecalifornia.com, or People's Advocate, 916-482-6175, www.davisrecall.com.

Opponents of the recall: Taxpayers Against the Governor's Recall, 916-569-0898 or 213-382-4111 www.stopherecall.com.

Campaign financing reports: www.cal-access.ss.ca.gov/Global/search.asp?SEARCH=Recall+Davis

CURRENT EFFORTS TO REPLACE MACLAREN'S CHILDREN CENTER

MacLaren's Children Center, the placement of last resort when no other facility was available for abused and neglected children was closed in March before a plan was in place for the children who would be placed there if it were open.

At this time children are being placed in the De-

partment of Children and Family Services' (DCFS) Emergency Response Command Post on Wilshire Boulevard which is open around the clock to handle child abuse complaints but is not equipped to house children. Children remain there for an average of six to eight hours until a placement is found. The Department is taking immediate steps to provide a more suitable environment by setting up the children's room with cots and a refrigerator.

Dr. Sanders, the new Director of the Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS), stated at the Los Angeles County Commission for Children and Families meeting on June 2, 2003, that he would like to work with the Commission on developing a plan for the placement of these youth.

John Oppenheim, Chief Deputy Director, DCFS, stated at the same June meeting that at the same time the decision to close MCC was made, the Department realized the need for the development of Reception Centers placed strategically throughout the County, where children who are detained can await placement in a child-friendly environment. The centers would also allow for supervised initial assessment and screening, supervised visitation, and family conferencing. The Reception Centers will limit a child's stay to no longer than 23 hours and 59 minutes. Mr. Oppenheim indicated that the Department has been working with Alex Morales, Executive Director Children's Bureau, who has offered to lease the Department a house in North Hollywood. This would function as the first reception center. Ultimately the goal will be to have reception centers in each Service Planning Area.

Harriet Chase, LWV/LAC Children's Services Consultant

Southern California Area

LWVC Membership Training Workshops

Topics:

**Voter Service, Elections and Beyond
Fund Development
League 101 or Introduction to League
Membership Recruitment and Retention**

Saturday, September 20, 2003

Registration/Coffee: 9:30 AM

Workshops: 10:00-3:00 PM

**Location: Center - Sisters of St. Joseph
480 South Batavia, Orange**

\$20.00 Lunch/Registration, if payment received by September 13th

\$25.00 Lunch/Registration, if paid at the door

\$5.00 Registration Only/Brown Bag

=====
Send registration and checks payable to LWVC, to: Joanne Leavitt,
2920 Kansas Avenue, Santa Monica, CA 90404

Name: _____

League: _____

No. of Persons: _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

**What's Wrong with
L.A. County Government?**

**SATURDAY, OCT. 4 - 9:30am-2:00pm
(Including Lunch)**

TAIX Restaurant

1911 Sunset Blvd., L.A.

Conveniently located near the Hollywood Fwy and Alvarado.
Valet Parking \$1.25

Featured Speaker Michael Feuer

This County League Day will help prepare you for the fall County Government Study consensus in your local League.

Mail your reservation to Gwen Cochran - 427 E. Walnut Ave., Burbank 91501
by Sept. 24. Make check for \$25 payable to LWV-LAC.

Name _____

League _____

Phone _____

Lunch Choice:

Chicken Salad _____ Vegetarian Salad _____

August 2003

League of Women Voters
of Los Angeles County

Joanne Leavitt, President
Chris Carson, Editor
carsonlww@earthlink.net

We're on the Web!!
<http://lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org>

Calendar

August 7—Speaker Training
Pacific American Legal Center

August 12—LWVLAC
Board Meeting, LA League
Office

August 28—WPC Meeting,
LA League Office

September 10—LWVLAC
Board Meeting, LA League
Office

September 20—LWVC
Member Training Workshop
– Orange (see flyer)

October 4—County League
Day (see flyer)

October 7—Recall Election

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For information, contact carsonlww@earthlink.net