



Santa Cruz Voter

League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER 2009

VOLUME 44, NUMBER 2

EXPLORE GOVERNMENT REFORM AT LUNCH WITH THE LEAGUE

Our exciting series of lunch with topical programs continues in October and November with experts on government reform. Please invite friends, co-workers and neighbors for these important and informational meetings.

Our speaker on Saturday, October 31 is Trudy Schafer, Senior Director of Program For the League of Women Voters of California since 1997. Her topic is "Redistricting 101--How Reform is Going to Work". Hear one of the most knowledgeable experts from State LWV speak about what is happening with Proposition 11 as we move towards reform.

November 21, Zabrae Valentine, Deputy Director of California Forward will speak on "Democracy on Your Doorstep (Or, Making Government work in Sacramento by getting it out of Sacramento...)" For more on California Forward, see page 3.

Where: DeLaveaga Golf Lodge Restaurant, 401 Upper Park Road, Santa Cruz

When: Saturday, October 31 and Saturday November 21, 2009, 11:30 A.M. to 1:30 P.M.

Cost: Prepaid \$15 per person for each luncheon, including tax and gratuity, with checks payable to LWVSCC and sent to:

Barbara Lewis, 851 Lost Acre Drive, Felton, CA 95018

The restaurant management requires an approximate count of attendees one week prior to each luncheon. They would also greatly appreciate a statement of menu choices to prepare for us.

Menu choices: Please indicate a menu choice for each event either in the memo section of your check or on a separate piece of paper from the following selections: Turkey, Swiss Cheese and Avocado Sandwich with Fresh Fruit Cup, Veggie Sandwich with Fruit Cup, Caesar Chicken Salad or Shrimp Louie Salad served with French Bread and Butter. Coffee or tea is included.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Welcome to our New Members! I look forward to meeting you and participating in League with you.

The League of Women Voters nationwide has gained its good reputation through almost 90 years of hard work and dedication to its principles of nonpartisanship and speaking to issues only after extensive study and reaching consensus.

Candidates of every stripe have come to respect us for our fair and nonpartisan forums. When they see our even treatment of each of them, their appreciation grows.

The public flocks to our "Pros and Cons" meetings because they know we will explain the Propositions clearly and fairly. I came upon a woman the other day who said, "I know you. You are from the League of Women Voters and came to our group to explain the Propositions. We count on you."

Elected Officials respect us because they know that if the League speaks, we have studied the issue and know what we are talking about. They appreciate reasoned testimony even when they may disagree with our position.

Newspaper editors print our letters to the editor and/or Op-Ed pieces because we don't write them unless we have studied and reached consensus on the issue and we have a reasoned argument that is important for the public to know.

This level of discipline has served us well. Your Board has adopted the nonpartisan policy printed for you in your Handbook. We pledge to faithfully follow its tenets to maintain and grow the good name of the League.

Here's to a good year working together!

Ann Wise
President

First Lunch With The League a Success

Theresa Rouse, Assistant Superintendent Educational Services, Santa Cruz County Office of Education, enthralled members and guests with her talk on the reality of education in our county at the September 26 event. Speaking plainly, Ms. Rouse, stated that due to recent State budget cuts, California schools are probably now at the bottom of all states in per-pupil expenditures, far below the national average. She said that while maintaining fiscal health is a big challenge, local school districts do a lot with just a little money. In spite of lack of funds, California ranks highest in state-prescribed education standards in the nation.

LOCAL eVOTER WELL RECEIVED

Many thanks for the many good comments received from League members about our initial issue. After reading the eVOTER online, long time member, Ilse Rowe, enthused "I enjoyed it much more than I expected". If you received this edition as a hard copy and would like to try the online version, please send your e-mail address to me at

krze4kats@sbcglobal.net.

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CHALLENGING STATE GOVERNMENT STATUS QUO

Don't miss the third in our of series of Lunch with the League on November 21 when Zabrae Valentine, Deputy Director of California Forward, speaks on bold proposals to improve our inept state government.

As stated by California Forward, "California can conquer the tremendous challenges before us today. We can continue to have good jobs; to promote growth of resilient, safe and healthy communities; and to preserve our natural resources. To do this however, we must govern smarter, which means increasing the ability of communities to solve problems locally or regionally and be accountable for results. It also means instituting new practices at the state level regarding how we budget, how we plan for the future, and how we make sure promises made by our elected leaders are kept."

According to their website, "California Forward is a diverse group of Californians working in a bipartisan way to improve quality of life for all Californians by creating a government that is more responsive, representative and cost-effective. A bipartisan Leadership Council selects and guides projects, which combine sound policy analysis and meaningful civic engagement to develop proposals and broad coalitions support. Through this public interest approach, California Forward is rallying the ambition, innovation and optimism of Californians to overcome the distrust and partisanship." Please go to www.caforward.org and be inspired.

Local League Invited to UN Dinner

The UNA of Santa Cruz will celebrate U.N. Day with a dinner at 5:30 PM on Sat., Oct. 24 at United Methodist Church, 250 California St., Santa Cruz 95060. New York UN attorney Denise Scotto will speak on the Treaty for the Rights of Women, CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women). Proceeds of the dinner will help the ratification of CEDAW. Tickets are \$24-\$50, sliding scale. Reservations are necessary. Call Pat Arnold at 425-7618 or go to the UNA/UNICEF store at 903 Pacific Ave., Santa Cruz

**BE READY FOR LUNCH WITH THE LEAGUE
OCTOBER 31**

To educate League members and the public about the Voters FIRST Act, California's new law for drawing boundary lines for State Assembly, State Senate, and State Board of Equalization districts, Trudy Schafer, Senior Director of Program for LWVC will speak at the second Lunch with the League on Saturday, Oct. 31. To learn more about this critical subject, check the California State Auditor's web page:
www.bsa.ca.gov/redistricting
for up to the minute information.

THANK YOU FOR A JOB WELL DONE

Bouquets of thanks and well wishes to April Bartel for editing and designing our local League's VOTER for over a decade. Her dedication and time have been much appreciated. In fact, under April's direction, Santa Cruz County's VOTER has received several awards. Fortunately for our League, April will still be available to share her creative skills at special events.

Join the League of Women Voters

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to men and women of voting age who are U.S. citizens. Others are welcome to join the League as associate members.

Send your check payable to League of Women Voters with this form to LWVSCC, Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010-1745.

___ \$65 Individual annual membership
___ \$97.50 Two members in a household
___ Contribution \$ _____

Checks made out to LWVSCC are not tax deductible. To make a tax-deductible donation, write a separate check to LWVSCC Education Fund.

Name _____
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The Santa Cruz Voter is published regularly by the League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County.

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LWVC REGIONAL WORKSHOP

The Palo Alto League invites you to learn what the League does and how it does it!

Saturday, October 24, 9:30 AM - 2:30 PM
450 Bryant Street, Palo Alto

\$25 per person/ \$30 after October 16
(\$15 if you bring your own lunch)

Register and pay by credit card at the LWVC website: www.lwvc.org

Santa Cruz County League members will be carpooling to the workshop. To join us, or find out more information, call Eloise Graham at 426-4526 or e-mail her at krze4kats@sbcglobal.net

LWVC OBSERVES HIGH SCHOOL DROPOUT RATE HEARING

"Defining the Problem" was the title of Assemblymember Alyson Huber's first of a planned series of hearings on lowering California's high school dropout rate. In a packed hearing room at the state capitol on August 28th observers heard from experts in the field. Some highlights and nuggets:

1. Keric Ashley, Director of Data Management, CA Dept. of Education, explained how CALPADS (CA Longitudinal Pupil Achievement Data System) is now able to give data to school districts regarding their dropout rates. "Data doesn't solve the problem, but spotlighting the issue helps."

2. Russ Rumberger, Director, CA Dropout Research Project (www.cdrp.ucsb.edu):

[a] The single best predictor of high school dropouts is failure in 9th grade. Additional key factors are low GPA or a student being retained, resulting in being older than his/her grade level peers.

[b] There's an economic cost to high school dropouts to the individual, to society, and to our tax system. (The highest unemployment rate in the nation is from high school dropouts.)

[c] English Language Learners are 15% of high school students, but 30% of dropouts.

[d] 1% of schools (25) account for 21% of dropouts.

[e] 10 school districts in CA account for 36% of dropouts.

[f] Schools matter. (Low income areas have much higher rates of dropouts than high income areas.)

KEY IMPLICATIONS: Start before high school. Focus on individuals and institutions that support students (families, schools, communities). We must focus on family dynamics. (Is the family poor? on welfare? Are family members in gangs? Did family members complete school? etc.)

3. Rick Braziel, Sacramento Police Chief on the social consequences of high school dropouts:

[a] Dropouts are 3.5 times more likely to be arrested.

[b] If we reduced dropouts by 10% we could reduce 500 murders and 20,000 assaults in CA.

[c] The sooner we get kids into preschool, the better. (Preschoolers learn social skills like "Don't take my toy; let's share.")

Some solutions: Shift the focus away from being punitive to a whole child/whole system approach; keep kids engaged through mentoring, sports, and leadership programs; give students job training. Training them today is a good investment in tomorrow. Chief Braziel's conclusion: We can't arrest away the problem. We need to invest in children, beginning in preschool.

4. Anthony Amato, Superintendent, Stockton Unified School System, reported how his school district used explicit steps to move from being a "dropout factory" to being a community that was invested in a college-going culture for their kids. One action? Their community banded together to help all high school students take the SAT.

Lastly, a few Community Comments bear particular attention:

[a] Don't focus on the "achievement gap"; focus on the rate of dropouts.

[b] Thousands of students are dropping out because they cannot pass the high school exit exam. There should be alternative methods available for students to show their proficiency.

[c] The decrease in vocational education programs has resulted in an increase in high school dropouts. It's critical that we bring back Career Technical Education.

[d] Don't forget GATE kids (gifted and talented). When classrooms teach to a standardized test many of these kids check out mentally or drop out.

By Ellen Wheeler, observer for LWVC Education Committee, chair of the Education Committee, chair of the Education Committee for LWV Santa Clara County, and member LWV Los Altos Mountain View.

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IN MEMORIUM

Recently, our organization lost two amazing advocates for voter rights and social justice. Rosalie Kraft, a dedicated volunteer and leader in many organizations and her church, as well as being a long time member of LWVSCC, passed away May 9, 2009. Beginning with marching against the Vietnam war, she was an ardent champion of world peace. Her compassion for others made her an ideal role model.

Betsy Darrow, past League president and member for over 40 years, passed away on September 11, 2009. Raised in a vibrantly political family, she grew up valuing community service and participation in the democratic process. Betsy served in just about every Board position in our local League over the years, registered voters and was always happy to open her home for meetings. She was a leader in her church, other caring organizations and in the community. She was an inspiration to all who knew her.

They are both missed by their many friends in League and in the community.

MARK YOUR CALENDAR

October

Wed., Oct. 14, 1-3 pm

League Board Meeting at Santa Cruz County Bank
720 Front Street, Santa Cruz 95060

Sat., Oct. 31, 11:30 am-1:30 pm

Lunch with the League
Topic: Plans for Redistricting, Legislative Boundaries
Speaker: Trudy Schafer, Sr. Program Director, LWVC
Where: DeLaveaga Golf Lodge Restaurant, 401 Upper Park Road, Santa Cruz 95065

November

Wed., Nov. 11, 1-3 pm

League Board Meeting at the home of Sandy Warren, 150 Scenic St, Santa Cruz 95060

Sat., Nov. 21, 11:30 am-1:30 pm

Lunch with the League
Topic: Proposals for reforming the State budget and fiscal system
Speaker: Zabrae Valentine, Deputy Director of California Forward
Where: DeLaveaga Golf Lodge Restaurant, 401 Upper Park Road, Santa Cruz 95065

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