



California VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF CALIFORNIA

Action and Membership

October 2003

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

During the campaign for the recall election, a gubernatorial candidate publicly complained that the League of Women Voters excluded him from its debates. Many of you e-mailed me to express your concerns. Although I tried to respond individually to each of you, I realize that there must be others who question the League's stance.

For the recall election we had 135 certified candidates on the ballot—candidates from all seven political parties recognized by the Secretary of State, and dozens of candidates with no party affiliation. To be fair to all the candidates, the criteria for the debates had to be objective and to ensure that televised forums did not include 135 candidates.

Whenever there are multiple candidates for an elected office, it is necessary to set some quantifiable and impartial criteria for deciding who will be included in a forum. For statewide contests, the League usually uses a percentage of support indicated in one or more respected polls with a cutoff date as close to the event as is technically possible.

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ACTION REPORT

Budget Accountability Act: Thank you to all the League members who gathered signatures for this proposed initiative to change the vote requirement for adopting a state budget from 2/3 to 55%. A remarkable twenty percent of the 1.4 million signatures were gathered by volunteers. We will soon know if the measure qualifies for the March 2004 ballot.

Community College System: LWVC sent a letter in support of open access to the Community College Board of Governors' special session on access on September 9. LWVC also wrote asking the Assembly Committee on Higher Education to support sufficient resources for the colleges to fulfill their overall mission and ensure access for all Californians to a quality higher education.

Health Care: LWVC supports both SB 2 (Burton) and SB 921 (Kuehl). We were active during the final steps toward passage as changes were made to SB 2, a bill that requires employers to provide health benefits. We also took part in talks about the universal health care bill SB 921, a two-year bill that will continue to be debated in 2004.

Water: LWVC wrote to the U.S. House Subcommittee on Water and Power for changes to H.R. 2828. The changes would affect the CALFED Bay-Delta Program whose purpose is to restore the ecological health of Central Valley Rivers and the San Francisco Bay-Delta Estuary.

Marion Taylor
Legislation Director

STATE WATER PLAN

The California Department of Water Resources (DWR) will soon begin to publish its required five-year update to the California Water Plan. Polly Smith, LWVC Off-board Program Director for Water and Agriculture, and Jack Sullivan, LWVC Natural Resources Director, have contributed to the update as members of the Water Plan Advisory Committee (AC).

The AC consists of about seventy members including representatives of agriculture, urban water districts, businesses, environmentalists, Native Americans, and environmental justice advocates. Since January of 2001, the AC has met about twenty-five times. In addition, hundreds of workgroup and caucus meetings have fed into the main AC.

Smith and Sullivan have attended almost all of the AC meetings plus many of the workgroup meetings. Both Smith and Sullivan participate in the Environmental Caucus, which feeds into the ecology and environmental parts of the plan. In addition, Smith and Sullivan have submitted written comments on various draft chapters that DWR staff has produced, and Sullivan has co-authored a short paper submitted to the DWR on environmental justice and water.

DWR will issue a public comment draft of the first of four volumes by December 31, 2003. After public comment, the volume will be edited to reflect the nature of the comments. Smith and Sullivan will likely be involved in that rewrite and in the development of the remaining three volumes.

Jack Sullivan
Natural Resources Director, LWVC

ISSUES FOR EMPHASIS: A STATUS REPORT

Other than action, here is what is happening with LWVC's five Issues for Emphasis.

State And Local Finances: Education consists of suggestions for local programs and camera-ready material for use in local VOTERS. The material is distributed in UPDATES.

Health Care: To facilitate statewide communication, a health care listserv will be set up in October. The Ad Hoc Committee plans to send its proposal for education and action to the Board for consideration in November. Information on the plan should be available in November UPDATE.

Education Update: The Board has approved the scope of the study, and the eight-member committee has started the study process.

Community College System: The Board has approved the Ad Hoc Planning Committee's interim plans. The committee plans to establish a listserv to facilitate statewide communication and to send a proposal for education and action to the Board in November.

Energy Update: The Ad Hoc Planning Committee is working on a plan to recommend to the Board.

Marion Taylor, Legislation Director

EF REACHES OUT— To Venezuela

Mony Flores-Bauer of the League of Women Voters of Oakland recently represented the League of Women Voters in a one-hour video interview on California's recall election. The Venezuelan government requested the interview because of the growing tension around Venezuela's democratically elected President Hugo Chavez and a referendum process that is underway.

When, for the interview, the U.S. State Department needed a Spanish-speaking expert to discuss how to educate and involve voters, the Department—naturally—thought of the League. Chon Gutierrez, Deputy Secretary of State for Operations in Sacramento, provided legal and constitutional expertise.

In her opening statement, Flores-Bauer gave an overview of the League's history and mission. Following the opening statements, an audience of 40 to 50 representatives from Venezuela's Congress and their 17 political parties, journalists and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) asked wide-ranging questions. Representatives from women's NGOs were particularly interested in whether women were intimidated from voting and how the League helps with civic empowerment.

In the course of the interview, Flores-Bauer referred to the *Easy Voter Guide, Voting is Easy as 1-2-3*, our "Running and Winning" curriculum, and the LWVUS publication *Guide to the Presidential Election* to illustrate the range of previous and current voters service projects.

Flores-Bauer said, "I sensed an interest and appreciation for the role of the League in the U.S. [In Venezuela] they have NGOs, but not with the same history and unique ability to cross into political and government sectors as a respected voter education source." She felt it was especially important that we were able to present a Spanish-speaking voice from the civic participation arena in California and that we were able to demonstrate how, despite all the hoopla of this special election, the work and impact of the League goes on year-round.

Many thanks to Mony Flores-Bauer for taking League's mission to Venezuela!

Robbie Davis
Education Fund Chair

ONE WORLD Countless Challenges Unlimited Solutions



The LWVC is proud to be one of 25 Tech Museum Laureates for 2003. Specifically honored for its election Web site **smartvoter.org**, the League is one of five Laureates in

the area of Equality.

The Tech Awards were inspired in part by the American Council/United Nations University's State of the Future report, and the United Nations is a partner in the award process.

Inaugurated in 2001, The Tech Museum Awards honor those who use technology to address challenges facing humanity in the areas of Education, Equality, Environment, Economic Development and Health.

For 2003, an international panel of judges selected 25 Laureates from over 500 nominations from 70 countries. Five winners, one Laureate from each of the five categories, will share \$250,000.

The final winners will be announced on October 15 in San Jose at a gala dinner presented by Applied Materials, Inc.

Trudell Een
Project Director
Smart Voter and Guide to Government

California VOTER

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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.

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For this election the percentage was set significantly lower than usual to take into account the more widely divided support among the large list. The rules for each forum were set up in collaboration with the other partners in the events, and the candidates received letters in advance advising them of the criteria for inclusion. Once the criteria have been agreed upon and sent to all the candidates, it is unfair to the other candidates to change the rules because we would like to see a particular candidate or candidates included.

League members take pride in our long and respected history as a nonpartisan voter education organization. We do not arbitrarily include or exclude any candidate based on party affiliation or lack thereof. We are committed to educating voters as fully as possible about candidates. Every candidate was invited to post information on our Smart Voter Web site, and the short list of candidates listed in the supplementary material for the *Easy Voter Guide*, in which the League is a partner, included the candidate who was dissatisfied with our policy.

This was an historic special election. In it the League members worked hard to continue the mission we started more than 80 years ago – strengthening democracy by acting as an unbiased resource that both candidates and voters can rely on.

Jacqueline Jacobberger
President
The League of Women Voters of California

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 or emailed to Lynda Hungerford, Communications Director, via our Web site.

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