



THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ANGELES

FEBRUARY 2006

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

2006 Means Engagement

It is worth repeating, particularly for new members, that the League's mission engages us in two different arenas: voter education and position advocacy. Both are exhilarating. Although 2006 will have animating engagement opportunities for voter education, particularly with our state-wide June and November elections, I would like to focus today on how our position advocacy arena is shaping up.

Why does LWVLA advocate and take stands on only some civic issues? This happens because members have studied and agreed on positions about certain issues but not others. One crucial element in advocating for our positions is knowing what they are, how they have been used before, and how they relate to current issues. When someone asks: "Does League have anything to say about ...redistricting? ...housing for the homeless? ...trash recycling in LA? ...community college financing? every member should be able to answer the question or at least know where to find that answer.

(continued on next page)

UPCOMING EVENTS

Feb 22-"Celebrating Leadership"
LWVLA Education Fund
Annual event at the Omni Hotel

March 11 -
New Member Orientation

March 25 -
LWV/LAC Convention

June 10 -
LWVUS Convention

June 17- LWVLA Annual Meeting
(If you are a new 50 year member,
please let the office know.)

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (cont.)

In this VOTER you will read about the steps our Consultant Committee is taking to revitalize member knowledge of positions so that we can promote the League's solutions in an informed and gradually more vigorous way. The article on "Program Planning" is an excellent tutorial on the process that has allowed the League to "maintain our integrity, our relevance, and reputation for effective leadership and thoughtful advocacy."

That relevance and reputation continue to create opportunities for LWVLA to engage in important issues. The Board has approved LWVLA's actively advocating for the extension of term limits and public campaign financing of elected Los Angeles officials. If there are city ballot measures seeking charter change for these issues, LWVLA will be helping to shape as well as to support them. This decision was reached after careful consideration of positions. In both cases the relevant positions were established by members at the national level and extended for use to state and local Leagues.

Education is an issue of high profile in Los Angeles and throughout the state. LWVLA has been active in advocating for elements of our education position as well as responding to requests for support from a variety of proponents. As you remember, our state position -- specifically its call for equal access to quality education -- allowed LWVLA to support Measure Y, the bond measure which funds LAUSD's plan for constructing schools. Some have asked if LWVLA will be taking a stand on the City Controller's request to audit LAUSD. We will remain neutral on this issue. Neither state nor local education positions address this issue directly; the City Charter does not authorize it unilaterally; and it could be seen as co-mingling lines of governance, something our state education position rejects.

These are examples of how significant our positions are as framework for LWVLA's advocacy work. Understanding positions is of great value for this work. But as important are members who have a passion for making these

positions impact Los Angeles today. Which brings us back to engagement: 2006. LWVLA is only as powerful as you make it. If you are interested in a particular position (there are 18 summarized under *ACTION* at www.LWVlosangeles.org) or are able to share knowledge linking current affairs to positions, contact Cecilia Schlesinger, Action Chair, at: action@LWVlosangeles.org.

-Liza White, President

Voting Rights Act Conference at USC (Sponsored by LWVLA and Common Cause)

The Voting Rights Act of 1965 is one of our nation's most successful pieces of civil rights legislation, but several provisions of the act will expire in 2007 unless Congress votes to renew them. In California, the Voting Rights Act (VRA) has played a key role in the empowerment of the state's diverse ethnic populations through increasing opportunities for political representation and access to the fundamental right to vote.

- Learn how the Voting Rights Act has been used to combat discrimination against CA voters
- Hear how the VRA has helped voters surmount barriers to participation in CA's elections and gain opportunities for political representation
- Attend valuable training on media communications, community forum organization, and Congressional visits, in order to mobilize for reauthorization.

When: Saturday, February 4, 2006, 8:30-5:30
Where: University of Southern California
Davidson Conference Center, 3415 S. Figueroa

For more information: Please call: (866) 952-4222 or (213) 747-7606, ext. 138, or e-mail info@calvec.org or go to www.calvec.org

Register on-line at: <http://www.calvec.org>

LWVLA Speaks at California Community College Organizations Annual Meeting

In May 2004, LWV California adopted the state community college system as an issue for emphasis for education and advocacy. A position was adopted which included developing a broad constituency of public support to ensure a statewide community college system with sufficient resources to fulfill its missions and provide access for all who sought it. In April 2005, the LWVLA sponsored three meetings at community colleges across Los Angeles. These community education forums were intended to increase the public awareness of the roles of the local community colleges and the challenges they face.

The LWVLA Community College Program Committee worked with each college for a period of about six months to develop these meetings. Each of the colleges defined their meeting topic and worked with the League to define the target audience and organize the meetings. The reaction and support from the colleges varied. In several cases we found that the lack of familiarity with the League, skepticism about our motivations, and effectiveness in conducting this type of forum were obstacles. In more cases the college representatives were simply overwhelmed with their existing workloads and were reticent to take on another assignment. In other cases the college acknowledged that they wanted to reach out to a broader community and while this was additional work, it was welcomed as an opportunity.

We held three successful meetings, with a total attendance of over 200 people. Since that time we have had contact with citizen and business organizations asking about follow up public meetings, we have developed good relationships with specific faculty at several colleges and have improved our understanding of the community college system. But, in general we do not feel we have improved our working relationship with the colleges' administrations or the institutions.

In November 2005 the LWVLA was invited to talk to the attendees at the annual meeting of

the Community College League of California (CCLC) that was held in San Francisco. The CCLC is a coalition of organizations that include college trustees and chief executive officers. CCLC is affiliated with the college administrators and classified senate organizations.

We spoke openly about our experiences conducting this project, both the good and bad. At the conclusion of the presentation we asked the attendees to consider the following: What priority do you set for community relations and outreach? If the League of Women Voters or some other community based organization knocks on your door, do you have an infrastructure in your organization that can work with that type of group? Do you see a value in this type of project and have you considered how to make best use of it?

Similar to the reaction from Los Angeles area community colleges at the start of the project, the reaction in this audience was varied. Some had had similar experiences and felt that their institution needed to reconsider their processes. One of the attendees felt that these processes were probably more developed at smaller schools in smaller communities where the colleges rely on community-based organizations for more of their outreach. Another attendee felt that the schools in his district had community outreach processes in place and that the school was in a better position to determine how to interact with their community.

LWV California's position remains committed to a strong statewide community college system and the LWVLA will continue to look for fruitful opportunities to work with local community colleges. In the course of this project the LWVLA has learned about one of the elements in our higher education system, contributed to educating our community, and brought thoughtful questions back to the system.

Lynn Lowry, Member LWVLA
Member LWVC Community College Committee

(Funding was made possible by the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund through a grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.)

PROGRAM PLANNING

Sometimes we hear, “What is all this fuss about Program Planning? Why should it be important to me? Why do we have to spend time on this? Why can’t we just go out and do something?”

Program is the League’s *reason for being*, the basis of both education and action efforts. Program - governmental issues chosen for study and action - is an essential element of League and, because it is so important, has traditionally originated with the membership through the program planning process. It is through our regular review of positions that we maintain our integrity, our relevance, and reputation for effective leadership and thoughtful advocacy.

Every two years, state and local leagues participate in the program planning process by making recommendations concerning program issues- this is how we remain a grassroots organization. We review the National and County positions one year, the State and City positions the next. This gives our members the opportunity to maintain a current knowledge of just what the League of Women Voters stands for (and thus is in a position for advocacy or education) as well as an opportunity to suggest what topics they wish to propose for a new concentrated study. Perhaps a little review of League Lingo would help here.

At all four levels- city, county, state and national, **league program** consists of governmental issues chosen for study and action, and includes both adopted positions upon which action is taken and issues for study that will lead to a position and action.

Study

To suggest a new study League members need to measure their proposed new study/ program item against eight criteria that include among others that government action is needed, political realities permit effective action, and that funding will be available to complete the study.

Issues

Issues are subjects on which Congress or state and local governments might take action (vote). The publication, Impact on Issues, contains a list of all our positions on issues that have been adopted nationally. Where We Stand is the publication that documents all our positions that we have adopted at the state level. LWVLA Positions in depth are found on our website, www.lwvlosangeles.org. These documents give you a brief statement of each position, a detailed statement of our position and the history of how we arrived at each issue. A League may write a letter, make a public statement or launch an action campaign on any issues where the League has a position. Because the League has been studying and reaching consensus for 85 years, we have positions on a great many issues.

Positions

Positions are reached by the League gathering information, studying the information and informing its membership and then having a consensus meeting where members decide their opinions about each issue. All of those opinions are then reviewed by the appropriate committee (depending on who initiated the study) and a position is written from what has been said by each League at each consensus meeting. This position is then brought to the next convention and voted on by the delegates. Once the majority of delegates vote in favor of the position, it is considered **adopted program** and Leagues may use it when appropriate to lobby for legislative action. For example, if members in a state adopt a position at its state convention it can only be used in that state unless other states or national decides to adopt the position at their state or national convention.

Consensus

Consensus is the result of research and study. It requires members to discuss what they have learned and reach common opinions on a number of points within an issue. In many cases, it is because of discussion (not voting) that one finds “common ground”. The League is relatively unique in having consensus meetings to decide on an organizational opinion. It takes a long time but it does give the position more weight and meaning.

Concurrence

Concurrence is the action of agreeing to and adopting a position that has been voted on/ adopted by another League after they have studied, reached consensus and adopted a position on an issue.

Update

Sometimes a League position may not address a portion of an issue. Sometime our country and the world have changed to the point that our League position seems dated or no longer accurately reflects the views of our members. In such a case, an update of a current position is in order.

National Program Planning

In February it will be our responsibility to review the positions, the action and advocacy, and suggested new studies based on national criteria. As we embark on this national program planning discussion, it is important to be aware of the positions taken over the many years which we still embrace. We will spend some quality time reviewing what our current national positions are and how we have been able to use them for action/advocacy-nationally, statewide, or even locally. Within the document (see insert) you will see notations of "California", or "Los Angeles" to indicate national positions which have been used by the other levels of League.

Rather than voting on whether to retain/delete/update the national positions, the LWVUS prefers to know our priorities for education and advocacy on their current positions. LWVUS has several broad areas on which it focuses: Representative Government; International Relations; Natural Resources; and Social Policy. In addition, National establishes issue priorities on what they feel they have a chance of making an impact. This year these included: civil liberties, election reform, campaign finance reform, redistricting reform, clean air, social security, DC voting rights, and the Arctic National Wildlife Refuge. The issue priorities are determined by the times and opportunities to make a difference. But all of

them fit under the mission of the League and relate to established positions. The state, as well as the local leagues, are able to use a national position under what is called a "vertical position."

A priority sheet (see insert) is to be completed upon which our members are to indicate the priority they wish LWVUS to establish on current positions. Please indicate your selections by the numerals 1 – 10.

If you wish to suggest a new study item, please discuss within your unit and write a brief summary of the scope of the study in 25 words or less. All of the priority sheets and suggestions must be in the office by February 24 in order to be compiled and sent to LWVUS. Be prepared to offer your services to work on any new or updated position. Individuals are certainly encouraged to mail in their own sheet with comments, but unit chairs/recorders should make a total tally sheet of priorities for those who have attended the meetings and have had the opportunity to discuss all of the topics.

The LWVLA Program Planning Committee has proposed that we do not suggest a new study, but instead concentrate on taking advantage of the many programs already underway at the national level and participate in the advocacy and/or education called for. However, for your information, there are Leagues across the country who are advocating a new study on the Death Penalty, a new or updated study on Redistricting, and Election Reform which might include both the voting equipment and/or the proportional representation or multi-member districts. All these recommendations will be collated and presented for member approval at June's LWVUS Annual Meeting in Washington, D.C., to which LWVLA will send delegates.

-Jean Thomson, Program Committee

CRIME AND PUNISHMENT? OR CRIME PREVENTION?

Gun violence and crime prevention have long been a concern of the League of Women Voters at all levels. One of the most astonishing things about crime is how little is known about the impacts of the policies and programs we put into place to fight it. As a result of this almost total absence of evaluation, identification of the most promising strategies and programs for combating particular kinds of crime problems has historically relied on intuition, fashion and politics.

This disconnect between delinquency prevention goals, programs and impacts has led to both wasted time and wasted money. Dr. Peter Greenwood, founder of RAND's criminal justice program, has written *Changing Lives: Delinquency Prevention as Crime-Control Policy*. The book analyzes delinquency and crime prevention programs - both those that work and those that do not - to determine the strategies and programs that have a clear impact on preventing juvenile delinquency, which is highly correlated with criminal behavior in youth and adulthood.

Women Against Gun Violence (WAGV) is dedicated to preventing gun violence, and over the last 12 years it has worked tirelessly, with the support of LWVLA, to pass sensible gun legislation, educate communities and individuals, and reframe gun violence as a public health issue in addition to a public safety issue. Because gun violence is a multifaceted problem, however, it requires a multifaceted approach.

On December 5, 2005 WAGV sponsored an event at the RAND Corporation which brought together leaders from the Los Angeles County health department, school district, probation department, law enforcement and local government to discuss juvenile delinquency prevention as a gun violence prevention strategy. We spent the day examining successful programs, especially ones such as the Nurse-Family Partnership. This program,

designed to support at-risk young women through their first pregnancy, resulted in unintended yet desirable consequences in not only the prenatal care realm, but in mental health, drug and alcohol use, criminal behavior, and overall well being for both the young mother and the child.

Other "evidence-based" programs were also examined through a delinquency prevention lens. The day culminated in a fruitful discussion, led by Controller Laura Chick, about the role of government, private agencies and schools in preventing delinquent behavior, and the political and practical implications of moving toward **evidence-based, rehabilitation and education** approaches instead of punitive approaches to control delinquency. At the conclusion of the event, a smaller working group was formed to continue the dialogue. They would welcome the participation of LWVLA members

**-Ann Reiss Lane, LWVLA member
Founder and Chair, Women Against Gun
Violence**

HOW IS HOMELAND SECURITY WORKING AT HOME?

The Los Angeles League, together with Leagues from surrounding communities, is participating in a national project entitled: HOW IS HOMELAND SECURITY WORKING AT HOME?

The outcome of this effort will be a community forum that will include a presentation of the findings from these interviews and presentations by local leaders who have responsibility for planning or implementing homeland security or emergency response.

This activity is part of the League's engagement in civil liberty and homeland security and part of our on-going commitment to educate citizens on major public policy issues.

If you would like to help with the interviews or event planning contact Nima in the L.A. office at 213-368-1616.

LWVLA VOTER

CONSULTANT COMMITTEE GOES TO WORK

A Consultant Committee, whose responsibility is to vitalize understanding and action on behalf of local positions, has been formed. This committee will match member consultants with LWVLA positions. We are in need of consultants who are knowledgeable or would like to become knowledgeable about our local positions. Consultants are responsible for thoroughly understanding their positions, and monitoring events in Los Angeles that are relevant to their positions. This monitoring could include reviewing newspaper articles, or news clips on radio, TV or the Internet, and alerting the Action Committee with recommendations for action.

The committee's short-term goal is to fill position vacancies by our annual meeting in June, 2006. The mid-term goal is to have a cadre of experts on LWVLA positions in place to instruct new members of our positions, monitor activities that pertain to these positions, and to advise the Action Committee to take action. Action could be in the form of observing the deliberations of governing committee or commission meetings, testifying and lobbying on positions held by LWVLA. or proposing media letters or op-ed pieces. The long term goal is to have experts in place on county, state and national issues as well as local.

Chaired by Cecilia Schlesinger, other members of the Consultant Committee are Barbara Braunstein, Helene Terris, Jean Thomson, and Ellen Glettner (Ex officio.). We would welcome you to join. It is an excellent way to learn about the League's positions and an even better way to further the mission of the League by making its positions relevant.

Our local positions are posted at www.LWVLosangeles.org. If interested or need more information, please contact Ellen Glettner at (213) 368-1616 or Cecilia Schlesinger, Action Chair at: action@lwvlosangeles.org

**-Cecilia Schlesinger,
Chair Action & Advocacy**

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome our new members
Debi Nibley Donna Stern

Patron- Judith Hirshberg
Sustaining Member -Lorraine May

TRIBUTES

In honor of our League's President Liza White by
Caroline Cooperman
Happy Holidays to Nima Long from Caroline
Cooperman
In celebration of Joy & Gerry Picus birthdays by
Rita Schneir
In celebration of Gerry Picus 80th birthday, by
Hermalee Schmidt
In celebration of Florence Verger's 90th birthday by
Caroline Cooperman

For a speedy recovery to Fae Shatz by Caroline
Cooperman

In memory of Joseph Graves by Nima Long
In memory of Carl Kellstron, by Jean Thomson
In memory of Marvin Ratner by Betty Marsh
In memory of Marvin Ratner by Caroline Cooperman
In memory of Jim Trotter, by Claire O'Connell
In memory Jean Jeanette Scott, by Florence Verger
and Irma & Elliot Silverstein

We mourn the passing of our long time members

Marvin Braude, former City Councilman
Jean Jeanette Scott

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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization open to all citizens, men and women, of voting age. The League's purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation of citizens in government and to act on selected governmental issues.