

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 44, No. 7, December 2011/January 2012

January Meeting Program Planning

*How Local Leagues Give Direction to the State and National
League*

The Date: January 19th

Location: 166 Basinside Way, Bay Farm Island

Time: 6 p.m.

The purpose of the planning program that we undertake each January is to advise our State and or National organization of our political interests and ask that they focus on them in their work in the coming year. This year we will be sending our ideas to the National League and the Bay Area League. In addition we review our old policies and positions for currency. Our program for January will be a Soup and bread event at Anne Spanier's house. Desserts are gladly accepted and Jeff will supply the beverages. The entire League membership is invited.

How the Program Planning process works:

Every two years state and local Leagues and Inter League Organizations (ILO's) participate in the LWVUS Program Planning process by making recommendations concerning program issues – *this is how we remain a grassroots organization.*

The Program Planning process is an important League tool for identifying issues for study. It gives members and Leagues the opportunity to balance the pros and cons, assess possible support, and consider the viability of issues.

This year, the LWVUS is also asking Leagues to let it know what LWVUS positions, if any, your local or state League or ILO has used in your work in the community. The response form will include a section where you can provide that information.

Selecting an issue for study

Program, a three-part process that is a core component of the League's mission, is composed of program planning, study and consensus, and advocacy.

(continued on page 2)

Program Planning Meeting

- Prepare for participation in Program Planning by looking at Impact on Issues, 2010-2012, which is available on the LWVUS website at www.lwv.org.
- Encourage members to evaluate possible issues by asking, for example:
 - Is there widespread member interest?
 - Is this a timely issue?
 - Is government action the most effective way to address the problem?

New Study, Review and Update, or Concurrence *Local and state Leagues and ILO's have the option to propose one new study, or one review and update, or one concurrence or to make no recommendation.* Leagues are no longer being asked to adopt existing program, although convention delegates will continue to do so.

New Study/Program Item To propose a new study, you need to fill out that section on the response form by including a brief statement (300 words or less), stating the scope of the study. List this statement under the appropriate position heading – Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, or Social Policy (see *Impact on Issues* for detailed descriptions of these headings – a summary of these positions is included). A statement of scope lists the areas to be explored, the emphasis on a particular aspect of the issue, and the parameters of the study. It is helpful to the staff and Program Planning Committee, if several Leagues are proposing or supporting the same study, that they use the same position heading and consistent wording in the brief summary of scope. **Review and Update** Likewise, Leagues may recommend one LWVUS position for review during each biennium. **Concurrence** The response form includes the option of recommending a program item for concurrence. Concurrence is the adoption of an existing position resulting from another State, Local or ILO level League.

Local and State League Action

The response form includes a section where your League can list any legislative or educational activities in your community that you have undertaken in the last two years based on LWVUS positions.

Book Club Meets January 9, 2012

On Monday November 28, the Alameda LWV Book club met to discuss “The Chocolate Wars” by Deborah Cadbury. The book told the story of the Quaker families, particularly the Cadbury family, who began the business of selling a chocolate drink in Victorian England. The coca bean had been discovered and the task of separating the cocoa butter from the cocoa itself and then combining it into a tasty fluid and later into a chocolate bar and finally delicious chocolate candies was a long and difficult adventure. The Quakers were progressive businessmen, preferring collegueship to competition, with worker safety, quality of life and value of the company as their guiding principles. In time, however, globalization overtook their model of *Principled Capitalism*. Felice Zensuis found Cadbury chocolate which was a great treat.

The next meeting will be on Monday January 9, 2012, at 3:30 at Applebees and the book will be King Leopold's Ghost, by Adam Hochschild, the story of colonial Belgium and the role of Leopold II in exploiting the Congo Free State during the period of 1885-1908. Alice Wilson Fried is the convener.



PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Jeff Cambra

President, League of Women Voters of Alameda

2012 ELECTION YEAR!

For an organization whose mission is voter registration and education, an election year is a very exciting and challenging time. 2012 provides our League with numerous opportunities to serve the community.

At the top of the list is voter registration. Look for our members to be out and about in the community staffing tables at major events with voter registration materials. Volunteers are needed to work short shifts at these events. Please drop me an email if you can help out. Anne Spanier and Marilyn Ezzy Ashcraft will continue the youth registration project in 2012.

For elections, first up is the June 16th Assembly District race, which has already generated much interest. Plan on attending our Candidates Forum in early May to meet the people running and hear their views on the issues. You can count on your League's Voter Service committee, chaired by Dorothy Fullerton to present a forum that gives each candidate equal time to present their position and respond to League generated questions designed to get to the core of key issues that affect our City.

While the presidential election in November will take center stage for most people, our local League will be focusing on several local races for city council, school board, and hospital board seats, the run off for the assembly seat, and an unprecedented number of state ballot measures. We can use a number of volunteers to act as greeters, hand out membership materials, and dispense refreshments at the forums. Let me know if you can help.

Our outreach will also include Smart Voter and video replays of the forums available from our website, the Alameda Currents website and the local public access TV channel 28. Last month, we partnered with the Mastick Senior Center to replay our Budget Basics and State of the Hospital forums. This outreach is important because some seniors prefer not to travel in the evening.

In addition to all these forums, our League will continue with the "State of . . ." program series including presentations from Margie Sherrat – the new AUSD school board president and Mayor Marie Gilmore speaking on the state of the city in March. In April, the environment will take center stage as we work with the City's Earth Day Committee to bring our positions on natural resources to the public.

With all this focus on elections, fundraising is needed to promote all of the planned forums and programs. Meet Your Public Official is our only major fundraising event. The committee starts meeting in January to plan this April event. We can always use help. If you are interested in helping out in the planning, please contact me, and I will get your name on the announcement list.

Finally, December is dues month and our League appreciates your membership payment. Thank you for your renewal. We could not do our work without your support. If you have not renewed, please do so soon. The December 31st deadline is rapidly approaching.

From our League to you, happy holidays and a prosperous new year.

Privatization, What Is It? (Part I)

By Anne Spanier

The definition of privatization is often a fuzzy concept. Numerous varieties of privatization have taken place, particularly in the last 40 years. According to Naomi Klein in her 2007 book “The Shock Doctrine”, the concept took hold during the decade of 1970 and became fully obvious in the last 10 years. She describes the Iraq War with its reliance on “private contractors” for many jobs that were once performed by soldiers as the extreme example. Contractors managed prisons, road construction, food services and all manner of providing for the soldiers during the conflict. Even intelligence became jobs that were relegated to people who were hired and paid by private companies who billed the U.S. government for their services.

Privatization is commonly defined as any process aimed at shifting functions and responsibilities, in whole or in part, from the government to the private sector. Privatization can take various forms. The most common form is contracting, which typically entails a competition among private bidders to perform government activities. With contracting, the government remains the financier and has management and policy control over the type and quality of services to be provided. Another form of privatization occurs when a government transfers ownership of assets, commercial type enterprises, or responsibilities to the private sector. This is called an “asset sale,” and generally the government would have no role in the financial support, management, or oversight of a sold asset. Another, more recent variation of privatization is “managed competition.” Under it, the contracting process permits an agency (e.g., the highway department) of the government to prepare a work proposal and submit a bid to compete with private bidders (e.g., highway construction contractors). The government may award the contract to the bidding agency or to a private bidder.

American capitalism is defined as a free-market system: an economic system based on the private ownership of the means of production and distribution of goods, characterized by a free competitive market and motivation by profit. There has been a continual debate in American society about how much capitalism our society should have compared to public ownership of such things as social services, parks and public lands, schools, hospitals, etc. Countries as they United Kingdom have a national health service provided by the government. Citizens in Scandinavian countries pay a heavy tax so that the government can provide many services such as schools, childcare, health care and subsidized housing.—In these countries the government is the direct provider of services.

The desire by some to privatize many services previously considered government responsibilities comes from a belief that competition is the best motivator of high quality results whether it be manufacturing or teaching students. Others believe that privatization requires profit taking from the activity - that can only be accomplished by reducing the costs of labor which in turn diminishes the quality of the activity and reduces the desire of well qualified people to work in those industries.

The articles about privatization will continue in the Voter to help the membership understand the concept of privatization and the role of the League of Women Voters as the committee studies this issue allowing for League positions. As the committee meets and discusses the issues, pertinent articles about the process will be included. The Privatization committee will conclude their study in early May 2012.



Celebrate New Year's Eve with the League in Alameda at Rhythmix Cultural Works. Will Durst defines political satire in America, and League members and friends can hear him right here in Alameda on New Year's Eve. Two performances: 7 p.m. (\$30) or 10 p.m. (\$40 includes a glass of econo-champagne and balloon drop) show. Both these shows sold out quickly last year. Purchase tickets at <http://www.rhythmix.org/content/11events/111231.html>

Where Do We Fit in the Region?

By Sally Faulhaber

With much of the upcoming Bay Area League Day concerned with RHND (Regional Housing Needs Determination) it is interesting to look at where Alameda stands.

Our current RHND is 2046 housing units, of which 1203 are to be affordable and 843 market rate. "Affordable" is broken down according to income level into 482 very low, 329 low, and 392 moderate income levels. In the period from 2001 to 2006, 1321 units were added to the housing stock, 552 (41%) of them affordable. This was 61% of the RHND for the period. Not all, however, was new construction: 566 units were rehab. And 155 of new units were for assisted living.

Recent large projects which are under construction or ready for it are Grand Marina with 40 units, 6 affordable, and Boatworks, 182 units, 51 affordable.

In the big picture, RHND is an attempt at regional planning to prevent increasing urban sprawl and long commutes. For many, housing is a matter of where we live and park our cars. But cars are a big part of greenhouse gas generation (~50%). How far we go to work, schools, shops, and soccer games matters. So where housing is built, and the urban design relative to destinations, matters.

Bay Area League Day: Housing and the Bay Area's Future.

Saturday, February 4, 2012

First Unitarian Church of Oakland

685 14th Street at Clay

Oakland, CA 94612

The keynote speaker will be DAVID ROSEN, a leading expert in the field of affordable housing finance, policy, land use, lending and investment strategic planning. There will be panels of experts on 1) meeting regional housing needs in light of the sustainable communities' strategy, 2) difficulties of financing affordable housing, and 3) how to serve the hardest to house. There will be plenty of time for questions from the audience during each panel.

Cost: In advance: \$30 (\$15 without lunch); at the door \$35 (\$20 without lunch). To register please write a check payable to "LWVBA" and mail, including your name and any guest names, and mail to LWVBA, 1611 Telegraph Avenue, Suite 300, Oakland, CA 94612. Registration is also available online through January 27 via PayPal at <http://www.lwvbayarea.org>. For more details, call (510) 839-1608 or send an email to editor@bayareamonitor.org.

End of the Year Reminder about LWV Dues

The good news for those who itemize taxes is that dues paid before December 31, 2011, qualify as a tax deduction for this year. It is no longer necessary to specify separate checks for dues and Education Fund donations. Simply note whether or not you are paying for a single or family membership. Single membership dues are \$70. A family membership is \$97. Any additional amounts on your check will be included in our general fund which includes funds for our educational mission. It is very helpful if you send any new change of address, e-mail or telephone number along with your check.

The League of Women Voters of Alameda values your membership and contribution to our work.

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 coming general election year.

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 East Shore Drive, Alameda, and help the League educate voters.



Save the Date

- 12/31/11 – New Years at Rhythmix p.4
- 1/12/12 – Board Meeting, Alameda Hospital
- 1/19/12 – Program Planning p.1
- 2/4/12 - Bay Area League Day
- 2/9/12 – State of AUSD
- 3/8/12 – State of the City
- 5/19-20/12 LWVC Leadership Council – Sacramento
- 6/8-12/12 – LWVUS Convention – Washington D.C.

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