



California VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

MARCH 2005



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

It is almost impossible to read a paper or listen to the television or radio without encountering the word "reform." Whether it is redistricting, education,

campaign financing, election procedures, government financing, or pensions for government employees, everyone (except perhaps the average voter) seems to be talking about it. An incredible number of initiatives are being circulated. What do our leaders and initiative sponsors mean by reform? Which of the proposals are real reform? Do any of them meet our criteria for good reform?

The League has studied and has positions on many of the issues that are "hot topics" today. We will be active on those which are most important and where we feel the League can make a difference. By leveraging the current publicity about reform, perhaps we can promote the kinds of reform in our governmental processes that our positions have long advocated.

Since the beginning of the year, we have been taking an active role in the discussion of the redistricting proposals that have been introduced in the legislature and others which are being circulated as initiatives. With other organizations, such as California Common Cause and the Center for Governmental Studies (CGS), we visited legislators, met with the Governor's staff, and talked with editorial staff members of major newspapers

to express our concerns about current proposals for reform.

We face a year of challenges but we will meet them in the same tradition that the LWVC has in the past. If there is a special election this fall, your help will be needed as we try to educate voters about an as yet unknown number of measures. If California voters are to be motivated to participate, they must make the connection between the ballot measures and the effects decisions on those measures will have on their everyday lives. League members can help make that connection and I hope each of you will be involved in whatever way you are able.

Jackie

LWVC CONVENTION

It's a New World

May 20-22, 2005

Garden Grove

Hosted by Orange County Leagues

- To Decide 2005-07 Program
- To Learn about California Politics
- To Attend Workshops
- To Hear Exciting Speakers
- To Network
- To Become Inspired

California VOTER
 March 2005
 President: Jacqueline Jacobberger
 Executive Director: Jill Kaiser Newcom
 Editor: Lynda Hungerford

About the League:

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, 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.

The League has two separate and distinct roles. The League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, which conducts our voters service and citizen education activities, is a 501(c)(3) corporation, a nonprofit educational organization. The League of Women Voters of California, a membership organization, conducts action and advocacy and is a nonprofit 501(c)(4) corporation.

The League never supports or opposes any political party or candidate. We advocate only on issues that members have studied and come to a consensus on. In an era of proliferating and powerful special interests, the League's advocacy in the public interest is increasingly recognized as an essential voice of democracy.

League invites your comments, letters, articles, and book reviews. They may be sent to the State Office.

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LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES 2005

1. Priority Issues

Redistricting Reform

State and Local Finance

- Support reform of the state budgeting process
- Support equitable and adequate generation and distribution of tax revenues

Health Care

- Support access to a basic level of quality health care for all residents
- Support continued funding of the safety net.

2. Support requests from local Leagues and ILOs for advocacy on bills of specific interest to their jurisdictions.

3. Take action as appropriate on core issues: Elections, Voting Rights, Campaign Finance Reform, and Reproductive Choices.

4. Consider Program Director recommendations for action on the highest priority bills in their program areas.

5. Review all statewide ballot measures and recommend a position or neutrality on each one to the LWVC Board of Directors.

ACTION ON REDISTRICTING

The League of Women Voters of California has taken a stand on several of the redistricting measures currently circulating or being discussed. While the League has considered the several other initiatives being proposed by the Governor, we have deferred action until we learn just what will be on a ballot, whether at a Special Election in 2005 or at the June 2006 Primary Election.

On redistricting, however, we decided to take a stand even though none of the proposals meets the criteria for an indepen-

dent commission specified in our position. Most of the proposals call for commissions to consist only of retired judges. While this is a serious drawback to the proposals, we decided that the benefits of giving authority to an independent commission rather than to the legislature make even this level of reform something the League should support. Therefore, we decided to support two bills in the legislature, SCA 3 (Lowenthal) and ACAX1 5 (Canciamilla and Richman). These two bills are closest to our position.

In addition, we decided to support ACAX1 3 (McCarthy), the bill sponsored by Governor Schwarzenegger, only if it were amended to delete mid-decade redistricting. Although the League position does not specifically address mid-decade redistricting, we believe that LWVC can oppose it.

The California Constitution provides for redistricting after a census when there is current data on population. It is not clear that using past census data would be found constitutional; for example, in California the population has grown by 3 million since the 2000 census.

Although we believe that the League cannot support a proposal which provides for mid-decade redistricting, we also believe that it is important to take a stand on issues relating to redistricting so as to strengthen our voice in working to ensure the best possible proposal is put before the voters.

The LWVC Web site under “redistricting” contains a wealth of information including the LWVC position, our 1988 publication “California Redistricting 1990’s,” and *Drawing Lines: A Public Interest Guide to Real Redistricting Reform*. *Drawing Lines* includes a comparison of various bills. See <http://ca.lwv.org/lwvc/action/redistrict>

Marion Taylor

Legislation Director

TAX EXPENDITURE REFORM BILL

As reported in the July VOTER, “tax expenditures” are tax credits, exemptions, deductions and other special tax breaks or incentives. They are called expenditures because they have the same effect as on-budget subsidies or rebates. According to the Legislative Analyst’s Office (LAO), tax expenditures result in state General Fund revenue reductions of more than \$30 billion each year.

League positions say tax expenditures should be in the interest of the general public and not just a specific group, provide benefits that significantly outweigh the increased burden to others, and contribute to tax equity. We have long advocated regular review and justification of existing tax breaks by the legislature.

Last year we supported a bill by Assembly-member Mark Ridley-Thomas that would have required the Department of Finance to make an annual tax expenditure report to the legislature that included a description of current tax expenditures, their original intent, the number and type of taxpayers that benefit from each, and an estimate of the revenue loss to the state. The report was intended to give the legislature a basis for evaluating existing tax expenditures against other pressing state needs.

That bill passed the legislature but was vetoed by the Governor on the grounds that the Department of Finance did not have access to adequate information needed to provide the “dynamic analyses” of tax expenditures called for by the bill. A dynamic revenue analysis is a method of evaluation based on estimates of the probable behavioral responses to the tax expenditure by taxpayers, businesses, and others. (As one can imagine, the assumptions used in such a model can greatly influence the results.)

The bill has been changed to meet the Governor’s objections and reintroduced as AB 168 (Ridley-Thomas), strongly supported by the

LWVC. It now requires reports from the Franchise Tax Board and the Board of Equalization that would provide the necessary information. The reports would be limited to revenue losses from tax expenditures in excess of \$10 million.

Each year beginning in 2007, the Department of Finance would be required to submit a tax expenditure report in conjunction with the Governor's budget. The LAO would be required to review the reports and make recommendations to the legislature on tax expenditures that should be modified or repealed.

Tax breaks are not all bad. They can function as a carrot that may work to produce public benefits more efficiently than the stick of regulation or the creation of new government programs. Many, however, never produce predicted results for the public good and stay in place with no serious review.

The impact on the state General Fund of the major kinds of tax relief enacted since 1997-98 has risen from \$174 million in 1997-98 to nearly \$7 billion in 2005-06. Regular evaluation of tax expenditures would be a significant reform of the budget process. It is past time to begin.

Anne Henderson

Off-Board Program Director

State and Local Finances

WELCOME BENICIA

The LWVUS has recognized the MAL unit in Benicia as a local League. The members in Benicia met all of the requirements for recognition, including producing a Know Your Town booklet, a membership handbook and brochure, bylaws, and a proposed budget.

League members in Benicia deserve special recognition for having completed these tasks in a very short period of time. Their energy and enthusiasm is exceptional.

LWVC SUPPORTS SINGLE PAYER HEALTH CARE

The League of Women Voters of California is actively supporting SB 840, State Senator Sheila Kuehl's single-payer health care coverage bill.

"The Health Care for All Californians Act: Cost and Economic Impacts Analysis," January 2005, is the Lewin Group study which estimates the cost of covering all California residents under a single health plan. The study analyzes SB 921, the Health Care for All Californians Act that Senator Kuehl introduced in the last session. This session's SB 840 is a revision of SB 921 fleshed out with many of the details lacking in SB 921.

To find the Lewin Report go to http://www.lewin.com/Lewin_Publications/Uninsured_And_Safety_Net/HealthCareforAllCalifornians.htm

Marion Taylor

Legislative Director

CONVENTION IS FOR ALL LEAGUE MEMBERS

Did you know that while each local League is allocated a specific number of delegates based on membership count, any League member may attend as a visitor and that visitors can attend workshops as well?

This year, workshops that will develop the themes of some of the articles included in this VOTER are:

- Strategies for Effective Action
- A Wild Card: Reforming State Government
- Will California Lead the Way in Universal Health Care

Workshops like these are the best introduction to the advocacy side of League. Go to the League Web site at <http://www.lwvc.org> to learn more about Convention.



SMART VOTER LIVE ON KTLA LOS ANGELES

Popular on-location TV reporter Gayle Anderson brought Smart Voter to a large morning news audience on March 8, Election Day in the City of Los Angeles and over 30 other cities throughout L.A. County.

Gayle interviewed Frances Talbott-White, Smart Voter's Southern California Liaison, at a Culver City Cybercafe/Laundromat.

Meanwhile, news anchors followed along on computers in the studio. The story was geared to the needs of voters searching for last-minute election information.

Trudell Een

Project Director for Smart Voter



Gayle Anderson, KTLA TV, interviewed Frances Talbott-White, Smart Voter Southern California Liaison, for the Morning News on March 8, Election Day. Talbott-White showed viewers how to find everything they wanted to know about local elections.

Attend the **Smart Voter Workshop and Dinner** on Thursday, May 19, at the Convention hotel. You will learn:

- Best Practices Leagues use to build their local Smart Voter team and to market Smart Voter in their community
- How to create maximum visibility for your League.
- How to leverage your volunteers' time through strategic collaborations.

STATE WATER PLAN

The League is concerned about the Public Review Draft of the California Water Plan that is about to be issued by the Department of Water Resources (DWR). Based on recommendations from the LWVC representatives to the Water Plan Advisory Committee, Polly Smith and Jack Sullivan, the LWVC has submitted a letter to the DWR, commending department staff for their leadership in developing this update to the water plan but making a number of suggestions for modification of the existing draft.

In particular, we urged DWR to include an Initiative in the plan that would stress conservation, recycling and nonstructural management techniques in water planning. We also urged DWR to discuss more fully the uncertainties that lie ahead in water planning and, in particular, the uncertainty presented to water planners by climate change and global warning.

The League believes that DWR should be more explicit about the groundwater situation in the state and should stress that groundwater is an important part of the state's water infrastructure.

The full text of the LWVC letter will be on the LWVC Web site under "Action."

Jack Sullivan

Natural Resources Director

SAN JOAQUIN RIVER REPORT

The Friant Dam on the San Joaquin River was completed in 1945 to provide irrigation water to farmers on the eastside of the San Joaquin Valley.

The diversion of water for irrigation, however, caused the San Joaquin to dry up in places and this, in turn, seriously affected salmon runs up the river. Recently a federal judge ruled that the Bureau of Reclamation, which runs the dam, was required to provide water to sustain fish popula-

tions on the river. The method for achieving this outcome has yet to be worked out and will likely take some time to establish.

The story of salmon and the San Joaquin River is presented in The Water Education Foundation's November/December 2004 Western Water. You can order this edition of Western Water, and other water-related items, by going to <http://www.water-ed.org>, sending email to orders@watereducation.org, or calling 916-444-6240.

Jack Sullivan

Natural Resources Director

NOMINATION PROCESS

Editor's note: At the 2005 Convention this May delegates will elect the officers and directors of The League of Women Voters of California 2005-2007. After the Nominating Committee's slate is presented at the Convention, delegates may make nominations from the floor.

The 2005-2007 LWVC Nominating Committee agreed from the beginning that the nominating process should be a transparent, without unspoken traditions or qualifications of which the membership as a whole would be unaware.

We used *In League* from The League of Women Voters of the US for our primary guide. This is a standard reference for all League members. It is a handbook, only, but one that is seldom modified. The LWVC guidelines we used are those found in "LWVC Policies and Procedures," and in a 1989 publication titled "How To—For the Nominating Committee." Both offer practical suggestions for meetings, distribution of materials, and identifying leaders. The "How To" publication was designed for local Leagues but it is applicable for the state level.

All of the above mentioned publications are available through the LWVC State Office. Portions relating to state board nominations will be posted

on our LWVC website in April and distributed at the 2005 Convention.

The League’s “How To” publication suggests that one of a nominating committee’s goals should be: “recruit older/younger/minority/members.” As you know, LWVUS has a strong policy of Nondiscrimination and Affirmative Action, under our Equality of Opportunity position, found in “Impact on Issues.”

To ensure that this goal became a directive, and not merely a suggestion, on January 9, 2005, the LWVC State Board unanimously adopted the following motion:

The Nominating Committee recommends that the board include language in LWVC Policies and Procedure and Job Descriptions (Nominating) to encourage LWVC board diversity.

All League members want our state board representation to reflect broad input and an open process. The Committee is designed to report di-

rectly to the membership; therefore, we encourage you to contribute suggestions to the committee for future consideration.

Diane Park, (DianLWV@cs.com)

Nominating Committee Chair

Committee Members: Caroline de Llamas, Roni Seay, Lynda Hungerford and Jack Sullivan

ACTION

For a list of all of the legislation that LWVC has taken a stand on go to the Action page of our Web site at:

<http://lwvc.org/lwvc/action/index.html>
or
click on “Action” on the home page.

Not a Member Yet? Please Join!

The League of Women Voters of California is strictly nonpartisan; we never support or oppose any political party or candidate. At the same time, we are wholeheartedly political, working to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to any person who subscribes to the purposes and policy of the League.

Yes, I want to join. Enclosed is my check for \$50 payable to the League of Women Voters.

Please send me more information about the League and its publications.

Name: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

County: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

**Mail to the League of Women Voters of California
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