



California VOTER

April 2004

GREETINGS FROM THE “OTHER SIDE”



I've been given the opportunity as Chair of the LWVC Education Fund to write a few words for this issue of the VOTER.

Since we've just finished another election cycle, I must recognize League members who worked so hard to make sure voters were informed about issues and candidates.

One group deserving special recognition is the Pros and Cons team. Writers and editors included Chris Carson, Anne Layzer, Rosalind Rude, Beth Bhatnagar and Trudy Schafer. Thanks also to the myriad of hard-working League members throughout California for becoming informed, speaking to the public, presenting candidate forums and registering voters. You are the true heart of Voters Service.

Smart Voter was a standout too. Project Director Trudell Een and her team once again did a masterful job of getting all the pertinent information onto Smart Voter and then making sure people knew about it. The web site recorded 1.2 million hits for the March primary including almost 350,000 on March 2!

Finally, I urge as many League members as possible to attend the LWVC Leadership Council in May. There will be several valuable and informative workshops and much important discussion about future plans for the LWVC. Council is not just for presidents any more. I'm looking forward to seeing you in Sacramento!

Robbie Davis,
Education Fund Chair

LOBBYING FOR HAVA

On December 9, 2003 the Senate approved the appointment of the members of the Election Assistance Commission (EAC):

- Gracia Hillman, former executive director of the LWVUS
- Paul DeGregorio of the International Foundation for Election Systems
- Raymundo Martinez III, an Austin lawyer
- Deforest Soaries Jr., former New Jersey Secretary of State.

The EAC is a part of the Help America Vote Act (HAVA) of 2002, created to address the issues brought to light by the 2000 presidential election. The Commission will serve as a national clearinghouse and resource for gathering information and reviewing procedures with respect to the administration of federal elections. In addition to its advisory role, the EAC is responsible for distributing federal election reform funding to each state.

With less than a year until Election Day 2004, timing is critical. State election officials have been anxiously waiting for Congress to meet its obligations. Now that the EAC is in place and money to implement state HAVA plans will begin flowing, officials can get moving fixing the problems in our elections systems.

Although the EAC had its first meeting in early January, they have not been able to estimate when they will begin the 45-day publication of the State Plans in the Federal Register which is required before the states can apply for Title II and Title III money. In the meantime, the League is lobbying for the \$1.5 billion for 2004 which is being considered by the U.S. Senate. League members should continue this lobbying effort.

Given the difficult fiscal circumstances facing state and local governments, immediate and full funding of HAVA is needed now in order to make essential prog-

ress before Election Day in 2004. Without the strong leadership that HAVA promised at the federal level, states and local governments simply do not have the ability to complete implementation of the important reforms that they are now required to make.

No civil right is more fundamental to America's democracy than the right to vote. As our nation spends billions of dollars helping to promote democracies abroad, Congress simply should not allow doubts about the legitimacy of our electoral processes to continue to linger here at home.

Marion Taylor,
Legislation Director

EDUCATION UPDATE

HEWLETT FOUNDATION GRANT

The LWVCEF has received \$150,000 from the Hewlett Foundation to fund both the Education Update Study and the education portion of the Community College System Issue for Emphasis.

As part of the grant, we received minigrant funding to be used for the local forums and other activities that many local Leagues organize around their participation in state studies.

SCOPE OF STUDY

The LWVC Board of directors approved scope of the Education Update:

1. A review of the existing LWVC Education position, supporting consensus reports, and study materials to identify areas that need to be revisited and updated.
2. A study of issues that have emerged since the 1983-85 LWVCEF Education in California study in the areas of finance, governance, school district organization, accountability, teaching, and curriculum.
3. An updated assessment and analysis of ongoing fundamental questions regard-

ing the separation of finance and program control, the role of the state relative to districts and school sites, articulation among levels of education, and the role of early childhood education (readiness to learn).

4. A review of the federal No Child Left Behind Act as it impacts education in California.

Kathy Webb,
Social Policy Director

NEW DIRECTOR

At their January meetings, the boards of LWVC and LWVCEF welcomed a new director—Nikki Harris. She will assist Sue Kelley with voters service functions during this busy election year.

Harris has belonged to six Leagues in four states.



She joined the Los Angeles League in 1976 and moved back to California in December 2003, when she resigned from her positions as Development Vice President on the New York State League board and Treasurer of LWV Buffalo/Niagara. She previously was Buffalo's Voters

Service Director for three years.

Harris has worked at all levels of League. She served on the New Jersey State League board as Director and Vice President of Voters Service. She is past president of local Leagues in New Jersey and Pennsylvania. In addition, three times in the 1990s Harris visited the former Soviet Union, where she conducted seminars explaining grassroots activism and "making democracy work." Harris also worked in the banking industry for over 35 years.

We're glad to have her on board.

Robbie Davis,
Chair LWVC Ed Fund

CLEAN MONEY BILL

INTRODUCED

The League has long supported the concept of publicly financed campaigns as the most comprehensive and effective way to end undue special interest influence in campaigns for public office. Public financed campaigns would level the playing field and encourage a greater number of qualified candidates to run for office. Today, many potential candidates are discouraged by the huge campaign war chests of incumbents and by the time required to raise comparable money.

LWV California is encouraged that Assembly member Loni Hancock and her co-authors have introduced The Clean Money and Clean Elections Act of 2004 (AB 2949) in this legislative session. The League, however, has not taken a position in support of AB 2949 because there are many details to be worked out in order to make this the best comprehensive strategy for the financing of campaigns in California. The League is committed to helping in that effort.

Donna Chipps,
Campaign Financing Director

LEAGUE GROWS IN BENICIA

The LWVC Board of Directors welcomes a new Member at Large Unit (MAL) in Benicia. Management Training Advisor Patsy White will advise the Benicia MAL as it begins the process of becoming a League. The Benicia MAL already has 16 paid members and has selected Luana Luther, whose name is not capitalized, to be its chairperson.

Luther has served on the Oregon state board and several other members have previous League experience as well. Luther can be reached at lusaz@msn.com or 707-746-5559.

Beverly King,
Member Services Director

SOCIAL POLICY

LWVC is joining several other organizations in educational initiatives related to social policy issues. The educational initiatives include:

Preschool for All Forums

The League is joining Children Now and Preschool California to hold regional meetings around the state on the topic voluntary preschool for all. The meetings will occur April through June in Riverside, Fresno, Orange County, Sacramento, San Diego, and Santa Clara.

Health Care and the State Budget--Town Hall Meetings

LWV California will join other organizations led by Health Access, to co-sponsor a series of Town Hall Meetings concerning

- the local impact of state budget cuts on health and human services
- the local impact of various revenue increase proposals
- the opinions and preferences of voters, which will be reported back to area legislators and the Governor in a written report.

Juvenile Justice Videoconference

LWV California is joining the California Wellness Foundation in producing a June 3 satellite videoconference, "Keeping Youth Safe: Strategies That Work to Prevent Violence—A Statewide Dialogue on Youth Violence Prevention."

This live transmission will link California state and local policymakers with law enforcement personnel, health professionals, advocates and youth in communities across the state. The event is intended to encourage government agencies to continue investing in programs and policies that prevent violence against youth programs.

Kathy Webb,
Social Policy Director

MARCH FOR WOMEN'S LIVES

The League of Women Voters of the United States is one of 700 organizations participating in the March for Women's Lives in Washington, DC on Sunday, April 25, 2004.

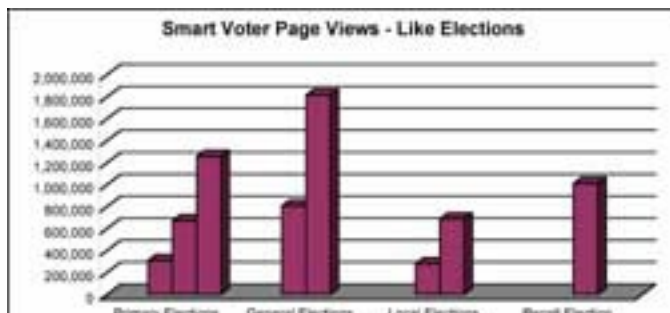
The March begins at noon at the National Mall. Marchers will begin assembling on the Mall, between the Smithsonian museums (between 3rd St. and 14th St.) as early as 10.a.m. After the March there will be a rally on the National Mall from 1-4 p.m. Special seating is available for people with disabilities; the route is also wheelchair accessible; and transportation is being provided for those who can't negotiate the route.

For information, especially if you need special assistance, check the Web site of the March organizers <http://www.marchforwomen.org>. If you want to march under the League banner, contact lobbying@lwv.org. If you would like to know who is going from California, check with Sheila Hoff (choff74523@aol.com); she also has some detailed information about March logistics.

Sheila Hoff,
Reproductive Choices Program Director

SMART VOTER GROWS

More and more voters are searching the Internet for political information these days and many found what they wanted on the League's internationally acclaimed Web site, <http://www.smartvoter.org>. Curious



voters studied over 1 1/4 million pages for the March Primary—double the number of pages viewed during the 2002 primary elections.

“This is so much better than what we had before that clearly, you have taken our Democracy to the Next level...Again, thank you, thank you,” said one visitor.

There were 2,274 candidates, 713 contests and 194 ballot issues listed on Smart Voter. However, voters easily and quickly navigated to the information they needed.

“Finally, information on the Internet that is accurate and useful. I probably would not vote if it wasn't for the info I get from your site. Thank you!” said another happy customer.

League volunteers in 23 counties worked fervently to provide election information for all Californians. Their efforts were acknowledged with these comments, “You do the community a tremendous service by having this website,” “the most informative [Web site] especially with regards to...judicial” and “a valuable tool with effective links full of content.”

Voters can turn to Smart Voter again in November for “accurate and useful” information on California elections.

Trudell Een,
Project Director, Smart Voter

COMMUNITY COLLEGE LEGISLATION

There is widespread interest in rethinking how we pay for higher education in California. The Assembly Higher Education Committee has continued to explore alternatives to the present system of funding in a set of hearings begun last fall. Speakers have pointed to the mismatch between priorities set by financial limits and those determined by the state's goals for its educational institutions.

Three committees, the Assembly Higher Education Committee, the Senate Budget and Fiscal Review Committee on Education, and the Joint Committee on the Master Plan will all make specific legislative proposals later this spring, attempting to simplify and

stabilize education funding as the state's current fiscal situation becomes clearer.

The League's Community College System Committee will monitor the hearings and report on legislative initiatives as they are written. We will also host a clearinghouse on developments relating to state initiatives via a link on the Members Only page of the League's Web site, www.ca.lwv.org/lwvonly. League members will be able to access the site at any time to find out what new legislation is being proposed, the latest news on the budget front, hearings, and any relevant new research report information.

If you would like to be part of the LWVC Community College information network, please send your name and e-mail, and the names of your local League and community college district, to Helene Lecar, hlecar1@ix.netcom.com.

Helene Lecar,
Community College System Committee Chair

COMMUNITY COLLEGE MARCH

The LWVC joined in support of students from all over the state who marched on the Capitol on March 15 to protest proposed state budget cuts which reduce access to the community colleges.

Many objected, with T-shirts, banners and chants, to the idea of solving the state's fiscal problems on



Fiberglass figures representing missing students in the march.

STATE COUNCIL

The California Connection
Communication for 2004
May 14 and 15, 2004

Council 2004 invites local League Presidents and two or three League leaders from each League to participate in a stunning array of workshops and deliberations that will determine the League's future in California.

SACRAMENTO LOBBY DAY

Tuesday, June 8 from 9:00 to 4:30 is the date for the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom's lobby day in Sacramento.

the backs of the students. The students marched with several dozen statues, 3/4-size figures crafted of fiberglass, symbolizing the 95,000 "missing" students the community colleges are not able to accommodate this year because so many classes have been cut.

Although the Governor's January proposal for 2004-05 does not impose major cuts on the community colleges, it redirects substantial numbers of students from the CSU and UC systems to the community colleges, which are already turning students away.

Other groups noted on March 15 that the Governor's proposed fee increase would take fees to \$26 per unit, up from \$11 per unit in 2002 for a combined two-year jump of 136%. The League's Community College System position does not address the appropriate level of community college fees.

Helene Lecar,
Community College System Committee Chair

BALLOT MEASURES

The California League has taken a stand on two measures that will be on the November 2004 ballot:

- **Access to Government Information**, also known as SCA 1 or the Sunshine Amendment. We support this constitutional amendment to make public access to meetings and public records a constitutional right; it puts the principles of the Brown Act into the state constitution.
- **Referendum Petition to Overturn Amendments to Health Care Coverage Requirements**. The League opposes overturning the Health Insurance Act of 2003 known as SB 2. It will be important to make clear to voters what a YES or NO vote means when the wording is established for the ballot.

The League has taken no position yet on any of the other measures likely to be on the November ballot. At its March meeting the state League's Legislation Committee discussed three of them:

- **Local Taxpayers and Public Safety Protection Act**. The purpose of this measure is to provide adequate, stable revenue to local government. It requires voter approval before the Legislature removes local tax money from the control of local government "as described in this measure," and it allows local government to suspend performing state mandates that are not reimbursed.
- **Improving Classroom Education Act**. This initiative would increase school funding for K-12 education and provide funds for a voluntary universal preschool program. The money to implement the initiative would come from an increase in taxes on commercial real property.
- **Mental Health Services Expansion and Funding**. This measure would provide money to counties to expand services and develop innovative programs and integrated service plans for mentally ill children, adults and seniors. The money would come from an added 1% tax on incomes of \$1 million or more.

Members of the Legislation Committee will wait for more information about the probable effects of these proposals so that the committee can consider how League positions relate to the proposals.

Marion Taylor,
Legislation Director

The California VOTER is a publication of the League of Women Voters of California.

President: Jacqueline Jacobberger
Editor: Lynda Hungerford

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 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 Website.

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