

February
2005

LWV/LAC VOTER

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. Associate membership is open to all others.

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We are already one month into the mid-decade year 2005, which opened with intense rescue and relief operations being sent to the many Third World countries devastated by a record-breaking tsunami. Close on its heels, severe and extended rainstorms saturated California causing local tragedies, mudslides, floods and long-term commuting inconvenience. Once again natural disasters have exacerbated the financial woes of countries and states both rich and poor.

Los Angeles County now faces increased demands on its always insufficient operating funds. Although many of the severely damaged roads are either state or federal highways and must be repaired by CalTrans, the County Public Works Department is asking the Board of Supervisors for permissions to contract for repairs on county-owned roads and waterways damaged by the storms. They will apply to be reimbursed by federal emergency funds if the President declares the County to be a disaster area.

In addition, the County has yet to resolve the on-going problems with its healthcare delivery system, particularly the extremely serious issues uncovered in the last year at Martin Luther King, Jr. Hospital in Willowbrook. Supervisors have been demanding answers from the Department of Health Services and Navigant, the firm hired to manage the hospital in the interim, to determine how soon MLK can be restored to credibility and safe competent delivery of care. If it cannot, or if it loses the \$200 million in federal funds, how will the County manage the redistribution of services for trauma, emergency, non-emergency and psychiatric care? One proposal is to seek more money from the state. Another is to establish an independent Board of Trustees for Martin Luther King Hospital or for all county hospital to try to achieve a greater level of responsibility with less political posturing by the Supervisors. Both management and funding are huge issues not easily addressed. League observers will be watching and reporting on what progress is made.

As the County heads into budget deliberations in the spring and early summer more areas of concern will emerge when the Supervisors debate which services

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to cut, freeze or enhance with tax dollars. The League will be watching and weighing in with its opinions.

*Margo Reeg
President*

NATURAL RESOURCES

"KEEPING THE LIGHTS ON" LWVC ENERGY CONFERENCE January 21, 2005

Everything you ever wanted to know about California's electricity future and then some was presented at the conference 'Keeping the Lights on' organized by the League of Women Voters of California Energy study committee and cosponsored by the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), California Energy Commission (CEC), and Town Hall Los Angeles.

To set the focus for the day, Bob Therkelsen, Executive Director of the California Energy Commission provided an overview of California's Electricity System. Electricity is an unusual commodity because it must be delivered instantaneously in response to demand; it is not storable; it follows the laws of physics not economics; it is essential to the health, welfare, and economic functioning of society; and it depends on a complex integrated system of generation and delivery controlled by many governmental and private agencies and corporations.

Although Californian's use of electricity per person is significantly less than that of people in other Western states and has remained at a relatively stable level for the last 20 years, the demand for electricity in the state continues to grow at about 2% per year due to increases in population and commercial/industrial/service expansion. However, peak demand for electricity during the hot summer months exceeds the generation and transmission capacity of power sources in California or contracted/controlled out-of-state generators. Conse-

quently, California is dependent on purchasing electricity at the last minute on the "spot market" from sources in the Southwestern states or the Pacific Northwest. In extreme situations the state must impose on its emergency interruption contracts in order to cut demand. Those large users generally have generators which they can turn on to keep their operations going. But they often add to air pollution.

In the last two years the energy related agencies including the CPUC and the CEC cooperated to create the Energy Action Plan (EAP). The agencies have conducted evaluations of energy supply, transmission and demand, and have issued Energy Policy Status Reports in 2002 and 2004 and are finishing the 3rd report for 2004. They have set energy priorities for the state including an "energy loading order" to meet energy demands. These priorities have been endorsed by former Governor Davis and by Governor Schwarzenegger.

- 1--Promoting Energy Efficiency
- 2--Developing Renewable Energy Sources
- 3--Expanding Energy Generation Capacity
- 4--Expanding Transmission Capacity

Among the problems facing California's electricity system in the future, according to Therkelsen, are growing demand for power not only in California but in the 14 state western region from which California purchases electricity. In addition, California depends more heavily on natural gas to fuel its power plants than eastern states. Supplies of natural gas, primarily from Texas, have been interrupted and prices have escalated. People are resisting the siting of liquefied natural gas (LNG) terminals along the coast due to safety concerns. Plus, the state has a newly adopted law requiring the reduction of greenhouse gases. (The two largest sources of greenhouse gases are power plants and motor vehicles.)

Generation capacity is another issue as older power plants are retired and delays are encountered in constructing state-of-the-art clean generators. Finally, the bottlenecks in the transmission system which prevent additional megawatts of electricity from being sent from generators in or out of state to areas of peak demand need to be relieved either

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by building additional transmission lines or additional generation capacity in heavy use areas. Environmental requirements for reducing air emissions and environmental justice concerns regarding location of power plants enter into these decisions, as well as who is responsible for paying for the construction.

What can the League do? First and foremost we need to be leaders in conservation and encourage others to conserve also. By installing low energy fluorescent light bulbs throughout our homes, replacing aging appliances with efficient "Energy Star" models, turning off appliances rather than leaving them in stand-by mode, using appliances in the morning or at night to avoid peak load hours, and by reducing use of air conditioning in the summer we can reduce the demand on our electricity system relatively painlessly. Additional measures include installing more insulation in our homes and replacing windows with double-paned models.. Those with means and dedication may want to install solar panel shingles to generate their own electricity during the day. Compared to the general population, League people already demonstrate a higher level of adoption of these simple practices. In the longer term, each of us will save resources as well as money.

Margo Reeg

GOVERNMENT

PALESTINIAN ELECTIONS: A CLOSER VIEW

Jennifer Collins-Foley, an executive staff member of the Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorders office until she moved back to the Washington, D. C. area with her husband and family, recently returned from observing the elections in Palestine. She traveled as part of a group, as the "election procedures" expert, and shared some of her experi-

ences with a group of us during a recent return to the RR/CC office in Norwalk.

The observers were in Palestine for about a week in December 2004 making preliminary contacts and arrangements. They returned in January 2005 for the actual elections. As a long-time election official herself, Jennifer reflected the hands-on concerns of one who understands elections at the nitty-gritty level of being sure supplies are available and workers are trained when people show up at the polls. She noted that elections were held only two months after President Arafat's death, a rush situation in places where elections are commonplace and societies peaceful, a greater challenge in Palestine.

Fortunately, registrations had recently been conducted in 24 Palestinian cities in September-October, so these registrations were extended and expanded. In addition to the political database generated from this process, there was a civil database based on other records. Initially, the plan was to have separate polling places for the separate lists, but a couple of days before the election took place, authorities decided to merge the two databases and allow interchangeable voting at all polling places. Jennifer likened it to merging active and inactive rolls for Los Angeles County.

Jennifer had pictures of the District Election Commission offices, beautiful buildings, classic architecture, furnished inside with ergonomically designed chairs that were in notable contrast to the chairs in the RR/CC conference room in which we were meeting. In Palestine, boxes of tissues with the Election Commission imprint were everywhere, as were cookies – Palestinian staffs found it hard to believe such enhancements were not part of Jennifer's normal working environment.

Although unemployment varied from 40% to 60% depending on the specific area of Palestine, the supplies and training supporting the election were state-of-the-art, having been provided by various European countries: ballot boxes from Norway, consultants from the Netherlands, etc. Jennifer reported that their procedures and training were top

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notch. UN trainers provided excellent role-playing exercises for the elections workers.

Absentee voting was not allowed as part of the Palestinian election because of fear of fraud. The thumb of each voter was marked with indelible ink to make voting more than once impossible. This precaution carried a danger of another kind in that some groups advocated boycotting the election, and the ink lasted at least five days.

The lack of absentee voting was a serious obstacle for those who had to pass through several check-points between a residence and a work place. To facilitate voting, Israeli staffing was removed from at least some of the check points, but the mounds of dirt put in place to impede transit were left in place. For the visiting group to pass through the VIP check point on their way to some of the northern Palestinian villages took more than an hour. In Gaza, the head of the District Election Commission was locked up at his home by the Israelis shortly before the election; Jennifer noted what an impact that would have in Norwalk were Conny McCormack [LA County Registrar-Recorder] to be so restricted. Also, supplies had to come through Israel, and delivery promises were not reliable.

Jennifer noted the brutalization that was apparent on both sides, and the sense of danger that prevailed. At one point the group had to retreat back into the Election Commission building as Israeli helicopters flew overhead, firing into a Palestinian compound. She wondered what she, with three children and a husband she loved at home, was doing in such a place—and then she realized she would be leaving, and thought about those who could not. She also reported a conversation she overheard as she stood in the midst of a third-world Palestinian village: two men were discussing the change from 150 channels to 250 channels on Jerusalem television.

Jennifer had recently completed a procedural election guide for use in Tajikistan, one of the former SSRs, and noted that it had to be an ethical guide, not just a procedural one. For example, under So-

viet rule, part of the responsibility of the election workers had been to assure a high turnout. Consequently, poll workers felt it their duty to vote for people unable to make it in on election day. Jennifer's guide made it clear that, under the Tajikistan national rules, the responsibility of the election workers was to assure an accurate, reliable vote, and that the turnout was the responsibility of the voter.

Sally Seven

LWVLAC Government Director

LWVC REDISTRICTING NEWS

Redistricting was made an LWVC action priority at the January 9 state board meeting. We sent a letter to the Governor stating the League's position on the issue on January 13; that letter is posted at the LWVC Web site at http://lwvc.org/lwvc/action/redistrict/letter_to_gov_jan2005.pdf. Similar letters were sent to members of the Legislature.

The LWVC is working with the California Voter Empowerment Circle and some partners to develop analyses of the several redistricting proposals. As soon as any analyses are ready for the public, we will place links to them at the LWVC Web site, <http://lwvc.org/lwvc/action/redistrict/>.

The LWVC will be following up on our letters with whatever lobbying seems appropriate. We will be studying the proposals to determine whether there are any we can support.

For more information, contact LWVC Program Director/Advocate Trudy Schafer at 916-442-9210 or tschafer@lwvc.org.

Chris Carson

LWVC Government Director

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EDUCATION

SPRING EDSOURCE FORUM

Mar. 17-18

How can we improve the instruction and opportunities that high schools provide their students? And how do we make them relevant in today's knowledge economy? At the 28th Annual EdSource Forum, "Shaking Up the Status Quo: The Movement to Transform High School," a group of outstanding speakers will examine the multiple challenges involved in changing the status quo in California's public high schools. Don't miss this significant and timely event! Join EdSource on Thursday, March 17 in Manhattan Beach, or Friday, March 18 in Santa Clara. For more information, go to EdSource's Web site at <http://www.edsource.org/forum05info.cfm> . Since LWVC is an EdSource subscriber, LWVC members are eligible for an early bird registration rate of \$50 until Feb. 18. After that date, registration is \$60 for EdSource subscribers. To register, go to <https://www.edsource.org/order/confregform.cfm?issubscriber=1>.

ANNUAL COUNTY CONVENTION

The 43rd annual convention of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County will be held on Saturday, March 19, 2005 at the Community Hospital of Long Beach, 1720 Termino Ave., Long Beach from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. The invited speaker will be Fourth District County Supervisor Don Knabe addressing Health Care and other urgent issues facing Los Angeles County residents.

Registration and brunch for League delegates and observers will commence at 9 a.m. in the hospital auditorium. President Margo Reeg will call the meeting to order at 9:45 a.m. The business of the day includes adoption of the County League budget, election of officers and board reports.

League members throughout Los Angeles County will be welcomed by Long Beach Area President Lois Ledger. Reservations for the convention and brunch are \$15@, with deadline of March 10, 2005 and \$20 for late reservations from March 11th to 16th. Food Bank contributions will be collected at the door.

Directions to the hospital from the 405 Freeway: exit Lakewood south, turn right on to Pacific Coast Highway, go up hill a short distance and make left turn on Termino and another left turn into hospital parking entrance.

TRANSPORTATION

From talking the talk to walking the walk.... Members of the County Board have put their commitment to Sustainability into action. Ownership of hybrid cars is spreading.

Three members of the Board are the proud owners of Toyota Priiii (we believe that's the correct Latinate plural) - Sally Seven, Lola Ungar and Chris Carson. Two members are proud owners of Honda Accord hybrids - Gwen Cochran and Georganne Thomsen. All of us are delighted with their comfort and performance. As one member of this exclusive club remarked; "I can pass anybody I want to pass." Very true! The editor can vouch for this from personal experience.

Of course the club is always willing to talk about gas mileage, particularly after just filling up on regular gas.

We know that there are other League members out there who are hybrid owners and the number is rapidly growing. Consider joining us in making your commitment to a cleaner environment real.



You are invited to a special presentation
of the credible Lewin Study research findings on the

Health Care for All Californians Act

February 9, 2005
1st Congregational Church of Long Beach,
241 Cedar, and 3rd
Long Beach 90802
Time: 9:45 AM-Noon

Parking at City Lot on Broadway and Cedar

Please come and hear about the astounding findings showing
how California can provide an affordable, high quality health
care plan with permanence and security in coverage to all.

Cosponsors:

1st Congregational Church of Long Beach
American Association of University Women of California
Gray Panthers of Long Beach
Health Care Council of Orange County
Health Care for All South Bay/Long Beach
League of Women Voters of Long Beach
National Council of Jewish Women of Long Beach
South Coast Interfaith Council
South County Labor, AFL-CIO

Information:

choff74523@aol.com
310 377 7668



League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County

43rd Annual Convention

Speaker: Don Knabe

Fourth District County Supervisor

Topic: **Health Care**

and other urgent issues
facing Los Angeles County residents

Saturday March 19, 2005 9am to 1pm

Community Hospital of Long Beach

1720 Termino Avenue
Long Beach, California

Directions: From 405 freeway:
Exit Lakewood south
Right onto Pacific Coast Highway
Left on Termino (a short distance up hill)
Left into hospital parking entrance

Reservations for convention and brunch **by March 10:** \$15.00 per each
Reservations **from March 11 to March 16:** \$20 per each

Send form and check payable to LWVLAC to:
Gwen Cochran, 427 E Walnut Burbank CA 91501

Reservation Form

Name(s): _____

League: _____

Delegate/Visitor _____

Amount enclosed _____

February 2005

**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

February 8—LWV/LAC
Board Meeting, LWV/LA
Office

February 9—LWV/LAC So-
cial Policy Network Meeting

February 9—Gearing Up to
Pass Healthcare (see flyer)

March 2—WPC Meeting,
LWV/LA Office

March 8—LWV/LAC Board
Meeting

March 19—43rd Annual
LWV/LAC Convention (see
flyer)

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For information, contact carsonlww@earthlink.net