



The California VOTER



SPRING 2007

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DOLORES HUERTA

will be the featured speaker at the banquet on Saturday, May 19 during the upcoming LWVC convention. A Bakersfield resident, Ms. Huerta has been a labor activist since co-founding the United Farm Workers of America union in 1962. Winner of numerous awards and honors, she received an honorary degree from Princeton University in May 2006 and was described as follows: "Through her insatiable hunger of justice—La Causa—and her tireless advocacy, she has devoted her life to creative, compassionate, and committed citizenship." Ms. Huerta is a role model for us all—and reason enough to attend convention. ★

Rally Set for May 18-20 in Bakersfield

Join the League of Women Voters of California for *Convention 2007: Rally in the Valley*, May 18-20 in Bakersfield. Since "rally" is defined by www.dictionary.com as "a coming together of persons for common action in a mass meeting" to "gather, organize and inspire anew," it is an apt word to describe our action-packed biennial meeting.

Delegates to the convention come together to determine the direction of the League of Women Voters of California for the next two years, including the adoption of program. Prior to convention and guided by the LWVC program planning materials, local Leagues review existing positions and suggest issues on which the LWVC should focus its education and advocacy efforts in 2007-2009. The LWVC board then reviews the results of this program planning process and recommends specific issues to be acted on by the delegates to the convention. All local League suggestions, even those not recommended by the LWVC board, will be included in the convention workbook and may be considered by the delegates.

The convention delegates will also adopt the LWVC budget for 2007-08, and elect the officers and directors who will guide the League during the next two years.

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Voting Rights Victory

In mid-2006, the League of Women Voters of California Board of Directors voted to join a lawsuit defending the right of certain prisoners to vote [*League of Women Voters v. McPherson*]. The Attorney General had issued an opinion in 2005 that prisoners serving time in a county jail as a condition of their probation for conviction of a felony were ineligible to vote under California law. The League and other petitioners, represented by the ACLU of Northern California and the Social Justice Law Project, challenged that opinion. We believed that it was clearly contrary to the language and legislative history of article II, section 4 of the California Constitution which disenfranchises only people in prison and on parole.

On December 21, 2006 the California Court of Appeals ruled in our favor, stating: "...Where the court suspends imposition of sentence and places a defendant on

—continued on page 5



President's Message

W

hen I joined the League of Women Voters in 1966 one of the first things I heard was that the League is a “grassroots” organization. It did not take long to understand what that meant. And when I attended my first national convention in Atlanta in 1972, I experienced first-hand how local League members made decisions for the LWVUS. Since that time, I have attended many state and national conventions and come to fully appreciate being part of the “grassroots.” This issue of the *California VOTER* features articles about the state convention in Bakersfield in May 2007. The first call to convention has gone to local League presidents and they will be seeking delegates to represent their Leagues.

Many Leagues have trouble finding members who are willing to set aside three days for the convention. However, this is the opportunity for our California “grassroots” to help chart the course for the LWVC during the next two years. If you have never been a delegate, I encourage you to volunteer and try it. You will participate in making decisions and attend workshops that will increase your effectiveness as a League member. I find that the times for informal networking are often the most helpful in gleaning new ideas about how to do things more efficiently or effectively. The times for networking are definitely the most fun!

You need not be a voting delegate to take advantage of the training and networking. So please consider joining us in Bakersfield as we “Rally in the Valley.”

This issue of the *VOTER* also informs you about some of the opportunities for advocacy that we anticipate during the new session of the legisla-

ture. Our success in the past has been due to your support. What we achieve in the coming session will continue to depend on you, the “grassroots.” The League’s name carries weight, and a single letter from me in the name of the League will influence some votes. However, when you flood your legislators’ offices with phone calls, letters, and e-mails about an issue of importance to us, they sit up and take notice. You are their constituents and will cast ballots in their districts on election day.

We tend to associate “pros and cons” with information on ballot measures and something we do only for statewide elections. However, there are many times when we provide pros and cons on issues of significance, even when we have no applicable position. Without taking sides, the League can bring people of differing viewpoints together for thoughtful dialogue about controversial topics. Educating others about both sides of an issue can be a very effective way to influence public policy.

Since this will probably be the last *VOTER* published during my term, I want to thank you for the opportunity to serve you and for all your support. The past years have been challenging, but it has been a pleasure and an honor to be a leader of this great organization. I look forward to my last few months as League president and know that, with you, we can continue to make a difference in California.



— Jacqueline Jacobberger, *President*



An Invitation to Convention from the LWV Bakersfield

Executive Order S-5-05, as signed by Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger in June 2005, says it best, “Whereas, the San Joaquin Valley is a region rich in resources and important to California’s heritage, economy, environment, and identity. It is one of the most productive agricultural regions in the world—home to farmlands that feed the nation and the world. It encompasses three world class national parks that preserve the natural beauty of the Valley and mountains that abound it. The San Joaquin Valley is intersected by a transportation corridor that is critical to the state’s interstate commerce. Its people are hardworking and representative of many cultures, races and nationalities...”

There is much more to know about our area and the LWV Bakersfield wants to share that with other League members from around the state when they attend the convention in Bakersfield in May 2007.

Is shopping your thing? We are known for our antique stores in downtown Bakersfield. Or, just enjoy the marketplace at the convention and find local products that reflect our heritage.

Come and “Rally in the Valley” with us. Together, we can make this great state even better!

— Renee Nelson, LWV Bakersfield Convention Committee Chair



Visit www.lwvc.org to register online for **LWVC Convention: Rally in the Valley** and sign up for the convention listserve.

Explore Underground Water Facilities During Pre-Convention Tour

Explore the Kern County underground water storage facilities that are also wetlands during a three-hour tour on Thursday, May 17. Since LA area drinking water is stored in these facilities, this pre-convention tour is of special interest to Angelenos. Register for this tour at www.lwvc.org. ★

The California VOTER

Spring 2007

President: Jacqueline Jacobberger

Editor: Kate Quick

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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.

The League has two separate and distinct roles. The League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, which conducts our voter 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. However, the League is wholeheartedly political and works to influence policy through education and advocacy. 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.

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801 12th Street, Suite 220,
Sacramento, CA 95814

916 442.7215

916 442.7362 (Fax)

888 870.VOTE (Toll free)

lwvc@lwvc.org

www.lwvc.org

www.smartvoter.org

www.easylvoter.org

Dolores Huerta photo by
Angela Torres, Los Angeles



With the passage of infrastructure bond propositions 1B, 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 that will meet the current and future needs of California.

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:

Aviation	C-	Transportation	D+
Levees/Flood Control	F	Urban Runoff	D+
Parks & Open Spaces	D+	Wastewater	C+
Ports	C+	Water	C+
Solid Waste	B		

To see the explanations supporting these findings, go to the Special EOI Report at www.calinfrastructure.org/pdf/EOI%20Special%20Alert.pdf

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

LWVUS IMMIGRATION STUDY

Now available on www.lwv.org:

Guidelines for the LWVUS Immigration Study at the Local Level

Immigration Study Scope

Immigration Web Conference Video

Immigration 101: The Basics

A variety of background papers on immigration

Now available on the LWVC members only site:

How to Do the LWVUS Immigration Study at the Local Level

How to Direct a State Study

The February 2007 *National Voter*, found at www.lwv.org, features the first in a three-part series of articles on immigration, "U.S. Immigration: A Historical Perspective."

For questions related to the LWVUS Immigration Study, additional materials or assistance in developing a presentation, contact Chris Carson, LWVUS Immigration Study Committee, at carsonlwv@earthlink.net.

To learn how to access the LWVC members only site, ask your local League president or contact the LWVC office at 916 442.7215. ★

LWVC Pursues Redistricting and Campaign Finance Reform

The election is finished and, while we're done with that long laundry list of ballot measures, the League's advocacy work on core issues continues. Both redistricting and campaign finance remain as important topics for legislation and the League continues to be deeply involved.

In the area of redistricting, the League and its coalition partners are actively engaged in moving a comprehensive plan forward. We are pursuing both a bill in the legislature and the possibility of a citizens initiative measure. LWVC President Jacqueline Jacobberger appeared with several of our coalition members in a press conference in early December, joining the Governor in a call for the legislature to pass a redistricting reform measure. This issue is being covered by the press throughout the state and members will have no trouble finding out the latest news. We urge all Leagues to be alert to LWVC requests for advocacy as the legislative session progresses.

Clean money (public financing of campaigns) advocates have decided not to pursue a ballot initiative for statewide public financing of campaigns in 2008. However, this does not mean that advocacy has been shelved. The League and its partners will work actively to move a bill through the legislature and there are several legislators who seem willing to carry bills. Again, we will need the support of local Leagues in this effort.

However, campaign finance reform is not limited to state government. There is good work being done by Leagues at the local level. A growing number of Leagues are conducting local studies of campaign finance and others are advocating for reform in their cities and counties. To assist local Leagues in this work, and to further state advocacy, the LWVC is forming an off-board campaign finance committee. It will work with the board on state bills and initiatives and serve as a resource center for local Leagues interested in acting locally. If you are interested in this committee, contact Executive Vice President Donna Chipps, who is also the LWVC off-board Campaign Finance Director, at evp@lwvc.org.

—Chris Carson, Government Director, govt@lwvc.org

Upcoming Events

LWVC Board of Directors Meeting
March 10-11 ★ Sacramento
916 442.7215

California Budget Project, Moving Forward: How Can We Build a Better Future for All Californians?
March 15 ★ Sacramento
www.cbp.org

Clean Money Clean Cities: The Impact of Local Campaign Finance Reform
March 15 ★ Pasadena
March 23 ★ San Jose
www.cacleancities.org

Reproductive Freedom Day: Take Action, Create Change
March 21 ★ Sacramento
www.ccrf.eventbrite.com

EdSource Forum: Money Talks
April 19 ★ Pomona
April 20 ★ Palo Alto
www.edsource.org

LWVC Board of Directors Meeting
May 19 ★ Bakersfield
916 442.7215

LWVC Convention: Rally in the Valley
May 18-20 ★ Bakersfield
www.lwvc.org

LWVC Board of Directors Meeting
May 21 ★ Bakersfield
916 442.7215

Voting Rights *continued from page 1*

probation, the defendant has not suffered a conviction for purposes of article II, section 4. In addition, where a probationer is ordered to serve time in a local facility because either imposition or execution of sentence has been suspended, he or she has not been imprisoned for the conviction of a felony, but has been confined as a condition of probation. Finally, where by virtue of Penal Code section 18, a felony offense is punishable by fine or imprisonment in county jail, and the trial court..., enters judgment imposing something other than imprisonment in state prison, the crime is a misdemeanor for purpose of article II, section 4."

Secretary of State MacPherson stated that he welcomed the court's clarification of the issue and his staff immediately began notification of clerks and registrars so that they could correct their voting rolls. It is estimated that 100,000 people are affected by this decision.

To read the opinion of the court in full, visit www.courtinfo.ca.gov/opinions/documents/A114988.PDF

—Chris Carson



What People Are Saying About Smart Voter...

“Finally! The Website I’ve been looking for since my first time voting (6 years ago—you might remember that election—the first of two successful elections for our President). I’m 26 and the website was completely comprehensible for me as I’m sure it would be for anyone younger or older than me. I love this site and I hope that you all stick around for a very long time! How long have you been around, by-the-way?”

“*Smartvoter.org* is an excellent site! The content is incredibly informative and well researched. The site is easy to navigate and a good source for unbiased facts. Thank you!”

Smart Voter Delivers to Both Coasts

California voters visited Smart Voter in droves to find information about the November 7, 2006 general election. The Web site delivered 7,000,000 pages in the thirty days before the recent election — that’s four times the number of pages delivered during a comparable statewide election in 2002.

Because 6,000 other Web sites linked to *SmartVoter.org*, it appeared high in many Google search results. Smart Voter frequently appears as one of the top three Web sites in searches on propositions and candidates. Over 50 percent of Smart Voter’s visitors found the Web site by doing a search.

There were 5,000 candidates and 364 ballot measures on Smart Voter for the recent general election. Los Angeles and San Diego had the highest number of local ballot measures, 29 and 20 respectively.

Santa Clara County had the highest candidate participation rate; 81 percent of the 208 candidates used Smart Voter to convey their message to the public. San Diego County had the most candidates: 566. Orange County volunteers had the highest number of participating candidates at 296.

The City of Cupertino did an admirable job of featuring Smart Voter on the City Web site. The LWV Cupertino/Sunnyvale and many candidates enthusiastically referred voters to

the site, resulting in the highest number of ballot/polling place lookups—over 29,000.

Smart Voter made its New York debut on November 7 with information about state-level and Westchester County, NY candidates and races. Voters in New York visited more than 500,000 electronic pages to find the information they needed to cast an informed vote. “We had 22 candidates log on and enter information [in one day]. I’m very encouraged,” commented Rob Marchiony, Smart Voter New York State Coordinator.

Did you see the innovative video for Smart Voter that appeared on YouTube? Many individual “MySpace” bloggers sent friends and family to Smart Voter. One blogger asked, “Do you know what’s happening in your ‘hood? Visit Smart Voter.”

It is easy for voters of any age to find information on Smart Voter. Simply type in your address and zip code at *SmartVoter.org* to find your personalized ballot for the upcoming election, along with links to a wealth of in-depth, nonpartisan resources.

Smart Voter is an online voter service project of the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund.

For more information, contact Trudell Een at director@smartvoter.org or 408 323-9611. ★



Every car counts!

Donate your car, truck, motorcycle, RV or boat to the League of Women Voters.

We'll pick it up. You'll support the League, get a tax deduction and avoid the headache of disposing of an unwanted vehicle.

League of Women Voters of California Education Fund

www.lwvc.org **Call 800 320.0476**

Encouraging informed and active participation in government and influencing public policy since 1920.

Age Brings Wisdom— And Tax Breaks

If you're 70 or older and you have an IRA, a new federal law makes it advantageous for you to donate withdrawals from your IRA to the League in 2007. *IRA withdrawals of any amount up to \$100,000 that are donated to League of Women Voters of California Education Fund will be counted towards your minimum IRA distribution and excluded from your taxable income for the year.* To learn more about the law or to discuss such a donation, please contact Executive Director Jill Kaiser Newcom at 888-870-8683.

Listen to Voices of Reform Post-Election Series

The Commonwealth Club of California initiated Voices of Reform in 2004 to foster probing discussions of state-level governance reform issues, make these discussions available to a broad range of people throughout California, and encourage opinion leaders and policy makers to actively pursue promising reforms.

On January 17, Voices of Reform hosted a series of discussions in Sacramento:

- ★ Redistricting Reform in 2007:
What's It Going to Take?
- ★ "Decline to State" Voters:
California's Fastest Growing Party?
- ★ Taking Stock of California's Initiative Process:
Opportunities for Reform
- ★ Campaign Finance Reform:
Finding Bipartisan Common Ground

Audio versions of these panels are available at www.voicesofreform.org.

Regional workshops reach more than 150 members in 2006

Thanks to the following local Leagues and site coordinators for hosting a workshop:

- LWV San Luis Obispo County ★ *Trudy Jarrett*
- LWV Northwest Riverside County ★ *Ruth Wilson*
- LWV Los Altos/Mountain View Area ★ *Crownie Billik*
- LWV Redding Area ★ *Susan Wilson*
- LWV Beverly Hills ★ *Judy Borash*

Rally *continued from page 1*

We urge you to get involved in your local League's planning for convention, volunteer to be a delegate, and come to the convention prepared to participate in the decisions that will guide the LWVC.

While You Are There

During the convention many League members will engage in caucuses to promote particular issues.

Workshops on Friday and Saturday will provide educational opportunities for all who register, even those who are not voting delegates. You won't want to miss a two-part workshop on the California state budget composed of presentations by Next Ten on the budget and how we fund infrastructure (Part I) and how to track government spending in your own community (Part II—"Follow the Money").

Other workshop topics may include membership recruitment, alternate board organizational structures, marketing voter service materials, maximizing online voter service outreach, "green" communities, a League study process tutorial, and alternative fuel sources.

There will be special, pre-convention activities on Thursday afternoon, so plan to come early. These special events include a half-day training with certification for Neighborhood Association Election Management and a visit to the Kern County Water Agency hosted by the LWV Bakersfield.

Sign Up!

It is not too early for League members to plan to attend the convention. The number of voting delegates allotted to each League is based on the number of members, but individual members are always welcome to register as visitors and to attend all convention activities. More information, online registration and the details of Convention 2007 are available at www.lwvc.org.

—Donna Chipps, *Executive Vice President*, evp@lwvc.org

—Robbie Davis, *LWVC Education Fund Chair*, edfund@lwvc.org

Not a member? Join the League of Women Voters.

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.

Name

Address

City

ZIP

Phone

E-mail

Please complete and mail this form to: **LWVC**

801 12th St., Suite 220, Sacramento, CA 95814

916 442.7215 ★ 916 442.7362 fax ★ 888 870.VOTE toll-free

www.lwvc.org ★ lwvc@lwvc.org

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



Easy Voter Guide

The Easy Voter Guide Project brought ready, reliable and readable information in five languages to 3.1 million Californians for the November 7, 2006 election, thanks to The James Irvine Foundation, California Secretary of State's Office, the California State Library and The San Francisco Foundation.

To learn about the *Easy Voter Guide*, visit www.easyvoter.org.

CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Please send change of address to:

MAIL LWVUS Member Services
1730 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

FAX Attention: Member Services
202 429.0854

E-MAIL Attention: Member Services
lwv@lwv.org



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