

June 2003

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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Hello all!

What a busy time. It seems we are hardly back from LWVC Convention and it is time for LWVUS President's Council. More on that next month. I haven't been to Washington, D.C. since 9/11 so this may be a very different experience.

The State Convention in Oakland was a great success. The hotel was very well located, within a few short blocks of many charming eating places, some in converted Victorian business buildings. We had many wonderful speakers with a surprise visit from Barbara Boxer on Saturday afternoon. She called League, said she would be in town and could we make room for her. Who would say "No" to an offer like that!

We also had the honor of LWVUS President Kay Maxwell's presence for most of the Convention. She was charming and delightful, very knowledgeable and down to earth. The text of her speech as well as the outgoing President's report and Chair of the E.F. report are all on the LWVC website.

With the usual hum of workshops and caucuses, much business was

done. As I commented to someone as we were leaving "Everyone won except the State Board". We went to the floor with two recommended issues for emphasis and these were adopted along with another issue for emphasis and two study updates. Lots of work to be done.

The Issues for Emphasis are: Health Care - Education and Action as we work toward universal access to health care; State and Local Finance - Education and Action as we try to resolve the budget crisis at all levels of government and The Community College System - Education and Action as we move to take action on our new position.

Both studies adopted are updates on our current position, one on Energy and one on Education. Both are subject to finding funding and you will be hearing a lot more about them over the next few months.

A new board was elected and new is the key word here. Only four are continuing from the previous board and one of them was appointed mid-term. Two are from Los Angeles County; Robbie Davis, Pasadena Area, was elected Chair of Educational Activities and Wendy Phillips,

President's Message (Continued)

Beach Cities, as Treasurer.

Another, very important action that was taken was the adopting of a Resolution on Civil Liberties expressing our concern that actions such as the Patriot Act and Homeland Security Act are not in accord with our positions and principles and asking our National Board to take action. This and other resolutions are also on the website.

Open government is always a concern of League and many of us have been very concerned with a small provision on pages 82 and 83 of the May Revise Budget that would do away with the mandate for local governments to post agendas 72 hours in advance of any meeting. The State Board sent a letter to the governor about this and gave me authority to speak about it before the Board of Supervisors. They agreed to direct their legislative advocates to urge this be reinstated by a 5/0 vote.

Save the date for our Summer League Day in Pasadena on July 26. We have a wonderful speaker lined up and some interesting workshops.

Joanne Leavitt
ac997@lafn.org

CHILD CARE

Universal Preschool

As early as 1960, there were recommendations being made that all children in the United States, aged four and over have the opportunity to participate in classes or play groups designed to prepare them for public school. This included the National Education Association's Educational Policies Committee. (Hess & Croft 1972) Edward Zigler, Head of the Federal Office of Child Development (also of Head Start fame) added his voice to the

idea that 4 year olds should be in public school programs. His view was that the program should be voluntary with parents having choices of programs. He also warned against a monolithic system and that there was no 'one best way' to accomplish universal preschool. (Hechinger 1986) During the following years public programs for preschoolers were added in many states. The most notable development was Head Start, funded by the federal government. None of these programs were "universal" however.

The Federal Government established the National Education Goals in the early 1990's. Goal 1 is: "All children will start school ready to learn." One of this goal's objectives is: "all children will have access to high-quality and developmentally appropriate preschool programs that help prepare children for school." At this point the states began to focus on the expansion of preschool programs to meet the needs of a wider range of children and to improve cognitive outcomes for children entering kindergarten. Out of this thrust has developed two types of programs: the expansion of state funded pre-kindergarten programs for children of low income families and the development of preschool programs for all age-eligible children, a non-targeted program in which any child of the appropriate age is eligible. This last is known as Universal Preschool. (Welfare Information Network, June 1998)

Only a few states, including Georgia (1993) and New York (about 1997) have chosen to offer preschool to all 4 year old children. In 2002 Florida passed Amendment 8 which requires the state to provide "high quality pre-kindergarten learning" to the families of every 4 year old that wants it. (Sacramento Tribune, 10-13-02)

The first recommendation of the Report of the School Readiness Task Force, (California State Department of Education) "Ready or Not, Here They Come," was that "An Appropriate, Integrated, Experiential Educational Program Should Be Provided for Children Ages Four through Six." It stopped short of saying 'for all children.'

In California in 1997, the Universal Preschool Task Force was convened to explore the feasibility of providing publicly-funded preschool for all children aged 3 and 4. The task force report, released in 1998 stated that "an investment in the education of young children comparable to investments for kindergarten through grade twelve and postsecondary education is essential if California is to regain its national role as an educational leader." (On the Capitol Doorstep, 3-98) The report included 5 recommendations regarding high standards for programs, qualified teaching staff, combinations of public and private funding, and building on the private and public programs that already serve preschool children.

Currently, California's new Master Plan for Education 2002 calls for the state to provide "voluntary access to formal preschool programs that offer group experiences, and developmentally appropriate curricula". It further recommends that the state should, "ensure that early learning gains are continued, by aligning developmentally appropriate guidelines, standards, and curricula for preschool, early childhood education, kindergarten, and the primary grades."

The California First Five Commission is working to develop universal preschool. (This Commission oversees the use of the 50 cents-per-pack tax on cigarettes that was mandated by Prop. 10 in 1998. The money must be spent on education and health programs for children under 5 years. There are 57 local commissions, statewide.) The commission will provide seed money to begin a universal preschool system while the state economy recovers. The legislature is unlikely to pass legislation to support this plan at this time. (Sacramento Bee, 12-1-02)

The Los Angeles County First-5 LA Commission (and two others) will use the tobacco-tax money to make preschool available to all 3 and 4 year olds. The programs would consist of some kind of children's groups that help to build academic skills. There is no promise of full day care. Attendance

would be voluntary. (Sacramento Bee, 12-1-02) The First-5 LA Commission has named Nancy Riordan and Robert Hertzberg to Co-chair an advisory committee that will help decide how to spend \$100 million in LA County to ensure universal, quality preschool. The purpose is to enable all children ages 3 and 4 to attend preschool. "Current estimates indicate that more than 100,000 of the county's 3 and 4 year old children do not receive early care and education services, and this does not include those receiving low-quality or infrequent services." (Daily News, 2-3-03)

Karen Hill-Scott, Co-founder of a Los Angeles child care agency, Crystal Stairs has been appointed to head the LA First-5 programs to implement this 10-year project. She has said that her goal over the coming year is to create a high-quality system that will be easy for parents to negotiate. The initial plans include expanding existing programs from half day to full day, training of child care providers, building new centers and providing other social services. The program would be free. (LA Times, 11-15-02)

There are many questions to be raised about Universal Preschool. Among them:

How will local preschool programs fit into the plans?

Where will the programs be located?

How will continuing funding be obtained?

What standards for quality will be used.

How will these be monitored?

What will be the standards for educating/training teachers and staff?

These and many other questions will be raised in the coming months as the LA First 5 Advisory Committee holds hearing throughout the county and shares its plans for Universal Preschool in Los Angeles County.

Katie Gerecke

Public Policy Chair, LWV of the Claremont Area

NATURAL RESOURCES

Need a Ride Friend? Transportation Alternatives

In recent weeks, much attention has been directed to the question of congestion on freeways particularly the 101 and the 710 in Southern California. One responsible agency, Caltrans, got into hot water by proposing enlargement of the 101 to deal with the number of cars using the free now and in the future. In order to expand the freeways, it would have been necessary to destroy a very large number of homes, businesses, parks and churches in order to make room for more concrete and, ultimately more cars. There was an outcry objecting strenuously to the destruction of homes and communities. It appears now that Caltrans has put these plans on hold and will attempt to deal with congestion by short-term solutions such as enlarging ramps.

This controversy is interesting in that it alerts us to the fact that the way we frame policy issues may lead to solutions that are unpopular and unworkable. In this case, Caltrans framed the problem in this way: we have freeway congestion. How do we make more room for more cars and ease that congestion. Pouring more concrete was the answer. What if Caltrans had framed the problem in the following way: we have a very large capital investment in southern California in automobiles. But this investment is seriously underutilized. That is, many cars have very few people in them and this underutilization contributes to congestion. So, the policy problem is: how do we get more people in each car?

Framed in this way, the policy problem takes on a different perspective. We have already tried one solution to this problem by establishing carpool lanes on freeways. These are somewhat effective but they really do contribute little to reducing massive congestion. What other kinds of things might Caltrans do to get more people in each car? One strategy that would undoubtedly

work but one that is politically very unpopular would be to properly price freeways. Any economist will argue that any shared resource that is not properly priced will suffer from congestion and over use. The price would have to be high enough to create an incentive to carpool or use public transportation. A high price might have negative effects for low-income people, but we could devise programs, that took into account the effects of tolls on low-income drivers.

If putting a price on access to freeways is not in our future, what might Caltrans do to reduce congestion without pouring concrete? Voluntary efforts in other communities may provide a guide for L. A. In the S. F. Bay Area people ride in "casual commutes," while in the Washington D. C. area people commute by "slugging." In both casual commute and slugging involve drivers lining up before entering a freeway or Interstate and picking up riders awaiting rides into metropolitan areas. With three or more people in a car, drivers are able to use the carpool lanes and avoid all of the congestion. On the S. F. Bay Bridge, drivers also avoid tolls.

In the Bay Area, this phenomenon seemed to emerge spontaneously and it appears to remain rather minimally organized. There seem to be only two rules: once in the auto, no food and no talking. Both in the Bay Area and in Washington D. C., this development does have the desired effect: more people in each car and more people avoiding commuter congestion.

Caltrans might also consider ways to make the L. A. transportation system more welcoming to such private ventures as ZIPCAR (www.zipcar.com), which operates in Boston and other cities. ZIPCAR provides members with an automobile on demand. A member calls or accesses ZIPCAR to reserve a car and is told the location of the car and where to return it. In most cases, members are able to obtain and return their car close to their residence or place of work. ZIPCAR does not put more people in each car at the same time. Rather, it makes use of each car more often and allows people who do not need a car every day to have

access to one when they need it. In effect, there are fewer cars on the road.

The point of these examples is a simple one: frame the policy problem in the correct way and we will see that there are possible solutions that do not involve lots of concrete. In the case of the examples above, none of them may work perfectly in L. A. in their current form. However, variants on these themes may provide us with partial solutions to the congestion problem. For example, casual commute apparently emerged in the Bay Area in a spontaneous fashion. It may be, given the sprawl in L. A. basin, that local and county governments may have to play a role in establishing something like it in communities surrounding L. A. The point here is to look at these examples and to think creatively about solutions for L. A. And we should not rule out properly pricing the freeway. Ultimately, as population grows, the State will have to use pricing to properly manage our transportation system.

John D. Sullivan
LWVAC Natural Resources Director

The Second ENACT Tour

The second ENACT Tour feature on Saturday, February 1st was the Santa Monica Urban Runoff Recycling Facility or SMURRF, where dry weather runoff is captured and treated.

The SMURRF is hailed as a state-of-the-art, first of its kind water recycling plant that treats dry weather urban runoff by conventional and advanced treatment systems. The SMURRF removes pollutants like sediments, oil, grease, and pathogens so that the waste water can be reused for beneficial purposes.

Placing such a facility at the Santa Monica Pier in front of a prominent Tourist Hotel overlooking the bay might not be the usual choice of a community. The City of Santa Monica's mandate for the SMURRF stipulated that it include a significant public education component and that it be responsive to the immediate neighborhood.

Eliminating pollution of Santa Monica Bay and producing high quality water for reuse is the primary objectives of the project. An important secondary goal is to raise public awareness of Santa Monica Bay pollution and the role of each individual in the watershed in cleaning it up.

ENACT participants first viewed the beach front tank where the dry weather runoff enters the system. Here, "coarse" screening to remove large floating debris and trash takes place. The "coarse" screened flow is then pumped 1/2 mile to the SMURRF.

Along the 1/2 mile walk, the Tour leader and Water Quality Specialist lifted a heavy metal cover, and showed the group the expansive underground area where the coarse material is pumped to for a later removal by vacuum trucks and appropriately disposed of.

Leaving that behind, the group followed the underground pipes up ramps and pathways, past interesting works of art, and to the SMURRF where several stages of treatment are openly exhibited. The SMURRF processes up to 500,000 gallons of runoff per day, under varied colored covers. The water as it moves through the facility is day lighted in five places so visitors can see the results of the purification process. At two points there are overlooks from which visitors can see the array of equipment. A photomural presents images of the trees that had to be removed to accommodate the construction.

Where Does the Water Come From?

The SMURRF cleans urban runoff from Santa Monica's two largest flows: 1) The Pico-Kenter which drains 4200 acres including parts of the City of Los Angeles and the Santa Monica Mountains, and 2) the Pier Storm Drain which drains 900 acres. Dry weather runoff is created from excess irrigation, spills, construction sites, pool draining, car washing, washing down pavement areas and residual wet weather runoff.

How Much Did It Cost?

SMURRF cost approximately \$12 million including the distribution system for recycled water. The SMURRF is a multi-agency partnership built upon regional benefits of the facility. Funding sources include the City of Santa Monica, the City of Los Angeles, the State Water Resource Control Board, the Metropolitan Water District, Federal ISTEA (Transportation) Grant Funds and the Los Angeles county Proposition "A" Grant.

This project needs to be seen to be believed. For Tour Arrangements: Call Water Quality Specialist, City of Santa Monica's Department of Environmental Affairs, Kim O'Kane (310) 458-8972, Ext. 1.

Mary Johnson
ENACT Representative

CIVIL LIBERTIES

WHEREAS the League of Women Voters from its inception has worked to protect civil liberties and foster open government for all; and

WHEREAS portions of several executive orders and legislative acts, such as the USA PATRIOT Act of 2001 and the Homeland Security Act, are contrary to the following positions of the League of Women Voters of the United States:

- citizen rights: protect the citizen's right to know and facilitate citizen participation in government decision making
- individual liberties: oppose major threats to basic constitutional rights; and

WHEREAS portions of these acts and executive orders have undermined our fundamental rights and liberties including:

- freedom of speech, religion, assembly and the press
- protection from unreasonable searches and seizures

-- the rights to counsel and due process in judicial proceedings

-- equal protection under the law; and
WHEREAS portions of these acts and executive orders impact our libraries and other sources of information, reducing our privacy as well as restricting our ability to obtain public information as provided under the Freedom of Information Act;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the delegates of the League of Women Voters of California Convention do express great concern about the erosion of civil liberties and acknowledge the need for extensive education to increase awareness and aid in protecting our Constitutional rights, while acknowledging widespread fear in the United States and the need for fair and effective ways to cope; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the League of Women Voters, at all levels,

- stand publicly and with other respected organizations that have voiced their concern about civil liberties and open government processes
- take timely and appropriate action to affirm and defend the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the League of Women Voters, at all levels, urge our elected representatives to

- closely oversee the implementation of these acts and executive orders
- actively work for the repeal of such portions of them that violate our constitutional rights and liberties
- adamantly oppose proposed legislation, such as the Domestic Security Enhancement Act of 2003, and any future legislation that would undermine or curtail our fundamental rights and liberties set forth in the United States Constitution and the Bill of Rights; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the League of Women Voters of California communicate this will of the convention to the League of Women Voters of the United States and urge their immediate action

Popovers in **Pasadena**

Saturday, July 26th

Women's City Club, Pasadena.
160 North Oakland

Registration: 9:30 am

Meeting: 10:00 am

Lunch: \$25.00 (includes materials and Yearbooks)
Check here ___ for vegetarian lunch

Workshops: Presidents
Action
County Study
Membership

Speaker: Raphael Sonenshein,
Professor of Political Science,
CSU, Fullerton
"County Government – An Oxymoron?"

RSVP by July 21st

Send reservation and check (payable to LWVLAC) to
Gwen Cochran, 427 E. Walnut Ave., Burbank, 91501 (818) 848-8684

Name: _____

League: _____ Position: _____

June 2003

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

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

Calendar

June 17—LWVLAC Board Meeting, LA League Office

July 7-8—LWVLAC Retreat and Board Meeting

July 26—Popovers in Pasadena, Women's City Club

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