

## The League of Women Voters of Alameda

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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.



# VOTER

Political Responsibility through Informed and Active  
Participation

Volume 45, No. 3, April 2012

## Meet Your Public Officials (MYPO)

Mark your calendar - May 3, 2012 is the date to of the League of Women Voters' of Alameda Annual Fundraiser. At this unique event, Alamedans get to mingle and speak directly to elected and appointed public officials in a relaxed, social atmosphere. And for our members, MYPO is a fun, rewarding way to express commitment as well as contribute to the League's work of providing non-partisan information and resources, i.e., Candidates' Forums, Ballot Pro- and-Con panels, youth outreach and other League activities throughout the year.

Never before in our history has it been more important for voters to have access to facts and truth about the issues that our communities, thereby, our nation face. To that end, we must have the help of each of our members to ensure with energy, creativity and enthusiasm, the support this fundraising activity needs to make sure that our goals are met.

This year, the League of Women Voters of Alameda will hold its MYPO event at the historic ELKS Lodge of Alameda, 2255 Santa Clara Avenue, from 5:30-7:30 P.M. on Thursday, May 3, 2012. Please plan to attend with family and neighbors to enjoy good food and drink in the company of those elected to represent us. Suggested donation \$10.

### For more information contact:

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## LWVA First Friday Social

League's First Friday Social for April is at Angela's Bistro, 2301 Central at Oak. We will meet on Friday, April 6th beginning at 6:00 p.m. for Friday Night Flights. Dinner to follow.

## LWVA to Support Urban Farming at Earth Day Celebration

Join the League of Women Voters of Alameda on Saturday, April 21st from 10:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. at Washington Park (8th and Central) as we celebrate the planet and help promote Alameda's Urban Farming organizations. Volunteers are needed to staff the League table. For more information, contact Tracy Jensen at [tjalameda@gmail.com](mailto:tjalameda@gmail.com).



## PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Jeff Cambra

President, League of Women Voters of Alameda

### MEET YOUR PUBLIC OFFICIALS

*Alameda League's most exciting and important event*

April is both an exciting and important month in the League's calendar. It has traditionally been the month the organization sponsors Meet Your Public Officials where public officials are invited to gather and talk with their constituents. League members and residents have the opportunity to meet their public representatives and discuss topics and issues that are important to the community.

The MYPO Committee is busy preparing invitations to members of the City Council, the City's Executive Team, the AUSD School Board, the City of Alameda Health Care District Board, and all the members of the City's Boards and Commissions. This event provides the greatest access and best opportunity for residents to connect with the individuals that represent them and make decisions on behalf of 73,000 Alameda residents. So far, the League has received confirmations from Mayor Gilmore, City Manager John Russo, and his executive team.

The MYPO Committee, co-chaired by Alice Fried and Audrey Lord-Hausman, has put together a great list of live auction items including two tickets to an Oakland A's game in Alameda County's Sky Box, a dinner for six courtesy of Anne Spanier and Ted Frey, a great cake making class including ice cream from Tuckers, and I will again provide Jeff's Ultimate Dining Experience featuring a progressive dinner with four of Alameda's best restaurants. There is a Maui timeshare in the works as well. Stay tuned for details.

Due to scheduling complications, this year's MYPO will be on Thursday, May 3, 2012 from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the newly remodeled Rathskeller room at the Elks Lodge. The venue is larger and more centrally located to the downtown area and a short walk from City Hall.

MYPO is an important event, because it is the League's only major fundraising activity. Many members don't realize a large portion of their League dues are allocated to the LWV-United States, LWC-California, and LWV-Bay Area. The local League realizes less than \$20 per membership. While the activities of these sister organizations are extremely important at the upper levels of government, it is also important for League members to support MYPO so that their Alameda League can continue to do the grass roots work here at home.

Voter registration and voter education activities take time and money to be successful. A single forum can cost over \$500 to produce. In this League year alone, the Programs Committee added five new presentations designed around the "State of the . . ." theme. These programs provide valuable opportunities for public entities to report to residents and to increase resident accessibility and participation through public engagement.

Later this month, each League member will receive five \$10 admission tickets to MYPO. I want to encourage you to purchase all five tickets and give the extras to friends. The live auction and raffle drawing items will prove to be quite entertaining. If you are unable to attend, please consider sending in a check for \$50 to support the valuable work of our local League. All donations are tax deductible now that the Alameda League is a 501(c)(3) organization and stay within Alameda to promote the League and its objectives. I am looking forward to seeing all of you on Thursday, May 3<sup>rd</sup> at the Elks Lodge.

# CAMPAIGN DISCLOSURE ACT of 2012

## AB 1648

The League of Women Voter of Alameda sent a letter to the City Council urging them to sign on as supporters of the California Disclose Act of 2012. The Disclose Act, AB 1648, is designed to bring transparency to campaign spending for political ads requiring clear identification of the sponsors. Besides listing funders on the ads themselves the legislation would apply to television, radio, print, mass mailers and websites for or against state and local ballot measures and to independent expenditures for or against candidates.

Today, millions of dollars are spent on unlimited, anonymous special interest campaign advertising with no requirement to disclose financial supporters. Political action committees are not required to identify the names of their funders. Effective campaign finance reform regulations will ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence and promote citizen confidence and participation in the political process. The League supports campaign finance reform measures for candidates and advocates of ballot measures that ensures full disclose of campaign contributions and expenditures.

National polls clearly show overwhelming bipartisan support for legislation requiring greater disclosure in political ads. As voters have become frustrated with the electoral process, it is time to bring greater transparency to the people rather than politics as usual. A previous version of campaign disclosure legislation, AB 1148, missed getting the required 2/3 votes by two votes. One of those votes has indicated support for the new legislation.

In the same letter the League asked the council to begin consideration of a local campaign finance reform model ordinance. The Sunshine Task Force developed a draft that could serve as the foundation for the council's work.

*Karen Butter*  
*Action Chair*

### **MEASURE C: The City of Alameda Special Transaction and Use Tax**

The City of Alameda is placing a ballot measure on the June 5th ballot to increase the sales tax by one-half cent. The tax increase would extend for 30 years and would pay for city facilities and equipment and offer funds to renovate the Carnegie Building and also toward building a new swim center and a lighted field. The Measure requires approval by 2/3 of those who vote to pass.

The League Board will hear from supporters and opponents in early April to decide whether to take a position on this issue.

#### MEASURE C BALLOT LANGUAGE

To maintain neighborhood crime patrols, fire protection and 911 emergency response; improve earthquake preparedness; replace an unsafe fire station; establish a citywide Emergency Operations Center, a joint police/ fire training facility, library, cultural and recreational facilities; replace outdated police/ fire vehicles and equipment; and for other capital equipment and facilities , shall the City of Alameda enact a one-half cent sales tax, with all revenue staying in the City, mandatory annual audits and public expenditure reports?

## BOARD BRIEFS

- A new membership brochure will be ready by the first Voter Service event in April.
- Donations welcome for the raffle/auction at MYPO. Date: May 3, 5:30 pm.
- LWVBayArea looking for a new Board member interested in housing.
- LWVA will ask the Alameda City Council to endorse the campaign disclosure bill now in the Assembly.
- Motions passed to include in the 2012-2013 budget monies for promotional expenses (newspaper ads, venues, etc.) and videography.
- Voter Service Chair will include information and education re. open primaries for community information.

# Key Features of the Affordable Care Act

On March 23, 2010, President Obama signed the Affordable Care Act. The law put in place comprehensive health insurance reforms that will roll out over four years and beyond, with most changes taking place by 2014.

**Key Features of the Law:** The health care law offers clear choices for consumers and provides new ways to hold insurance companies accountable.

The most important parts of the law are:

**Your Rights:** If you have insurance, these consumer protections can help you get the most out of your plan.

**Insurance Coverage:** If you need insurance coverage or have been rejected due to a health condition or disability, you may be eligible for coverage through one of these programs.

**If you are 65 and older:** The health care law strengthens Medicare and provides access to preventive services and prescription drug discounts for seniors.

**Preventive Care:** You may be eligible to receive recommended preventive health services at no cost.

**The “Patient’s Bill of Rights”:** outlines consumer protections and gives you the knowledge you need to make informed choices about your health. Insurance companies can no longer limit or deny benefits to children under age 19 due to a pre-existing health condition. You have the right to choose the doctor you want from your plan’s network or seek emergency care at a hospital outside of your health plan’s network. Insurance companies can no longer cancel your coverage just because you made an honest mistake on your application. If you have been rejected for insurance due to a health condition or disability, you may be eligible for coverage through the Pre-Existing Condition Insurance Plan. If you are under 26, you may be eligible for health insurance coverage under your parent’s plan.

Starting in 2014, you will be able to shop for insurance and compare health plans in new state-based Affordable Insurance Exchanges.

*Shubha Fanse, Health Care Committee*

## Privatization Part III (Conclusion)

A committee to study the effects of Privatization was formed by The League of Women Voters of Alameda (LWVA). The committee has been meeting since November and is part of a nationwide study undertaken by LWVUS. Privatization is the transferring of government services or assets to private organizations in a number of different ways, from outright sell off to the development of public-private partnerships to manage the asset. This activity has become more prevalent in the last few decades particularly with the financial pressures causing many municipalities to seek financial remedies for their budget shortfalls. Alameda has faced just such issues with its animal shelter and most recently its golf course property. The solution to the financial challenges of the animal shelter were resolved with a public and non profit partnership. The city government provides oversight and some financial support while the non-profit group provides day to day management and some financial support. In the case of the golf course, the city officials resisted the outright “swap/sale” to a developer who would have provided millions of dollars to improve the course in return for build able lots. Instead the City began a lease/management arrangement with a private company. The city will retain the property and provide oversight in the refurbishing and management of the courses by the private company. The Mif Albright Short course will continue to provide low cost golfing for seniors and students who are learning to play.

Privatization is complex. Complete privatization is the outright sale of government assets to the private sector. It is done by selling shares of government industries which can be traded on the stock market, selling an industry to a private investor or by vouchers which are sold or given to citizens for a low price. This form of privatization has been prevalent in Eastern European countries, particularly Russia after the collapse of the Soviet Union.

The privatization of management and operations is the turning over of managerial and operational responsibilities of publicly owned facilities to private sector firms or non-profit organizations. Sports and concert activities are commonly cited in this model. Baseball and football teams use the public asset during the season and the Parks Departments may use the asset during the remainder of the year. The teams pay the municipality for the use of the property. Toll roads and toll bridges are other examples.

Contracting out is the production of designated services by a private firm under a contract to a governmental entity. The government pays the contractor directly from taxpayer funds. This method is widely used in contracting for security services, data processing and consulting services. During the Iraq war the U.S. government used “contractors” for everything from managing the troop’s food, laundry, recreation, etc. to security for civilian employees and some intelligence activities. The novel “Shock Doctrine” by Naomi Klein writes in great detail about this practice.

Franchising is the awarding of exclusive rights to perform services within a specific geographic region or for the exclusive use of public property to a private firm by a governmental agency. User fees from customers are paid by the private company to the

governmental agency. Examples are cable television, electricity, gas and water services. The local governments provide oversight, set rates and evaluate compliance.

Open competition. In this approach, many private firms are allowed to compete to provide a service within a government jurisdiction and some examples are internet and telephone services. In some circumstances a private company might compete with a public entity to provide the service. Some services such as providing gas and electricity would not be appropriate for this type of privatization

LWVA committee members read background, history and philosophy of privatization (See Voter articles December 2011, and March 2012) and reviewed examples of the types of assets and functions that have been privatized including the results if available. Some examples included libraries, school systems, prisons and water districts. One reading described variations in state laws regarding privatization. Some states have laws prohibiting certain types of privatization. In the City of Alameda there is such a prohibition against the sale of public parks written into the City Charter.

Committee members became fluent with such terms as asset sale, divestiture, employee stock ownership plans, franchising, joint ventures, leasing arrangements, managed competition, outsourcing and public-private partnerships.

After meeting and discussing various studies and the pros and cons of certain ideas the committee is now scheduling a consensus meeting for the general membership. We hope to understand the general feeling of league members about elements of the topic. Are there governmental services that should or should not be privatized? What criteria should be used to determine that answer? How should the criteria be applied? How is accountability and transparency developed in this study. What are core services and how should the community protect the well being of the citizens? What is the consequence of privatizing a service that has long been considered public, like libraries for instance? How should the contract be written and what legal steps should be followed in privatization. What is the financial impact and how will it be measured? Other considerations should be about displacement of employees and how to enforce regulations. The outcome of these nationwide discussions are designed to create a policy position for the League of Women Voters to be used by all Leagues throughout the United States. The LWV US will not take a stand on whether or not privatization is good or not, rather it will provide a best practices approach for governments planning to privatize a service.

The date is Monday evening, April 23 at 7 pm. It will be held in the Alameda Hospital in room A on the second floor of the building. Light refreshments will be served. *Anne Spanier*

## **TAKE THE ALAMEDA BUDGET CHALLENGE**

The Alameda League hosted a public workshop to inform our residents about our budget issues here in Alameda. The “perfect storm” (State budget reductions and an international economic downturn) has visited us as well. Over the past several years, one time reductions and one time use of reserves has occurred. Structural changes are in process but will require several years before their impact is apparent in annual budgets.

The City partnered with Next10 to prepare the Alameda Budget Challenge (<http://www.cityofalamedaca.gov/>). Next10 is a non-profit organized for the purpose of educating our citizens about our State budget, the revenues and expenditures. Based on a similar model, Alameda’s budget is available for challenge. The workshop participants voted on expenditure reductions and revenue increases and in the end balanced the budget. Of course, with each opportunity came much discussion about how we value each of the services. This discussion is almost more important than the budget itself because we learned what’s of value and why its valued. Each League member is hereby challenged to take the Alameda Budget Challenge. You will be asked! *Juelleann Boyer*

## **LWVBA Convention**

- Saturday, May 5, 10 am to 12 noon
- Speaker: Will Travis former BCDC director, currently Sr. Policy Advisor to Jt. Policy Committee- *Status of Regional Planning in the Bay Area*
- Location - Lafayette Public Library. Cost per League - \$10 Delegates determined by local membership but all League members are invited to attend.
- Agenda items - Review of by-laws, budget and pro- gram. Convention kits will be sent to local Leagues by April 14.

Join or renew your membership to the Alameda League today!



Name \_\_\_\_\_

Other Names \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_ (if a family membership)  
City \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ e-mail \_\_\_\_\_

\$70 Single Membership  \$97 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. Membership dues are tax deductible

**Consider a Donation to the League**

Please consider adding \$5 or more to your renewal check, or at any time to LWV Alameda, P. O. Box 1645, Alameda, CA 94501. Voter Service is especially in need of funds to provide factual information to voters in this general election year.

**Turn your Trash into Cash for the League**

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



**Save the Date**

- 4/6/12 – 1<sup>st</sup> Friday Social - p. 1
- 4/19/12 – Board Meeting – Alameda Hospital
- 5/3/12 – MYPO – p.1
- 5/5/12 – LWV Bay Area Convention – p. 5
- 5/19-20/12 LWVC Leadership Council – Sacramento
- 6/8-12/12 – LWWUS Convention – Washington D.C.

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