



VOTER

POLITICAL RESPONSIBILITY THROUGH INFORMED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION

January 2008

Presidential candidate voters' guide available

Thanks to the collaboration between members of the Maryland, National Capitol Area, and Virginia Leagues and the LWVUS/EF, the 2008 Presidential Primary Voters' Guide is available. We have responses from: Biden, Clinton, Edwards, Obama, and Richardson on the Democratic side and Giuliani, McCain, Paul, Tancredo, and Thompson on the Republican side. Only Dodd and Romney were invited to participate and chose not to. We ended up with an 83 percent response rate, which is a testament to the League.

You can download a complete pdf of the Voters' Guide from VOTE411.org. While the posting of this information on your Web site or linking to VOTE411.org is completely optional, we encourage all Leagues to take advantage of this useful voters' service product. Interested Leagues may also choose to incorporate the information from the LWVUS/EF Voters' Guide into their own state/local Voters' Guides. Also, check out www.smartvoter.org.

Pros and Cons of Feb. 8 ballot measures discussed Jan. 23

For a list of the state League positions, see Page 5.

The League of Women Voters Alameda will hold a public discussion Jan. 23 at 7 p.m. on seven of the Propositions on the Feb. 8 ballot.

The event will be held at the Mastick Senior Center, 1155 Santa Clara Ave. and is free and open to the public.

☐ Proposition 91: Transportation Funding. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

☐ Proposition 92: Community Colleges. Funding. Governance.

Fees. Initiative Constitutional Amendment and Statute.

☐ Proposition 93: Limits on Legislatures Terms in Office. Initiative Constitutional Amendment.

☐ Proposition 94: Referendum Petition to Overturn Amendment to Indian Gaming Compact.

☐ Proposition 95: Referendum Petition to Overturn Amendment to Indian Gaming Compact.

☐ Proposition 96: Referendum Petition to Overturn Amendment to Indian Gaming Compact.

☐ Proposition 97: Referendum Petition to Overturn Amendment to Indian Gaming Compact.

Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker reports to the community Jan. 24

Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker invites the community of District Three to engage in a discussion on the state of the county, Thursday, Jan. 24, 7 to 8 p.m. at the San Leandro Main Library, 300 Estudillo, San Leandro. Light refreshments will be served.

Topics to discuss include:

- What is the status of major re-development projects and economic renewal initiatives?

- What are we doing to prevent youth violence?

- Is Health Care Reform really going to improve the health status of our children, families and seniors?

- Any other key issues important to District Three and its unincorporated areas.

For more information or to RSVP, call 272-6693 or email district3@acgov.org

alameda.ca.lwvnet.org

This is our Alameda League Website. League events, back issues of the VOTER and public meetings are posted there. Know of a public event? Email yakitt@aol.com or call 523-6456.

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Resolve to lend us a hand in 2008

We have begun the New Year and my best wishes to all of you for a wonderful one. Of course, the New Year always brings to mind some reflections on the year before, as well as consideration of what was done well, what not so well, and what needs to be accomplished in the next 12 months.

What did we do well? For starters, lots of good advocacy on the League's core issues. In addition, we elected a full Board of Directors and have seen some new folks get involved and some, who were not very engaged, get engaged. Our finances have remained healthy; our participation level, especially in the Immigration Study Forum, very good.

What did we not do so well? Add more members and get more of our current members more active. This is something we will be working on in the coming months, and is, in League parlance, a Total Board Responsibility.

What else do we need to do? I think we need to get more members to commit to bringing in new members and to doing at least one project

or activity for the League. After the February election, we have a few months to ready ourselves for the June primary, and it's going to be a biggie! Then, of course, there is the Presidential election in November. Lots of work for many willing hands. So get with it – volunteer to do something and everything will get done.

We are still seeking an Action chair, and with the Naval Air Station Property development still on the front burner, as well as health care, redistricting, environment, and education issues, it is critical that one or more of you step up.

I also want to take time in this message to acknowledge the passing of two long time members who will be greatly missed: our Treasurer, Pat Caito, and our oldest member and stalwart helper, Lucile Harrison. Our League will not be quite the same without them, but I am confident that others will step in and fill their shoes.

So, here's to us – a small League with a big heart and lots to do. My personal pledge to you all is to work hard to see that things get done and to delegate, nag and cajole. Come with me on this great 2008 ride, and we will see our League grow and prosper!

Happy New Year! Kate

Engaging young people in voting

ServiceVote is Youth Service America's (YSA) campaign to engage young people in the political process, beginning with voting.

Building on the significant recent growth in both youth volunteering and voting, ServiceVote 2008 challenges young people to think critically about how they can continue to affect the issues they work to address through service by participating in the political process - and provides opportunities for them to participate in the presidential election.

ServiceVote will launch an interactive website in early 2008, providing a venue for information, discussion, and dialogue around the issues young people are addressing through their service and what the candidates are saying about those issues.

ServiceVote will also host a series of events combining service-learning projects and candidate forums in early primary, battleground, and party convention states. To learn more, visit <http://www.servicevote.org>.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



Kate Quick

or activity for the League. After the February election, we have a few months to ready ourselves for the June primary, and it's going to be a biggie! Then, of course, there is the Presidential election in November. Lots of work for many willing hands. So get with it – volunteer to do something and everything will get done.

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF ALAMEDA

Current and past issues of the *Voter* are posted on our website: www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org
The *Voter* is published 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Alameda
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Help us keep info up-to-date

The League is very internet savvy on both the National and State Levels. They do a wonderful job of supporting local League websites. As a webmaster newbie, I would be at a loss to maintain the Alameda Website without the League Easy Web.

What Easy Web cannot do is provide local content that is useful, accurate and current for the Alameda League. I need your input and feedback about the Alameda League website.

Log on at alameda.ca.lwvnet.org and check it out. Is there something you are looking for and don't find? Find inaccurate or outdated information? Have a suggestion? Let me know at yakitt@aol.com, or give me a call at 523-6456. Don't forget to check out the LWV California website at ca.lwv.org and the National website at lwv.org.

Bay Area League Day Feb. 22: Transportation, climate change

The topic of this year's Bay Area League Day will be "Transportation Solutions to Climate Change," on Feb. 22 from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. at Nile Hall, Preservation Park in Downtown Oakland, 12th Street and Martin Luther King Way.

The agenda is as follows:

9 a.m. – Registration and Refreshments

9:30 a.m. – Program

9:45 a.m. – Keynote: The Regional Transportation Plan 2035 and Climate Change – Therese McMillan, Deputy Executive Director of Policy, Metropolitan Transportation Commission

10:30 a.m. – Morning Panel: Perspectives on the Regional Plan

and Funding Options – Stuart Cohen, Executive Director, Transportation and Land Use Coalition – Robert McCleary, Executive Director, Contra Costa Transit Authority; Bob Allen, Transportation & Housing Program Director, Urban Habitat

Noon – Lunch

1 p.m. – Afternoon Panel 1: Safe Routes to Schools and Other Local Solutions – Jim Smith, Public Information Officer, Bay Area Air Quality Management District; Rochelle Wheeler, Program Coordinator, Alameda County Transportation Improvement Authority

1:45 p.m. – Afternoon Panel 2: Sub-Regional Bus Service and

Pedestrian/Bicycle Options – Robert Raburn, East Bay Bicycle Coalition. Representative from Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority

To register in advance, send a check for \$25 (or \$15 if not having lunch) payable to the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area to the address below, or to instead register online, visit www.lwvbayarea.org/BALD.html. The deadline for pre-paid registration is Wednesday, Feb. 13, after which the cost increases to the day-of-registration fee of \$30. For more information, call 839-1608.

Feedback from SmartVoter users . . .

Thank you, thank you, thank you for the "My Ballot" so that I found my polling place effortlessly! ... I found exactly what I needed and then some. Not only did it tell me where to go, I was able to just as easily get the directions from my house without having to go to MapQuest on my own. Maybe the unfortunate part is that our world has gotten so hasty, but at least the League of Women Voters realizes this and is saving the day! Thank you! – **San Joaquin County**

Just wanted to say great website. For the past 3 years I have used it for every election in my district. I especially love the Ballot Measures Analysis. It has helped me make more informed decisions. I always recommend your site to anyone that I know who votes or are unsure of a ballot measure. Keep up the great work!!! – **Los Angeles County**

Thank you for the LWV website and its recent enhancements. I have become a much more informed voter. As usual the LWV information is neutral and designed to INFORM, rather than PERSUADE. The audio clips of KPCC's pro/con sessions have been especially helpful. They are a welcome change from the awful "shout politics" which has become so common. Thanks again! Please keep up the good work. – **Orange County**

This is a great site...easy to navigate....well done! :-)) – **Orange County**

...I am interested in volunteering time to help

this organization... – **Fresno County**

...the League ... has maintained the highest standards of honesty and integrity over the course of many years. You are fine, patriotic citizens and everyone who loves our country and our democratic form of government owes each of you his or her heartfelt gratitude and admiration. – **Sacramento County**

Love the site! Thanks for taking the time. That's more than what can be said for some candidates! – **Orange County**

The League of Women Voters Smart Voter site is superb - a fabulous public service, as were the scores of professionally conducted candidate forums... – **Santa Clara County**

For your
election questions:
www.smartvoter.org

Handy web sites

- 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

Supreme Court weighs voter ID requirements

This story aired on NPR's Morning Edition Jan. 9. It cites action by the League in providing examples.

By Nina Totenberg

Politics is front and center at the Supreme Court on Wednesday, as the justices examine the constitutionality of laws requiring voters to show a government-issued photo ID in order to cast a ballot. Although 24 states have enacted such laws in recent years, Democrats contend that they suppress voter turnout.

Since the fateful 2000 election, Republicans in many states have pushed for voter ID laws to stave off what they see as a major problem: voter fraud through voter impersonation at the polls. But studies have shown the problem does not exist.

Tova Wang, a Democracy Fellow at The Century Foundation, co-authored research and filed a federally mandated report on the question. "We found that although there is fraud in the system, it doesn't take place at the polling place," Wang says.

Royal Masset, a consultant who by his own estimate has been involved in some 5,000 Republican campaigns in Texas, agrees. "My experience is that in-person voter fraud is nonexistent," he says. "It doesn't happen, and if you really analyze it, it makes no sense because who's going to take the risk of going to jail on something so blatant that maybe changes one vote?"

Voter fraud does exist, say the experts, but in more systematic ways, through ballot box stuffing, voter machine manipulation, registration list manipulation and absentee balloting.

Documents Required to Vote

Still, 24 states have passed some sort of voter ID law. Indiana's is the strictest: It requires anyone voting in person to present a current government photo ID. If you don't have one, you can vote

provisionally at the polls, but you must present the required ID at an appropriate government office within 10 days or your vote will not be counted. People who don't have IDs can get them free from the state, but they must have appropriate documents, such as a certified birth certificate, and other secondary proof.

The Democratic Party and the American Civil Liberties Union went to court seeking to block the law, noting that there is not a single recorded case of voter-impersonation fraud in Indiana's history. A federal appeals court acknowledged that the law poses a heavier burden on groups that tend to vote Democratic — minorities, the poor and the elderly. But, the court said, the burden is slight.

'A Preventative Approach'

In the Supreme Court on Wednesday, Indiana will argue that the law is necessary to promote public confidence in the system. "There is concern about fraud in the future, so it's a preventative approach that hopefully can maintain the integrity of the voting process," Indiana Attorney General Steven Carter says.

Countering that argument will be lawyer Paul Smith. "Under the Supreme Court's doctrine, the fundamental right to vote is protected from laws which look like legitimate regulations but don't actually serve any purpose while imposing significant burdens," Smith says. The devil, Smith contends, is in the details of Indiana's law. He cites, for example, the case of a woman who made three trips to the motor vehicle bureau in a vain attempt to get a free voter ID card. Her problem, even after she obtained her birth certificate, was that it was not in her married name. While the state does provide free voter ID cards, Smith observes, voters incur considerable costs in time and money to secure the documents the state requires as a condition for getting the cards.

'I Should Be Able to Have a Voice'

The League of Women Voters has filed a brief with concrete examples. One of those examples is the case of Kim Tillman of Indianapolis, a stay-at-home wife of a janitor and mother of seven children ages 1 to 11. In order to get the free voter ID card, she had to get her birth certificate from out of state, a process that she said would have cost as much as \$50. And that was money she needed for household bills.

Not being able to vote, she says, made her feel like she wasn't a citizen. "I believe that I should be able to have a voice ... to say who I would like governing the state that I live in," Tillman says. "But unfortunately because of the state laws I'm unable to do that."

The state contends that Tillman could have voted if she had gone to the state offices within the 29 days before an election and sworn out an affidavit saying she is indigent, a process she would have to repeat before each election. There is no indigency affidavit provided on Election Day at the polls.

There are no hard figures on how many eligible voters are without any current state or federal government photo ID. The Census Bureau and the Federal Highway Administration estimate that 11 percent of voting-age citizens, some 21 million Americans, lack any form of current government-issued photo ID.

The lower courts have come to different conclusions about voter ID laws in different states. Some laws have been struck down and some upheld. Without exception, though, the judges have cast their votes along party lines, with Republican appointees in favor of the voter ID laws and Democratic appointees against. Now, with the legacy of *Bush v. Gore* lurking in the background, the Supreme Court is poised to pack another political punch.

Calendar of events

All members and the public invited

- **Wednesday, Jan. 23, 7 p.m.** – Public discussion on seven of the Propositions on the Feb. 8 ballot, Mastick Senior Center, 1155 Santa Clara Ave. (See story, Page 1).
- **Thursday, Jan. 24, 7 to 8 p.m.** – Community report with Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker. San Leandro Main Library, 300 Estudillo, San Leandro. (See story, Page 1).
- **Tuesday, Feb. 5 – Get out and vote!!!**
- **Thursday, Feb. 21, 7:30 p.m.** – Board Meeting. Conference Room C, Alameda Hospital, 2070 Clinton Ave.
- **Saturday, Feb. 22, 9 a.m. to 3 p.m.** – Bay Area League Day: "Transportation Solutions to Climate Change." Nile Hall, Preservation Park in Downtown Oakland, 12th Street and Martin Luther King Way. (See story, Page 3).

**Please consider making a donation of \$5 or more to our Education Fund, the lifeblood of our public outreach activities.
No amount is too small.
Your donations are tax deductible.**

Mail your check to:
League of Women Voters of Alameda,
P.O. Box 1645, Alameda, CA 94501
Include your name, address, phone, and email and the amount you've enclosed.

Thank you!

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.

With membership comes the opportunity to work with well-informed, grassroots activists on a broad range of public policy concerns. Learn valuable, transferable skills, including how to organize and run productive meetings, write more effectively, speak in public, organize and run effective campaigns, conduct research studies, and coordinate general civic leadership training. The League invites your comments, letters and articles. They may be sent, faxed or e-mailed to the LWVA.

Join or Renew

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: \$60 for a single membership; \$80 for a family membership.
Students pay \$25, and dues assistance is available. Questions? Contact **Karen Scanlon at 523-64456 or yakitt@aol.com**
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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