



VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ANGELES

MARCH 2007

Upcoming Events

March 6

Election Day

March 31

LWV County Convention

May 18-20

LWV State Convention

June 16

LWVLA Annual Meeting

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As required by LWVLA Bylaws, inside are the financial reports for fiscal year 2005-2006.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

The holidays are long gone and our League members are back to the business of informing voters, educating and advocating from our positions, deciding what issues we will focus on for the next two years and doing the structural work of budgeting, nominating and promoting that allow these efforts to flourish.

This VOTER brings you some signature events in our past - *Judicial Independence Forum*, in our present - *Leadership Awards Dinner* and in our future - *Candidates Forums for LAUSD School Board and LA Community College Board*. The leadership and the industry of members in the first half of our 2006-2007 year are unprecedented in my experience. As membership is the engine of what we accomplish, it is particularly important that recruitment, retention and orientation be well served.

To that end, we have now established a membership chair under the umbrella committee of PR, Outreach and Membership (PROM). We have initiated several new strategies for encouraging membership by informing about our activity. You have hopefully all received the "Special Edition" of the VOTER whose purpose is to reveal the dynamic face of the League's work by using a more visually compelling format. Please share this VOTER with friends and colleagues through copies obtainable from the office or from our website:

www.lwvlosangeles.org/files/JAN07VOTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE (cont.)

We have developed an on-line newsletter. This was launched in mid-January and will be published every six weeks. If you know anyone who would like to have a short, timely reminder of what LWV Los Angeles is doing, please have them e-mail our Administrative Director, Ellen, at ad@lwvlosangeles.org. Of course they can always go to our website directly for calendar information at www.LWVLosAngeles.org.

Additionally, those units which have designated themselves as 'expanding' have begun to consider ways to reach out into their geographical communities to bring their monthly meetings to the public. Holding meetings at an easily accessible public venue, as well as advertising that meeting in local media are two possibilities. Unit meetings are an important connecting point for those who know of the League but have never experienced League members at work.

If you are a member and want to become more active in "the business of informing voters, educating and advocating from our positions", please call Ellen at (213) 368-1616. She will connect you with a member who will guide your involvement. From there your ability to connect with a network of interesting, thoughtful, engaged people will be limited only by your imagination and ambition to make a difference in our Los Angeles community.

-Liza White, President LWV of Los Angeles

FROM THE EDITOR

The LWVLA VOTER serves as a tool to inform, educate and empower conscious evolution, first among League members and second among residents of Los Angeles, whom League members serve with voter education.

The VOTER team works to play its part in enhancing our reader's awareness of the tools and opportunities available to fully participate in these exciting times of renewing social order. May all voices be heard, more social potential awaken! All League committees are enlisting new members. Don't hesitate to call the office to learn how to bring your skills to the projects that interest you.

-Lynn Crandall, VOTER Editor

EDUCATION FUND BOARD UPDATES-

"Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government" Approximately 12,000 of the 14,000 copies of *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government* have been distributed. A report on the book's distribution was sent to the Haynes Foundation. The Structure Committee is considering ideas for future activities and projects related to the book.

Through the efforts of Anne Reisinger, an event cosponsored by the League and CORO Foundation was held on January 24 at the Henry Fonda Theatre in Hollywood. President Liza White moderated a panel including book author, Dr. Raphael Sonenshein. Copies of the book were distributed both at this event and at the Judicial Independence Forum.

On January 23, Dr. Sonenshein, Liza White and Evon Gotlieb presented copies of *Structure* to members of the Los Angeles Board of Education and School District Superintendent Brewer. The Board members expressed appreciation for the books and for the 1,000 copies that are being distributed to middle and senior high school history and social studies teachers. President Liza White was also contacted by key District staff to discuss future possible uses of the book. Lynn Lowry and Liza White made a similar presentation to the Los Angeles Community College Board of Trustees on February 7.

Civic Society: There are approximately 30 members of the Civic Society at present. These are \$1,000 contributors to the Education Fund who receive invitations to salons during the year to hear speakers and discuss topics of civic interest. Education Fund Board Member Maureen Kindel has offered the services of her public relations agency, GCG Rose & Kindel, for a second year to assist in securing hosts and programs for the salons. Efforts will be made to attract people under age 45 to the Associates level, which has a contribution minimum of \$250. League members and others who are interested in participating are encouraged to contact the League office.

-Evon Gotlieb, Chair, LWVLA Education Fund Board

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE FORUM: A Hallmark Event!

LWV is noted for the quality of all of its programs, the scope and depth of their content and the range of perspectives they present. However, even by League standards, the Judicial Independence Forum, held at Loyola Law School January 27, was a hallmark event. The Program Committee has set its goals high; the forum demonstrated that, with extraordinary effort, those goals are reachable.

A sold-out event with a waiting list boasted an audience reflecting the diversity the committee seeks. There were at least 50 non-League attendees, many of them young. Students from several colleges and universities participated as program interns. Selected for their potential interest in the program content, they assisted with the details of setup and organization, then benefited as members of the audience. One intern said, "I never expected to be talking with a judge at lunch!" Partnering groups included League members from Beach Cities, Glendale/Burbank, Pasadena, Torrance, the LA County ILO and the Beverly Hills Bar Association.

Loyola Law School was a hospitable and highly functional setting. In the auditorium, the LWV logo, set the scene for the audience. The speakers and the program focus and design generated exploration of issues vital to judicial independence.

The program began with a panel discussion, "Challenges and Judicial Pressures." California Superior Court, LA County Judge Terry Smerling moderated a panel including David Burcham, Dean of Loyola School of Law and Sr. Vice President of Loyola Law School; Candace Cooper, Presiding Justice of Division Eight, Second Appellate District; Allan Ides, Professor of Loyola Law School and Joan Dempsey Klein, Presiding Justice of the California Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Three.

Judge Smerling began with a provocative question about the judiciary as, historically, the most fragile branch of government. The only reason that judicial review and independence exist is because the courts claimed them in the defining case of *Marbury v. Madison*. He reminded us that the judiciary has resolved numerous political struggles, civil rights a notable issue, which the political legislative and executive branches have refused to touch. Yet, unlike the political branches, judges cannot respond to political attacks on litigation. They must remain neutral.

Each member of the panel identified challenges. Justice Klein, although not an advocate of judicial elections, acknowledged that, in her time, running for judicial office was perhaps the only way for a woman to become a judge. However, although she had initially reached the bench through election, she does not believe that judicial election is appropriate. She acknowledged that being a good judge is a learned process. She also bristled at the term 'activist judges' as a concept that discredits the judicial process and judges in general.

Dean Burcham reminded us that the judiciary has the responsibility to measure legislation against the Constitution. A single unelected judge can undo the will of the majority. But there are transcendent values that we place above congressional majorities. Understanding that politics will never be removed from judicial appointments, he suggested that the challenge for the judiciary is to accommodate political issues while not letting those issues threaten impartiality/independence. He also noted that 39 states have judicial elections.

Justice Cooper addressed the special significance of the issues of judicial appointments and independence for minority populations. Minorities rely on the courts to ensure their rights and to protect their access to government. She also spoke to the need for minorities to be represented in the judiciary in some proportion to their representation in the population and the challenges for achieving this. She noted, while there are many minority

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE (cont.)

bar associations, their potential to influence judicial appointments is directly related to whether they are part of the constituent base of a sitting governor.

Professor Ides spoke to the significance of the “Rule of Law” as a concept by which our society has chosen to live. He noted the interesting distinction between being “democratic” and “being governed by the rule of law.” The law is not a decision of the majority. It is the judge’s role to see that we play by the rules. He averred that an attack on the judiciary is an attack on government.

In the afternoon a second panel addressed “Options and Potential Solutions” with Norman Epstein, Presiding Justice of the Court of Appeal, Second Appellate District, Division Four, as moderator. Panelists Judge Harold I. Cherness, retired from the Superior Court in Culver City; Jo-Ann Grace, President and General Counsel of Metropolitan News Company; Cruz Reynoso, Professor of Law at UC Davis; Stephen F. Rohde, a senior partner of Rohde & Victoroff and past President of the Beverly Hills Bar Association and the ACLU of Southern California and John Van de Kamp, former District Attorney for LA County and Attorney General for California.

Justice Epstein posed the basic questions on the meaning of judicial independence: Independence to do what? Independence from what? His response, that the judiciary is free of threats or rewards in the exercise of its function, free to follow the law and act impartially, is one that resonated throughout the forum .

Judge Cherness focused on the challenges for judges who have to run for reelection. Mounting a campaign means getting political. It requires money and talking about issues.

Attorney Grace focused on what judicial independence does *not* mean. It does not mean job security; the people must be secure, not the judge.

Professor Reynoso noted the seeming anomaly that judges, who have a non-majority role, are elected by a majority. He believes the federal system of life terms has worked better than the state system of periodic elections. While judges must always be restrained by the rule of law, they are often attacked for striking down unconstitutional initiatives.

Rohde stressed the importance of public education, charging forum attendees to reach out to others with this information. He urged that we use the term ‘fair and impartial’ rather than ‘independent’ judiciary, as independent suggests that judges are above the law

Attorney Van de Kamp urged the necessity of encouraging dissent and freedom of speech. He noted our country values impartiality and feels a strong respect for the judiciary in California.

What are the emergent issues and themes? With such a distinguished and diverse panel presenting their views, significant themes wove their way through the program. The central issue of panel focus was the selection of judges—typically, by appointment—and retention—typically through the election process. Sitting judges, unless unopposed, must face election once every six years to retain their seats. Most, but not all, of the panel found the need for judges to wage campaigns for retention of their positions was not only a hindrance and expense, but a significant deterrence to judicial independence. However, Jo-Ann Grace and John Van de Kamp took the position that judges must be answerable to the people and elections can accomplish that.

Another major theme in the discussions was the importance of educating the public, not only about the role of judges, but about the roles and functions of government in all its complexities. They decried the lack of strong civics programs in schools and the general ignorance in our society of both the principles of government, e.g. the separation of powers and how the government actually works. Several references were made to the exemplary role of the League of Women Voters in educating the public in these areas and the need for the League to

JUDICIAL INDEPENDENCE (cont.)

continue in this role. Finally, they acknowledged the significant role that judges can play in educating those who participate in the jury system and the court rooms.

Related to the education of the public was the discussion, in response to a question from the audience, of the role of the media in affecting the public's view of the judiciary. Some felt television dramas typically show the prosecutor in the right, even when breaking laws, the defense attorney as a "sleaze bag," and the judge as stupid. While the general consensus was that TV programs on law are misleading. Justice Klein pointed out that, early on, some law shows were helpful in featuring minority figures as judges, and concluded that the role of the media in this area is a mixed bag.

At the end of the day, as participants buzzed about the experience, there seemed a universal consensus that we had benefited from the well-expressed and well-informed opinions of a stellar panel of experts. In addition, each attendee left with a small library of relevant literature provided by the Brennan Center for Justice at NYU School of Law and the Justice at Stake Campaign along with LWVLA's new edition of *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government*.

Bottom line: Jean Thomson and her committee are to be commended for providing an extraordinary program in the best tradition of League. For those who were unable to attend, the day's program was videotaped by Channel 36 and edited versions should be available for future reference.

(Note: This article was based on program notes taken by Lilyanne Ohanesian, USC student intern and president of the campus group USC LWVLA.)

PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING

January 11 LWVLA members met to make recommendations for the local and state program agendas for the next two years. We heard presentations from our members who have been leading our program activities for the past two years including state and local studies, education and action efforts. Review of recent activities reminded us of the importance of our positions and set the stage for looking forward.

A great effort was made to reach out to our members to participate in this process and did they! After suggestions from the floor, there were a total over 30 program ideas to discuss including new studies, study updates, education and action. Our members are concerned about so many issues.

Following a lively pro and con discussion of each proposal a vote was taken. The recommendations to LWVC were, a new study on our state prison system, study updates of Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) and the Initiative/Referendum Process and health care and adequate finance of K-12 education as issues for education and advocacy.

Local recommendations for local program included: study updates on Housing/Homelessness and Police, and that we undertake education and action on election integrity, global warming and sustainable communities, and continue the work on Revolving Door. Transit issues and voting rights were also recommended for action.

The Program Committee Co-Chairs will be present these recommendations to the LWVLA Board who will determine which items it will recommend as program at the Annual Meeting on June 16.

We will be saying more about each of these issues in upcoming VOTERS. Please remember we are a member run organization. That means if you think we should be involved in an issue we need you to get involved in making that happen.

-Margie Engel, Program Planning Co-Chair

HEALTH INSURANCE REFORM PROPOSALS BY THE DOZEN: WILL THE CALIFORNIA LEGISLATURE DO THE RIGHT THING?

Winston Churchill was reported to have said, "Americans always do the right thing – after they try everything else."

After many years of incremental, piecemeal attempts to fix our deteriorating health care system, we have seven million uninsured in California (47 million in the U.S.), unsustainable increases in the cost of health insurance and poor quality of care. The Institute of Medicine estimates that 18,000 Americans a year die prematurely because they don't have health insurance.

With Governor Schwarzenegger saying that our health care system "isn't working" and calling for universal coverage, an opportunity for real health insurance reform may be at hand.

Proposals are multiplying, many only in outline form. Only Senator Kuehl's bill, SB 840, re-introduced in February, contains answers to most of the questions regarding reforming our health care system. But this bill has been a work in progress for four years (SB 921 became SB 840 in 2005). As of this writing, the main proposals besides SB 840 are from Governor Schwarzenegger, Senator Perata and Assemblymember Nunez.

How are we to evaluate these proposals and the many others that will be proposed?

First by remembering that our health care system has many parts closely connected to one another. The 2004 Report of the National Coalition on Health Care concluded: "First, we would emphasize again our conviction that reform must be systemic and system-wide. The problems of our health care system are so closely interrelated that they must be addressed at the same time. One-dimensional reform will not work."

Second, understand what aspects are important for a workable health insurance system and why. Then it will be possible to compare proposals according to these criteria and not be overwhelmed by the details.

There are six critical elements.

1) **Universal, Continuous Coverage.**

Reasons are both ethical and economic. Access to health care is vital to life, security and individual opportunity. It eliminates cost-shifting to insured populations or hospitals. It improves cost-effectiveness. The federal government requires hospitals to care for the uninsured in ERs. This is costly compared to primary care in clinics or a doctor's office.

2) **A Single-Risk Pool.** This simplifies administration, saving billions of dollars. It spread the risk over the entire population. In any year, 20% of the population uses 80% of health services. **This is not only a fundamental principle of insurance, but also the basis for building a strong, compassionate community.**

3) **Comprehensive Coverage.** Without this many people will not be able to receive the care they need, or the cost of obtaining care will lead to bankruptcy and impoverishment.

4) **Choice of Provider.** Providing the ability to choose a health care provider increases the likelihood that providers will compete for patients on the basis of quality of service.

5) **Equitable and Sustainable Funding.** Costs should be allocated relative to ability to pay. Funding should be relative to population and economic growth.

6) **Simplified, Accountable Administration.** An administrative authority is needed to: establish a trust to receive and allocate funds, contain costs, negotiate with providers, improve quality and support the development of information technology and best medical practices.

- Doris Isolini Nelson, Health Care Consultant

VERIZON GRANT AWARDED

Exciting news! Verizon has awarded \$20,000 to LWVLA as a grant for the implementation of the "Running and Winning" project. Asia Powell, Verizon's Strategic Programs Manager, came to the LWVLA Board meeting on February 6 with check in hand. She spoke about Verizon Foundation's focus on K-12 education and on the effective use of technology and her appreciation of League's direction.

Verizon's support enables us to go forward with this project that will bring high school students in the LA area together for personal dialog with public officials. Students will use technology for background research in preparation for the project's culminating event, for continuing dialog with other participants and for media presentations to convey their ideas. The focus of this project is central to the LA League's goal of reaching out to youth and promoting their civic education and engagement in government. It is anticipated that participation in "Running and Winning" will also stir students' consideration of their own potential to provide political leadership.

MEMBERSHIP

We welcome

- | | |
|-------------------|------------------|
| Cynthia Ananias | Lynn Lipinski |
| Gabrielle Andrade | Ellen Markus |
| Crystal Butler | Mira Miskin |
| Richard Dickinson | Louretta Randell |
| Sheila Garb | Rachel Rosenthal |
| Susan Gordon | Sandra Segal |
| Corita Grudzen | Mary Ann Smith |
| Judy Hellinger | Alex Wald |
| Bernice Leve | Barbara Wellisch |

SUSTAINING

Sarita Fields

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Elizabeth Armstrong
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EDUCATION FUND

Bill Abramson Diane Smith Takakjian
Elizabeth Armstrong Myrna Vallens

TRIBUTES

In honor of Irma & Elliot Silverstein,
50th Wedding Anniversary
by Nima Long and Betty Marsh

In memory of Barbara by Nancy & Marvin
Martin

In memory of Judy by Nancy & Marvin Martin
and the North Valley Unit

In memory of Vilma Wells by a friend and by
Jackie Karvas

In memory of Louise Ronne's son, David, by
the West Valley Unit

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

The North Valley Day Unit sadly announces the death of Charlotte Child on January 22, 2007. Charlotte was a member of the League for almost 50 years. She had been Unit Chair, and served as a Discussion Leader at our lively meetings. She was also a gracious hostess at our many holiday parties. She will be sorely missed.