



Alameda Voter

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Upcoming election makes February a very busy month

By **KATE QUICK**
President

As soon as the holidays were over, things started to heat up on the League activity front. We are actively planning our voter service activities for the upcoming March 2 Election, and I have been responsible for writing the Pros and Cons on the County Health Care Services Tax – “Measure A.” Writing Pros and Cons is not a simple matter – one has to research the information, read all the ballot arguments, distill the information, and no matter what one’s own opinions are, write a balanced piece of information which just gives the facts and no opinions.

On Jan. 30, some of us will be going to Bay Area League Day, which this year is dedicated to the issues of the state budget. The flyer says: “Its all about the Money!” and indeed it is. I am looking forward to getting more information, as I have found it mind-boggling to see the state go from a surplus to a multi-billion dollar deficit in so short a time. There will be reports to the membership on what we hear.

Please read the article (page 2) about the National League’s concurrence on its new position

on the election of the President, and please respond. They have made it easy for you.

February will be dedicated to voter education and in lieu of a monthly meeting, we will do Pros and Cons nights and a combined candidates’ forum for the one local election – for County Board of Education. We don’t get to see candidates for the County School Board very often – they have in the past mostly run unopposed and so don’t appear on the ballot. This year, our current County School Trustee, Gaye Plair Cobb, is opposed by Wandra Boyd, and we will get to hear what they have to say.

We will also be distributing our Pros and Cons throughout the community. If you know of any site where you think we should leave them, contact JuelleAnn Boyer at 523-6548. She is also looking for helpers to do the distribution. If several people could do just a few sites for her, it would be a big help.

Enclosed in this issue of the *Voter*, you will find our Pros and Cons on the four state ballot measures, as well as three other Pros and Cons – for Measure C - Alameda School Repair Measure; Measure A, Essential Health Care Services Tax; and for Regional Measure 2 – Regional Traffic Relief. Please read them, and if you have questions, please attend our Pros and Cons and Candidates’ Forums Feb. 25 and 26 at the Mastick Senior Center. (See article on page 3 for details.)

SmartVoter: Your election resource

Don't forget about SmartVoter (www.SmartVoter.org), the award-winning Web site is one of the best resources for unbiased election information.

SmartVoter contains election information from candidates and government elections departments. It provides information from League of Women Voters organizations and links to news media and other election sites. And there are archives of past elections.

Find your ballot with polling place: Enter your address, get just your choices anytime you want them.

Information on races: Read statements directly from candidates.

Find links to other sources: All information is conveniently organized by contest.

Local election resources: For *your* county
QUESTION: How do I get all of this data?

ANSWER: Fill in your address and zip code into "My Ballot" or browse contests geographically.

Q: Which type of page gives access to the most information on the Smart Voter site?

A: The page for a single contest or ballot measure. That page lists an overview of candidates or a ballot measure and may contain additional information from known governmental or nonpartisan sources outside SmartVoter.

Inside this issue

- League ballot 2
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All League members: Vote on Presidential selection

The LWVUS asks each League member for concurrence on its position on the selection of the President.

Be a part of Grass Roots at its best – read the material below and either mail your completed form (see below), or log on to the National (LWVUS) Website and complete the form electronically, as per the instructions. If you do respond, please send a copy of your response (either e-mail or snail-mail) to Kate Quick at 1437 Ninth Street, Alameda 94501; katequick@comcast.net by the third week in February, so she can complete our required League report.

Delegates to Convention 2002 approved a review and update of the League's position on the Selection of the President initially adopted in 1970 and updated in 1982. A task force of representatives from all three levels of the League has examined the changes

that have taken place over the last 30 years and drafted a new position statement to address these changes. The LWVUS Board is now seeking member agreement with this proposed new position (printed below), which would replace the current position in its entirety.

Please study the position statement, answer the questions at the end, and send your response to the LWVUS office – register your view on the LWVUS website at www.lwv.org/concurrence/, or mail your response to League of Women Voters, Selection of the President Concurrence, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20036. Background information is available on the LWVUS website or from your League president.

Postmark deadline: March 1, 2004. Online deadline: March 4, 2004.

Proposed position on

selection of the President

The League of Women Voters believes that the direct-popular-vote method for electing the President and Vice President is essential to representative government. The League of Women Voters believes, therefore, that the Electoral College should be abolished.

The League also supports uniform voting qualifications and procedures for presidential elections. The League supports changes in the presidential election system - from the candidate selection process to the general election - to provide voters with sufficient information about candidates and their positions, public policy issues and the selection process itself. The League supports action to ensure that the media, political parties, candidates, and all levels of government achieve these goals and provide that information.

Do you concur with the proposed LWVUS position on selection of the President? (check one answer)

- Strongly support
- Agree
- Do not accept

What were your means of learning about this issue? (Check all that apply)

- Read National Voter article(s)
- Attended a League meeting
- Joined LWV update discussion list
- Read outside material
- Read material provided on our website
- Other _____

The League should use this method of member agreement for future updates: Yes No

Name _____

League _____

Street _____

City/State/Zip _____

(Name, League and address required - some things the Board will take into consideration when determining whether or not concurrence has been achieved are the number of Leagues participating and the diversity of participation, including geographic diversity, size of League, and so on.)

Mail to: League of Women Voters, Selection of the President Concurrence, 1730 M Street, NW, Suite 1000, Washington, DC 20036; or Log on to: www.lwv.org/concurrence/

Board Briefs

At its Jan.7 meeting, the Board:

- planned for voter service activities for the March primary: two public meetings of pros and cons on the state and local ballot measures, one of them to include candidates for Alameda County Board of Education; and producing and distributing written pros and cons;

- agreed to try to get speakers on housing issues for our March meeting;

- began planning for our annual meeting;

- appointed Jean Fong and LuAnn DeWitt to the nominating committee, joining Lynn Groh, Connie Hanna, and Lib Zackheim, elected at the last annual meeting;

- heard that Kate Quick and Miriam Schiffman will interview Wilma Chan as part of the state League's annual legislative interviews;

- heard that the Alameda Board of Education has agreed to change its public comment time to allow comments at the time an issue is brought before the Board;

- heard an explanation of the local school bond measure on the March ballot and voted to support it; and

- heard that the report on our forum on access to health care in Alameda is ready for distribution to the participants, and agreed to send copies to the local papers.

Candidates' forum, election pros and cons Feb. 25 and 26

Need help sorting through the four state ballot initiatives? Having trouble understanding the Alameda measures? Want to hear what your County Board of Education, Area 2, candidates have to say?

The Alameda League of Women Voters is hosting two free nights of election education, Feb. 25 and 26 at the Mastick Senior Center, 1155 Santa Clara Ave., Alameda.

The first night will feature "Pros and Cons" on the four state ballot propositions, 55,56,57 and 58 (see insert for details).

The second night will feature "Pros and Cons" on local and regional measures – for Measure C - Alameda School Repair Measure; Measure A,

Essential Health Care Services Tax; and for Regional Measure 2 – Regional Traffic Relief. (See inserts for more details).

The second night will also include a "Candidates' Forum" with the two candidates for a seat on the Alameda County Board of Education – current trustee Gaye Plair Cobb and opponent Wandra Boyd.

Both events run from 7 to 9 p.m. and doors open 30 minutes prior for socializing.

This event is co-sponsored by the American Association of University Women and the Business and Professional Women's Association.

Spread the word about these events, they open to the public.

Alameda's Measure A discussed by League president Kate Quick on cable TV

Would you like to know more about Measure A, which will be on our ballot March 2? And, see President Kate Quick of the Alameda League and your County Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker?

Tune in to Channel 28 on the cable TV on

any of the next three Saturdays at 9:30 a.m. and Sundays at 8 p.m.

Measure A is the county-wide measure to raise our sales tax half-cent to bring in money to serve the uninsured at the County Medical Center and associated clinics, John George

Psychiatric Pavilion, and other community based clinics and hospitals.

As of this writing, six out of the seven county Leagues have supported Measure A, including the Alameda League.

Handy Websites

- Oakland League: www.lwvoakland.org

- Bay Area League: www.lwvba-ca.org

- State League: www.ca.lwv.org

- National League: www.lwv.org

- LWV Smart Voter: www.smartvoter.org

- LWVBA Monitor: www.bayareamonitor.org

- Sen. Barbara Boxer: senator@boxer.senate.gov

- Sen. Diane Feinstein: senator@feinstein.senate.gov

- The White House: www.whitehouse.gov

Measure A – Healthcare services tax

By KATE QUICK
President

As the representative of the League County Council (a group of the Presidents of the seven local Leagues in Alameda County), I have been attending the meetings of the Blue Ribbon Task Force of the County Board of Supervisors on the issues around the delivery of health care services by the County in these tough economic times. As with all County services, the Medical Center and its associated clinics, the John George Psychiatric Pavilion, and many of the Health Care Services Agency's clinics and Community Based Organizations have been experiencing a huge increase in demand for services from the uninsured, and a major decrease of funding sources at the same time.

The situation at the Medical Center (Highland and Fairmont Hospital and John George) is at the breaking point, economically.

The pressures may be relieved somewhat with the passage of the proposed half-cent sales tax, which is scheduled to sunset in 2019, and which will bring in an estimated \$90 million per year. At present, the Medical Center is depending on funds from the County to stay afloat, but, as you may have seen on the television news, the County is suffering shortfalls from decreases in State funding, and is already undertaking layoffs and closures. The County Council has agreed to support this measure, and six out of seven county Leagues, as of this writing, including ours, have felt that it is worthy of support.

Measure 2 – Traffic and transit issues

By KATE QUICK
President

Some of you may have seen our State Senator and Alameda native, Don Perata, on TV proposing a \$1 bridge toll hike to fund not only traffic congestion relief on the bridges, but a whole variety of transit and transportation issues.

We know, due to the

state budget crisis, that the state does not have enough money to assist with the long-planned extension of BART to the south and the east; park and ride hubs; the new TransBay Terminal bus-rail connection, and so on.

This bridge toll hike proposes to raise \$125 million per year over a 35-year period. It also re-

Measure C – Alameda school bond

By LENA TAM
Boardmember

2000.

There has been no formal opposition to the measure.

“This is about providing safe facilities for our kids. Measure C will take advantage of some of the lowest bond rates in decades to make these improvements in our schools,” said David Forbes, PTA Council President.

“Passage of Measure C will make the Alameda School District eligible for state matching funds. It will create hundreds of new jobs and stimulate our local economy, while holding to strict accountability standards,” said Lena Tam of the Alameda League of Women Voters.

“The League has a long-standing position supporting school bonds because it helps address important capital needs for a community that cannot be put off,” said Kate Quick, president of the Alameda League of Women Voters.

For more information, contact David Forbes at dforbes@alamedanet.net or call 523-3513.

Alameda voters will decide on March 2 whether to approve a \$63 million bond measure to renovate deteriorating school facilities and relieve overcrowding.

If approved by the voters, Measure C would qualify the Alameda Unified School District for \$17 million in matching state funds for improvements at its neighborhood schools – elementary, middle schools and high schools. Money also would go toward building a new school for 600 students, constructing additional classrooms, retrofitting for earthquake safety, upgrading electrical systems for internet and cable technology, and renovating other aging fixtures, such as heating and air conditioning, and roofs.

The measure will not increase existing tax rates. Measure C requires 55% voter approval to pass, based on the new threshold established for school bonds by Proposition 39 in

quires the Metropolitan Transportation Commission to develop a plan for regional transit connectivity by December of 2005.

Read the pro and cons

on this measure carefully (see insert). The League is supporting it, in keeping with our strong positions on regional solutions to transit and transportation.

Assemblywoman Chan interviewed by Alameda League

By MIRIAM SCHIFFMAN
Action Chair

On Jan. 16 Kate Quick and Miriam Schiffman represented the Alameda League and joined members of the Oakland and Piedmont leagues in the State's annual legislative interview with Assemblywoman Wilma Chan.

The questions that State requested we ask were related to the Budget Crisis and Reforms, Community College Funding and Structural Reform, and Water Conservation.

The Budget Question was as follows:

Question: "During this budget crisis there have been many calls for structural reforms in the area of state and local finance. Reduction of the number of votes needed to pass the budget from 2/3 to some lower standard, revised property tax shifts, swapping property taxes for sales taxes, caps, etc. have been proposed. Now Gov. Schwarzenegger is proposing to change the ERAF (Economic Recovery & Finance Act), which will take back his promised restoration of the losses to cities and counties from the vehicle license fee rollback. Do you support any of these measures, or do you have others to suggest? Has your opinion changed now that we know that significant portions of the revenues included in this year's budget will not be realized?"

Answer: Assemblywoman Chan favors passage of Proposition 56, the Budget Accountability Act initiative set for the March ballot and endorsed by League. While against more borrowing and tax cuts, including the rollback of vehicle license fees, she felt that passage of the Governor's Bond Issue was needed at this time. She

felt that her bill (AB4), now on the Assembly floor, to raise the taxes of the top five-percent of Californians would still leave more money in their pockets in light of President's Bush's tax cuts and would help a little in solving the budget deficit.

The Community Colleges questions asked:

Q: The current budget crisis hit just as the demand for higher education is at an all-time high. What should the state do to accommodate this flood of new students in light of the Governor's proposal to further reduce the money

for State Colleges and Universities and move students to Community College, without funding the Community College growth either? How can the funding be stabilized and be fairly distributed throughout the state?

A: Assemblywoman Chan is hoping that public pressure may reverse the cuts now proposed for Community Colleges. She described the college system as the "Pride of California" and should be protected. She feels that the only way to protect funding and make it more stable is to create a separate funding stream for Community Colleges such as the State Colleges and Universities have. Currently the funding is tied to funding for K - 12. But she does not see this happening soon.

The Water questions were:

Q: "Many experts agree that population pressures and environmental requirements will force Californians to conserve more

water and find more use for recycled water., What policies would you favor to achieve these ends? What priority should be given to water management techniques, such as conservation and recycling, compared to building dams and reservoirs that take more water out of the environment?"

A: Assemblywoman Chan said that she supports legislation that has been proposed to tie growth to water utilization and institute controls to conserve water. She feels that California can do more in the area of water conservation.

When asked about her own Legislative priorities,

Assemblywoman Chan mentioned 1) finding a balanced approach to the Budget, mentioning her own bill (AB4) and raising tobacco taxes as two possible areas for increases in revenue streams; 2) Universal Preschool; and 3) Health Care including care for children with asthma, stopping the over-billing of the uninsured and limiting marketing practices of pharmaceutical companies in order to lower costs.

She is a cosponsor of a universal health-care bill but does not think it will become

law soon. She feels that efforts to gain increases in California's share of the Federal funds is right since the state does not get a fair share in terms of its population and needs.

Reports of these interviews which League members have conducted throughout the state will be compiled by State League and used to determine the receptivity of various legislators to our own programs and to take the pulse of the Legislature.



Wilma Chan

Assemblywoman Chan favors passage of Proposition 56, the Budget Accountability Act initiative set for the March ballot and endorsed by League.

Calendar of events

Feb. 4, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m. - Board Meeting, home of Luann DeWitt, 2917 Central Ave.

Feb. 15, Sunday, 5 p.m. (all tentative) – Nationally televised debate between Democratic presidential primary candidates. Sponsored by the U.S. League of Women Voters.

Feb. 25, Wednesday, 7- 9 p.m. – "Pros and Cons" on the four state propositions. Free. Open to public. (See story page 3 on event).

Feb. 26, Thursday, 7- 9 p.m. – "Candidates' Q&A with the two Alameda County Board of Education candidates" (See story page 3) and "Pros and Cons" on Measures A, C, and R-2 (see stories page 4, and colored inserts on three measures).

Keep in touch with your League

Have you moved? Have you changed your phone number or email address? Does your League have the best ways to get in touch with you? Don't let the League lose contact with you.

Send any new contact information to Jean Fong, membership director. Write her at 734 Palmera Court, Alameda, CA 94501. Call her at (510) 522-7797. Or email her at jsfong1@com-cast.net

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues, and influence public policy through education.

Join the League of Women Voters

Cut out, fill in and mail this coupon with your check to: League of Women Voters of Alameda, P.O. Box 1645, Alameda, CA 94501.

Dues: \$50 for a single membership; \$20 for an additional membership at the same address. Make checks payable to League of Women Voters of Alameda.

Joining at the local level makes you a member at all levels: Local, county, Bay Area, state and national.

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