

LEAGUE OF WOMEN
VOTERS OF ALAMEDA



VOTER

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Kate Quick – Co-President

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Felice Zensius – Co-President

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Just back from State Convention, all fired up for our annual meeting and for the next year! It was great to have four of us in attendance this Convention. Having gone to many as our sole representative and come away exhausted from trying to cover everything myself, having three others to go to workshops and caucuses made my role much easier.

Our keynote speaker, Alex Padilla, the new Secretary of State was inspiring in what he had to say about improving our election systems. Let's pay attention to what is happening in the Secretary of State's office to see if his plans bear fruit.

While the State League budget includes a raise in PMP (Per Member Payments) of \$2.50 this year and next year, we are going to try to raise more money, rather than raise our dues to cover the extra cost. This means we all need to think really hard about things we can do to make money for the League. Deborah Wright, our new fund raising person has many good ideas and I know with all hands helping we can easily fund our work next year.

Speaking of next year it is an election year, so we are gearing up already to find willing workers to help Dorothy Fullerton, our Voter Service Director to moderate forums, write candidate questions, study the propositions to be ready to present pros and cons, and distribute the Easy Voter Guides and any other materials we prepare to educate voters. We want to do more voter registration as well, especially encouraging youth and former nonvoters to register on line, educate themselves about the measures and the candidates and get to the polls on Election Day. Contact Dorothy Fullerton if this is your area of interest and you are willing to be trained to do one or more of these important tasks.

I am hoping to see many of you at our annual meeting. If you are new to League, this is the time of year that we do our most serious business: adopt a budget, make decisions on our positions and bylaws, elect new officers and board members, and hear from all of you what you want your local League to do in the coming year.

Kate

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

Friday, June 5 - First Friday Social Dinner

5:30 pm, China Villa, Harbor Bay Landing
Reservations required; Robby Kiley, rkiley7@comcast.net.

Wednesday, June 10 - Communications Committee

9:15 am The Beanery at Marketplace, 1650 Park Street For more information email Mari Clark meclark922@gmail.com.

Monday, June 8 - Book Club

3 pm, Applebee's, South Shore Shopping Center

Saturday, June 13 - Annual Meeting & Luncheon

11:30 am - 2:30 pm, Cardinal Point Retirement Community. Reserve for lunch (send check for \$30) by June 5th to LWVA, PO Box 1645, Alameda 94501. Members are welcome to attend meeting without lunch at 12:45. See your mailed 2015 Annual Meeting Kit for details.

Saturday, June 27 - Hot Topic: "How Transparent is Alameda's Government?"

2-4 pm, Alameda Free Library Karen Butter - Presenter. Ruth Dixon-Mueller - Chairperson
Reservations required dixonmueller@yahoo.com

Saturday, August 1 - LWVA Board retreat

9:00 am - 3:00 p.m., venue TBA. LWVA members welcome. This is our major planning session for next year. Contact Alice Fried (alicefried89@gmail.com) or Anne Spanier (spanier.anne@gmail.com).

PROGRAM COMMITTEE

Gayle Thomas – Chairperson
blaze00031@aol.com

Alameda School Superintendent Sean McPhetridge and AUSD Board President Barbara Kahn offered their perspectives on "New Directions for Alameda's Public Schools" to a small but lively audience at LWVA's final spring public forum on Thursday May 28th at Encinal High.

Presentations and Q&As covered a wide range of topics, including decisions relating to the upgrading of Encinal and Alameda High Schools with funds from Measure I; efforts to improve science, technology, math and engineering school curricula and teacher training; philosophies, policies and practices of student testing; the need for inclusiveness in reaching all students with quality education that meets their individual needs; the special status of charter schools; future funding needs for public school maintenance, expansion to meet growing numbers of students, and teacher and staff salaries; and negotiations with the teachers' union over upcoming contract renewals. McPhetridge also announced the death of long-time AUSD Board Trustee (and LWVA member) Niel Tam, who passed away on Sunday, May 24th.

MEMBERSHIP COMMITTEE

Ruth Dixon-Mueller – Chairperson

dixonmueller@yahoo.com

May was a very good month for new members, due partly to our successful MYPO event on April 30th. Twelve people joined and one renewed from last year. This brings our current total to 127!

Please welcome to the League:

- **Ellen K. Paisal**, MYPO volunteer and former LWVA member (Elarsonpaisal@hotmail.com)
- **Patricia Moffitt** (pkmoffitt@yahoo.com) and **Steven Moffitt** (sdm_alt@yahoo.com)
- **Denise Gasti** (drgasti@comcast.net) and **Cheryl Saxton** (golfingdc@aol.com), winners of LWVA family membership at MYPO silent auction. Cheryl is a member of Alameda's Golf Commission.
- **Julie Conner** (julieconner26@gmail.com)
- **Amy Stevenson** (amy.stevenson12@yahoo.com)
- **Betty Hatch**, MYPO volunteer, LWVA renewal (bettyhatch@att.net)
- **Joan Borkow** (jborkow@gmail.com). Joan is newly arrived from Massachusetts.
- **Louise Nakada** (louweez828@gmail.com), Director of Community Relations, Alameda Hospital.
- **Bonnie Panlasigui** (bpanlasigui@alamedahealthsystem.org), CAO, Alameda Hospital.
- **Jim Meyers** (jmeyers@coahcd.org) and **Kate Meyers**, winners of LWVA membership raffle at MYPO. Jim is a member of the Alameda Health Care District Board.

Membership directory:

The printed 2015 Membership Directory will be distributed at the June 13th Annual Meeting to those who attend and mailed to the rest of the members following the meeting. Periodic updates will be sent out to members during the year as an Excel attachment. Many thanks to Dorothy Fullerton for preparing the print version based on the privacy-protected membership list. Please note that the Directory is intended for our internal use only and is not to be distributed to non-members.

Hot topics in the Library:

The April hot topics discussion of the message of the film Miss Representation facilitated by Dorie Guess Behrstock attracted a small but lively group of six people, including one non-member.

On Saturday June 27, 2-4 pm, LWVA Action Chair Karen Butter will facilitate a discussion of the question, "How Transparent is Alameda's Government?" This will contribute to plans for a public forum on governmental transparency and citizen involvement in the fall. Learn about Alameda's Open Government Commission and share your ideas about what "transparency" means and what you would like to know!

Do you have a "Hot topic" that you would like to facilitate in a small group discussion? The continuation of this series depends on you!

!

DEAS FROM OUR MEMBERS

California's Open Primary Election System

Anne Spanier (spanier.anne@gmail.com)

California is known to have adopted the Open Primary system that advances the top two vote getters in the June primary to the November ballot regardless of party affiliation. The public is happy to cross party lines and increase their choices. Indeed, the crafters of this ballot measure (2011) reported that the process would reduce the “insider political party’s control over candidates”. That in turn was believed to reduce the selection of polarizing candidates in the primaries when more strident partisans dominate the elections. But does it?

Over our history there have been many strategies created to ‘improve our elections’ such as literacy tests and poll taxes which in reality suppressed voter participation. The Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the Motor Voter Law 1993 were enacted to eliminate many suppression tactics. The League of Women Voters was in the forefront of these efforts.

In this most recent attempt to ‘improve election processes’ through Open Primaries, there are many who are concerned that independent and small parties are being shut out of the process because they are too small. Additionally, recent evidence suggests that cross-over voting skew elections. There are other concerns as well. In conclusion, there is considerable confusion in the voters' minds about the pros and cons of this process. The Alameda League could vastly improve the public’s understanding of this new voting process by undertaking a study of this method at this time.

The possibility of undertaking such a study will be raised at the LWVA Board retreat on August 1st. Let us know if you're interested!

BOARD ACTION

At its monthly meeting on May 21, the LWVA Board:

1. Made final arrangements and assignments for the Annual Meeting and luncheon on June 13, 2015, 11:30 AM-2:30 PM at Cardinal Point Retirement Community, 2431 Mariner Square Drive in Alameda. Meeting Kits have been mailed to all members; luncheon reservations (\$30) are due by June 4th; reminder will be sent.
2. Reviewed the bylaws and program/position recommendations for accuracy for the Annual Meeting vote.
3. Received reports on the LWVA State Convention in San Diego, May 13-17, attended by Felice Zensius, Kate Quick, Anne Spanier and Alice Fried. See Alice’s report in this VOTER, “New from Other Leagues.”
4. Received a final report from Deborah Wright on “Meet Your Public Officials” (MYPO 2015) April 30th (see May VOTER.) Net profit from tickets, raffle and auction bids and wine bar sales reached \$5,000 this year, almost \$2,000 more than in 2014. Final accounting is forthcoming.
5. Considered a report by LWVA Action Chair Karen Butter on her discussions with the City Council, Planning Board and Open Government Commission on issues of transparency; concluded that it is the League’s responsibility to find ways to help the public become more involved (e.g., forum planned for the fall).
6. Noted upcoming events scheduled by the Program Chair, Gayle Thomas: public forum on AUSD on May 29th (final forum in the "spring season" and a repeat of the Alameda Development and Affordable Housing Panel, Lunch and Tour on Nov. 11th. Additional forums are planned for the fall.
7. Accepted reports from the Communications Committee (with a recommendation that a Chair be appointed); the Membership Committee (see Membership report in this VOTER); and Voter Services (with a recommendation that LWVA participate in various street fairs on Park St., Webster St., Crab Cove, etc.)

8. Considered a motion from Anne Spanier that LWVA undertake a study of California's Open Primary election system, to present findings at the 2017 LWV California State Convention. Motion not passed; further discussion postponed to Board Retreat Aug. 1st (see Anne's report under "Ideas from our Members" in this VOTER).

(Summary of minutes of Recording Secretary Earleen Hamlin)

NEWS FROM OTHER LEAGUES

PowerPoint from LWVUSA now on local website

This short slide deck is a good overview of the organization.

http://www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org/files/lwvus_league_history_powerpoint_about_the_league.pdf

LWV California State Convention, San Diego, May 14-17, 2015

Alice Fried, alicefried89@gmail.com

What an experience for a League convention newbie! I quickly realized that Plenary is no place to take a nap. It is a fast moving session packed with information and decisions made for us all. Even a bathroom break had to be strategically implemented (I took mine during money talks).

More importantly, though, I learned quite a bit about the League, how our League fits in and the role I want to play in growing our impact. For instance: my mother's, and now my initial take on the importance of the League's mission in our social and economic environments, was re-enforced. Empowering citizens with truth and facts about issues and solutions for individual choices that shape better communities everywhere, is critical if we are to protect our democracy.

I also learned that the highly respected Alameda League suffers from the same major ailment as all others. That is, despite Alameda's rise in membership, and in spite of the League's positive worldwide legacy and its mission of inclusiveness, overall League membership is declining. It has become stagnant in its reach and struggles to get the results of its studies and messages to more and diverse audiences.

Considerable focus on this was evident by the workshops offered:

- The Future of Voter Service in California
- Communications: Messages that Move Voters
- Everything You Ever Wanted to Know About the League But Were Afraid to Ask
- Analyzing Local Legislation
- Democracy in Dialogue: Leading Our Communities through Civil Engagement
- Building a More "Leaderful" League

I found the Communication workshops very useful and am looking forward to sharing what I learned about framing our messages and invitations to target audiences with you in the hopes that we devise and implement relevancy into our outreach to engage more communities.

Caucuses and other meetings addressed specific issues for our state that could have an impact on a variety of communities. For example:

- Death with Dignity
- Making Democracy Work for More Voters in California
- California Water Update
- California Climate Change Legislation
- Raising Minimum Wage/Living Wage
- California Immigrants and Access to Healthcare

In addition to all this discussion and learning, there were the inevitable fixes that had to be made by vote to the by-laws, the programs, the budget and the installation of new state officers. Boring? Perhaps. But like I said, napping was not an option.

Things We Should Know Before Planning Our Year

Technology in communications is on the rise by national. Expect changes to website—League Easy Web (LEW); more services for help in creating local websites, videos, etc. Expect dues increases from national to compensate for declining membership.

Advocacy and Educational Program Themes Adopted

- Money in Politics
- Protecting CA Environment
- Election Reform and Voting Rights
- Minimum Wage/Living Wage

California legislation:

- Prop 13 (review of property tax policies)
- Mobile Voter (Assembly Bill 1461)
- Clean Energy and Climate Change (AB32)
- Vote Cal – Same Day, Online Voter Registration

My Suggested Proposals for the Coming Year

- Hold an additional fundraiser to offset cost of \$2.50 increase in dues as well as to send Treasurer, Membership Chair and Fund Raising Chair to next Convention.
- Conduct a communication workshop with interested members to better focus on technology and messaging with an expected outcome of more community engagement. (The leader of the workshop, Sarah Diefendorf, lives in Oakland and has agreed to present.)
- Establish a collaborative agreement with College of Alameda. (Two leagues have engaged younger members and grew membership significantly by doing this.)
- Collaborate with other local leagues by holding relevant events to reach more diverse audiences. (Made initial contact with Oakland, Berkeley and West Contra Costa Leagues).
- Conduct more general membership meetings designed to inform and engage our entire LWVA membership.

Successful Activities of Other Leagues

- Monthly Meetings for Members and Community
- Established a LWV unit in Local Colleges
- Themed State of the Community Luncheon honoring Community Activist; Key Note Speaker (Raised over \$20,000)
- Targeted School Moms
- Special Pamphlet for Students on Voter Registration
- Voters Rights Documentary (SF)
- New Forces for Youth Video

Inspirational Tidbits

League must work outside the election cycles on voter registration, public policy and advocacy to engage more and diverse communities.

Disengagement reflects the state of our democracy.

Status quo hurts all Americans.

The road to success is through controlled failure. (My grandmother's translation—Nothing beats failing except trying).

For the latest news from the national League visit www.lwv.org and from California visit www.lwvc.org. Bay Area League news can be found at www.lwvbayarea.org; Berkeley, Albany and Emeryville news at www.lwvbae.org; and Oakland news at www.lwvoakland.org.

BOOK CLUB

Anne Spanier – Chairperson

annespanierleague@att.net

June 8, 2015 at Applesbee's at 3pm. The book is West with the Night by Beryl Markham. It is the story of a young independent woman who grows up in Africa and raises horses as well as becoming a bush pilot. She has many adventures during her years of the 1930s and 1940s.

SOCIAL COMMITTEE

Connie Slattery–Hanna – Chairperson

connie.hanna@comcast.net

LWVA Friday Night dinner for June will be at China Villa in the Harbor Bay Shopping Center. Friday June 5 at 5:30 pm Unfortunately once again both Connie Hanna and Robby Kiley will be out of state but that won't get in the way of a good time had by all who get together!

Reservations required:

Robby Kiley, rkiley7@comcast.net

TREASURER'S REPORT

Marian Breitbart – Chairperson

mbreitbart@me.com

TREASURER'S REPORT FOR APRIL 2015

With April's expenditures of \$1,556.39 (including MYPO expenditures graciously covered by in-kind donations) exceeding revenues of \$1,407.71 (including the in-kind donations) our cash balance decreased \$148.68 to \$16,745.83 including \$220 held in "operating cash" for change at the MYPO event. The bank balance was \$17,300.81 and excluded \$774.98 in checks outstanding. In addition, we have a CD maturing 5/23 in the amount of \$10,070.

April receipts of \$1,407.71 were comprised of \$211.60 in cash donations and \$85.14 in MYPO in-kind donations with the balance representing MYPO ticket sales/donations. Expenditures for the month included \$535.86 in PMP payments, \$330.27 in MYPO expenditures, \$375 for national convention registration (with more to come), \$125 in Chamber of Commerce dues and \$194.26 in miscellaneous supplies.

We began the fiscal year with a balance of \$14,900.74. During the first 10 months we had revenue of \$11,817.68 and expenditures of \$9,972.59 resulting in an ending balance of \$16,745.83 or a year to date surplus of \$1,845.09.

Balances to-date do not yet reflect most of the national convention costs nor all the costs and revenues of a very successful MYPO but the unofficial forecast is for a smiling Treasurer at year end (I have a tentative dental appointment June 30 to have my teeth cleaned and buffed) thanks to the generosity and hard work of the membership, Board members and team of helpers.

Not a member of the League of Women Voters of Alameda?

A membership form is available

at http://www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org/join_form.html

The League relies on membership dues and donations to support our educational programs, candidates forums, and advocacy. The League of Women Voters of Alameda is a 501(c)(3) organization, and your membership dues and donations are tax deductible. You can find a donation

at http://www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org/donate_form.html

Our address is PO Box 1645, Alameda CA, 94501

The VOTER editor can be reached at [510-769-6875](tel:510-769-6875)

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