

August
2004

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

The President is on vacation. Her letter will resume when she returns.

VOTERS SERVICE

Meet Your Judicial Candidates on Local Television

Last February, LWVLAC conducted a traditional judicial candidate forum, co-sponsored by LWV East San Gabriel Valley and LWV Whittier. Seen by a live audience in the West Covina City Hall and televised by West Covina's City TV as well as several other government channels, it was very well received and much appreciated by candidates and voters alike. Encouraged by that experience, the LWVLAC Board decided to explore further opportunities to present judicial candidates to L.A. County's voters.

The L.A. County Registrar of Voters produces a dizzying array of different ballot types for each election. For this fall's General Election, each ballot must include the candidates from just one of 19 Congressional Districts and just one of 26 State Assembly Districts. About half of the ballots must include the candidates from one of 8 State Senatorial Districts. Depending on location, there might also be candidates for City Council, Board of Education, Water District Boards, etc.

In spite of all of this variety, however, certain candidates will appear on every ballot in the County: all of the candidates for U.S. President, Vice President, and U.S. Senator, plus all of the candidates for Judge of the Superior Court. The names of most of the 'upper ticket' candidates will be familiar to voters, but the ten judicial candidates (two for each of five offices) are among the least known on the ballot.

Not wanting to make a bad decision, many voters simply skip the judicial portion of their ballots. Less conscientious voters may select candidates at random

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or by pure instinct. Fortunately, however, there are some who go to the trouble of seeking out information on the judicial candidates. Among their best sources for the Fall 2004 election season are League of Women Voters publications and projects: Election Info, LWVLAC's 'wraparound' supplement to LWVC's Pros & Cons on the state ballot measures, www.smartvoter.org, and an hour-long television program, tentatively titled Meet Your Judicial Candidates.

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Co-sponsored by LWVLAC, LWVLA, and LWV Santa Monica, Meet Your Judicial Candidates will be filmed in a professional studio setting by Santa Monica City TV, working in consultation with the Center for Governmental Studies' Video Voter Project. The program will consist of a 'one-on-one' interview with each candidate, along with general information on the election and voting. This format has been used very successfully in Santa Monica and has brought 'rave reviews' from candidates and voters as well as scholars in the field of community media. All interviews will be conducted by Sandy Jacobson, a member of LWVSM with a great deal of experience in voter service television work. Questions and other content are being developed by the LWVLAC Judicial Candidate Forum Committee.

Meet Your Judicial Candidates will be ready for distribution during the last week in September, when DVDs will be mailed to all local Leagues as well as to all government TV channels in L.A. County. SMCTV and L.A. City Channel 36 will broadcast Meet Your Judicial Candidates repeatedly during the month of October and will urge other government channels to do the same. The program will also be available in streaming video

at www.citytv.org and on the judicial pages of Smart Voter: www.smartvoter.org.

The Judicial Candidate Forum Committee has worked hard throughout the summer. Many thanks are due to Robin Gee (SMCTV), Barbara Inatsugu (LWVSM), Marilyn Johnson (LWVLA), Daphne Lake (LWVLAC), Julie Rajan (LWVLA), Margo Reeg (LWVLAC), and Sally Rivera (LWVLAC) for being so generous with their skills and insights.

-- Frances Talbott-White, Chair
Judicial Candidate Forum Committee

Summertime: Fish are Jumpin', and so is Smart Voter

From the user's point of view, the month of August is a quiet time at Smart Voter: www.smartvoter.org. The only candidates on line are the nominees and run-off candidates from the March election. Nevertheless, this is an especially good time for League members to check out the site. See what your Congressional, State Assembly, State Senate, and Judicial candidates have posted -- or what they haven't posted. Then contact them and let them know either that you appreciate their participation, or that you'd like to see their campaign material on line.

Contacting candidates via Smart Voter is a very easy task, since e-mail addresses and/or phone numbers are posted for practically all candidates. Here are some 'talking points':

- more and more voters are looking for election information on line;
- Smart Voter is FREE to candidates;
- Smart Voter gives candidates more exposure on search engines such as Google;
- Smart Voter gives candidates another portal to their other websites, if any.

If you encounter candidates who have questions or need help with their Smart Voter postings, please tell them to use Smart Voter's on-line 'feedback' function or phone me at (310) 397-4970.

Behind the scenes at Smart Voter, August is a busy

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time. Ballot measure information is being collected and posted, local candidates are being invited to participate, and team members are being trained. If you can make phone calls or stuff envelopes, you have the skills Smart Voter needs most at this time of year. If you're computer savvy, you can easily learn to do some of the on-line work Smart Voter will involve in September and October.

Wouldn't 2004 be a good year to join the Smart Voter team? Phone me at 310/397-4970 or e-mail ca-south@smartvoter.org.

-- *Frances Talbott-White*
Smart Voter Southern California Liaison

SOCIAL POLICY

Health Care

SB 921 (Kuehl) Health Care for All Californians Act passed in the Assembly Health Committee on June 22 by a vote of 12-5. As much work was done in LA County to pass this bill out of committee Leagues that took an active role certainly are appreciated. The Claremont League, Glendale/Burbank League, Torrance and Beach Cities Leagues and the East San Gabriel Valley were all asked to help get this passed. The Aye votes were from Cohn, Goldberg in place of Chan, Chavez, Dymally, Koretz, Lieber, Montanez, Nakano, Negrete McLeod, Ridley-Thomas, Salinas and Wolk. Dario Frommer did not vote and Spitzer, Dutton, Nakanishi, Plescia and Richman voted No. If you haven't sent a letter to your legislator please do so and thank them for their Aye vote or ask them to support this if they didn't do so this time.

The status of the bill is to not move it forward this year but to reintroduce it in the next session in the state Senate. But the victory in the Assembly Health Committee along with the strong base of support that has developed will fortify the movement forward. In the meantime the economic study on the bill is still in the works. The committee

chair Cohn was quoted as saying that "We have a system we have been putting Band-Aids on for a long time and there are major bleeders out there".

This coming season we will be working to defeat the initiative to overturn the Pay or Play health reform and persuade the Senators in LA County that are not already co-authors to get on board with the single-payer health care reform bill.

Anyone wishing more information on the bill can keep up to date by going to the website www.healthcareforall.org or www.sb921campaign.org.

Sheila Hoff
LWV/LAC Health Policy Director

WHAT IS A SPA BESIDES A GOOD PLACE FOR R & R?

Among things learned at Katie Gerecke's information-packed Pre-K workshop at last month's Popovers gathering, was background information about the eight SPAs -- Service Planning Areas -- approved by the Board of Supervisors in 1993 upon recommendation of the L.A. County Children's Planning Council (CPC). The CPC itself was established two years earlier by the Supervisors as "An independent public/private collaborative body to plan, promote, coordinate and evaluate the effectiveness of programs for children countywide."

Areas covered by each SPA vary widely as boundaries were drawn based upon the numbers of children and families receiving services. Thus SPA 1 covers the entirety of the Antelope Valley and SPA 2 takes in all of the San Fernando Valley and runs from Agoura Hills to La Canada/Flintridge. SPA 3 includes the entire San Gabriel Valley as well as Pasadena and Altadena. SPA 4 is compact, taking in metropolitan Los Angeles including Hollywood. SPA 5 runs west from La Cienega Blvd. to the Pacific Ocean and south to the airport. SPA 6 covers south and south/central Los Angeles while the cities of South Gate, Downey, Whittier, La Mirada, Hawaiian Gardens and Lakewood are

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among the communities within the boundaries of SPA 7. Referred to as South Bay/Harbor, SPA 8 covers everything from Inglewood to Catalina Island, the Beach Cities and Long Beach.

Each SPA is governed by a SPA Council which is comprised of parents, service providers, agency representatives and community members. County League Social Policy directors past and present are hopeful that there will be one or more local League members working with each Council. Sally Rivera notes there has been a lack of League participation with Councils in Area 1, 2, 4 and 6. If you would be interested in getting involved, please contact Sally at sjrbrdr@earthlink.net or (562) 696-1344. More information about the CPC and the SPAs may be obtained from the CPC website: www.childrensplanningcouncil.org or by calling (213) 893-0421.

Jean Cohen

LWVC Working Party for children

LWVUS CIVIL LIBERTIES

At national convention, the delegates unanimously passed a resolution raising civil liberties to the highest priority for education and advocacy. At its recent retreat, the LWVUS Board took action to implement this decision. The following is a memo from Kay Maxwell detailing the Board's actions.

TO: All State and Local Leagues

FROM: Kay Maxwell, President

DATE: August 3, 2004

RE: Civil Liberties: LWVUS/EF Activities

At its July 25th meeting, the LWVUS Board of Directors addressed in depth the issue of past, present and future activity in the area of civil liberties, both from an advocacy and education perspective. A

multi-phase approach was devised, which is described below. This approach allows progress on this important topic, while still enabling Leagues at all levels to focus on election-related activities. In addition, it provides the opportunity for new developments, such as the outcome of the November election, to play a role in shaping a larger civil liberties program.

The first phase begins immediately and will continue until the October Board meeting. This stage includes a number of actions - some new and some extensions of existing activities. These include:

- * Reminding all Leagues of the LWVUS/EF activities and materials that already exist on civil liberties, which can be used immediately. As noted in the most recent Presidents Update, LWVUS has created questions on civil liberties issues for consideration by federal and local candidates this election season. They were distributed at Convention 2004 on the resource disks in delegates' registration packets. Please consider including these questions in your League's voters guide and/or candidate forums'

- * Moving the issue of civil liberties to the highest level of legislative priorities for the remainder of 2004. Based on standard procedure, the Board will review and determine all legislative priorities for 2005 at its January 2005 meeting.

- * Confirming that the \$8,326 donated by League members to date for civil liberties has been put in a separate account dedicated for this purpose within the Education Fund. The Board also reviewed the end-of-fiscal year financial report in order to identify other possible small sums of money that might be added to this account. None of the \$8,326 has been spent for this or any other purpose.

- * Establishing a formal LWVUS sponsored online list to enable members to explore what Leagues have done and will do on civil liberties at the state and local levels, and to identify materials and speakers. It will operate according to the guidelines for LWVUS lists and will become operative during

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the month of August. We will inform you when that happens, and at that time will provide all the necessary information about accessing the list, the list guidelines to be followed, and so forth.

* Appointing a subcommittee of the LWVUS Board to determine the most appropriate roles for, and operational aspects of, an off-Board Advisory Task Force on the topic of civil liberties, and to consider funding sources. Members of the subcommittee are Jane Gross (Chair), Xandra Kayden and Mary Wilson. The subcommittee will make its recommendations to the Board at its October 2004 meeting.

The second phase will begin at this point, with the creation and appointment of a small Civil Liberties Advisory Task Force. The purpose of the Task Force will be to define the scope of a civil liberties program and explore relationships with members, staff, and Board. It is anticipated that this Task Force would begin its work immediately, so that it could make at least initial recommendations to the Board at the January Board meeting. It is also anticipated that some of the funds raised to date on civil liberties will be used to cover the costs of an in-person meeting of that Task Force.

The third phase of the program will be initiated in January 2005, when the Board addresses the recommendations of the Civil Liberties Advisory Task Force.

We on the LWVUS Board and staff look forward to growing engagement in the civil liberties area and believe that the approach outlined above is one that is both reasonable and responsive, and will provide opportunities for the League to make a difference on these critical issues as we go forward.

Since there is great League interest in this topic and because LWVUS does not have email addresses for most League members, League presidents are strongly encouraged to share this memorandum on civil liberties with your boards and members, perhaps by mentioning it in your Voters.

LAND USE

At the land use workshop at Popovers, the participants discussed the basic concepts of land use planning in Los Angeles County. We begin an occasional series about the basic terminology of Smart Growth.

Alternative Transportation: All types of transportation that do not require highways—rail, buses, bicycle and walking paths.

Brownfields: Contaminated land, usually old industrial sites.

Cluster Housing: Planned housing developments with homes in close proximity while much of the land is retained as natural areas or developed as parks.

Common Good: The well-being of the larger community taking precedence over individual preferences.

Comprehensive Planning: Official planning that considers a range of issues and the impacts they have on each other; e.g., highways' impacts on business locations. It is the policy basis for all regulations (laws) if a government has written and adopted such a plan.

Edge City: When a suburb becomes complex enough to serve its residents' work, cultural and recreational needs without dependence on a central city.

Growth Cap: A law passed by a city to control development in a prescribed area.

What is a Structural Budget Deficit?

Many experts believe that California faces a “structural budget deficit.” This means that with the current revenue structure (e.g., taxes, fees, and other sources), the state has insufficient income to maintain services at the current level.

Each year, the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO) publishes a forecast of the California fiscal situation for five years into the future. In November 2003, the LAO’s estimate was that without corrective action, the ongoing gap between revenue and expenditures is about \$14 billion dollars, assuming that the state continued funding the Vehicle License Fee backfill, as Governor Schwarzenegger has promised it will.

The LAO has also analyzed the budget the governor has proposed for 2004-2005. This budget proposes significant reductions in expenditures. These included reduced expenditures for education, transportation, social services and a ten percent reduction in Medi-Cal reimbursement rates. There are increases in fees, such as increased tuition for higher education, but no increase in general taxes. According to the LAO, about 37 percent of the budget savings are one-time savings. The office concludes that even if the budget were enacted as proposed, the General Fund would face a shortfall of about \$88 million for 2004-05, and a continuing structural deficit of about \$7 billion dollars.

In its analysis of the 2004-05 budget, the California Budget Project (CBP) attempted to refute the governor’s assertion that, “If the government had simply spent at the same rate that California’s economy has grown, the state budget would be balanced today.” According to the CBP, state spending has not kept pace with growth in personal income. In addition to the loss of revenues from the decline in collection of the personal income tax, the CBP identifies several other areas of revenue loss. These include sales tax (service



consumption is growing and not taxed), Internet, mail order sales and the phase-out of federal estate taxes. Moreover, corporations are paying a smaller percentage of their net incomes in corporate income taxes. Shifting costs to local governments also account for some of the savings in the 2004-05 budget.

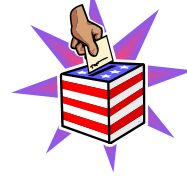
In its publications the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC) is essentially in agreement with the CBP and the LAO about the reasons for the current budget situation. It also identifies the drop-off in revenues from personal income tax on stock options and capital gains as the major factor in the decline in General Fund Revenues, and asserts that these revenues are “unlikely to return to peak values in the foreseeable future.” The PPIC also points out that voter initiatives limit the flexibility of the state’s legislature.

An ongoing activity of the PPIC has been a series of statewide surveys of Californians. A recent survey showed widespread support for the governor but widespread distrust of state government in general. Respondents are generally committed to funding education, local governments, and health and human services. In the responses to the survey about 64 percent stated they would be willing to pay higher taxes to maintain current levels of support for K-12 education. They overwhelmingly opposed an increase in the Vehicle License Fee or state sales tax. They support “sin” taxes—although even doubling the state’s tax on cigarettes would have only a very small effect on the state’s revenue stream.

With the proposals being considered and the acclaim a state budget agreement will engender, it appears that California’s structural budget deficit will continue.



**THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF LOS ANGELES
Education Fund**



Invites You to a Special Conference

Where Have All the Voters Gone?

This growing problem threatens our democracy. Over 51% of non-voters are angry and disgusted with politicians and the political process, according to a poll by the Harvard University/Washington Post Vanishing Voter Project. Over 70% of non-voters are actually registered to vote, but opt out. What *can* we do? What *should* we do? **Let's talk about solutions to the problem.**

Keynote Speaker: Dr. R. Michael Alvarez, *Professor of Political Science, California Institute of Technology, Co-Director of the Caltech/MIT Voting Technology Project.*

Panelists: Sharon Davis, *Shevotes.org*
 Dan Schnur, *Republican Political Strategist*
 Darry Sragow, *Democratic Political Consultant*
 Dr. Lynn Vavreck, *Asst. Professor of Political Science, UCLA*
 Deborah Wright, *Executive Liaison Officer, L.A. County Registrar of Voters*

Friday, September 10, 2004

9:30 am (Registration)

10 a.m. — 3 p.m. (Program)

Los Angeles Athletic Club

**411 West Seventh Street
Los Angeles**

\$35 per person (includes luncheon and handouts), parking \$5

Limited Seating: *RSVP by Monday, August, 30, 2004*

 Clip out and send to: League of Women Voters of Los Angeles Education Fund
 3250 Wilshire Blvd. Suite 1005, Los Angeles, CA 90010. **Deadline Monday, Aug. 30**

NAME: _____ PHONE: _____

NUMBER OF RESERVATIONS: _____ AMOUNT ENCLOSED: _____

Make check payable to: LWVLA Education Fund

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August 2004

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

Margo Reeg, President
Chris Carson, Editor
carsonlww@earthlink.net

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

Calendar

September 1—WPC Meeting,
LWVLA Office

September 10—LWVLA
League Day on “The Vanish-
ing Voter” (see flyer)

September 14—LWVLAC
Board Meeting

September 22—Delivery of
Pros and Cons

September 30—LWVLA
City Ballot Briefing

October 2—LWVLAC Ballot
Briefing, Hollenbeck Home

October 9—LWVC Training
Workshops, Orange

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