



# THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

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Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

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## *President's Message*

First, thank you to all the people who made the Mayoral Forum such a success. I was delighted that we again made the front page today in the Bee. Mary Giventer's expert role as moderator set the stage for a civil and informative forum. Kudos go to Marsha Blomquist for getting the volunteers, Wendy Scott for the publicity, and of course to all the volunteers. A member from the audience came up to me after the forum and expressed her desire that the League run the National Debates.

The State Study on Higher Education got off to a great start with a very well attended Lunch and Learn this month. More L&L meetings concerning the same topic will follow this spring. A Consensus meeting will be conducted later.

The annual review of our local program will be held at my house (Torrid Ave. Modesto) at 6:00 on Feb. 10<sup>th</sup>. Snacks will be provided. This is being held on the same evening as our regular board meeting, which should begin around 7 PM. Last year the group decided to expand our position on water. If time, that issue will also be discussed. For those interested MJC will be dedicating three of their Science Colloquium discussions on the water issue this February. Those dates are Feb. 10, Feb. 17 and Feb. 24. They are held from 3 to 4 PM at the Science Community Center, Room 115 on the West Campus.

Thanks to Michael Fuller for getting out the Finance Drive letters. It had been delayed due to health issues. We appreciate your dedication in getting the job done. I hope you are generous with your contributions.

*Seena Rhine, President LWVSC*

## *Higher Education Study*

We started the California Higher Education Study at the January Lunch and Learn and will continue this process over the next several months. The Lunch and Learn is summarized elsewhere in this issue. If you would like to be part of a discussion group to look at the issues of equity, funding, affordability, preparedness and barriers/opportunities for success in greater detail, please e-mail Mary at [mgiventer@pacbell.net](mailto:mgiventer@pacbell.net) or call at 209-635-6136. The consensus report is due May 15 so we have time for several interesting discussion sessions. The input of those who have been, or are currently, faculty, staff or students would be particularly helpful.

## **Margaret Sturtevant 1919 – 2016**

Long-time League member Margaret Sturtevant passed away in early January at the age of 96. She led a full and active life – raising her family and contributing to the Hughson community where she lived for more than 70 years. She is perhaps best known for the establishment of the Hughson Arboretum and Gardens on a corner of the family ranch. She envisioned a place where people could visit to enjoy and learn about nature. A memorial service is planned for spring at the Arboretum.



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***Lunch & Learn: LWV California Education Study  
Speaker Mary Giventer***

LWVC has a longstanding K-12 Education Position, most recently updated in 2005. At the 2013 State Convention, two young men successfully urged the delegates to adopt a study on higher education in order to advocate on issues affecting California colleges and college students. At the January Lunch and Learn, LWVSC Vice President Mary Giventer provided background information on the study.

The areas of focus are equity, funding, affordability, preparedness and opportunities/barriers to college success. The 1960 California Master Plan for Higher Education (UC, CSU and community colleges) was a 25-year plan. Changes in California's demographics and economics mean we need to provide education for a different population – younger, poorer and with minorities making up the majority. Also more jobs now require post secondary education; by 2025 California projects a deficit of 2.5 million college-educated workers.

Barriers to earning a college degree are different than in 1960. Whereas state funding for UC and CSU was 90% in 1960, it has declined to an all-time low in the last 30 years requiring program reductions, increases in the number of out-of-state students and higher student fees – directly impacting access and affordability. At UC Berkeley, a third of freshmen are non-California residents who pay higher tuition! Students from higher income families are more likely to earn a degree than those from the lower income families because attending college demands a higher percentage of the family's income. Similarly, low-income students are less prepared for college, requiring remediation. At CSU, 77% of low income students require remediation while at community colleges the rate is 70-90%. This readiness gap is costly to students, families, institutions and taxpayers and correlates with low graduation rates.

Bridging the economic and preparedness gaps calls for innovations. Some ideas include expanding concurrent enrollment for high school students at community colleges, building technical pathways to college and career, increasing student capacity at UC and CSU, and streamlining the transfer process from community colleges to UC or CSU.

Mary noted recent recognition for CSU Stanislaus and MJC for programs that serve students who must overcome some of the barriers mentioned above in order to attain a college degree.

***Marie Bairey, Secretary***

*Who should be the next Mayor of Modesto, Ted Brandvold or Garrad Marsh? That was the theme for the non-partisan forum which was held at the Modesto Library on Monday, January 25. At least 90 potential voters should now have the information that they need in order to cast their ballots.*

Thank you to the following members of League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County who made this successful forum possible for the Modesto community: **Marie Bairey, Arlene Ison, Mary Giventer, Mildred Kinser, Seena Rhine, Marsha Waggoner, and Marsha Blomquist.**

## Money in Politics Consensus Meeting

Thank you to everyone who participated in the Money in Politics consensus meeting and, especially, thank you to Seena for hosting us. The majority of the questions were easy for us to agree on but some generated interesting discussion. We submitted our report to national by February 1. Along with the survey questions we included several statements. The following is a summary of our statements:

*Our overriding concern is for transparency and disclosure in all aspects of campaign finance. Our definition of political corruption is much broader than the quid pro quo that the Supreme Court currently recognizes. It is natural to support and contribute to a candidate who shares your views on issues. However, "buying" greater access or special treatment should not be part of the political system. We also feel that aggregates of large amounts of money in the political process distorts the process enough to rise to the level of corruption or the appearance of corruption. For this reason we feel that there should be some spending limits on any person beyond the candidate, his/her direct campaign committee and the political parties. In principle we are supportive of voluntary public financing of elections but note that attempts to do so have not proven successful to date.*

If you want a text of the full consensus study, e-mail me at [mgiventer@pacbell.net](mailto:mgiventer@pacbell.net). The League will now take the consensus reports and formulate a position statement which will be voted on at the National Convention in June.

### Reducing the Corrupting Influence of Money in Politics

In a recent League blog the League suggested four solutions for fighting the corrupting influence of money in politics:

- 1) **Strengthen regulations on coordination.** The Federal Elections Commission (FEC) can work to define "coordination" as a way of cutting back on "independent" expenditures that really are coordinated with candidate campaigns, but thus far they have done nothing. (We learned in our Money in Politics consensus meeting that the FEC is made up of an equal number of Democrats and Republicans, so essentially any proposed action ends in a deadlock.)
- 2) **Improve disclosure.** The League is a long time supporter of the DISCLOSE Act and will continue to push for its passage.
- 3) **Establish a public financing system.** States like Washington, Maine and Connecticut have had success in public financing of statewide elections. This would be a long term solution.
- 4) **Vote.** The only thing that can stop the flood of money is a flood of voters. Each voter who shows up diminishes the influence of every dollar spent trying to swing an election.

### CALENDAR OF EVENTS

[\(Check Website for Updates\)](#)

Wednesday, Feb. 10 <sup>th</sup> 6:00pm-8:00pm	<b>Program Review &amp; Board Meeting</b> Hosted at Seena Rhine's. Please call (209) 524-1698 for directions or for a ride.
Thursday, Feb. 25 <sup>th</sup> 12:00pm-1:30	<b>Lunch &amp; Learn: Julie Johnson, Title IX Compliance Officer at California State University Stanislaus. Higher Education, Title IX and Clery Act requirements</b> <b>Ridgways Restaurant. Chef's Choice, \$13.00.</b>

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**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.**