

## Congressman Stark fields questions at forum

By **AUDREY LORD-HAUSMAN**  
LWVA Action Committee

**C**ongressman Pete Stark (D-Alameda) held one of his regular open forums at Alameda City Hall Jan. 21.

Those in the packed room asked questions that generated a great deal of discussion, much of which was around themes and issues of concern to the League.

Stark began by commenting on four areas:

- Corruption (e.g. bribery) in Washington
- Suggested Reforms (campaign financing)
- Google and privacy
- Spying in the name of fighting terrorism

**!! No Child Left Behind never received the promised money to support it. If the U.S. is to survive in a global environment then money must be allocated for education.**

— *Pete Stark, Congressman*

Stark dealt with bribery in short order saying he felt it is a law enforcement issue, not a reform issue.

### **Campaign Finance Reform**

"We are not doing enough for realistic reforms," Stark told the audience. He wants to see Federal funding of campaigns in order to take the politicians out of the fund-raising process.

### **Google Search and Spying on Americans—Loss of Individual Freedoms**

The Google issue concerns the proposal to require search engines to allow the government search of files in the name of fighting terrorism.

Google rejected the idea.

And, with domestic surveillance, the government has admitted it has been spying on Americans without legal permission or court oversight, as needed to conduct the War on Terrorism.

To both issues, Stark said the pub-

### **FYI**

**Snail mail:**  
Rep. Pete Stark  
39300 Civic Center Dr., #220  
Fremont, CA 94538

See **STARK** page 5

## *Annual 'Meet Your Public Officials Party' needs your help*

Save the Date! The next "Meet Your Public Officials" event is set for Friday, April 28, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. at the Harbor Bay Community Center, 3195 Mecartney Road.

Your help is needed to make this event a great success. We need a group of people who would like to help put together this fun and fulfilling, annual social gathering of community members and elected and public officials. This is the League's only fundraiser.

Tasks range from small commitments of time, to more involved ongoing work:

- Help Jean Fong with follow-up calls to public officials
- Help with set-up and decorate (need 3-4)
- Work the reception table for one hour, taking tickets, etc. (need 4)
- Help get raffle items (Fun and enticing raffle

prizes are very much needed)

- Sell raffle tickets at event (3-4)
- Bring coolers, ice and wine bottle openers
- Tend the bar, pouring wine (need 4 for two one-hour shifts)
- Prepare name tags (stick-on for attendees; special ones for officials)
- Clean-up crew (3-4)
- Purchase or get wine donated
- Donate non-alcoholic beverages
- Coordinate member donated food
- Sign up to bring a dish

We look forward to seeing everyone. Remember this is an opportunity to bring friends and potential new League members to introduce them to LWV.

Please contact Audrey Lord-Hausman at 522-4651, or email [alord@ix.netcom](mailto:alord@ix.netcom).

## Board Briefs for January

At its Jan. 12 meeting, the Board:

■ decided to ask the Nominating Committee to get started;

■ began planning for annual legislative interviews with our state senator and assemblyperson;

■ discussed concerns re the mail-in vote planned for the June election;

■ heard we need a replacement for our IN (Interleague Network) Committee member;

■ set Friday, April 28, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m. as the date for our Meet Your Public Officials event; and

■ heard that the Membership Committee is working on getting members to pay their dues; only 49 had paid by the meeting date.

## LWVA sponsors forum on ballot reforms

The League of Women Voters of Alameda (LWVA) will hold a forum on recent proposals to make voting easier and less expensive on Thursday, March 23, from 7:30 pm to 9:30 pm in the parish hall of Christ Episcopal Church in Alameda. Christ Church is located at 1700 Santa Clara Ave. on the corner of Santa Clara and Grand.

One proposal, "instant runoff voting," or IRV, would have citizens vote for candidates in rank order. The winner would then be the person who received the most top-ranked votes. One goal of this proposal is to avoid costly runoff elections. The League of Women Voters of California has come out in favor of IRV.

Another proposal is for "all-mail balloting" which, as the name implies, would permit everyone to cast ballots via mail in hopes of increasing voter turnout.

Forum speakers are veterans of the ballot debate.

Helen Hutchinson, president of the League of Women Voters of Oakland, is a member of the Alameda County Registrar of Voters Advisory Committee on election systems and, last December, served as the public representative on the election equipment selection committee.

Steve Chessin of Mountain View is president of Californians for Electoral Reform (CfER), an organization that since 1993 has been educating and advocating on behalf of alternative electoral systems, including instant runoff voting and various forms of proportional representation. He was instrumental in passing Santa Clara County's 1998 charter amendment that allows the county to use IRV in county elections, once the voting equipment is reprogrammed to handle ranked ballots. He also is active in the League of Women Voters.

For more information, call 864-0370.

## Interleague Network representative needed

By **SALLY FAULHABER**  
LWVA Secretary

The League needs a new representative on the IN Committee. IN stands for Interleague Network, and the other leagues of the nine Bay Area counties.

This is an interesting job, and the

time commitment is small: attending a meeting every other month at 12:15 p.m. in Berkeley, and reasonably frequent meetings of our board.

You would bring Alameda issues of regional significance (public shoreline and traffic come to mind) to the committee's deliberations and report to our board on issues raised by the others. The committee recommends action to the board of the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area, and its members coordinate local action to ensure that all leagues project a consistent message.

This is a good portfolio for someone interested in environmental issues and the regional agencies which govern them. Please respond to Dorothy Fullerton, Karen Scanlon, or Sally Faulhaber (see staff box at left) if you would like to give it a try.

### The League of Women Voters of Alameda

Current and past issues of the *Voter* are posted on our website: [www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org](http://www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org)

The *Voter* is published 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Alameda

The *Voter* Editor is Cara Watkins

#### Officers:

Vice President/Program Linda Hudson: [lhudson-lhw@earthlink.net](mailto:lhudson-lhw@earthlink.net)

Secretary Sally Faulhaber: [ssyh@alamedanet.net](mailto:ssyh@alamedanet.net)

Treasurer Pat Caito: [patricia.caito@gte.net](mailto:patricia.caito@gte.net)

#### Directors

Juelle-Ann Boyer: [jab@borupp.org](mailto:jab@borupp.org)

Donna Vaughn: [dbvaughn@comcast.net](mailto:dbvaughn@comcast.net)

Cara Watkins: [geekspeak@compuserve.com](mailto:geekspeak@compuserve.com)

#### Administrative Committee

Dorothy Fullerton: [pandata1@earthlink.net](mailto:pandata1@earthlink.net)

Kate Quick: [katequick@comcast.net](mailto:katequick@comcast.net)

Pat Sahadi: [pmsrps@aol.com](mailto:pmsrps@aol.com)

Karen Scanlon: [yakitt@aol.com](mailto:yakitt@aol.com)

Lena Tam: [ltam@ebmud.com](mailto:ltam@ebmud.com)

#### Action Committee

Karen Butter: [kab@library.ucsf.edu](mailto:kab@library.ucsf.edu)

Audrey Lord-Hausman: [alord@ix.netcom.com](mailto:alord@ix.netcom.com)

Felice Zenzius: n/a

#### Communications Committee

Li Volin: n/a

Luann DeWitt: [ldewitt@alamedanet.net](mailto:ldewitt@alamedanet.net)

Cara Watkins: [geekspeak@compuserve.com](mailto:geekspeak@compuserve.com)

Andrea Pook: [apook@ebmud.com](mailto:apook@ebmud.com)

#### Membership Committee

Dorie Behrstock: n/a

Jean Fong: [jsfong1@comcast.net](mailto:jsfong1@comcast.net)

Connie Hanna: [channa@alamedanet.net](mailto:channa@alamedanet.net)

Stefani Komaru: [stefkom@aol.com](mailto:stefkom@aol.com)

Marilyn Ng: [mjklN@yahoo.com](mailto:mjklN@yahoo.com)

#### Program Committee

Linda Hudson

Diane Lichtenstein: [dlooo@juno.com](mailto:dlooo@juno.com)

Shiela Turner: [sturner@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sturner@sbcglobal.net)

# 'Brilliant' speakers, activities highlighted Sunshine Week

By **NANCY VAN HUFFEL**  
President Eden Area League  
of Women Voters


Last week was Sunshine Week throughout the United States. No, the purpose was not to herald the beginning of Spring, or lament the grey clouds and damp weather. It was to focus attention on the importance of open decision-making and access to information within our respective levels of government.

The League of Women Voters acts as a force for positive change in our communities; and we believe that making elected officials and the general public aware of open government laws is one of our primary functions.

On that basis, last week, the seven Alameda County Leagues of Women Voters sponsored a community forum on the importance of Sunshine Week activities, focusing on the California Public Records Act and the Ralph M. Brown Act. The purpose was to encourage more public awareness about open government.

State Attorney General Bill Lockyer was the keynote speaker. He was supported by three separate panels, which dealt with an in-depth look at the Ralph M. Brown Act (public access to meetings) and the California Public Records Act or CPRA (access to public records). The panels examined the laws from the perspective of citizens, public officials, and the media. The panelists and participants discussed elements of the two laws and some of the most consistently contested issues between citizens and government.

Of particular note was the discussion about competing interests and priorities between those requesting or seeking information and those within government who have to produce it. The comments focused on timing and how it appears different to both sides; costs, and the demand on limited resources within governments already stretched tight.

 The League of Women Voters believe that making elected officials and the general public aware of open government laws is one of our primary functions.

Panelists highlighted some of the more egregious violations of the legislative intent such as governments charging unrealistic amounts for copies or electronic files, or taking extreme lengths of time to respond; and commercial firms using the intent of these laws to get marketing data and information on citizens.

The panelists talked about how to strike the right balance between these interests – particularly how to allow the time to deliberate and get full public input while still acting according to the law to produce the requested information.

Berkeley and Oakland panelists informed the audience of the numerous extra steps each city takes to assure everyone is served and responded to, including having multiple bi-lingual staff available to assist with these numerous requests. Attorney General Bill Lockyer noted in his speech that even the best

of intentions and processes sometimes fail to produce the desired outcome, which he illustrated with a small vignette: A temporary security guard was at the desk of one the Attorney General's Office when someone requested information. Much to Mr. Lockyer's dismay, the temporary guard told them that the Attorney General's Office doesn't give out any information to anyone!

More than 100 elected officials, League members, community advocates, and press representatives attended the event. Panelists included: Berkeley City Attorney, Manuela Albuquerque and City Clerk, Sara Cox; Oakland Director of Public Ethics Commission, Dan Purnell, and Mark Morodomi, Deputy City Attorney;

Thomas Peele, investigative reporter from the Contra Costa Times; Karl Olson, news media attorney; Sophia Cope, from the First Amendment Project; and Terry Franke from Californians Aware. Richard Winnie, Alameda County Counsel, acted as moderator.

The seven Leagues want to acknowledge ANG Newspapers for publishing an editorial on this very important topic and making the public more aware of their rights. The League hopes that this is just the beginning in an effort to raise public awareness.

The National League has put together an extremely informative booklet on Sunshine activities including what citizens can do and how to conduct compliance audits.

For this and more information on the League of Women Voters, contact your local League or email us at [lwvsun@comcast.net](mailto:lwvsun@comcast.net).

# Energy study covers resources, environment and distribution

By **JUELLEANN BOYER**  
Energy Study Coordinator LWVA

There were nine members present Jan. 19 for the consensus meeting on the state League's Energy Study.

Meredith Owen, energy management supervisor at Alameda Power & Telecom (APT), was there to give an overview of APT's energy sources and to answer questions. She also gave away energy-saving compact fluorescent bulbs.

The study was designed to elicit the values members hold about energy service and the factors members would consider in the acquisition of new electric resources. Values and factors were graded as vital, very important, somewhat important or not important.

In summary, the group coalesced on the following issues:

**Values:** Vital values were judged to be environmental protection (of natural resources) and reliability of service. Very important values are reasonable rates and social equity and environmental justice.

**Factors:** To consider in the acquisition of new electric resources were: Vital factors – included impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and level of support for baseload power requirements. Very important factors were the diversity/mix of resources and the availability at times of peak power demand.

A full report will be provided at the next Board meeting, March 16.

## Strong turnout for 'Save the Bay'

By **LINDA CRAIG**  
President LWV Bay Area

More than 100 people attended our biennial regional meeting Jan. 27.

It began with a beautiful video highlighting "Saving the Bay." Will Travis, Executive Director of the Bay Conservation and Development Commission, made a poetic presentation on why the Bay matters as a sense of place.

He acknowledged Sylvia McLaughlin's efforts with the Save the Bay movement ("The Bay is never saved at one time, but needs to be saved day-by-day").

Travis' presentation will also be on our website very soon.

Information about current projects such as the South Bay Salt Pond Restoration and the Bay Trail were expanded by discussions about how to address the balance between access and wildlife needs and also between maintaining or restoring the habitats for salt water and freshwater species.

Attend our LWVBA Convention May 13 and our next regional meeting in September.

## Campaign funding clears state Assembly hurdle

(reprinted from  
*The San Jose Mercury-News*)  
By **EDWIN GARCIA**  
Mercury News  
Sacramento Bureau

Voting along a deeply divided partisan line, the state Assembly approved a measure that would allow candidates for state office to use taxpayer money to fund their campaigns – cutting out big bucks special interest donors.

The much-debated California Clean Money and Fair Elections Act of 2006, which passed with 47 of 48 Democrats voting in favor – and no Republicans in support – would be a voluntary program. But a candidate who chose not to participate and accepted outside donations would almost certainly face scrutiny – and perhaps voter backlash.

The measure, written by Assemblywoman Loni Hancock, D-El Cerrito, is nearly identical to a law in Arizona. It next heads to the Senate.

But opponents said Hancock's bill raises issues of free speech and would prompt the spending of public money in controversial ways.

AB 583 would provide funding – estimated at \$106 million total the first year – to all candidates for state

office who collect a certain number of \$5 donations known as "qualifying contributions" to receive public financing for the primary election.

Candidates also would be allowed to receive "seed money contributions" of less than \$100 from any registered voter for expenses related to the qualifying phase.

Candidates would then receive a set amount of money that would be a fraction of what it currently costs to run a campaign.

A total of \$100,000 would be given to candidates for an Assembly seat; \$200,000 for Senate; \$250,000 for the state Board of Equalization; \$1 million for statewide office except attorney general; \$1.5 million for attorney general; and \$6 million for governor. The amounts would increase for a contested general election.

The proposed law also would prohibit participating candidates from receiving private donations other than qualifying contributions.

It is unclear whether Gov. Schwarzenegger would sign the bill into law. Voters, though, may have the final say: A measure similar to Hancock's bill is being pushed by the California Nurses Association for the November ballot.

### FYI

Check our website  
<http://www.lwvba-ca.org/>  
for the names of the speakers and their organization's website.

# March is National Women's History Month

submitted by  
the National Women's History Project

To address the absence of information about women in America's schools, the National Women's History Project led a movement to have Congress designate a celebration to recognize women's historic achievements. The goal was to ensure that information about the myriad ways women have changed America would be part of our children's education.

In 1980, President Carter issued the first Presidential Proclamation calling on the American people to remember the contributions of women. By 1987, fourteen governors had declared March as Women's History Month, and that same year, Congress and the President followed by declaring March as National Women's History Month.

This year's theme, "Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams," honors the spirit of possibility and hope set in motion by generations of women in their creation of communities and their encouragement of dreams.

Community comes in many forms, and dreams change, expand, and are sometimes fulfilled. Women: Builders of Communities and Dreams honors women for bringing communities together and restoring hope in the face of impossible odds.

The purpose of Women's History is not to idealize women. On the contrary, the stories of women's achievements present an expanded view of the com-

plexity and contradiction of living a full and purposeful life.

Learning about the extraordinary achievements of women helps diminish the tendency to dismiss and trivialize who women are and what they accomplish. In celebrating women's historic achievements, we present an authentic view of history. The knowledge of women's history provides a more expansive vision of what a woman can do. This perspective can encourage girls and women to think larger and bolder and can give boys and men a fuller understanding of the female experience.

How are our children – girls and boys alike – going to understand the importance of women to American culture and history if their education includes little or nothing about the significance of women's contributions?

We know from research and from anecdotal studies that learning the stories of women's success, talent, and accomplishments expands a sense of what is possible for girls and women. Information about women and their successes gives males and females alike a perspective that challenges some of our cultures' most unconscious and archaic assumptions about women.

Thus, women's history becomes a story of inspiration and hope. A story of courage and tenacity. A story of promise, possibility and purpose.

Women's history is our nation's story. It is the story of how women built communities and inspired and nurtured dreams and how they will continue to do so

## FYI

National Women's History Project:  
[www.nwhp.org](http://www.nwhp.org)  
Email: [nwhp@nwhp.org](mailto:nwhp@nwhp.org)  
Phone: 707-636-2888

## STARK continued from COVER

lic should be outraged and people must make their voices heard. Public opinion is what will swing the pendulum, he said.

### Taking Action

Stark said that letters sent to Washington, DC, are all inspected for anthrax and that delays delivery. He asked that letters be sent to his local office so that he receives them directly:

### In response to other questions

■ Stark said that The Patriot Act won't change while the Republicans are in office.

■ He told the audience

that he thinks the Pharmacy Medicare Benefit Plan is not a mandate; it only won by one (1) vote. It's such a poor bill that if it was brought to the floor now for a vote, it would probably be repealed, he said.

It can be improved, however, much as Medicare and Social Security have been over the years, but it won't happen this year.

The Gray Panthers have filed suit and Stark has written a more flexible bill. Three particular parts are wrong with the original bill:

The government can't bargain for lower prices; the pharmaceutical companies were guaranteed that they wouldn't lose money; and if you sign up, you are obligated for a year but the company can change the plan any time they want without notifying you.

He discussed the availability of HICAP (Health Insurance Counseling and Advocacy Program) that is a volunteer-based program helping people and their families on Medicare navigate the health insurance maze.

■ Alternative Minimum Tax: he believes the middle

class is being affected by this tax. It needs correcting. He would like everyone to stay turned.

■ Education: he believes the country must put more money behind education. "No Child Left Behind," for instance, never received the promised money to support it. If the U.S. is to survive in a global environment, particularly in the areas of science and math, then money must be allocated for education. He believes that the number of high school students who are not graduating from high school in this country is shocking.

# Calendar of events

*All members and the public invited*

- **Thursday, March 23, 7:30 - 9:30 p.m.** - Forum on Ballot Reforms, Christ Episcopal Church, 1700 Santa Clara Ave. (See story page 2)
- **Thursday, April 20, 7:30 - 9 p.m.** - Board meeting. Alameda Hospital, conference room A, 2070 Clinton Ave., Alameda.
- **Friday, April 28, 5:30 to 7:30 p.m.** - Meet Your Public Officials Party. Harbor Bay Community Center, 3195 Mecartney Road. (See cover story).

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. Last year we had no donations, so we are trying to increase awareness this year.  
**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 of citizens 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.

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:** \$53 for a single membership; \$20 for an additional membership at the same address. Students pay \$25, and dues assistance is available. Questions? Contact Jean Fong at [jsfong1@comcast.net](mailto:jsfong1@comcast.net) or 522-7797. 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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