



LWV/LAC VOTER

September 2005

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Media coverages of Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans and the Gulf Coast reveal how quickly the United States can be plunged into Third World status when struck by natural disaster. Images of people stranded in attics, on rooftops; bodies floating in the streets; and riots in the Superdome must jar our sense of contentment and complacency, if not smug superiority over the rest of the world.

How did the U.S. succumb to such devastation—the worst U.S. natural disaster since Hurricane Andrew or the Northridge earthquake? Why did people in charge of disaster preparedness miss the signals or ignore the warnings of meteorologists who predicted that Katrina would slam into New Orleans? Why have levees been consistently under funded? Why did tens of thousands of people not evacuate? Why did the Federal Government take several days to mobilize emergency help? And how does this tragedy affect us here in Los Angeles County?

We can speculate and try to second guess the reasons for downgrading the probability of Katrina's remaining a Class 5 hurricane upon landfall. We can criticize the choices made by Congress and the President in funding repairs and improvements to the levees. And we can shake our heads at the behavior of those

who remained in the city as the storm struck. Poverty, lack of transportation, poor health, or lack of hope may have contributed to their seeming inertia.

But what can we do about it? An immediate response as individuals is to contribute to the Red Cross or another disaster relief group which will deliver food, water, clothing and shelter to the victims. Next we can support the firemen and other volunteers from California who rushed to New Orleans to help in the rescue efforts. Of course, we will offer sympathy and emotional support to friends and colleagues who have relatives displaced in the disaster.

But how does Katrina impact L.A. County? Although Houston and other cities in Texas and the region have absorbed most of the refugees, they will not be able to house, feed, educate, provide health care, and employ all the refugees permanently. Los Angeles County is beginning to see displaced people hoping and trying to relocate here to be with other family members. Schools will see some increase in enrollment. In fact, LAUSD has introduced a process for enrolling these students without formal documentation and immunization records. Colleges from Pepperdine to the Cal State system are accepting displaced students at the last minute.

Los Angeles County will feel the impact of this domestic immigration in many areas: housing, health services, schools, job pressure, unemployment, mental health, and family services. Each of these areas is under some duress and budget constraint already. Despite the improving tax revenues the County has more needs than it can possibly fund. Will we be able to absorb and support the newcomers?

The County budget, passed during the summer, includes more funding for law enforcement, jails, and prosecutors. The only social service increase cited by Supervisor Knabe in the Whittier *Business Focus* was a \$7 million appropriation to bolster foster care programs for children. Most of this new money will not provide for better health coverage and care at County facilities. Nor will it provide for low-income housing, job training, or emergency responses to fires, landslides or earthquakes here.

Some of you heard a report on Prop.B Trauma Care funding for facilities and Emergency Preparedness from Supervisor Yaroslavsky at Popovers in July. Maybe we should congratulate ourselves for supporting that measure on the ballot two years ago. L A County now has money to use to enhance emergency response. But there is as

yet no prospect for a trauma center east of Freeway 605.

More and more we see how vital it is that the government maintain and fund a variety of safety net services for people. Government also needs to have good long range planning which foresees needs of the future and funds the big long-term projects to meet those needs. We cannot rely exclusively on private benevolence to address disasters. Government, through taxes, bonds, universal insurance, as well as user fees and

other revenue sources, must raise funds to provide emergency relief. Big government project funding should not be based on legislators' "pet" projects or reelection goals. By not investing in preventive maintenance and construction we risk paying much more in rescue and repair as well as in loss of life.

What can we do about this dilemma? --- **campaign** to defeat measures and bills that concentrate power in the Governor's or President's hands;--- **lobby legislators** to protect the common

person by providing safety net services and protect our civil rights;--- **work to promote government that recognizes that revenues must be sufficient to finance real needs, including disaster preparation and response even if it means increasing taxes.**

Hurricane Katrina's devastation will take months if not years to repair. LA County will be part of the recovery.

Margo Reeg, president LWV/LAC

November Special Election-- Local Boards and Councils

By now local Leagues have many plans for Voters Service activities for the rapidly approaching November 8 election.

As an illustration of the variety of activities and deadlines each Voters Service Chair or Committee must meet, check out this Calendar.

August

- 15 Orders for Pros and Cons due to LWVC
- 18 Final candidate lists for local school, water and library boards, and City Councils published. Leagues start outreach to candidates for Smart Voter website
- 31 Finish arranging speakers for County Ballot Briefing Start Registering voters

September

- 1 Finish scheduling Candidate Forums for local races and send out candidate letters
- 12 Orders for Easy Voter Guides in 5 languages due to Common Knowledge

13 Primary
53rd Assembly District

24 **Ballot Briefing and Action Workshop at Hollenbeck Home**— encourage local speakers to attend.

Distribute *Pros and Cons* and *Easy Voter Guides* during month

30 **Attend debate between Sen. Kuehl and Richman on Universal Health Care**

Schedule Pro & Con presentations

October

Conduct Forums

Do Pros & Cons presentations

24 **Last day to register voters for November 8 election**
Monitor Community College student elections

25 **Touchscreen Early Voting at 11 sites in County through November 4**

Attend Pollworker training

November

Continue:Pro & Con presentations

1 Early voting at RR-CC in Norwalk through Nov. 8

8 Election Day

Serve as a Pollworker

You can help your local Voters Service Chair by volunteering to distribute *Pros and Cons* to city libraries, schools, and City Halls; to schedule Pros and Cons speakers and engagements; to register voters at your local Farmers' Market or school; to make calls to candidates urging them to visit Smart Voter and post their campaign material; to coordinate/recruit people to work at Candidate Forums; to distribute *Easy Voter Guides* to churches, senior and community centers in multilingual areas; to talk to neighbors and friends about the importance of voting in local elections and on ballot measures. Be a part of the Voters Service team! You will enjoy your service and involvement!

Town Hall Debate on Health Care Reform

The Governmental Affairs Committee of the Professionals in Human Resources Association (GAC of PIHRA) is presenting their very first Town Hall Meeting with

Senator Sheila Kuehl (D-23) debating Assemblymember Keith Richman (R-38) on the topic of health care reform in California.

Senator Kuehl's SB 840 would provide health insurance coverage to all Californians under a universal single payer health care system funded by employers and employees alike. It has passed the senate and certain assembly committees.

Assemblyman Richman, a medical doctor, authored a bill mandating that every individual carry personal health insurance similar to car insurance. His bill was rejected by the legislature.

The Town Hall meeting is on September 30, 2005, 11:30 a.m.-2:00 p.m. The Olympic Collection Banquet Center, 11301 Olympic Blvd. LA 90064,

Fee: \$45.00 (lunch included)

Q/A will be a prominent portion of the debate. This is an opportunity to interact with members of our State Legislature and question them directly on the provisions of SB 840 and alternative approaches to health care reform. All registrants are invited to e-mail questions in advance to Steven Sion, chair of GAC ssion@sionlaw.com. or have them ready for collection from audience at the event.

You may register online at www.pihra.org, via e-mail at programs@pihra.org or call (800) 734-5410.

~~ Sheila Hoff, LWV/LAC Health Care Directo

One Stop Voter Information Resource
Smartvoter.org – nonpartisan election information since 1996.

Smart Voter is produced by the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit corporation, to:

Provide voters with comprehensive nonpartisan information about the contests on their ballot in an easy-to-use presentation.

Provide a means for candidates to publish information about themselves and their candidacy directly to voters.

(<http://www.smartvoter.org>)

PLEASE NOTE last VOTER goofed!!

The Deadline for the Program Planning is JANUARY 15, 2006 Program suggestions need to be in time to go in the Call to Convention before the scheduled March 2006 convention. Put this corrected date on your calendars and schedule a county program planning session to meet the January deadline.

~Katherine Dunlap, LWV/LAC Board

Affordable Housing

Elizabeth Wright, outreach coordinator & policy advocate for the Southern California Association of Non-Profit Housing (SCANPH), a membership organization whose mission is to promote affordable housing throughout the five-county Southern California region, was presenter at the County Summer League day affordable housing workshop. She left us with some clarifying & helpful information.

If a household spends no more than **30% of its income on housing, these costs are considered affordable.** Affordable housing is not federally subsidized public housing (or Section 8 housing).

Non-profit developers can develop affordable housing which is subsidized thru funding sources such as government grants and private loans; this funding method allows developers to keep costs & rents low.

California is the second least affordable state in US, 80% of the state population cannot afford the median priced home. It contains 9 of 10 least affordable metropolitan areas in nation. Almost 50% of all renters in Southern California are paying more than half their income in rent. Only 48% of LA Co households own their own home, compared to 68% nationwide. These are strong reasons

affordable housing is an urgent need.

An inclusionary housing ordinance requires that developers of new housing include a certain percentage of units affordable to lower income residents in their projects or pay an "in-lieu" fee. Over 20% (117) of CA jurisdictions have inclusionary housing ordinances. During the past 30 years inclusionary housing has created over 34,00 affordable homes and apartments in California and has the potential to nearly double the current rate of affordable housing production in the state.

The Area Median Income (AMI) is used to determine eligibility for affordable housing. The current AMI for a family of four in LA Co is \$55,100.

Moderate income is	80%-120% AMI	\$44,080 - 66,128
Low Income	50%-80%	27,550 - 44,080
Very Low Income	less than 50%	16,530 - 27,550
Extremely Low Income	less than 30%	16,530 or below

~~Daphne Lake, LWV/LAC Housing consultant

If any member would like to have more of this presentation please e-mail lake.d@sbcgobal for the connection.

LATEST CENSUS DATA, released August 30, 2005, show that the income of the median California household --- the household at the middle of the income distribution --- was stagnant during the most recent period. In California the median income was \$ 49,927 in 2003-04, down by a statistically insignificant \$299 from \$50,226 in

2002-03 in inflation-adjusted dollars. This trend mirrored that for the nation as a whole, where the median was \$44,436 in 2003-04 and \$44,514 in 2002-03.

The data on 2004 income, poverty and health care coverage suggest that the current recovery has been slow to help low-and middle-income families. Both incomes and poverty rate have

shown little change during the current recovery, suggesting that the expansion has been neither robust nor broad-based. This is the first time poverty increased between the 2nd and 3rd full year of recovery and income growth has been weaker than during any recovery of the past 45 years except for that of the early 1990s.

~~CBP Email Update

The California Budget Project (CBP) serves as a resource to groups seeking accurate information and analysis of a range of state policy issues.

Breaking news from LWVC

September 7, 2005

LEADING CIVIL RIGHTS GROUPS DENOUNCE PROPOSITION 77

***Voting Rights Advocates Join Together in Calling
Upon Californians to Vote No on Redistricting
Initiative in Favor of True Redistricting Reform***

Los Angeles and Sacramento, California –

The Asian Pacific American Legal Center (APALC), the League of Women Voters of California (LWVC), and the Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF) announced today their joint opposition to Proposition 77, the redistricting initiative that calls for mid-decade redistricting, shifts the responsibility for drawing legislative district boundaries from the state legislature to a panel of three retired judges, and requires passage of a statewide ballot measure before new district lines can become permanent every decade.

"Proposition 77 fails to achieve true redistricting reform," stated Steven J. Reyes, Staff Attorney at MALDEF. "Proposition 77 unwisely entrusts the task of drawing legislative boundaries for 36 million Californians with three retired judges who cannot reflect the racial/ethnic and gender diversity in this state and who cannot be held accountable for their actions." Reyes noted that if the Proposition 77 proponents were truly committed to reform, they would have opened up the process to more Californians and not created more barriers to public participation. Earlier this year, MALDEF and APALC released a "Model Redistricting Act" that outlined some of its vision of reform using a citizen-based redistricting commission.

"Proposition 77 would require a harmful mid-decade round of redistricting;" commented Stewart Kwoh, Executive Director of APALC, "If the mid-decade redistricting is conducted based on outdated data from the 2000 census, the redistricting will ignore three million new Californians. "Proposition 77 also does not promote fair representation and would harm the interests of community groups" stated Eugene Lee, Staff Attorney in APALC's Voting Rights Project, "The panel established by Proposition 77 would not be required to consider essential

community information in drawing boundaries. In 2001, this community information was vital to ensuring that minority communities had a voice in the redistricting process."

Added Jacqueline Jacobberger, president of the LWVC, "The League of Women Voters of California seeks reform that will increase the accountability of our elected officials. For eight months this year, the League, APALC, MALDEF and other groups urged the legislature to negotiate a compromise bill to enact redistricting reform that implements an open, transparent redistricting process and uses fair standards for drawing boundaries." Noting that Proposition 77 fails to achieve this reform, Jacobberger continued, "We agree with others who have called for reform of the redistricting process. However, it would be disastrous to change the process simply for the sake of change, and adopt a proposal that is flawed."

APALC, the League of Women Voters of California and MALDEF call upon Californians to reject Proposition 77 and call upon legislators and the Governor to work together next year to pass legislation that will implement true redistricting reform. Their joint position paper on Proposition 77 is available on the Internet at

<http://apalc.org/pdf/prop77pos.pdf>.

APALC is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advocating for civil rights, providing legal services and education, and building coalitions to positively influence and impact Asian Pacific Americans and to create a more equitable and harmonious society. APALC is affiliated with the National Asian Pacific American Legal Consortium in Washington, DC.

The League of Women Voters of California is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

A national nonprofit organization founded in 1968, MALDEF promotes and protects the rights of Latinos through advocacy, community education and outreach, leadership development, higher education scholarships and when necessary, through the legal system.

League of Women Voters of California

LEADERSHIP TRAINING WORKSHOP

Saturday, October 1, 2005

9:30 a.m. Registration
10:00 – 3:00 Workshops

Janet Goeske Senior Center
5257 Sierra Avenue, Riverside

- Workshops:
1. League 101-Intro to League Jackie Jacobberger, LWVC Pres.
 2. Making the Most of Membership Bev King, LWVC Membership
 3. Making a Difference with Advocacy Jack Sullivan , LWVC Legislation
 4. Paper, Paper—Organizing and Archiving Caroline de Llamas, MTA
 5. Voter Service/Smart Voter Frances Talbott-White

Cost: **\$25** Registration w/Lunch received by September 23
 \$15 Registration only—Bring own Lunch
 \$30 Late or Onsite Registration

Who should attend? League board members, new League members, League action people, Voters Service committees

Directions: Take 91 freeway to Arlington Avenue. If coming from Los Angeles area turn left on to Arlington; if coming from San Bernardino turn right on to Arlington. Proceed on Arlington past Sears store and turn left at the light on to Streeter Avenue. Turn right at the next light on to Sierra Avenue. The Senior Center is on the corner of Streeter and Sierra Avenues.



Registration Form

Send completed registration form and check made out to **LWVC to:**
Jan Green
 17334 Rancho Road, Riverside, CA 92504

Name _____ Phone _____

LWV _____ Email _____

Address _____

LWV/LAC VOTER
September 2005

Margo Reeg, President
Liz Allen, Editor
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We're on the Web!!
<http://lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org>

Calendar Dates to Save

- | | | |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Sept 24 Sat | Ballot Briefing and Action Workshop | Hollenbeck Home |
| Sept 29 Thur | Alternate Ballot Briefing presented by LWVLA | Immanuel Presbyterian Church L.A. |
| Sept 30 Fri | Town Hall Debate on Health Care Reform | Olympic Collection Banquet Center L.A. |
| Oct 1 Sat | LWVC Regional Workshop | Goeske Senior Center, Riverside |

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