



VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ANGELES

Members meet in units: Crenshaw • Culver City • Las Virgenes • Los Feliz • North San Fernando Valley • Pacific Palisades • Sherman Oaks • Tujunga • University/Westside • West San Fernando Valley

MAY 2007

Upcoming Events

May 18-20
LWV State Convention

June 16
LWVLA Annual Meeting

July 21
LWV/LAC Summer League ("Popovers")

July 28
Board Retreat

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SAVE THE DATE

SAVE THE DATE

Saturday, June 16, 2007
Annual Meeting

FLEX YOUR POWER IN THE TOWER!

This year's Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles again will be held in the Bradley Tower atop L.A. City Hall. All members are delegates and will have the opportunity to vote on recommendations for program as they help to chart the future of the Los Angeles League. Full membership participation is encouraged.



Saturday, June 16, 2007

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

There is a tag phrase that summarizes the wordless feel of a League engagement. I use it particularly when talking to people who aren't naturally eager to hear about, say, city finance or grapple with a judicial system under siege. It reflects my inability to shape into words the spirit of occasions dry in topic but rich in purpose, depth and joy. It is relevant to many League interactions: I say, "You had to have been there."

This was true of the ballot count organized by our Election Services team on March 19. Members gathered to count over 8000 ballots for the Cal State University system's vote on a strike action. The outcome and the money earned were significant. But the camaraderie, sharing of League lore and sense of being in a focused hive of activity – well, "YHHTBT."

April unit meetings on what our study team is learning about how LA city finances itself took up an incredibly complicated topic. In less than two hours, presenters educated members interactively, generating not only understanding but heat and passion – on the nuts and bolts of city finance! "YHHTBT."

We are losing Ellen Glettner, our fine Administrative Director, to a new position. She has shaped the mechanics of our office with a quiet certitude we relied on. Although this came as a real blow, it took only days to bring a team together to shape the search. While applying their skill for placing ads, a method for screening hundreds of applications and a plan for interviewing and hiring, they carry on their own work schedules! "YHHTBT." We hope for an early June hire.

On April 2, three justices on the court of Appeal heard the case in which our League is a plaintiff – "AB 1381"-- the mayor's attempt to use state legislation to reorganize authority over the local school district. Arguments were deeply legal, referencing the state constitution, city charter, federal rights and severability. But the context was of issues being resolved through deliberation, words and questions not rage or bullets. "YHHTBT"

being resolved through deliberation, words and questions not rage or bullets. "YHHTBT"

Finally, the Annual Meeting of all members is on June 16. It is the once-a-year time for members to decide allocation of our money, who our directors will be, and what League will focus on in next two years. Longtime members know this is a time to reconnect with friends and celebrate. Newer members may wonder why they should bother. To them I say, "League is a complicated, willful, fascinating, engaged organization. You will never know why you should bother to go to Annual meeting until you go. Then you too will be telling others: "You had to have been there."

- Liza White, President

LWVLA BUDGET

Included in the kit for the Annual Meeting is the proposed budget for LWVLA for Fiscal Year 2007-2008. Each year, a joint Budget Committee representing both LWVLA and the LWVLA Education Fund Board of Directors prepares budgets for the two organizations. In preparing the budgets, the Committee receives input from the administrative staff and chairs of the various League portfolios - e.g., Voter Service, Program and Action Committees.

The proposed budgets are then recommended to the Board of Directors of the respective groups. Once approved by the LWVLA Board, it is submitted to the membership for adoption at the Annual Meeting. The proposed budget for the LWVLA Ed Fund is sent to the membership for information purposes only; this budget is adopted by the Ed Fund Board.

Members of this year's Budget Committee were Elizabeth Ralston, Chair, Sara Buenabad, Margie Engel, Carrie Hidding, and Gerald Sallus. Evon Gotlieb, Liza White, and Ellen Glettner served ex-officio.

Members with questions about the budget are encouraged to contact Elizabeth Ralston at ewrlwv@ewralston.com.

From LWVC VOTER

With the passage of infrastructure bond propositions 1 B, 1C, 1D, 1E, and 84 last November, the near-term stabilization of under-funded, over-used infrastructures within California seems at hand... or does it?

Voter approval signals willingness to address these expensive and complex issues, but how do we ensure that we get the most bang for the buck? Where and how soon will notable progress be made to bring aging levees up to higher public safety standards? Will increased cargo demands on our seaports, airports, rail and road systems keep air quality standards behind the curve in parts of the state? Are we playing a win-some, lose-some game, moving forward in some areas while sacrificing in others? The California Infrastructure Coalition (CIC) includes cities, counties, special districts and other regional organizations; corporations; and nonprofit organizations representing those who are impacted by infrastructure investment policy.

The CIC is committed to increasing awareness of California's infrastructure requirements and seeks to build support for the development and implementation of policies and funding that will result in well-maintained, safe infrastructure facilities and systems meet current and future California needs. In conjunction with its partners, the CIC produced a 2006 infrastructure "report card" and guide for citizens.

Their ratings on California's current infrastructure systems are: To see the explanations supporting these findings, go to the Special EO Report at

www.calinfrastructure.org/pdf/EOI%20Special%20Alert.pdf

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MARCH 6 VOTER TURNOUT -- '¡Vergonzoso!'

In 1994, I joined the League of Women Voters because I was appalled by low voter turnout in the primary election. Statewide, 35.05% of registered voters went to the polls, and pundits bemoaned the record low. What did I know? In 2006, as I was rounding out 12 years with the League, the Primary turnout had slipped to 33.63% statewide and 27.35% in L.A. County.

Both 1994 and 2006 were 'mid-term' elections, of course. Without a presidential race to bring out big crowds, why would more than about one third of the voters be interested?

Yet even these figures seem high in comparison with the City of Los Angeles' record for recent municipal primaries in years with no mayoral contest. In 1999 (the earliest such year I could find easily on line), 18.07% came out to vote in the city (diluted to 15.73% with the outlying LAUSD and LACCD districts included).

Now, as I approach my 'lucky' 13-year mark as a League member, the March 6, 2007 municipal primary brought out 11.00% of L.A. City voters. This is the final count. On March 8, when it looked like the turnout would be only 7.7%, Jazmin Ortega of La Opinion quoted me as saying the turnout was 'vergonzoso'. How I wish my English had been that precise! I said 'embarrassing,' but 'vergonzoso' conveys the sense of 'embarrassment over something disgraceful.'

From 18% to 11% turnout in eight years? Disgraceful, indeed. What will May 15 bring?

- Frances Talbott-White, Voter Service Director

**The one who says it can't be
done should never interrupt
the one doing it.**

THESE VOTES COUNTED

On March 19, twenty-one Leaguers counted over eight thousand ballots for the California Faculty Association. Never in the history of the twenty-three California State Universities has there been a need for a vote of the faculty on an issue so pressing. The issue here was: Should State University faculty strike? This vote came after two years of failed labor negotiations.

Because of the magnitude of the issue and the number of votes to be counted, the LWVLA was asked to handle this election. A group beyond reproach was required to handle the process, count ballots and to perform efficiently and fairly. We did just that.

The twenty-three colleges sent their email and hand-marked ballots in sealed boxes to the office. After the three faculty observers arrived, we opened and counted the ballots. In shifts from three to six hours each, the following people were the efficient counters, tabulators and processors for the day: Nancy Arnheim, Jane Clark, Jean Cohen, Mary Lou Dudzak, Ellen Glettner, Nancy Herz, Lillian Laskin, Ruth Logan, Estelle Markowitz, Estella Mysels, Doris Nelson, Cecilia Schlesinger, Bertha Sutton, Irma and Elliot Silverstein, Helene Terris, Florence Verger, Felita and Milt Waxman, June Weinberg and Liza White. Sixteen of these people are part of the University/Westside Unit. The bonding of like minds in common purpose energized the room. Everyone worked together with purposeful results.

We were impressed that 80% of the eligible faculty voters expressed their opinions in this process. The will of the voters favored the strike. The faculty members have returned to the negotiation table with new force. Our Election Services group handled another election that week for a condo association.

Clearly, managing elections is a project that members in all League units can expand. Do you belong to a condo group that could use

the League election management services? We encourage all units to find personnel to join our Election Services group. Call Nancy Arnheim with names of those interested in serving. Election management is our business; LWVLA profits well from this voter service.

**- Nancy Arnheim and Felita Waxman,
Co-Chairs of Election Services**

LWV/LAC CONVENTION

LWV Los Angeles was well represented at the LWV/Los Angeles County Convention on Saturday, March 31 at South Coast Botanic Gardens. Delegates Marilyn Albertson, Nancy Arnheim, Margie Engel, Mattie Grant, Katherine Green, David Holtzman, Barbara Reiter, Irma Silverstein, Sandra Trutt, Renee Weisenberg and Liza White were joined by visitors Joyce Batten, Fran Lapides, Lillian Laskin, Betty Marsh, Estella Mysels, Julie Rajan, Bette and Don Simons, Jean Thomson and Bessie White. For those who were able to stay after the breakfast meeting, it was a treat to see and smell the Palos Verdes Peninsula gardens in their spring glory.

Dynamic guest speaker Geraldine Knatz, Executive Director of the Port of Los Angeles, made a wide-ranging address touching on history, environmental issues, security, management and redevelopment of the port.

Chaired by LWV/LAC President Lola Ungar (a member of LWV Torrance as well as the South Coast Botanic Gardens Board), all the regular business of a League convention was done: program and budget approved, officers elected, 'Directions to the Board' heard and noted. LWVLA's Mattie Grant was elected to a one-year directorship. She will be joining fellow LWVLA members Katherine Dunlap and Frances Talbott-White as LWV/LAC Board members, working with Marilyn Albertson as LWVLA's liaison to LWV/LAC.

Members of the Judicial Independence Committee recognized at the LWV/LAC Convention included Irma Cohen (Beach Cities), Chris Carson (Glendale/Burbank), Jean Thomson (Los Angeles)

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Frances Talbot-White (LWV/LAC), Jan Nathanson (Beach Cities), Monica Marquez (Glendale/Burbank), Sondra Hauge (Pasadena area). They, along with other committee members Lola Ungar (County ILO President), Gwen Cochran (Glendale/Burbank), Gerald Sallus (Los Angeles), Carole Villianos and Doris Rosenberg (Beach Cities) all received a box of Voters Choice Teas.

CONSTITUTIONALITY OF AB 1381 UPDATE

The constitutionality of AB 1381, the Romero Education Act of 2006, was thoroughly scrutinized by a three-judge panel of the 2nd District Court of Appeal April 2. A ruling on the legislation which would give Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa substantial control over the Los Angeles Unified School District is anticipated to be rendered near the end of the month.

LWVLA President Liza White, Barbara Inatsugu, LWVC Director for PreK-12 Education, and Jean Cohen, chair of the LWVLA Education Action Committee, attended the morning-long hearing over which Justice Joan Dempsey Klein presided.

LWVLA is a plaintiff in the school district's suit against AB 1381 because we believe it violates parts of the State Constitution and the Los Angeles City Charter, in addition to creating a complex governance system lacking clear lines of authority and accountability. We also believe the legislation has by-passed those who have the greatest stake in LAUSD reform and that decisions about local governance belong first with those people directly affected.

DELIBERATION IS A FORM OF ACTON

In a statement released last October announcing LWVLA becoming a plaintiff, President White stated, "The League takes no position on what the future governance structure of the school district should look like, which includes the issue of mayoral control. League's full focus is on the need to resolve the constitutional questions as soon as possible so they themselves do not become another roadblock among the many impediments to better education for LAUSD students."

- Jean F. Cohen, Education Action Chair



Jean Thomson received a letter of congratulations, lobster hat and tickets for San Pedro Lobster Fest.

Jean Thomson was duly honored for her leadership of the Judicial Independence project, which had involved LWV/LAC along with several of L.A. County's local Leagues. Jean will enjoy VIP passes to next summer's Lobster Festival in San Pedro -- especially if she and Bob wear their beautiful red lobster hats.

- Frances Talbott-White

"It is not the function of our Government to keep the citizen from falling into error; it is the function of the citizen to keep the Government from falling into error."
Supreme Court Justice Robert H. Jackson

WE'RE RUNNING AND WINNING

Running and Winning, our project to raise the sense of political awareness and encourage positive leadership among high school students, has leaped a few hurdles and is back on track. Generous funding support from Verizon and an enthusiastic and resourceful Running and Winning Committee has us off and running ourselves. The following is a brief summary of our current plan.

Objective: To engage high school students in issues basic to the mission of League and to heighten the students' awareness of and involvement in political leadership.

Scope: This is the first of what we plan to be an annual project. The committee has agreed to keep it focused and manageable. Our tentative plan is to include ten high schools with six students from each. Schools will be selected from the Los Angeles area and will be contacted directly by League members.

Target Population: We plan to include a diverse group of students considered non-traditional leaders, i.e. they have the potential for positive leadership but may not see themselves as such.

Faculty Participation: Each school will identify a faculty representative to select students and prepare them for participation in the Running and Winning event. There will be one training session for faculty representatives.

Elected Officials/Legislators: We seek ten elected officials from various government levels to interact with small groups of five to six students.

Facilitators: College students will be trained to be facilitators of discussion groups. The initial circulation of an intern job description for this position has already attracted responses from college students.

OUR CHILDREN ARE THE FUTURE

Constitutional Rights Foundation:

The Constitutional rights Foundation with a contract from LAUSD, developed a curriculum titled Election Central intended to add depth to the Running and Winning experience and further engage students with issues relevant to their consideration of political leadership. A meeting of Constitutional Rights staff and representatives of the Running and Winning Committee made it clear our organizations are a perfect fit and our collaboration will benefit all.

Target Date: The Running and Winning event will be scheduled for a Friday in early November, e.g. November 2 or 9, to be confirmed pending school/district calendars.

How You Can Help:

Many have expressed interest in and have resources valuable to this project. Do you have connections with or suggestions for: 1) School or district staff who might be valuable for this project? 2) Elected officials effective in small discussion groups of high school students? 3) Special resources for ensuring media and newspaper PR for this event? 4) Ideas we haven't thought of?

Please Contact: Zhita Rea by e-mail, zhitajim@hotmail.com or by telephone 323-571-1603. We welcome your input and/or collaboration on this project.

- Zhita Rea, R&W Committee Chair

* **Employment Opportunity** *

Sadly, our Administrative Director, Ellen Glettner, is moving on to new opportunities. Please help us circulate this employment opportunity to persons or organizations who might be interested.

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles (LWVLA) is seeking an Administrative Director (A.D.) to support programs and implement policies developed by the Boards of Directors of LWVLA and the LWVLA Education Fund. The A.D. manages the office, staff and financial operations and assures support of standing committees. Requisites: excellent management and interpersonal skills, good communication skills, proficiency in basic office software and small office computer and telephone systems, college degree and administrative management experience. Experience working with non-profits preferred. Salary/benefit range: \$45,000--\$50,000. Benefits: four days per week, negotiable hours and paid holidays. Full job description and instructions for submitting letter and resume is available at www.lwvlosangeles.org/

From LWVC VOTER

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For the latest on infrastructure funding and policies in California, read *Eye on Infrastructure*, the CIC's monthly publication about the latest happenings around the state, such as upcoming conferences, legislative issues, and local infrastructure ballot measures.

To subscribe, visit www.calinfrastructure.org.

- Charolette Fox, *Natural Resources Director*, natural_resources@lwvc.org

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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.

