



THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

October 2012

Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

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Message from our President, Mary Giventer:

When pollster John Zogby addressed the League convention in Washington D.C., he said it was one speaking engagement he had to accept because the League of Women Voters was a room full of the ultimate political junkies. Well, fellow political junkie, this is our season. The League's mission has always been to encourage voting and to inform and educate voters. The events we have had so far have successfully done just that. At the Rotary sponsored Senior Stride event, we registered a 66-year-old woman who had never in her life previously voted. At an advocacy table at the Modesto Farmer's Market the interest in League positions on the ballot measures was so high we actually ran out of flyers and had to run into the library to make more copies. As you can see on the Voter Services calendar in this issue, we have many more events planned before the election. Whether your preference is to register voters, hand out materials on League positions, assist at a candidate's forum, or research and present the Pros and Cons of one of the initiatives, there is something for everyone to do, and we need everyone's help. Do not be afraid to volunteer because you have not done this before. There are experienced members who are more than willing to mentor and guide you. This is a very busy season for the League, but if we each contribute a few hours of time we can have productive and fulfilling Voter Service events and know that WE CONTRIBUTED TO MAKING DEMOCRACY WORK IN STANISLAUS COUNTY!

Mary Giventer, President

Our Voter editor, Patty Beyer, is relocating out of state. We need to find a replacement immediately! Please contact Mary Giventer, President, if you are able to fill this position for the remainder of the 2012-13 year.

Nominating Committee

There are two positions available on the Nominating Committee for non-Board members. Amy Wolfe is chair of the committee. Stella Beratlis and Ann Krabach are the Board members serving on the committee. The committee will meet a couple of times in the spring to recommend next year's Board. This is a great opportunity to serve the League without making a yearlong commitment, and you will be serving with three outstanding people. If you are willing to serve, please call Mary Giventer, 632-8996.

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From the Desk of the Vice-President:

INITIATIVE AND REFERENDUM UPDATE STUDY

As of March 2012, the number of initiatives targeted for the November 2012 ballot is huge: four qualified, 67 were cleared for circulation, and five were at the Attorney General's office. On average, 21 percent of proposed measures actually make it to the ballot, predicting 20 measures will be decided in November.

Had enough? During the May 2011 LWVC Convention, delegates adopted an update of LWVC's study of California's initiative and referendum process. The study committee is working to develop the material that all local Leagues in California will use to come to consensus at meetings later this year or early 2013—after the 2012 presidential election.

The Committee is examining history, process (including the practices of other states), and key concerns, sifting through dozens of ideas to reform California's process. They are seeking to identify the deeper policy-based issues that will help shape the League's position on California's Initiative and Referendum process in the future. The reform ideas being examined cover a wide range of possibilities, from throwing out the whole process as suggested by Peter Schrag in *Paradise Lost* to an embrace of the growing trend of direct democracy. Here are some of the more popular themes:

- *Level the Imbalance of Money Interests*
- *Increase Transparency*
- *Engage Citizens*
- *Think Slowly; Work Together*
- *Technology Impacts*

For more information, go to the LWVC Initiative and Referendum study Web page: <http://ca.lwv.org/lwvonly/studies/2011-initiative-and-referendum/index.html>

If you are interested in working on this study locally, please contact Stella Beratlis at vp@lwvstanislaus.org or 613-9283.

Stella Beratlis, Vice-President

Lunch and Learn

The speaker for October 25th is Modesto Irrigation District board President Tom Van Groningen. He will be speaking on water issues, which is a topic of great concern to many local residents. This should be a timely and interesting presentation.

All Lunch and Learn meetings are held at 12 pm on the last Thursday of the month at Appetez Restaurant, Roseburg Square in Modesto. Everyone is welcome; you do not have to be a League member to attend. Reservations are not required. The cost is \$11 payable at the time of the luncheon.

There will be no Lunch and Learn in November or December due to the holidays.

We will resume in January with Modesto Mayor Garrard Marsh as our speaker.

Ruby Hennessey, Lunch and Learn

Board Highlights: September 8, 2012

- M. Giventer reported that Doc-U-Store is going out of business. They have offered to move our documents to Pacific Storage who will honor our current contract with Doc-U-Store
- L. Kelso reported that we have two new members: Barbara Jensen and Wendy Scott
- H. Renning reported that the Holiday Fling would be held at the home of Lynn Fenderson on Monday, December 3rd at 6:30 p.m.
- No Board meeting in October due to the forum activities

Laurie Carley, Secretary

Voter Service Fall Schedule

League is going to be very busy serving our communities this fall. Our Voter Service schedule is filled with voter registration, pros and cons presentations, and forums. **Please review the list of events that have been booked to see where you can assist**, and contact Ellen Meyer or Marsha Waggoner. Thank you.

October 1 Congressional Forum- 6-7 pm, CSUS, Snider Auditorium

October 2 Oakdale City Council Forum, 6-8 pm, Oakdale City Hall; **Two volunteers needed to time the forum, 1 moderator, and 2 volunteers to sort questions from the audience**

October 3 Turlock City Council Forum, 7 pm, Turlock Council Chambers. **Two volunteers needed to time the forum, 1 moderator, and 2 volunteers to sort questions from the audience**

October 9 Pro and Cons, 12 noon, Modesto Rotary, Modesto Convention Center (Doubletree);

October 11 Riverbank City Council Forum, 6-8 pm, Riverbank Community Hall. **Two volunteers needed to time the forum, 1 moderator, and 2 volunteers to sort questions from the audience**

October 16 Pros & Cons Presentation, 7-9 pm, CSUS, Mary Stuart Rogers Bldg, Rm. 130

October 18 Pros & Cons Presentation, 6 -8 pm, MJC East Campus, Room MSER Sierra 132

October 20 Voter Registration, Stanislaus County Library, Modesto; **two volunteers needed per shift.** 10 am-12 noon, 12 noon to 2 pm

October 20 Voter Registration, Turlock Public Library, 10 am-12 noon.

*Ellen Meyer & Marsha Waggoner,
Voter Service*

**SAVE THE DATE
HOLIDAY FLING**

**Monday, December 3, 6:30 p.m.
Home of Lynn Fenderson
(Details in November Newsletter)**

Finance Drive

We launched our annual Finance Drive in September with letters to members, community supporters, and city officials where we have conducted candidate forums for Voters. We rely heavily on money raised through the annual Finance Drive to support our local program activities. This year we are conducting a number of Forums for local elections and will be doing voter registration. Contributions to the finance drive help to support these activities. Some of our dues money also supports these activities but most of it goes to support the League's state and national programs. Donations in any amount are appreciated.

Ellen Dunbar, Finance Drive

**I WANT TO ADD MY VOICE TO YOURS
BY JOINING THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF STANISLAUS COUNTY!**

- Student Membership \$25
- Individual Membership \$60
- Household Membership \$90

Please contact me with more information.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone (for directory) _____

Email _____

— Please deliver my *Voter* by E-mail__ US mail __

MAIL TO

LWVSC

P.O. Box E

Modesto, CA 95352

Initiative and Referendum Process

Dr. Larry Giventer, Professor Emeritus of Politics and Public Administration at CSUS, spoke to Lunch and Learn on the initiative process in California. The reform movement of the early 20th century was an effort to put government in the hands of the people enabling “do-it-yourself lawmaking” through initiative, recall and referendum. Since then about 1,750 initiatives have been proposed, 350 qualified for the ballot, and 116 were approved (of which 47 were constitutional amendments).

Initiatives require valid voter signatures to be placed on the ballot, and this process in recent years is most often handled by one of several signature-gathering companies costing about \$3 million per initiative. It is not surprising that organizations with deep pockets often use this strategy to promote special interest measures. The legislature uses the initiative process, usually for bond measures. Depending on the topic, initiatives may be reviewed by the attorney general, the legislature or Department of Finance before being placed on the ballot. Many controversial initiatives find their way to the court system after passage to determine constitutionality. Initiatives take precedence over legislatively enacted laws, and those that become law can only be overridden by vote of the people through another proposition.

Marie Bairey, Local Action



Welcome new members:

Barbara Jensen & Wendy Scott



League of Women Voters

HOLIDAY FLING

For members, donors and guests

Monday, December 3, 2012 at 6:30 p.m.

Please join us for appetizers and conversation!

More details in next month's Voter!





PROP 30 Schools and Local Public Safety Protection Act YES

Proposition 30 begins to move California toward financial stability and adequate funding for all the services we want from our government; we can't continue to cut vital public services like schools and public safety. This measure will provide some much needed income from a temporary increase in income tax rates for the wealthy and a modest temporary sales tax increase. The plan is a part of a balanced approach to eliminating our deficit that includes \$8 billion in cuts, \$6 billion in new revenues, and \$2.5 billion in loans, deferrals, etc., this year. Proposition 30 also guarantees a stable source of funding for counties to pay for their new public safety responsibilities such as housing low-level prisoners and providing substance abuse treatment.

PROP 31 Government Performance and Accountability Act NO

Proposition 31 is based on good intentions and has some pieces that, taken alone, the League could support. However, Prop 31 has several significant flaws. There are questions about whether or not the provisions allow local governments to suspend state environmental requirements. What is clear is that there will be significant legal uncertainty, and years of litigation. In addition, the measure prescribes the specific manner of state and local government budgeting and puts this process into the state constitution. Prop 31 has other questionable provisions, such as establishing a significant shift of power over appropriations to the governor at times of fiscal emergency.

PROP 32 Special Exemptions Act NO

This measure is not the campaign finance reform measure its proponents say it is. Proposition 32 promises "political reform" but is really designed by special interests to help themselves and harm their opponents. It looks like a campaign finance reform measure but unfairly targets one set of large campaign donors while giving other donors unlimited power. Its ban on payroll deductions for political giving will affect unions but not corporations, and even the restriction it places on contributions to candidates by corporations is full of loophole exemptions. It does not fix the problem of money in politics; Super PACs and independent expenditure committees will continue to spend without limitation.

PROP 34 SAFE California Act YES

The SAFE California Act will replace the death penalty in California with a sentence of life in prison without the possibility of parole. Convicted killers will stay in prison for the rest of their lives, eliminating the possibility of executing an innocent person in California. This will save over \$100 million every year—because the court and incarceration costs are so much higher for prisoners at risk for a death penalty. \$100 million of these savings will be allocated over the next four years to pay for increased investigation of unsolved rape and murder cases. Convicted killers will be required to work and pay restitution into a victims' compensation fund.

PROP 40 Referendum on Redistricting YES

We strongly urge a "YES" vote on this referendum on the state Senate maps drawn by the independent Citizens Redistricting Commission. The question on a referendum is not intuitive; it asks if you want to retain the new law, or in this case, the maps drawn by the Citizens Redistricting Commission. So vote YES to affirm the maps drawn by the Citizens Redistricting Commission, YES—in support of the Commission, YES—to validate the open, transparent process, YES—to retain fair districts.

VOTE WITH THE LEAGUE ON NOVEMBER 6!

Adequate revenue to provide for the public good is critically needed. The League supports Prop 30 on this ballot as the best way to provide some relief from the endless cutting of vital government services. We see some merit in the following two measures, Props 38 and 39, but have taken a neutral position on them because of their earmarking of revenues.

PROP 38 Tax for Education and Early Childhood Programs NEUTRAL

We are neutral on Our Children, Our Future, the measure supported by the California State PTA and activist Molly Munger. It provides significant funding for education and early childhood programs. In addition, for the first four years, this measure provides money to help the other underfunded government services. However, in the longer term, it earmarks essentially all the new money for education and early childhood programs. These programs definitely deserve to be adequately funded, but so do all of the government programs we support, from mental health programs to the court system to childcare.

PROP 39 Tax Treatment for Multistate Businesses NEUTRAL

This measure will close a tax loophole for multistate businesses, generating revenues of about \$1 billion per year—a good thing. However, it earmarks about half the new revenue for the first five years, so that portion can only be used for energy efficiency and alternative energy projects. We are neutral on this proposition because we believe new revenue for the state should be available for all of the programs funded by state revenue—schools, law enforcement, health care, jobs programs, the judiciary system.

The League has not studied the issues in the following measures, and so has **no recommendation** on **Proposition 33** (Auto Insurance Rates), **Proposition 35** (Human Trafficking), **Proposition 36** (Three Strikes Reform), and **Proposition 37** (Genetically Engineered Foods).

VOTE WITH THE LEAGUE ON NOVEMBER 6!

8/6/2012

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan 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.

**League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County
P.O. Box E
Modesto, CA 95352**

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[\(Check Website for Updates\)](#) – see [Voter Service Article](#) – *volunteers needed!!*

Monday, October 1	Tenth Congressional District Forum, 6:00 pm, CSUS, Snider Auditorium, Candidates Jeff Denham and Jose Hernandez
Wednesday, October 10	No Board Meeting – see you at the forums!
Thursday, October 25	Lunch and Learn, 12:00 pm, Appetez Restaurant, Modesto Irrigation District, Board President Tom Van Groningen
Monday, December 3	Holiday Fling – Home of Lynn Fenderson
Thursday, January 31, 2013	Lunch and Learn, 12:00 pm, Appetez Restaurant, Garrad Marsh, Modesto Mayor