

March  
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.

### Inside this issue:

<i>Natural Resources</i>	2
<i>Social Policy</i>	4
<i>LWVUS News</i>	5

First, I'd like to extend an invitation to all League members to attend the 43rd County Convention in Long Beach on Saturday, March 19 from 9:00 to Noon. We will meet at the Auditorium of Community Hospital of Long Beach at 1720 Termino, near the traffic circle. Our speaker will be the **Honorable Don Knabe** who will fill us in on current issues in Los Angeles County. Business will include election of board members and adoption of a budget for 2005-06. Despite the negative image of hospital dining, the Long Beach League assures us that brunch will be worth coming for.

March marks the end of my first year as President of the Los Angeles County League of Women Voters. Among the accomplishments of the Board during this year are the successful Popovers in Pasadena, which featured workshops for presidents, voters service teams, and the address on the County of Office of Education by the Superintendent, Dr. Darline Robles.

We conducted a busy election education season with the compilation and publication of the **ELECTION INFO and PROS and CONS**. The "Meet Your Judicial Candidates" program on DVD was a new project which was played frequently on cable stations in LA, Santa Monica and Beverly Hills, but spottily in the rest of the county. Due to the problems of distribution and cost, this project is being evaluated for effectiveness.

Another addition to the LWV/LAC member and voter education arsenal is the wider distribution of this Newsletter which has recently been renamed the County VOTER. In the past the County Newsletter was a longer monthly epistle to the County Board and local League presidents and other subscribers. The County VOTER was a 2-page piece used primarily to announce all LWV/LAC sponsored events (like Popovers and Convention), report on County study issues and summarize responses to interviews of County officials. The VOTER was printed and distributed to all Leagues for inclusion in local Voters. More recently camera ready copy was given to each League to be printed and included in Voters. This was done because of the difficulty in distributing printed copy to all Leagues in time to make their VOTER deadlines.

(Continued on page 2)

(Continued from page 1)

Chris Carson created the LWV/LAC website at <[www.lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org](http://www.lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org)> and has posted the County Newsletter on the website and sent an email notice to all board members, local League presidents and VOTER editors. Because of positive feedback on the content of the Newsletter and the ongoing problem of distribution of "hard copy" in time to make local Voters, the board decided at its 2004 Retreat to rename the newsletter, the VOTER, and encourage wider distribution by having local Leagues forward the notice of publication to all of their members who have email. The Board also urges all local Leagues to reprint not only the meeting flyers, but also articles on League issues in their own Voters.

We recognize that the concept of the VOTER is an every-member publication. But, the board does not want to increase dues to pay for every-member mailings. Therefore we have adopted this compromise. We are providing more issue-oriented articles on a monthly basis to all Leagues, but we are counting on local members to forward the entire VOTER via email and/or to print selected items in local Voters. We know we have not solved the problem of some computers not being capable of opening or clearly reproducing all parts of the County VOTER or the problem of not all members being online.

For this reason, Dorothy Larson has been mailing hard copy of the VOTER to people who request it. Copies are free to presidents and voter editors in every League as well as to the Supervisors. Other who would like a paper copy sent directly to their home can subscribe for \$10/year. A subscription coupon is available in this edition of the VOTER. There will be a subscription coupon at the County Convention also.

We hope you find the VOTER interesting and timely.

*Margo Reeg*  
*President*

## NATURAL RESOURCES

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

California's Energy Crisis was a wake-up call to the people and the government that the electricity deregulation plan put forth in **AB 1890** (Peace 1996) and implemented beginning in 1998 was not working as planned. At the League's Energy Forum, **Paul Clanon**, Deputy Executive Director of the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC), presented a summary of the events of the crisis and posited reasons for its severe effects on California's electricity distribution system.

Deregulation was touted by those who believed that Californians paid higher electricity prices than other parts of the country (about 50% higher in most cases), and that the independent operator monopoly and inefficiencies in power plant operations contributed. Another perceived issue was the "higher energy costs driven by environmentally-friendly generators and nuclear power."

The goal of deregulation was to create a new energy market where independently owned for-profit power generators would compete for buyers of electricity and would build new lower cost power plants. The Independent System Operator (ISO) and the Power Exchange (PX) would operate the transmission system and manage the sale and purchase of electricity on the spot market.

According to Mr. Clanon, there were actually three interrelated crises involved in the energy crisis of 2000-01.

- Reliability---power outages needed to be avoided
- Financial crisis---outages cost state residents and industry about \$40 billion
- Governance---no one agreed on who was responsible to decide on and pay for major capital outlay

(Continued on page 3)

*(Continued from page 2)*

The investigation of the energy crisis conducted by a special team revealed that, in fact, the Stage 2 Alert in May of 2000 and the PG&E blackouts in June 2000 were caused by power plant owners testing the market system to see how effectively they could manipulate the market. At the time there was no obvious explanation for blackouts in June, not a peak demand month. Manipulation of the market by Enron and other giant "energy holding companies" from out of state was later determined to be the cause. When a Stage 3 Alert occurred in December 2000, typically a low load month, California avoided blackouts by shutting down aqueducts. In response, U.S. Energy Secretary Richardson ordered out-of-state generators to sell electricity to California.

In January 2001 the CPUC ordered a rate hike on one cent per kW hour to help utilities pay for purchase of power. Rolling blackouts affecting 200,000 customers in Northern California forced Governor Davis and the Legislature to move quickly to try to stabilize the market by ordering the Department of Water Resources to buy power for the utilities. With authorization to spend \$10 billion on electricity, DWR set out to secure expensive long-term contracts with generators. Then the Independent System Operator requested \$6.2 billion in generator refunds through FERC, the Federal Energy Regulating Commission. Again in March all of California was hit with rolling blackouts affecting over 1.5 million customers during a low load period. The CPUC then instituted a 3 cent rate increase, the largest in history, which was not enough to rescue the utilities. In April 2001 PG&E filed for bankruptcy and FERC agreed to order price caps when power shortages were identified by the ISO.

Clanon offered two theories for the Energy Crisis:

- **The market was not set up properly.**  
Blackouts occurred due to shortages in power supply as a result of aging plants being taken off-line for repair or replacement., Mistakes were made by the CPUC and others by not providing for emergency plans when supply was low.
- **The market was manipulated.**  
Evidence indicates that traders and genera-

tors created artificial shortages by turning off power plants and using "power play" tactics to increase prices and manipulate when and where power would be supplied to the grid. Many companies were involved in "gaming" the power market.

In answer to the question, "Did demand trigger price spikes?" Clanon showed a chart comparing the summer price curves for 1999 and 2000 for Sundays when offices and other high air conditioning facilities are not in use to illustrate that demand did not create the severe price spikes.

To another question, "Did withheld supply trigger price spikes?" He showed another chart of planned or forced shut downs of power plants for 1999, 2000, and half of 2001. In the last quarter of 2000 and all of 2001 the number of Megawatts of generation that was shut down was three to seven times as large as in 1999. The highest prices were incurred in 2001 when the most plants were idle.

Clanon suggested that the question is not Regulation versus No Regulation but rather what type of regulation. He believes that competition should help keep rates down. But the public and the state need to monitor regulations and criteria for buying and selling power in order to follow what is happening in the competitive market. The 100% spot market proved to be too vulnerable to manipulation and to changes in generation. For example, the drought in the Northwest caused decline in hydro-power generation reducing the availability of electricity from that source. Clanon agreed that renewable energy sources are a path out of vulnerable situations, such as natural gas price fluctuations and other power sources out of the utilities' control.

Although the blackout danger is temporarily behind us, due to the addition of several more generation facilities, prices are still higher than before 2000. The state and the utilities are still paying for the high priced long-term contracts negotiated during Davis term. Attempts have been made to renegotiate the contracts, but not all have been rewritten.

*(Continued from page 3)*

Meanwhile, California is not "out of the woods" yet. There are number of aging power plants that are due to be retired, the transmission grid has two major bottlenecks, and demand for energy continues to increase. It is anticipated that the state could experience blackout again this summer. This is the most important statement from the conference to be reported in the news media.

*Margo Reeg*

---

## **SOCIAL POLICY**

### **At "Popovers"**

July is still the "Popovers in Pasadena" month, but this year it will not be the last Saturday in July. Instead, mark your calendar for the fourth Saturday, July 23, and plan to go beyond the headlines on a wide array of social policy issues. The LWV/LAC Social Policy Network is planning a keynote presentation, a series of workshops and follow-up discussions that you will not want to miss.

The keynote presentation will be an overview of the California Health Insurance Reliability Act recently introduced in the Legislature by Senator Sheila Kuehl (revises prior session SB 921). CHIRA is based on recommendations found in the recently released Lewin Report. The proposed plan "assumes an insurance plan that covers medical, dental and vision care [for all Californians]; prescription drugs; emergency room services, surgical and recuperative care; orthodontia; mental health care and drug rehabilitation; immunizations; emergency and other necessary transportation; laboratory and other diagnostic services; adult day care; all necessary translation and interpretation; chiropractic care, acupuncture, case management and skilled nursing care." The Lewin Group estimates that CHIRA could "reduce total health spending in California by \$8 billion in the first year, alone. The total savings under this plan from 2006-2015 would be \$343.6 billion...." By July, much will be known about how this bill is faring in

the legislative process. Sponsors are enthusiastic, but many hurdles are fully anticipated.

Workshops will include the following:

— An update on the Los Angeles County hospital system, with emphasis on Martin Luther King Jr./Drew Medical Center, and implementation of Measure B.

In addition to inquiries made by the media and the Los Angeles County Supervisors about the status of the Los Angeles County healthcare delivery system, hearings by the recently formed Select Committee on the Los Angeles County Health Care Crisis (chaired by Assemblyman Mark Ridley-Thomas) are scheduled for late February and into spring. In establishing the special legislative panel, Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez said, "Six hospitals in Los Angeles County shut their doors in 2004 alone. The insured and uninsured alike will face a real disaster if the healthcare safety net begins to unravel. We must focus on this looming crisis and help make the county's healthcare system financially stable." The Los Angeles Times recently pointed out that "[s]ince the 1980s, 10 of the county's trauma centers have closed, largely because of financial woes stemming from treating the indigent and uninsured." By July, the hearings will have finished, the Board of Supervisors should have received additional reports from Navigant regarding King/Drew, and an additional report on application of Measure B funds should have been filed.

— A discussion of affordable housing options in Los Angeles County. For those who attended the January 29 LWV/LAC Land Use meeting, this workshop will be an expansion on possibilities raised by SCAG COMPASS and the Los Angeles County Department of Regional Planning. In working with the 187 cities that form SCAG, COMPASS has recommended that development be evaluated in terms of mobility, prosperity, livability and sustainability. The Housing Element (updated 2001) of the Los Angeles County General Plan states that the county will have "[a]n ongoing planning and monitoring function focused on housing that promotes the provision of affordable housing, and ensures the long term availability of de-

*(Continued on page 5)*

*(Continued from page 4)*

velopments that provide affordable housing." Presentation of plans being proposed, already implemented and a consideration of laws and proposed legislation (pending as well as past failures) are planned for the workshop.

— An overview of the PreK initiative that is expected to be circulated for qualification on the November 2006 General Election ballot. This initiative replaces the previously qualified but later withdrawn "Improving Classroom Education Act" initiative of spring 2004. First 5 California Chair Rob Reiner is spearheading the initiative, which is expected to be more narrowly focused on universal voluntary preschool than was the prior initiative. Background on the benefits of preschool, concerns about developmentally appropriate approaches to preschool and demographics, especially those of Los Angeles County families, will be included as part of the presentation.

— An update on the LWVC Education position following expected changes during the May LWVC Convention. In addition to specific information about changes, recommendations for action at several levels of League are anticipated.

The luncheon tables will supplement discussion of items raised in the workshops, preview specifics of CHIRA and add areas not addressed in other parts of "Popovers." In addition to health, housing, the pending PreK initiative and multiple education issues, SPN is planning to designate tables where attendees will be able to also find out more about the expected-to-be-qualified parental notification initiative, the status of the implementation of the Mental Health Services Act (Proposition 63), and the status of the Service Planning Areas, including League representation in the SPAs.

The day will be full and by July 23 - who knows? - other table topics may very well emerge as not-yet-known "we need to find out more" items. Mark your calendar, watch for upcoming registration information and be there!

*Sally Rivera*  
*LWV/LAC Social Policy*

## LWVUS NEWS

### Social Security

To: Members of the U.S. Congress

From: Kay J. Maxwell, President

Re: Social Security

The League of Women Voters is deeply concerned over proposals to privatize the Social Security system. We believe that any Congressional debate must address the broad social needs the system now meets, the long-term future of the system and the financial risks that privatization could place on individuals and on government.

In the 1930s, the League of Women Voters supported passage of the Social Security Act. Fifty years later, in a study of the fiscal policy of the United States, League members determined that the federal government has a role in funding and providing for old-age, survivors, disability and health insurance. For such insurance programs, participation should be mandatory and coverage should be universal.

Social Security is one of the most successful social welfare programs of the 20th Century – one that has contributed to unprecedented economic growth and the stability of the U.S. economy. It has been the primary safety net for older workers and their spouses. Before Social Security, one in three senior citizens lived in poverty. Today that number is one in ten. In addition, disability and survivors' benefits under Social Security have provided for millions of American families. We must recognize that Social Security is not merely a retirement program – it is a social insurance program with broad effect.

Concerns have been raised that Social Security is in crisis and that Congress needs to act now. The League of Women Voters believes that both the perceived crisis and the proposed solutions need to be thoroughly examined and debated. We believe there is sufficient time to do so. The long-term

*(Continued on page 6)*

*(Continued from page 5)*

challenges do not manifest themselves until the year 2042. Even then, Social Security has 70 percent of needed funds. Diverting money from the Social Security trust fund into private accounts could hasten the insolvency of the fund. The results could include a substantial increase in the deficit and significant cuts in some or all of Social Security's retirement, disability and survivors benefits.

If Congress determines that changes in Social Security are needed, there are reasonable, moderate adjustments that can achieve solvency and fiscal soundness. But it is key that we have a full, national debate before making major changes in the system that has served so many Americans so well.

---

### **Democracy Agenda**

**Washington, D.C.** – The League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) today announced a Democracy Agenda to guide the organization's work. Launched on the 85th anniversary of the League's founding, it is an advocacy and public education effort to strengthen and renew the basic tenets of American democracy.

"The occasion of our 85th birthday provides an opportunity to look back and to the future," stated Kay J. Maxwell, LWVUS President. "Since our founding in 1920 we've come a long way, but much still needs to be done. The Democracy Agenda focuses on the most important foundations of our government and nation," added Maxwell.

"Years of band-aid solutions and neglect have allowed the mechanisms of many of our government systems to become weak and in some cases break down completely. The Democracy Agenda presents viable solutions to help overcome these persistent weaknesses and educate communities nationwide on how to make things better," Maxwell said.

"We will move the Democracy Agenda forward through the work of our members and supporters, community organizations, elected and government officials and the people of this nation," stated Maxwell. This effort seeks to protect our electoral processes through election reform and campaign finance reform, advance our representative government through nonpartisan redistricting, and preserve our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties. The League will work to tackle these issues and others in related areas on behalf of all citizens.

"Now is the time to get to work," said Maxwell. "Democracy is at risk when long lines and faulty voting processes keep Americans from voting and having their votes counted. Democracy is at risk when partisan gerrymandering ensures that elections are over before the people even vote. Democracy is at risk when government actions threaten basic civil liberties. And, democracy is at risk when special interests pay for election campaigns. We must renew and repair our democracy so that it truly works for all citizens," Maxwell concluded.

LWVUS encourages state and local Leagues to make this unique democracy agenda their priority also. The Board envisions an overarching effort in strengthening and renewing democracy through advocacy, education and visibility efforts. This theme provides a framework for reaching out to the public, building League membership and accomplishing core program goals. Additional information about this special focus will be forthcoming.

The Board recognized that advocacy on many other League issues will also be appropriate during 2005. The other issues on which LWVUS expects to take some degree of priority action are **Clean Air, Social Security, D.C. Rights**, and protection of the Alaska National Wildlife Refuge (**ANWR**) from oil drilling.

Selection of these issues for priority action does not mean these are the only issues on which the LWVUS will take legislative or other advocacy

*(Continued on page 7)*

(Continued from page 6)

action. We plan to continue our current active monitoring of the many issues that are important to the League. However, we recognize that our resources are not unlimited and that there are many issues on which coalition partners may be better suited or more effective. For example, the Board discussed the fact that the major issues confronting Congress this year in the area of reproductive choice are likely to occur in the context of the Senate's consideration of judicial nominees. The Board reiterated the League's firm commitment to reproductive choice, but confirmed that maintaining the League's policy of not taking a position on particular political or judicial appointments is essential to our position as a well-respected nonpartisan voice.

---

### **New Healthcare List**

LWVUS would like to invite you to join the newly established, "lww-healthcare" discussion list. This list is open to League members who want to discuss and promote health care issues, as well as pursue and promote education and advocacy efforts about health care issues. All of these discussions and efforts will focus on the local and state level where we expect the most effective action may be taken.

This is the place to:

- Share information on what your League and others in your community and state are doing
- Recommend resources – websites, books, organizations, speakers
- ◆ Discuss news about health care issues and policies with other League members

All League members are invited to subscribe to the health care discussion list. Please invite any

other interested LWV members to join also.

To subscribe type in the "To" section of an e-mail: [join-lwv-healthcare@lists.lwv.org](mailto:join-lwv-healthcare@lists.lwv.org)

As with all League discussions, partisan or prejudiced statements are not acceptable. Remember always identify yourself and your League affiliation when you post messages to this list.

If you have technical questions or problems related to the list, please contact our List Administrator, Olivia Thorne, [othorne@voicenet.com](mailto:othorne@voicenet.com) directly.

Moderators:

Tom Carson, LWV Glendale/Burbank CA,

[tpcarson@earthlink.net](mailto:tpcarson@earthlink.net)

Susan Gast, LWV Chester County PA,

[ssgast@aol.com](mailto:ssgast@aol.com)

Judith Janay, LWV Larimer County CO,

[jjanay@frii.com](mailto:jjanay@frii.com)

LWVUS Board representative:

Xandra Kayden

[xkayden@ucla.edu](mailto:xkayden@ucla.edu)

---

### **FROM THE EDITOR**

We are coming to the time of year when most local Leagues hold their annual meetings and elect officers and directors for the upcoming year. Each League will be contacted in the not too distant future to update their information for the County Yearbook. The Yearbooks is useful to all of us only to the extent that the information in it is accurate, and it is up to each local League to be sure that the most current information has been provided to the Yearbook editor. And, of course, the earlier you can provide this information, the better. Thanks in advance for your cooperation in this matter!!

# **Change** the Life of a **Foster Child**

Important ways *You Can Make a Difference*

**Town Hall Meeting**  
**Monday, March 28th**  
**7:00PM - 8:45PM**  
**Redondo Beach Public Library**  
**303 N. Pacific Coast Highway**

**Guest Speaker:**  
**MIRIAM KRINSKY**  
**Executive Director, Children's Law Center**

**Learn about the foster care system and its challenges.**  
**Network with local volunteers.**

The **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS BEACH CITIES** and the **REDONDO BEACH PUBLIC LIBRARY** invite you to participate in an in-depth look at the Foster Care System.

For more information call (310) 545-1026 or visit [www.beachvoter.org](http://www.beachvoter.org)





# 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 \_\_\_\_\_

**March 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**

March 2—WPC Meeting,  
LWV/LA Office

March 8—LWV/LAC Board  
Meeting

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

April 6—WPC Meeting,  
LWV/LA Office

April 12—LWV/LAC Board  
Meeting

May 4—WPC Meeting,  
LWV/LA Office

May 10—LWV/LAC Board  
Meeting

**SUBSCRIBE TO THE**  
**LWV/LAC VOTER!!!**

Sign Up Today!! For hard copy subscriptions, the subscription is \$10.00 per year; contact Dorothy Larson. If you receive it by email, it's free!!

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ Zip \_\_\_\_\_

Local League \_\_\_\_\_

Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

*For information, contact [carsonlww@earthlink.net](mailto:carsonlww@earthlink.net)*