



The Voter

November
2008

League of Women Voters of Los Angeles

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

Upcoming Events

November 4: General Election
November 20: Running & Winning, Fall Session
December 16: LWVLA Holiday Celebration

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

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

With so much attention being paid to the Presidential election, you will accurately assume that our voter service efforts are peaking. Our speakers were pressed to their maximum availability on engagements to educate about the many ballot measures – 70 talks. We were registering people to vote in interesting venues—for instance at a Job Corps conference and at Paramount Studios. We were interviewed about League and the elections on KABC's *Spotlight on the Community* radio program which was aired in mid-October.

However, with all this election-specific activity, it is easy to forget that other issues vital to League's mission are also moving forward. Here is news about other fronts that are showing progress.

Recently we had a very big win in the arena of full public campaign finance (FPCF) reform. This has been a top issue of emphasis for LWVC as well as LWVLA for several years. Despite the defeat of state Proposition 89, which called for FPCF in all statewide elections, there has been work at the state and Los Angeles levels to move this concept into future elections. At the state level, AB 583, the California Fair Elections Act (Hancock, D-Oakland), was signed into law by Governor Schwarzenegger. This authorizes a ballot measure that requires

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public financing of campaigns for the office of Secretary of State as a pilot project on the June 8, 2010 ballot. In Los Angeles, FPCF has been considered within the neighborhood council system for the last year. The Los Angeles project has given residents a chance to understand a variety of ways to shape this finance reform for our local elections.

FPCF is one of several election changes that have been put forward. It is being closely aligned with another change that LWVLA is advocating for – Instant Runoff Voting. This is the system of voting which combines the traditional primary and general elections by allowing voters one election in which they cast their votes in a preferential hierarchy of choices. We believe it will create less polarizing elections and starkly diminish the influence of special interest money on elections. Saving the city significant amounts of money once IRV has been implemented is also a very salutary result. A motion was made in council to craft an IRV ballot measure for the March, 2009 election. The motion would allow for the use of IRV in a city, community college or LAUSD election as a pilot measure and most likely allow the savings from IRV elections to support the implementation of an FPCF system. While LWVLA is still considering the implications of this motion in its details, having IRV and FPCF in the public discussion at this level is progress indeed.

Finally, a little noted but important bill was signed by the governor that would make on-line voter registration an available option in California. This clearly would benefit voters by making registration more accessible and enable voter participation more and more electronically than through print.

It is these kinds of successes that should encourage us all in continuing the work of the League. Even after defeat, there is always movement forward, given steady effort and clear focus.

- - Liza White

GREENING YOUR HOLIDAYS

Take the lead this holiday season and start new traditions by “greening” your holiday decorations, celebrations and gift giving. Start by being aware of the impact your choices make on the planet, and then begin making changes. Every green change helps in some way. You can start with a few changes this year and incorporate more ones that are new each year. Focus on the true meaning of the holidays for you and free yourself from consumerism that encourages excess and the purchasing of unnecessary material goods. Here are some ideas to get you started:

Decorations

- ♦ Buy a living Christmas tree in a pot or a reusable artificial tree. If you do buy a cut tree, be sure to recycle it at the end of the holiday. A good source for tree recycling information on the internet is www.888CleanLA.com.
- ♦ Buy LED holiday lights, which use considerably less energy than traditional incandescent bulbs. Unplug or turn off holiday lights during the day.

Celebrations

- ♦ Try to reduce buying in general and reuse what you already have. Think about your trash output ahead of time with the goal of reducing the amount of trash your celebration produces.
- ♦ Buy or make less food and make sure leftovers don't go to waste.
- ♦ Use washable plates and utensils.
- ♦ Reduce the use of plastic items as they are not biodegradable. Use paper products in preference to plastic.
- ♦ Buy items in recyclable containers and packaging (and, of course, be sure to recycle them).

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Gift Giving

- ♦ Send electronic greeting cards instead of paper cards.
- ♦ Instead of buying gift bags, buy a canvas bag to put your gift in.
- ♦ Buy an extra canvas bag for yourself to use while you are shopping.
- ♦ Stock up on pattern-less wrapping paper and matching ribbons which will work year round. Check for recycled wrapping paper or reuse the wrapping paper on gifts you receive. Avoid metallic gift-wrapping that cannot be recycled.
- ♦ Save and reuse packing materials you receive for your own packages. Avoid purchasing styrofoam peanuts for packaging filler; use newspaper or scrap paper. Packaging stores will usually accept used styrofoam peanuts for reuse if you receive more than you can reuse. Reuse boxes rather than buying new ones.
- ♦ Consider giving consumables (food and drink) as gifts. For fair-traded coffee, tea and chocolate, visit www.equalexchange.com. Fruit from your own fruit trees makes a tasty gift.
- ♦ Consider giving an e-book reader to any voracious readers on your list. The Amazon.com Kindle and Sony Reader saves paper and downloading a digital book requires no transportation.
- ♦ Give nontangible gifts, such as gift certificates for sporting events, concerts, massages, theater and movies tickets, etc. Or, personal, homemade gift certificates for services (sweat equity) for example, for two evenings of babysitting or an afternoon of yard work.
- ♦ Give gift memberships or donations to LWV and other favorite nonprofit organizations. Consider a gift

membership to a botanical garden, such as Descanso Gardens (www.descansogardens.org), instead of giving flowers, plant a tree with TreePeople (www.treepeople.org).

- ♦ If you give a gift that requires batteries, include rechargeable batteries with your gift. A battery recharger makes a good gift as well.

By greening your holidays and spreading your knowledge and concern for the environment to others, you give a gift to the Earth, as well. Tell family and friends what you are doing and why. Happy Green Holidays!

**- - Sandra Trutt & Linda Hopkins, Members
LWVLA Green Committee**

HOW SECURE ARE OUR ELECTIONS?

That question was one of the reasons that drove our League's choice of Election Integrity as a topic for education and action.

At the September Unit meetings, the Election Integrity Committee shared its findings in a multi-media presentation. Many of us had heard of problems or irregularities in other parts of the country and wanted to know if anything comparable could take place here. In the documentary film clips, we showed some of those events around the country and explained the mechanics of some of the difficulties voters encountered elsewhere.

As we look at the experiences of other communities we learn that California generally, and Los Angeles County in particular, have sound, secure voting equipment and election systems. But stay tuned! Both the City and County of Los Angeles are planning to purchase new voting equipment. They expect to start the process within months. Let's be at the table to help make sure the new system is at least as good as the current system.

**- - Margie Engel
Election Integrity Committee, Chair**

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A VERY GREEN IDEA

Who in our society does not have an old cell phone just crying out "recycle me"? The League can help. We have discovered an organization, *Collective Good*, which creates partnerships with nonprofits to ensure that the benefits of mobile phones are maximized, and their environmental impact is minimized. More information is available on their website, (www.collectivegood.com). The League will be the recipient of any money a person's cell phone would garner in its recycled state. (it can be up to \$18 per phone). If you go to their website, you will see that the League of Women Voters of Colorado is a listed nonprofit, and we hope to be added to the website in the future.

This is a great opportunity for LWVLA to get a little greener environmentally as well as to make some money. It is a win-win situation. The Green Committee is sponsoring this effort. If you send the phone directly to the company, you must bear the cost of shipping. To avoid the shipping cost, we have set up a collection box at the office. When we collect 15 phones, Collective Good will assume the shipping cost.

Before the phone can be reused, the software is changed out, erasing any trace of your ownership of the phone, and erasing the phone book, so that there are no security or privacy issues and no chance of getting a bill from the next owner. To be doubly safe, it is also a good idea for you to make sure that the phone is deactivated and your phone book erased before donating the phone. If you have any questions, call the office at (213) 368-1616, email either the office at info@lwvlosangeles.org or me at hrtterris@aol.com, or check out their website listed above.

The office has set up the drop box in the office. Now it is up to you to gather old cell phones from your friends and family. A good time to drop off the phones could be when you come to the office holiday party in December.

Looking forward to a Greener LWVLA!

- - Helene Terris
LWVLA GREEN Committee, Chair

2008 VOTER SERVICE MARKETS

Generally, LWV's voter service revolves around the same types of activities in every election cycle: voter registration, voter education on ballot measures and candidate forums. These activities, moreover, require the same skill set --research, writing and speaking -- with the same buttress of administrative support: publication, distribution, marketing and scheduling.

Candidate forums (and in this respect Smart Voter can be seen as a huge candidate forum) are unique in that they must be marketed to candidates and their handlers before they can be marketed to voters. For the most part, though, the market for voter service is universal.

With voter registration and education, we try to reach the entire population of individual voters and potential voters, but to be effective we must target certain groups: schools, libraries, service clubs, churches, charitable organizations and, increasingly, corporations.

During the 2008 Presidential election, many large corporations have placed greater emphasis than ever before on the civic engagement of their employees. We caught an inkling of this in fall 2007, when LWVUS announced that American Express had committed to a large grant program which would support local League voter service work in the urban areas where AMEX has the greatest number of employees.

With funding from the AMEX grant, administered through LWV of Los Angeles County, we have broadened the video distribution of our judicial candidate interviews and subsidized the production of our bilingual (English and Spanish) countywide publication. Thus AMEX joined Sempra Energy and Wells Fargo as a major supporter of voter service materials in Los Angeles.

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Corporations have been consumers, as well as suppliers, of voter service, including on-site registration drives and speaking engagements. Some supporting corporations include Munger Tolles & Olson, Paramount Studios, SONY Pictures Entertainment, and State Farm Insurance. Semptra, AT&T, Verizon, City National Bank, Team CFO, Inc., Kaufman Downing, LLP and GCG Rose and Kindel have supported voter service through grants and participation on the Ed Fund Board.

2008 brought LWVLA into a new relationship with Endeavor Communications, a large talent and literary agency headquartered in Beverly Hills. This fall they launched 'Endeavor Votes', an ambitious schedule of at least two programs per week from September 8 through November 4 with a broad spectrum of speakers including three from LWVLA. Endeavor's initiative is based on the awareness that by educating their employees they will benefit not only the corporation but also the society within which they live and work. A worthy endeavor!

- - Frances Talbott-White
LWVLA Voter Service Director

Membership Initiative Project — Making It Personal

**508 Members as of October 1st/
GOAL: 40 new members
by December 1st**

This is the second in a series of membership recruitment articles. It contains ideas and resources for each member to use. League membership cannot grow without your enthusiasm and knowledge to make the case to all.

Do what is comfortable for you and report your success to President@LWVLosAngeles.org. One small success brings a sense of victory to

all. Can you commit to trying just one suggested strategy a week?

What were the ideas in last month's VOTER?

- 1) ASKING WORKS: Simple but true.
- 2) MESSAGE MATTERS: *The League of Women Voters is where hands on work to safeguard our Democracy leads to civic improvement. Join us in making democracy work.*
- 3) Use these RESOURCES (call 213-368-1616).
 - **This is Who We Are** (colorful tri-fold brochure)
 - **Your Community-Your League** (colorful tri-fold brochure with membership tear-off)
 - **Membership envelope**

Here are more ideas for recruiting members:

- 4) Tell potential members how the League works for them:
 - **www.SmartVoter.org** is truly the preeminent website for any voter: It provides:



- Voting information personalized to each voter.
- Candidate profiles (as provided by candidates without charge).
- Ballot issues (formal and current articles).
- Polling place (time and location).
- Election results (current and archived).
- Guide to Government (local elected contacts).

- League is an organization whose **longevity and continuing focus** assures that reforms endorsed by member consensus can eventually prevail. Examples: redistricting reform, campaign finance reform, health care reform.

- League is where people get non-partisan, non sound-bite, objective

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information about ballot measures – **Pros & Cons, Speakers Bureau, Election Hotlines**. League is where **election integrity issues, such as access to voting, voting procedures, and vote counting** get defined, shaped and defended.

-- Liza White

Remembering Betty Mann

Riverside County League member Betty Mann passed away September 30 in Palm Desert after a short illness. She had been looking forward to becoming a 50-year member in 2009.

Before moving to Palm Desert in 2001, Betty had been a member of several local Leagues in California. In fact, some may remember her as a member of LWV Los Angeles. In 2000, she came to L.A. to assist with a Smart Voter exhibit in the 'Democracy Row' show which the USC Annenberg School of Communications mounted alongside the Democratic Convention of that year. Leaguers working with her at that time were astounded by her ability to answer questions about any and all matters related to government and elections.

Betty Mann was a founding member of the Smart Voter Steering Committee and served Smart Voter as our Research Specialist until the current election season. She also organized a number of local voter service events for the Palm Desert Community.

Many will miss Betty Mann as a Leaguer and friend.

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTIONS

CIVIC SOCIETY

Margie Engel

Education Fund Bequest

A substantial bequest from the Rod Redmond Trust was made to 'The Education Fund – Endowment Fund' by Hannah M. and J. M. Redmond, trustees of Hannah's husband's Trust. Hannah has been a member of League for over 60 years, served on the Board of Directors, on various committees, and as Unit Chair for Pacific Palisades. We thank her for this generous support for League's educational programs.

VOTE WITH THE LEAGUE

LWVC Recommendations

- Prop. 1A High Speed Rail Bonds Support
- Prop. 2 Standards/ Confining Farm Animals No Position
- Prop. 3 Children's Hospital Bond Act Support
- Prop. 4 Parental Notice for Minor Abortion Oppose
- Prop. 5 Nonviolent Drug Offenses Support
- Prop. 6 Police and Law Enforcement Funds Oppose
- Prop. 7 Renewable Energy Generation Oppose
- Prop. 8 Eliminates Same-Sex Marriage Oppose
- Prop. 9 Criminal Justice. Victim's Rights Oppose
- Prop. 10 Alternative Fuel Vehicles. Bonds Oppose
- Prop. 11 Redistricting Reform Strong Support
- Prop. 12 Veterans' Bond Act 2008 No Position

LWV/LAC County League Recommendations

The LWV/LAC County League Board met and approved **supporting Measure R** based on their on their Transportation position and **supported Measure U** based on their County budget position.

WAS THE VOTER NEWSLETTER LATE TO YOUR MAILBOX? Help us track late deliveries. If received after the 3rd week of the month, please report it to the office at (213) 368-1616.



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS[®]
OF LOS ANGELES**

November 4, 2008 Special Los Angeles City Election
THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS of Los Angeles RECOMMENDS...

Measure A Gang and Youth Violence Prevention, After-school, and Job Training Programs **NEUTRAL**

This \$36 per parcel tax intends to address gang violence through funding prevention and job training programs; preventing students from dropping out of school; funding supervised after-school programs, tutoring/mentoring, and vocational/apprenticeship programs; and through expanded graffiti removal. These are laudable goals which the League supports through its position that promotes the well-being, the full development and the safety of all children, and which supports violence prevention programs. However, the way in which Measure A would be financed finds less support in the League's State and Local Finance position. Although Measure A makes accommodation for low income seniors to afford the increase in their parcel tax, the tax is still regressive. Additionally these taxes are earmarked without a sunset provision which would require review of their efficacy by the voter.

Measure B Update of Low Rent Housing Authorization **NO RECOMMENDATION**

This Measure would repeal current restrictions on low rent housing density, height and units per site and replace them with requirements compatible with current housing needs. The League is currently reviewing its positions with regard to Housing and to Homelessness. These positions support subsidized housing programs that reflect the goal of adequate housing for low income residents in every community. However, our Planning Position supports the preservation of low-density residential neighborhoods. Measure B rescinds extant density requirements for low rent housing. Therefore the Board of Directors of LWVLA voted to make no recommendation on Measure B given that members will be updating these positions this spring.

Measure J - Local Community College Classroom Repair, Public Safety, Nursing, and Job Training **SUPPORT**

The 3.5 billion dollar bond measure would support building projects for the Los Angeles Community College District, with an emphasis on energy-efficiency. LWVLA's position on Community Colleges supports LACCD as an essential part of public education in meeting the needs of the Los Angeles Community, and believes that this investment in Community College infrastructure is warranted.

Measure Q - Safe, Healthy Neighborhood Schools – Los Angeles Unified School District **SUPPORT**

This 7 billion dollar bond measure would bring existing facilities into repair and upgrade; reduce quality hazards; and build and upgrade specialized classrooms for job and college learning and internet use. The League's support of access and equitable opportunity for all children mandates vitalizing our large number of very old schools. Postponing this funding will place equal access to safe, healthy, technologically current education out of reach of too many students for too long.