

The League of Women Voters of Alameda

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The VOTER is published 8 times per year. Current and past issues of the VOTER are posted on our website
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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 policy issues, and influence public policy through education. 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.



Volume 42

Number 5

July/August

Political Responsibility through Informed and Active Participation

VOTER

ALAMEDA LEAGUE WINS TWO AWARDS AT STATE LEAGUE CONVENTION

The State of California League of Women Voters held their convention in Long Beach May 14-17, 2009. In addition to electing a slate of new officers, the convention also gave a number of local Leagues awards for exceptional service to the League and the community. The Alameda League received two awards, one for Communication and one for Action.

The communication award was for a website that was current, easily understandable and encouraged membership and donations. Our web site is www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org. Karen Scanlon is our webmaster and Voter editor and has done an excellent job.

The Action award was given for the work done by Karen Butter and Sally Faulhaber in their presentations to the Alameda City Council to endorse Proposition 11, the redistricting election reform measure. Joanne McKray and Kate Quick were also instrumental in this effort. The League, both at the Alameda level and the state level, has provided hundreds of volunteer hours securing the passage of this measure.

Pictured below from left, State of California LWV board members Chris Carson, presents the award to Alameda LWV Program VP Anne Spanier and Alameda LWV President Kate Quick. At right is Linda Craig, also a member of the state LWV Board.





President's Message

PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Kate Quick, Co-President, League of Women Voters of Alameda

In the next VOTER, Anne Spanier and I will be doing a joint message, but as Anne is away in Turkey for her summer holiday, I thought I would share some of my words at the July annual meeting regarding the state of our League.

In general, we have grown in membership and have remained very solvent in our finances. We have met our goals to do these things and to raise our visibility in the community. This is in no small part due to the efforts of many of our members.

We partnered with the City Free Library to host a Presidential Inauguration Viewing event at the Library. When we were buying the treats and setting up we pondered how many might come. "Maybe ten; maybe a hundred", was our thought at the time. Over two hundred came! It was standing room only and a wonderful event. Our thanks to everyone who worked hard on the publicity, decorations, reception desk, and food.

We completed and took consensus on the National Public Vote issue thanks to our Program VP, Anne Spanier, who also put together many informative and useful programs for us throughout the year. Anne was elected co-President for the coming year at annual meeting.

Several op-ed pieces about various topics we have been concerned about, such as Proposition 11, have been published. Thanks to Joanne McKray, our Voter Service effort has been comprehensive and much appreciated by the community. We have been able to provide Pro and Con speakers for many organizations, as well as put on voter education forums for the general public. Pros and Cons and Easy Voter Guides have been ordered and distributed, voters registered, voter registration boxes serviced (thanks to Dorothy Fullerton and the affidavit project committee), and questions coming into our League line answered. Since the November election was the third in a short time, we were also pressed to get yet another election going in May. And, working together with lots of people helping, we did it!

In addition to her work on Membership – and it is no small matter that our member number has increased from 98 to about 115 over the past year - Shubha Fanse started up a Health Care committee, which has done a terrific job of both studying the issues and educating the rest of the membership on them. Karen Scanlon has made our web site an award winning one, and the Action Committee, under the leadership of Karen Butter and Sally Faulhaber, has seen to it that our League acted on important issues such as Proposition 11 - redistricting, as well as good government, health care, education and public access. Our League won yet another award at State Convention for its work on Proposition 11. Joanne McKray assisted the Action Committee with this one, and helped us to put together a compelling presentation to our City Council that resulted in their endorsement of the Proposition.

What our League has that is envied by many others, is a large cadre of people who work on jobs big and small, to make it all happen. Luann DeWitt, Karen Butter, and Karen Scanlon make your VOTER happen each month and it requires many things to make it to our mailbox. Luann has a "close, personal" relationship with the folks at our P.O. to insure that our mailings get to us and works those contacts constantly. She is one of our unsung "she-roes"!

Audrey Lord Hausman and her large group of worker bees put on another wonderful Meet Your Public Officials event this year and it just gets better and better. Special thanks to Doris Gee and Connie Hanna, Liz Rogers and Li Volin, for their work on the MYPO raffle. Jeff Cambra donated his services to put together a live auction at the MYPO of a night out on the town, which brought in \$500! And thanks to Juelle Ann Boyer, who helped to organize the invitation list of public officials and get the many administrative tasks done. Juelle Ann was also a big help in reorganizing the Annual Meeting Kit this year.

Jeff also volunteered his services as videographer for our pros and cons for the May election. Thanks to Karen Butter, Joanne McKray, Elisabeth Shilfer, Felice Zensius and Dorothy Fullerton for being the "stars" of our video, and for being our main Pros and Cons speakers at many venues before the elections.

It has been a busy and productive year for our League, and I am sure I have left out people who should be thanked by name for our successful and award-winning 2008-09 Program Year. Let's build on our successes and take the Alameda League to new heights in the coming year!

Alameda League Sponsors Community Action for Sustainable Alameda (CASA)

On Thursday May 28th LWVA hosted 3 speakers from CASA, an organization dedicated to the task of promoting sustainable action in Alameda. The presenters were: Joyce Mercado, Herb Behrstock and David Burton. The main goal of the organization is to reduce the carbon foot print in Alameda. If we are to reach that goal it will take behavior change of all Alameda residents to do so.

The first speaker, Joyce Mercado, distributed a list of household activities (casa-alameda.pbworks.com/FrontPage) which contained a check list of what the average person could do to change their habits contributing to global warming. In the area of home conservation which accounts for about 27% of our carbon footprint, the speaker told the audience that to diagnose problems in our homes the Alameda Municipal Power will conduct a one hour free home audit. This audit will help the homeowner identify areas in which energy use can be reduced and offer suggestions on how to do corrective actions. The speaker went on to say that laundry is an area of possible savings. Using cold water for most or all washing and always using cold rinse water will cut down on the need to heat water. Heating water uses electricity as does using the dryer. The speaker recommended a retractable clothes line as a way to reduce dryer usage. Using a rubber ball in the dryer when drying sheets and towels will help to spread out the clothes and reduce drying time as well. Of course lowering the thermostat was another suggestion.

The next topic was that of junk mail. There are websites devoted for this activity that are free and others that charge a fee. The Alameda Education Foundation (AEF) is a non profit organization that will assist the homeowner, for a modest fee, to eliminate junk mail. As the AEF helps the schools, their earning these fees helps our school taxes to go further. The presenter also suggested that all pieces of paper with a clean side be used to print messages from our computers. While recycling is good, it is better to **reduce** use, **reuse** it and then at the end if necessary **recycle** it.

In the garden, citizens can compost all of their food waste, tissues, green yard waste and food soiled paper cartons and napkins. Food that is sent to landfill creates methane gas which contributes to greenhouse gasses. Cloth napkins and dishtowels should be used in preference to paper products. Styrofoam which cannot be recycled, remains in landfills for generations. Always carry your portable cup when buying coffee at the coffee shop to eliminate Styrofoam use. Using cloth grocery bags will reduce the manufacture of plastic bags. Another waste of resources is bottled water. Bottles need to be recycled, but more importantly bottles filled with water are heavy and must be transported long distances to market, adding to the carbon transportation contribution.

Transportation is the biggest greenhouse gas violator in Alameda. More than 54% of the carbon foot print is from transportation sources. It was suggested that keeping a diary for a few weeks to determine what trips are taken in the car is the first step to diagnosing the problem. Next, analyze what trips could be combined, eliminated or deferred to cut down on unnecessary travel. Dorothy Fullerton told the audience about the American Association of University Women's (AAUW's) effort recently to put together a bus route schedule to help residents use public transit instead of an automobile. Joyce Mercado said a way to evaluate successful behavior change is to check the number of gas tank fill ups on a calendar. CASA also has a link with bicycle routes for those who are able to do some errands on a bicycle.

The next speaker, Herb Behrstock spoke about the general goals of CASA and the progress Alameda has made in its efforts to reduce its footprint. As many already knew, Alameda Municipal Power gets almost 85% its fuel sources from geothermal, solar and hydroelectric power. It is one of the most successful utility companies in the state. Over 950 cities in America have adopted goals of green house gas reduction. The Alameda City Council adopted the goals of a sustainable Alameda and created a task force to oversee the progress. One of the earliest tasks was to develop a methodology for measuring a baseline amount of atmospheric gasses and then to plot increases or reductions over time. When the methodology was finalized, the City Council adopted it and set a 25% reduction by the year 2020. The City of Alameda, while accounting for a very small amount of the greenhouse gases, has been very progressive nevertheless. In addition to the high level of alternative fuel mix that Alameda Municipal Power uses for its electricity production, the city automobile fleet has begun using clean technology. Almost 2% of the city vehicles and equipment are powered by electricity and biofuel. When older vehicles are replaced they will be vehicles that can run on alternative fuels.

David Burton then discussed the long term goals of the organization and the need to do outreach for the community. It will take a great deal of education to change behavior and engaging groups such as the League of Women Voters with its power to reach community groups is an important step. David Burton urged the members to access the CASA website for information on important activities to change our habits. He went on to say that the organization is growing and trying to tackle the larger issues of raising awareness of the way we live and how it impacts our environment. The goals of awareness, mobilizing for action and engaging our leadership will be part of CASA's ongoing mission.

A lively question and answer period followed the presentation with many members of the audience suggesting ways that they have cut down on their use of electricity.

By Anne Spanier

Voter Service

May 19 was the date of another election, the first of two in this "off" year. The issues on the ballot were placed there by the legislature in an effort to have the electorate solve the budget impasse in the legislature, and predictably it did not work. At press time there is still no solution. It is exceedingly difficult to arrive at a budget when two-thirds of our representatives must agree and have only a small portion of the general fund with which to work.

The state's problems were not solved, but members of the Alameda League once again admirably carried out their role of informing voters as to the issues. Sorting and distributing Easy Voter Guides in five languages and League position sheets to over 30 sites were Ruth Belikove, Sally Faulhaber, Dorothy Fullerton, Connie Hanna, Lois Prior, Kate Quick, Anne Spanier, Li Volin, and Felice Zensius. Working on publicity regarding our activities were Kate Quick and Anne Spanier.

We presented pros and cons on the six propositions at five events - at the Main Library, Cardinal Point, Temple Israel, the Rotary Club, and a PEO meeting. The presenters were Karen Butter, Dorothy Fullerton, Kate Quick, Elisabeth Shlifer, and Felice Zensius. This time the presenters did extra duty, creating a video for Alameda Currents and a BlipTV blog. Jeff Cambra was the man with the camera and know-how to make it happen. If you haven't seen it yet it is still linked to our web site www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org on the Elections page.

Come September, we will start in again. November pre-election activities will include developing materials to explain local as well as state issues.

By Joanne McKray

Youth Vote in 2008 Election Ranked Among the Highest Ever

About two million more young people voted for president last November 4 than in the 2004 election, raising the percentage of people under the age of 30 who voted to 51 percent, according to a new report by the Center for Information and Research on Civic Learning and Engagement.

The third-highest showing of young voters — about 22 million, topped only by the turnout in 1992 and in 1972 — represented the third consecutive election in which the percentage of young voters increased, after a significant drop-off between the 1992 and 1996 elections.

The center, which is commonly known as Circle, found several trends in data from the U.S. Census, most notably that young black voters turned out in higher numbers than any other racial or ethnic group of voters since 1972. About 58 percent of black voters under the age of 30 participated in the election, higher than white (52 percent) and mixed-race (55 percent) young voters, and about 20 percentage points higher than young black voters in the 2000 election.

Young black voters appear to have been so inspired to vote that, in an inversion of normal voting patterns, more voted in Washington, D.C., than did older residents: 76 percent of D.C. voters age 18 to 29 voted, whereas 73.4 percent of voters age 30 and older did so.

Additionally, the report says, 62 percent of college-educated young people voted, whereas only 36 percent of young voters without college experience voted. Gender also played a role, with women outvoting men by about eight percentage points. —*Megan Eckstein*

Spare the Air

Winter is gone, and gathering around the fireplace is probably not on your mind. On the other hand, it is a good time to think about installing some air sparing equipment.

The idea that a wood-burning fire, which many of us associate with such wholesome things as cozy family gatherings and camping in the wilderness, could be hazardous to our health seems a strange inversion. But science tells us that wood smoke is a major source of wintertime air pollution in the Bay Area.

Wood smoke contains harmful air pollutants including particulate matter, carbon monoxide, and toxins like dioxin. Smoke from wood-burning fireplaces and stoves contains fine particulate matter that lingers in the air and is so small that our bodies' natural defenses cannot filter it out. Instead, we inhale it deeply into our lungs, where it can become lodged and pass into the bloodstream. Thirty to forty percent of the Bay Area's winter particulate matter pollution comes from wood smoke. Living in cities, close to so many neighbors, this becomes a real public health problem. On winter days, air cools and sinks close to the ground. When there is no wind to disperse pollutants from fireplaces, they become trapped close to the ground and can build up to unhealthy levels, making it difficult for people with asthma and other respiratory conditions to breathe. Under these conditions the Bay Area Air District declares Spare the Air Days. Those who burn wood during winter Spare the Air alerts will receive a warning for the first violation. A second violation could result in a fine of several hundred or even thousand dollars. Spare the Air days are announced on www.sparetheair.org, or you can call 1 877 455-2876. You can sign up to receive automatic alerts by visiting the same website or calling 1 800 430-1515.

There are several things you can do to reduce wood smoke pollution: Switch to a gas fireplace or insert; Get an EPA certified insert for wood burning; Burn short, hot fires using clean, dry wood. Never burn garbage, plastics, glossy paper or wood that has been painted or treated.

The City of Berkeley recently passed a wood burning ordinance. Enforcement is by complaint, and proceeds in several steps. It calls for initial reconciliation, in which a person who believes wood burning has created a smoke hazard shall notify the offending source in writing within 30 days. This should be preceded by personal discussions. If this doesn't resolve the issue, mediation, arbitration, and litigation follow.

Now if we could just do something about all those smoky barbecues.

ALAMEDA LEAGUE TO TAKE EDUCATIONAL ROLE ON POINT INITIATIVE

At its 2009 Annual Meeting the Alameda League voted to take no position at this time on the proposed Alameda Point Revitalization Initiative and instead provide neutral educational support to the community.

The Initiative was originally anticipated to be on the November 2009 ballot, but now will not be considered until the June 2010 election. An ad hoc committee reviewed the Initiative and made the following recommendations for focus in preparation for Pros and Cons and public forums:

- What is Measure A and how would it impact development?
- The Development Plan in relation to transportation and transit-oriented development.
- The Development Plan in relation to environmental clean up.
- The Development Plan in relation to housing.
- The Development Plan in relation to commercial development and job creation.
- What are the options if there is a "no" vote?
- To consider the Development Agreement.
- What are the financial implications to the city?

For a complete report of actions taken at the Annual Meeting the minutes are available on our web site www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org on the Current Issues page

Join or Renew your membership in the Alameda League Today!



Name _____

Other Names _____

(if a family membership)

Address _____ City _____ ZIP _____

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\$68 Single Membership \$85 Family Membership \$25 Student Membership Dues year is Jan 1 – Dec 31.
Dues assistance is available for those on limited income – Contact us at 869-4969. Make Check payable to LWV Alameda and mail to: League of Women Voters of Alameda, P. O. Box 1645, Alameda, CA 94501

Education Fund donations are Tax Deductible

Donations to the League of Women Voters Educations Fund are tax deductible. Consider sending a check for \$5 or more made out to LWV Ed Fund with your renewal, or at any time to LWV Alameda, P. O. Box 1645. Alameda, CA 94501

Turn your Trash into Cash for the Ed Fund

Lynn and Jim Groh collect aluminum cans, sell them and give the proceeds to the Ed Fund. Drop your aluminum cans on their front porch at 1546 Eastshore Drive, Alameda, and help the League educate voters.

Useful Web Sites

League of Women Voters of Alameda
www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org
League of Women Voters of California
www.ca.lwv.org
League of Women Voters US
www.lwv.org
City of Alameda
www.ci.alameda.ca.us
Alameda County
www.acgov.org
California Secretary of State
www.ss.ca.gov
Smart Voter
www.smartvoter.org

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