



VOTER

Spring 2006

Editor: Kate Quick

LWVC Signs Ballot Argument in Favor of Proposition 81



Kate Quick

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At its January 2006 meeting the LWVC board of directors voted to support the California Reading and Literacy Improvement and Public Library Construction and Renovation Bond Act of 2006, which will appear as Proposition 81 on the June 6 ballot.

On behalf of the LWVC, President Jackie Jacobberger has signed the ballot argument endorsing the proposition. The support for this measure is based on our Public Libraries position, which is, in brief:

"Support a public library system as a basic community service with a long-term, assured, stable and adequate funding source. Support access by all persons to public library services as a major source of knowledge and information necessary for informed, active participation in a democratic society."

This measure will, if passed, authorize the state to borrow \$600 million through the sale of general obligation bonds to provide 65 percent of the cost of projects for building and renovating local public libraries. In 2000, voters passed a similar bond for \$350 million, which funded 45 projects, many of which are currently underway. Eligible applications for an additional 60 projects, seeking \$506 million in bond funds, were not funded. A 2003 assessment found more than 500 projects were needed. Prop. 81 is a critical step toward addressing those needs.

League Expresses Concerns Regarding the Statewide Voter Registration List

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In late March, LWVC President Jackie Jacobberger wrote a letter of concern regarding the new state procedures for adding registered voters to the CalVoter state database.

The Help America Vote Act (HAVA) requires each state to implement, by January 1, 2006, "a single, uniform, official, centralized, interactive computerized statewide voter registration list." Last November, Secretary of State Bruce McPherson entered into an agreement with the U.S. Department of Justice to update and use the existing CalVoter registration system to meet this requirement until a fully HAVA-compliant database can be put into place.

Under HAVA and state law, registrants must supply their drivers license (or state ID) number, or if they do not have one, the last four digits of their Social Security number.

The problem was that the computer database matching process used for checking registration information against Department of Motor Vehicle (DMV) and Social Security records was causing a

large number of registrations and re-registrations (about 25 percent statewide) to be inappropriately rejected. If those rejections were not corrected in time, many eligible voters would encounter obstacles to voting on election day. Generally speaking, people not on the registration list will not receive sample ballots, ballot pamphlets, or notice of their polling places. They are not permitted to receive an absentee ballot.

County elections officials have been working to obtain the information needed to clear up each rejection, but this is a time-consuming task. Registrants' response rate to phone calls

and mailings has been low, and their privacy concerns have worsened the problem. It is clearly better to avoid the erroneous rejections in the first place.

The League's letter cited HAVA intentions that information provided by other databases, such as DMV data, would supplement the information provided by the voter, helping to correct an application so that it can be processed and accepted, instead of being rejected. The LWVC pointed out that a database match is not a condition of voter eligibility under HAVA or state law, and

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VOTE! TUESDAY, JUNE 6



A Message from the President

Californians are again looking to the League of Women Voters for the information they need to make intelligent choices when they cast their ballots in June. We have adapted our methods of providing that information as technology and the population of California have changed. We are effectively using the

Internet with Smart Voter and our Web site, and publishing the *Easy Voter Guide* to serve the needs of California's very diverse

population.

While the means may change, our mission remains the same—encouraging all eligible citizens to be informed and to vote. I hope that each of you will make a commitment to spread the word about the resources the League offers and help citizens in your community exercise their right to vote—fundamental to involvement in the democratic process.

Jackie

LWVC Takes a Neutral Position on Proposition 82—Preschool for All Initiative

Kate Quick

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Once again, the LWVC finds that its analysis of a ballot measure in a major area of concern reveals a conflict of positions. The Preschool for All Act initiative, Proposition 82 on the June 2006 ballot, has particular interest for League members since it touches two of our most important policy positions—State and Local Finances and Education. The LWVC board, after long research and discussion, decided to take a neutral position on the measure.

The initiative, if passed, would place a tax on high incomes (over \$800,000 for couples) to fund voluntary universal preschool for all California children. Our State and Local Finances position states that in order to achieve flexibility of revenue we advocate minimum use of direct voting by citizens on tax sources and rates, that each fund or tax "earmarked" for a specific purpose should contain an automatic sunset date, and that adoption of designated "earmarked" funds and taxes should be done only in a situation where social benefit significantly outweighs the loss of flexibility.

On the other hand, our recently updated Pre K-12 Education position supports a comprehensive pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade public education system which meets the needs of each individual student. It states that all children should enter school ready to learn to their fullest potential and that measures to ensure this include school readiness programs, including universal access to preschools that are

high quality, developmentally appropriate, and voluntary.

Clearly the board needed to carefully consider the conflict between these two positions. The process began in early January with the development of extensive background material by the State and Local Finances and Education off-board program directors and legislative consultants. After discussion at the January board meeting, the program committee decided that further research was necessary. In March, committee members



and off-board representatives developed a list of questions which were asked during teleconferences with representatives of both supporters and opponents of the measure. After further discussion the program committee decided that the two positions were both so strong that they could not recommend either a support or oppose position. The LWVC board was asked to

adopt a neutral position, and it concurred. League members are, of course, free to advocate for or against this measure as individuals. But the League at all levels will remain neutral.

League Supports Initiative Reform Proposals

Chris Carson

Government Director
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Tired of slogging your way through confusing, complicated ballot measures that even when passed become voided by court action? The LWVC is supporting two bills that are part of a bipartisan package of initiative reform proposals sponsored by Secretary of State Bruce McPherson. ACA 18 (Nation) would reestablish the indirect initiative in California. It provides for legislative review and possible enactment of initiative proposals, allowing for improvements to be made and costly initiative campaigns to be avoided. AB 2460 (Evans) would require the Secretary of State to check the text printed on initiative petitions prior to circulation for signatures, and on a sample of the completed petitions, to be sure the wording is the same as that originally submitted by proponents. LWVC President Jackie Jacobberger appeared with McPherson and the bills' authors at a press conference to announce support for the proposals.

The LWVC has long advocated initiative reform and welcomes these proposals. Watch for legislative updates on these bills and more information on the League Web site.

Clean Money Bill Advances

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Advocates of Clean Money—public funding of campaigns for state office in California—were rewarded for their efforts when the Assembly passed AB 583 (Hancock) on a 47-31 vote on January 30. The bill has been referred to the Senate Elections, Reapportionment and Constitutional Amendments Committee for a hearing in April or early May. If successful there, its pathway to passage includes the Senate Appropriations Committee, full Senate, back to the Assembly for concurrence in amendments, and ultimately to the Governor's desk. If AB 583 passes all these hurdles, it will eventually end up as a proposition in a statewide election with a final vote of the people.

The League of Women Voters of California has been participating since 2003 in the Campaign Finance Reform Summit, a coalition made up of the California Clean Money Campaign, California Common Cause, the Greenlining Institute, and various other organizations interested in campaign finance reforms in the state. Our goal is to see California follow the lead of Maine

and Arizona, which have adopted Clean Money as a voluntary alternative to financing legislative and statewide campaigns.

League members throughout the state have participated in the effort to encourage AB 583's progress through the legislature. Most notably, Bay Area League members, spearheaded by Judy Cox and Anne Spanier of Oakland, have contacted other Leagues to ask them to hold constituent meetings with senators, adapt and use an op-ed article, and send messages to their members by phone and e-mail.

We ask all voters to contact their state senator and stress their support for full public financing of state elections!

More campaign finance news: A California Nurses Association (CNA) initiative is being circulated for signatures. It includes a strict restriction on corporate do-

nations to campaigns as well as a proposal for full public financing of state campaigns. Please note that the LWVC has not taken a position on the CNA initiative and League members may not collect signatures in the name of the League or in connection with a League event. Local Clean Money proposals are also hot topics in Los Angeles, San Diego, San Jose, and Santa Barbara.

How does Clean Money work?

After collecting a prescribed number of \$5.00 contributions to demonstrate broad public support, a candidate would be eligible for public funds to adequately finance a viable campaign with no private donations. Additional funding, up to a limit, would be given to a publicly financed candidate if a non-participating opponent outspent him or her.

What does the public gain from this expenditure?

We have the opportunity to vote for a candidate who has spent the election period engaging voters in discussion of public policy rather than asking for money to fund a campaign. Additionally, states that have implemented Clean Money elections have more participation in elections from a diverse pool of office seekers and of people giving the \$5.00 contributions. Candidates from all political parties are running publicly financed campaigns in those states. It is believed that increased voter turnout in Clean Money elections may be related to increased voter confidence.

LWVC Endorses Health Care for All—California OneCare Now Campaign

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SB 840 (Kuehl) provides for a state administered universal single-payer health insurance plan that would save enough of the monies now spent on health care to provide affordable and secure comprehensive health care for all residents. Originally introduced in 2003 as SB 921, it was amended and reintroduced in



the current session as SB 840. Legislative support has grown steadily, and there are now more than 30 coauthors. Last year, it passed the Senate and the Assembly Health Committee. The next step is expected to be a hearing and amendments in August after the legislature's break.

SB 1784 (Kuehl), a funding act, was introduced in February. It is now in the Senate Revenue and Taxation Committee and

will be heard in April. Amendments to include the funding mechanism for SB 840 are expected at this time.

Passing universal single-payer health care is a League legislative priority, and a plan for local League support of SB

840 is underway. The LWVC has endorsed Health Care for All—California's OneCare Now campaign. Local Leagues are encouraged to participate in coalition with HCA chapters and other activists in their communities.

Remember LWVC and Leave a Lasting Legacy

Leave a lasting legacy by remembering the League of Women Voters in your will. To request sample bequest language or to discuss your estate plan, contact Jill Kaiser Newcom, Executive Director, at (916) 442-7215 or jnewcom@lwvc.org.

Smart Voter Presents June 2006 Party Ballot—Adds directions to polling place lookup

Trudell Een

Smart Voter Director

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For many voters, election time is a season of confusion. Bombarded by campaign ads, political rhetoric, and a complicated primary election, voters find it more than challenging to make well-informed decisions. We have an answer—<http://www.smartvoter.org/>.

The popular polling place lookup was initiated more than half a million times in a recent election. Now this feature is better than ever with a new service added for voters: directions directly from home to polling place have been added to the map.

Keeping in touch with elections officials is one of many pleasures in working on Smart Voter. During a recent meeting, Smart Voter volunteers collaborated on-the-spot with Larry Herrera, Long Beach City Clerk, on a student essay project: "Why Voting



The Orange County Smart Voter Team

Stan Miller, LWV Central Orange County; Frances Talbott-White, Smart Voter Southern California Liaison; Neal Kelley, Registrar of Voters, Orange County; Angela Chen Lindstrom, Orange County Smart Voter Coordinator

in Long Beach City Elections Is Important to Me." Contest winner's essays will be published in the June 6, 2006 Sample Ballot and mailed to 196,000 registered voters. Additionally, there will be Mayor and City Council Proclamations.

Showcasing Smart Voter in Orange County's new technology center was sublime. Neal Kelley, Registrar of Voters, was appreciative of the extra value Smart Voter provides and graciously offered the League use of the new technology center. Angela Chen Lindstrom, Smart Voter Coordinator, took the opportunity to do a training session for Smart Voter volunteers.

Enhance voter awareness in your community through your Smart Voter project!

And From a Satisfied User . . .

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the "My Ballot" so that I found my polling place effortlessly! . . . I found exactly what I needed and then some. Not only did it tell me where to go, I was able to just as easily get the directions from my house without having to go to MapQuest on my own. Maybe the unfortunate part is that our world has gotten so hasty, but at least the League of Women Voters realizes this and is saving the day! Thank you!

—San Joaquin County.

Meet Our Newest LWVC Board Member Voter Service Director

Sharon Wallace of Butte County has been appointed as voter service director for the LWVC to fill the remainder of the 2005-07 term. Sharon is a past president of her League, and has been on the boards and commissions of several other organizations over the past 15 years, as well.

She received her B.A. in Public Communications/Journalism from CSU, Chico in 1983, and is a graduate of the Great Valley Center IDEAL leadership program, Class of 2000. While raising a daughter (Misha, age 16) and son (Aidan, age 11) she and her husband Mike have been active in both the farming and land conservation arenas, and together they own a 40-acre walnut orchard in Tehama County.

As the current voter service chair for the LWV Butte County, Sharon looks forward to a busy couple of years in the pursuit of "an informed electorate with quality access to democracy" at both the state and local levels.

Announcing a New Team Member for the Easy Voter Guide Project

Carol Souza Cole will be coordinating Easy Voter Guide activity for the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund (LWVCEF) while working closely with the California Secretary of State's Office, the California State Library, and Common Knowledge.

As an active member of the League of Women Voters of Woodland and a trustee of the Woodland Joint Unified School District, Carol brings tremendous communications, media relations and public outreach skills to this important project. She can be reached by e-mail at easyvoter@lwvc.org.

One Person's Clunker Becomes a Gift to the League

Jill Kaiser Newcom

Executive Director

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"It was the easiest thing ever!" reports Melinda Laponis, the very first person to donate a car to the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund. After discovering that the United Way didn't want her 1989 Volvo, Laponis was referred to the company that handles the League's brand new vehicle donation program. While browsing that company's Web site, she learned her donation could benefit the League of Women Voters. Laponis, an advocate for voting rights, was delighted to be able to turn her old car into a gift to the League.

To get rid of her old car, Laponis called a toll-free number, indicated that she wanted her donation to benefit the League, and made an appointment to have it picked up. On the day of her appointment, she left the car key and title for the tow truck driver, and when she got returned home later, the car was gone! Now she'll get a deduction on her income taxes of at least \$500.

If you're ready to say goodbye to your own clunker, take advantage of this new fundraising effort by calling 1-800-320-0476.

Openness and Transparency in Government Celebrated throughout California in March

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Last November, the LWVUS launched a project to celebrate "Sunshine Week" through a series of grant-sponsored forums about the importance of, and challenges to, accountability and transparency in government. Fourteen Leagues around the country, including three in California—LWV Glendale/Burbank, the Alameda County Council, and LWV Benicia—were awarded grants.

In southern California, the LWV Glendale/Burbank forum focused on threats to open government at the local level. The featured speaker was Barbara Blinderman, a noted open government litigator. She spoke on the Brown Act and how citizens can challenge what they feel are violations or threats to this open government law. The meeting also featured a panel consisting of elected officials, a city attorney, an investigative reporter, and the publisher of a local independent news weekly. The forum was taped and broadcast on cable television. As a follow-up, the tape and LWVUS and LWVC materials will be distributed to government teachers at the local high schools.

To the north, the seven Leagues in Alameda County, whose leadership regularly meets as the County Council, sponsored a similar community forum in which both the Brown Act and the California Public Records Act were discussed. California Attorney General Bill Lockyer was the featured speaker, and the panelists were a city attorney, the county counsel,

an investigative reporter, activists representing Californians Aware and the First Amendment Project, the director of the Oakland Public Ethics Commission, and a news media attorney. Over one hundred elected officials, League members, community advocates and press representatives attended the event. Several newspapers ran editorials regarding the importance of "sunshine in government" prior to the event. Each city in the county and the county board of supervisors were asked to issue proclamations regarding "Sunshine Week" and pledge themselves to full adherence to the laws regarding openness in government.

On March 18, the LWV Benicia held an open government forum in the city council chambers, again featuring California Attorney General Bill Lockyer and an overview by the deputy Solano County counsel and Benicia city attorney. Their panel included news media representatives and Lois Wolk, California State Assembly Member. The event was cosponsored by the local chapter of the American Association of University Women and the Contra Costa Times newspaper.

Kudos to all the local Leagues in California who had activities and programs on sunshine in government during "Sunshine Week." Congratulations to those Leagues who received grants, and thanks to the LWVUS for providing the grants to help to make their programs a success. Good work, all!

California VOTER

Spring 2006

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About the League:

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan 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 on which they have come to consensus. 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.

With membership comes the opportunity to work with well-informed, grassroots activists on a broad range of public policy concerns. The League provides members with opportunities to learn valuable, transferable skills, including how to organize and run productive meetings, write more effectively, speak in public, organize and run effective campaigns, conduct research studies, and coordinate general civic leadership training.

The League invites your comments, letters, articles, and book reviews. They may be sent, faxed or e-mailed to the LWVC.

The California VOTER is published quarterly by the **League of Women Voters of California.**

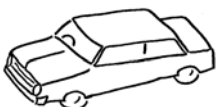
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New Orleans' League Easy Web (LEW) Site Saves the Day

Carol Watts

LWVC Webmaster

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On August 23, one week before Hurricane Katrina struck, Ann Petit sent us an e-mail saying that LWV New Orleans was ready to go live with their LEW-built Web site <http://lwvno.org> Little did Ann know



Photograph by Jenene Chesbrough

Lower 9th Ward, New Orleans six months post Hurricane Katrina

that her life was about to change enormously. Following the devastating hurricane, LWVC granted the LWV New Orleans several months of free use of their LEW site to assist in their rebuilding efforts. What they have accomplished using LEW in very difficult circumstances makes our election efforts appear tame by comparison.

Ann evacuated to Dallas, Texas and is still living there. There are difficulties with her returning and rebuilding. So, she waits—and has worked very hard to build her League's Web site while she is relocated.

On the morning of March 17 Ann Pettit called me at home. She and other League members had been working hard to get the 120 candidates for offices in the Parish of New Orleans to respond to the League's questions to produce an online Voters Guide. This was the day they had promised to publish. She thought she had a problem. We quickly resolved that problem over the phone and she told me her stories.

The League had sponsored a forum for all of the candidates for mayor the previous night. Ann said that 1,000 people (yes, one thousand) attended the forum in person. In our dreams, we wish our forums

could be so successful! It shows what happens when the local media really pays attention—the national media. Ann said, "We could not have done this without League Easy Web."

LWV New Orleans has had tremendous success in getting candidates to respond to their questions. Of the 120 candidates in 14 contests from mayor to the seven assessors, a whopping 104 have responded. Seven assessors??? Yes, New Orleans has seven, a quirk of history and state constitutional law. The first question the League asks of these candidates: "If you are elected to this office, will you work to consolidate the seven assessor offices into one office with sufficient resources and staff?"

Their Web site is also the "go to" site for the unusual voting conditions due to the hurricane. Voters are spread out over the country.

These voters can vote absentee, or they can travel to Louisiana and vote as early as April 10 at several designated locations before their primary election on April 22.

Ann has also worked with the webmaster of LWV Dallas, Ann Adams.

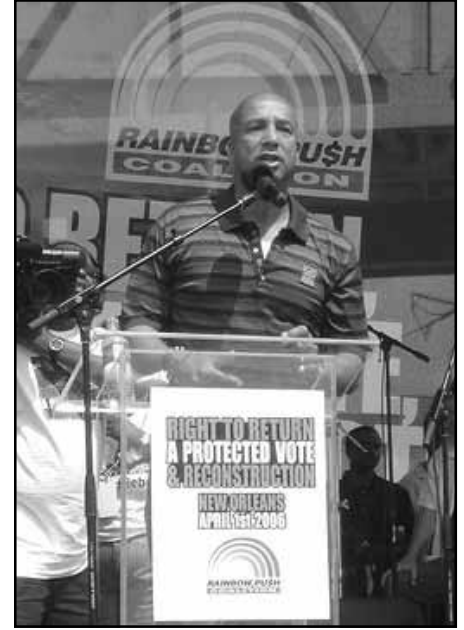


Photo by Garlin D. Gilchrist II www.TheSuperSpade.com (c) 2006

Mayor Ray Nagin, City of New Orleans Rally and March for Voting Rights of New Orleans residents displaced by Hurricane Katrina. This took place in New Orleans, LA on April 1, 2006.

<http://lwvdallas.org> has a special page just for New Orleans citizens displaced by Katrina. LWV Dallas also uses League Easy Web. Check out their Voters Guide at <http://lwvno.org>. Go, LWV New Orleans!!

Election Day is Tuesday, June 6, 2006.

Polls are open from 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

May 22 is the last day to register to vote.

Absentee Ballot

The last day that your county elections official can accept an application by mail for an absentee ballot is May 30, but you may apply in person at the office of the county elections official through election day. Absentee ballots must be in the hands of the county elections official by 8:00 p.m. on Election Day, June 6, 2006.

New citizen?

If you became a citizen in California after the close of registration on May 22, 2006, you may still register to vote by visiting your county elections office on or between the dates of May 23 and May 30. Bring proof of citizenship with you, and be prepared to declare to the county elections official that you have established residency in California.

Election Information

If you are a registered voter, you will receive a notice of the election that includes the address of your polling place. The notice will also include a sample ballot, an application for an absentee ballot and information about the ballot measures.

Activist Given 268th Star on Palm Springs Walk

Charolette Fox

Natural Resources Director
natural_resources@lwvc.org



Photo by Gail Papparian

Activist Ruth Licata accepts a star on Palm Canyon for her contributions to the community. Licata was an original founder of the ACLU chapter in the Coachella Valley and also an environmental advocate.

It was a walk with her mother 86 years ago that started an 11-year-old Ruth Licata on her way to becoming a women's activist and purveyor of the polls. It was 1920 and women had just won the right to vote. It hit her that while the United States had been recognized since 1776, women were only allowed to vote starting in 1920.

Ruth moved to Palm Springs

in 1945 with her husband and they opened Casa Licata, a small boutique hotel. She became active in the Palm Springs Civic Association and the American Civil Liberties Union. She also was a county deputy registrar, member of the League of Women Voters, the Sierra Club, UNICEF and the Audubon Society. Ruth believed in an open records law, environmental rights, voting rights, and an engaged citizenry. Licata registered voters and made sure residents were informed about what they were voting for. Her friends call her the Goddess of Fair Government.

"She stands for equality, justice and making things right in her community," said Arlene Rosenthal.

Before the dedication of Ruth's star on the Palm Springs Walk of Stars, Charolette Fox, natural resources director for the League of Women Voters of California said her organization has an incredible amount

of respect for Licata and decided on a bouquet of yellow roses and a red, white and blue crocheted lap blanket. The LWVC President, Jackie Jacobberger, sent a letter of congratulations in which she noted the appropriateness of this woman being honored on this day, coming as it did on the heels of Sunshine Week, a time when Leagues nationwide were involved in open government projects.

Ruth was raised from her wheelchair, waved to the crowd, and was the first to walk on her star, Star #268, one of the few dedicated to humanitarians, poets, and community activists. "My sisters

called me Mrs. Full-Charge," said Ruth. "I was never satisfied until I rode the bull." She started the American Civil Liberties Union Desert Chapter,

sued Desert Regional Medical Center for violations of the Ralph M. Brown act, and fought for environmental issues. "You usually don't get honored to do that," said Ruth.



Registration continued from page 1

that only positive information of a disqualifying characteristic should be used to disqualify a voter.

As we went to print, some positive steps had been taken to address this situation, but more were needed. The Secretary of State was instituting new database matching rules to eliminate some 30 percent of the rejected registrations. Legislation was being proposed to deal with another major category causing 60 percent of the problems. The League is continuing to work with all involved to resolve this problem. We believe that uniform and nondiscriminatory practices are important for any process concerning the registration of voters and that we must not go into this election season burdened by processes that disenfranchise voters.

Ed. Note: A note of caution for local Leagues, or any group registering voters close to the deadline for the June election: Try to do your voter registration effort well in advance of the deadline. Those registering shortly before the deadline may be caught up in this matching problem and local registrars may not have time to get them on the rolls.



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Not a Member of the League of Women Voters? 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 in the League is open to citizens of voting age. Others are invited to join as associate members.

- Yes, I want to join. Enclosed is my check for \$50.00 payable to the League of Women Voters of California.
- Please send me more information about the League and its publications.
- I would like to support the League with a gift of \$ _____

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Dues and gifts to the League of Women Voters of California are not tax deductible. Gifts to the LWVC Education Fund are tax deductible.

Join LWVCNews

LWVCNews is a free one-way information listserve. The LWVC/EF will use it to send various types of information, such as:

-  **action alerts**
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This is a great way for you to keep informed about the activities of your state League!

Send an email to

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