

**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.



**Volume 44
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VOTER

**Political Responsibility through Informed and Active
Participation**

Measure A Forum– The School Parcel Tax Thursday, February 3rd, 7pm Alameda Free Library

Absentee ballots for the Measure A March 8 Special Election begin going out February 7, so the Alameda League's Forum on Thursday, February 3, designed to give citizens information regarding the proposed school parcel tax, is well timed. The place is the Main Library, 1550 Oak, and the time is 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. League members and the general public is invited to attend.

The program will begin with a presentation from an Alameda Unified School District official as to what the measure contains, and the consequences for the school district of its passage or non-passage. Then speakers favoring and opposing it will speak and respond to questions.

Following the program members of the League Board of Directors will meet and vote on whether the League will endorse, oppose, or take no position on Measure A.

Important dates for voters in this upcoming election are as follows:

- February 7: early voting begins at the Registrar of Voters office, 1225 Fallon,
- February 21: last day to register to vote in the Measure A election
- March 1: last day to request vote by mail ballots
- March 8: Special Election

Joanne McKray

BOOK CLUB MEETS JANUARY 26

The Book Club will meet on Wednesday January 26 at 3:30 p.m. at 166 Basinside Way, Alameda.

Marilyn Ng is the hostess and will introduce the author and book, "*Leap of Faith*" by Queen Noor of Jordan. Anyone who is not a member of the Book Club but would like to join us, please call Marilyn at 523-9363.



CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Anne Spanier and Jeff Cambra
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of
Alameda



LWVA Board of Directors NOT THE SUM OF ITS PARTS

As members of the League, we are all aware that the League is non-partisan and does not support individual candidates. It is known nationally for its objectivity and balanced views on major issues. However, in Alameda, many of our members are quite partisan and politically active within the community taking positions on a number of issues and visibly supporting candidates. This creates confusion when the same politically active individuals are asked, as board members of the League to participate in a process to arrive at a position on a particular issue using League guidelines.

So, the question is whether politically active board members can make non-partisan decisions?

The ability to put one's own personal views aside in order to objectively evaluate a particular issue and arrive at a defensible position is extremely difficult to do. The Board recently faced this challenge when one of the Measure A opponents e-mailed us prior to the board meeting and said that the board had already made up its mind and that it would vote unanimously to endorse Measure A. I was dumbfounded. And then, he went further and requested that we not release our position until after our "neutral" Pros and Cons Forum. After all, how could an organization that just came out and endorsed Measure A put on an "objective" pros and cons forum. My one finger hit the keyboard like lightning as I typed, "WELL! I don't think you know. . . . " hum? Does making a position announcement prior to holding a neutral, objective, fair forum pass the smell test? I know I am objective, but does the public know? Just as important, does the person who sent the e-mail and will be participating in our forum know?

At the board meeting, this point was brought up. Some said, "Of course, we are objective. Everyone knows that." Others were more concerned with a different public perception. We had a good discussion, but could not reach consensus. In the end, the majority felt that it would be best to vote and announce the decision after the February 3, 2011 forum. So, while we all knew that we were objective and could run a neutral forum, our individual interests gave way to a more important interest of public perception of our League. It also demonstrated the board's overarching sense of fairness in the political process.

So, while we all have our personal views on a variety of things, it is good to know that when our board members, with their varied interests take their place at the board table, the decisions made are well grounded in League principles of openness, fairness, voter education. I would be interested in hearing what you would do given the situation. Please email me at Jeffcambra@earthlink.net.

Happy New Year! May 2011 bring you good fortune, *Jeff Cambra*

Welcome to the Program Planning Process for 2011-2013!

What do you want to see on the agenda for the League in California for the upcoming biennium? As a valued member of this grassroots organization, you have the **opportunity and the responsibility** to indicate the issues on which you believe the state League and all local Leagues in California should focus their time, talent, money, and reputation.

We hope you use the program planning process as an opportunity to think strategically about the work of the League on the state level. Consider where there is the most **need**, where we will be most **effective**, and what activities best serve our **mission**. And consider the **indirect impact** of these choices, particularly on membership recruitment and retention, fundraising, and our reputation—all of which are crucial to the future of your local League as well as that of the LWVC.

There is only so much we all can do with our limited human and financial resources. The state League is spread wide and far by the numerous policy positions we have and the many voter service and community education projects we undertake. We also deeply respect grassroots member interest in any issue. We believe in the will of the Convention to set priorities from both a policy and a budgetary standpoint.

The meeting is scheduled for Thursday January 27 at 6pm @166 Basinside Way, Harbor Bay. Soup and bread will be provided. Drinks and desserts gladly accepted.

Alameda League to City Council Re: Sunshine Task Force

January 4, 2011

Mayor Gilmore, Vice Mayor Bonta, and members of the City Council

My name is Karen Butter and I am speaking for the Alameda League of Women Voters. The League congratulates the Sunshine Task Force on its outstanding work to improve transparency and promote the highest standards of ethical behavior in government. The Alameda City Council formed the Sunshine Task Force Task Force in February 2010 and charged it with "reviewing, identifying, and prioritizing key issues of concern related to improving the public's access to City information". Later the Council asked the Task Force to consider campaign finance reform.

Following a public workshop this past September the Task Force finalized the Sunshine Ordinance to foster better understanding of the Brown Act and Public Record laws and to recommend practical local implementation and application of the regulations.

The League attended many of the Task Force meetings for both the Sunshine ordinance and campaign finance reform submitting comments and testimony. We watched the extensive discussions and thoughtful deliberations of Task Force members in carrying out their charge. We encourage the City Council to adopt both ordinances as submitted. We also encourage the City Council to schedule educational workshops on the Brown Act for elected and appointed officials and Alameda Citizens.

League members work to nurture and encourage greater voter education and open and accountable government for the citizens of Alameda. Issues covered by the Sunshine and the forthcoming

LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara, on the Tucson Violence

Washington, DC – "The League of Women Voters joins with all Americans in expressing our shock and dismay at the tragic shootings in Tucson last weekend. We express our deep sorrow to the families of the victims, and offer our sincere hopes for the recovery of Representative Giffords and the other survivors. We applaud the courage of the individuals, thinking they were just out for a Saturday conversation, who took immediate action to help the injured and end the rampage.

"What can we make of this madness, this senseless act of violence? And terrible though this event was for all of us now, what might the long term effects be? Will it make public figures - politicians, media figures, celebrities - more mindful of the potentially harmful impact of their angry words - or will everyone continue to put their own agendas first, without regard to the climate they create? Will it make the public more trusting of the patriotic motivations of their elected leaders - or will respect for them be further diminished? Will it make our elected leaders more willing to reach out to meet and hear from their constituents directly - or will it reinforce the growing gap between voters and those they put in office? Will it allow Americans to feel comfortable and welcome in the public space - or will they conclude that it is safer to stay home and drop out of the conversation? It is clearly time for each of us to consider these issues, individually and as a community.

"For 90 years, the League has worked to facilitate the civil exchange of different points of view, to bridge the gap between the voters and the elected, and to help improve the functioning of government. We hope that moving forward our nation will come together to foster and strengthen the very essence of our representative democracy: 'government of the people, by the people, for the people.'"

Mid-Year Financial Outlook

Ted Frey reviewed the League's receipts and expenditures during the first six months vs. the Fiscal Year budget for 1010-2011. Membership dues and contributions to the ED Fund represent about 80% of LWVA's receipts each year. At mid-year roughly 40% of last year's members had yet to renew. A "full court" press for renewals is needed in January. Our other major income source is the MYPO fund-raiser scheduled for April 14. Even with a successful membership drive and excellent receipts from MYPO, however, the League is still expected to have an operating deficit at the end of this Fiscal Year.

Alameda League Invites Proponents and Opponents of Measure A to its January Board Meeting.

The League of Women Voters takes positions on issues after thoughtful deliberation. These positions which do represent advocacy can be favorable, neutral, or opposing. For that reason, local, state and national Leagues invite stake holders to present their arguments to governing boards all across the country.

The Board of the Alameda League invited organizations with varying viewpoints to the January 13th meeting. First Robert Shemwell, Alameda School District Business Officer, provided information about the loss of revenue from the state over the last 3 years and the expected losses in the coming budget session. The AUSD has lost almost 16 million dollars from the State of California during that period. Mr. Shemwell went on to say that the District's budget of 80 million dollars is deceiving. When categorical program costs are eliminated the money available to the District is closer to 56 million dollars. He then presented the AUSD's projected division of the budget dollars by category (e.g. class size, enrichment, athletics etc.) with and without the passage of Measure A.

Next Ed Hirshberg, an opponent of Measure A, voiced his opposition to the way the parcel taxes were calculated. His objections were both legal and fairness related. His legal assertion is that AUSD is required to levy parcel tax uniformly across defined parcel base. That contention is currently under appeal with his lawsuit against Measure H. His second complaint is that the proposed parcel tax discriminates in favor of owners of undeveloped property and large parcels. He objects to both the cap of \$7,999 on improved property and the \$300 charge for unimproved property irrespective of its size. He considers these elements to be inequitable and recommends voting against Measure A.

The second speaker was Rand Wroble, a former candidate for School Board in 2010. Mr. Wroble was not opposed to the parcel tax but he felt the formula was unfair because a cap at \$7999 favored large parcel owners to the detriment of smaller business owners. The cap results in an estimated \$1,300,000 of potential revenues being eliminated that otherwise could reduce the parcel tax burden from \$.32 to \$.29 per square foot. He handed out two charts to support his point. He urged that a LWVA endorsement of Measure A should contain conditions that the existing formula be revisited in a year or two.

The third speaker, Mr. Michael Robles-Wong spoke in favor of the parcel tax. Mr. Robles-Wong presented the Board with information about what the tax measure would mean to the school District in terms of class size, athletic programs, enrichment for disadvantaged students, music programs and other amenities now currently enjoyed by the students.

A spirited debate followed with a decision to withhold an official endorsement and to decide a neutral or opposition position after the Pros and Cons meeting on February 3rd. The Board members reviewed the League's official positions to determine whether or not one existed that adhered to the rules of equity for those being taxed and whether the Measure A met the requirements of a comprehensively drafted position.

BOARD BRIEFS FROM January 13th

- Ted Frey reported on the usual "cash drain" and the need to increase revenue and adjust the budget.
- Measure A Pros and Cons scheduled for February 3, 7 pm at the Alameda Library.
- Board members will be assigned members to phone to encourage renewals.
- After hearing the speakers for and against Measure A, the Board voted to not take a position until after the Pros and Cons February 3.

Citizen Redistricting comes to California!

Historically, the federal census which happens every 10 years generates the numbers to enable a redrawing of the boundaries of political districts. Up until the 2010 census, the redrawing was the duty of state elected officials. With the passage of Proposition 11 (the Voters FIRST Act) in the November 2008 general election, responsibility for redrawing the legislative and Board of Equalization district lines became the responsibility of a new Citizens Redistricting Commission. A second initiative on the ballot Proposition 20 (the Voters FIRST Act for Congress) in November 2010 was passed by voters. This gave the Citizens Redistricting Commission the task of adjusting the boundary lines for the Congressional districts as well.

California's first Citizens Redistricting Commission will be a 14-member Commission charged with redrawing California's Senate, Assembly, State Board of Equalization, and now Congressional districts based on information gathered during the 2010 census. It will have five Republicans, five Democrats, and 4 not affiliated with either of those two parties but belong to another party or are decline-to-state." The Commission must draw the State Senate, Assembly, and State Board of Equalization districts in conformity with strict, nonpartisan rules designed to create districts of relatively equal population that will provide fair representation for all Californians. Congressional districts shall achieve population equality as nearly as is practicable according to Proposition 20."

(www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov)

Eight members have been chosen, and they will appoint the remaining 6 positions. The series of meetings scheduled for these appointments commenced on November 30th and will continue through December 17th if necessary. The meetings will be streamed live online at www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov

The eight commissioners are: Vincent Barabba, former Director of the US Census Bureau, Santa Cruz County, Republican; Cynthia Dai, launched the Tsinghua-Berkeley Glocal Technology Leadership Program, San Francisco County, Democrat; Connie Galambos Malloy, Urban Habitat Director of Programs, Alameda County, Declined to State; Jodie Filkins Webber, litigation defense attorney, Riverside County, Republican; Stanley Forbes, co-owner of a small retail bookstore, Yolo County, Declined to State; Elaine Kuo, currently caregiver to her father, previously senior research analyst at UCLA, Santa Clara County, Democrat; Jeanne Raya, insurance broker and president of La Raza Lawyers of California, Los Angeles County, Democrat; Peter Yao, councilmember in the city of Claremont, Los Angeles County, Republican.

Here is the proposed slate, made up of six proposed members to be added to the commission. The motion to adopt this slate of the final six commissioners is currently pending before the commission and includes the following persons as proposed members of the Citizens Redistricting Commission:

Registered Democrats	Registered Republicans	Registered "Other"
Gabino T. Aguirre	Lilbert "Gil" R. Ontai	Michelle R. DiGuilio-Matz
Maria Blanco	Michael Ward	M. Andre Parvenu

The 14-member Commission must draw the district lines in conformity with strict, nonpartisan rules designed to create districts of relatively equal population that will provide fair representation for all Californians. The Commission must hold public hearings and accept public comment. After hearing from the public and drawing the maps for the 40 Senate districts, 80 Assembly districts, and four Board of Equalization districts, the Commission must vote on the new maps to be used for the next decade. To approve the new maps, the maps must receive nine "yes" votes from the Commission—three "yes" votes from members registered with the two largest parties, and three from the other members. The role of the Commissioner is further described at www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov/role.html.

This article is reprinted with permission from the Oakland VOTER, edited by Sandy Threlfall from two sources: LWW of California press release and the website www.wedrawthelines.ca.gov

Join or Renew your membership in the Alameda League Today!



Name _____

Other Names _____

(if a family membership)

Address _____ City _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

\$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 9450

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.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- 1/27/11 – Program Planning – p.2
- 1.29/11 – Bay Area League Day
- 2/3/11 Measure A Forum – p. 1
- 3/8/11 – Measure A Election
- 4/14/11 – Meet Your Public Officials
- 5/13-11-5/15/11 – State Convention in Sacramento
- 6/18/11 – Annual Meeting featuring John Diaz as speaker.

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