

The League of Women Voters of Alameda

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The VOTER is published 9 times per year. Current and past issues of the VOTER are posted on our website

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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 43
Number 4
May 2010**

VOTER

**Political Responsibility through Informed and Active
Participation**

ALAMEDA LEAGUE SUPPORTS MEASURE "E"

At its April 15th meeting the League board heard from Measure E opponents and proponents to decide whether it should endorse or oppose the measure (take a position) or remain neutral. For the proponents representatives from Alamedans Protecting Learning at Underfunded Schools (APLUS) outlined reasons their support for Measure E. Without additional funds neighborhood schools will close, the school year will be shortened and programs such as music and sports will be cut. They noted that closing one school would only recover \$300,000 (out of a \$7 million deficit) and that both Piedmont and Albany recently passed a split roll parcel tax. The opponents, Alamedans for Fair Taxation, expressed concerns about the tax burden on commercial property owners, especially small businesses, and the legality of a split roll parcel tax. Commercial properties are paying an increasing percentage of the overall tax burden and many small businesses in Alameda are struggling to stay in operation. The Board considered both arguments and reviewed local, state and national positions that would allow it to support or oppose the measure. The Board voted to support Measure E with the following statement.

"A quality education is an investment in our children's future. The best way to grow our economy and create well-paying jobs is to support public schools that provide our students with the skills they need to succeed in the workforce. California is reducing its support for local school districts and the Alameda Unified School District is planning cuts of \$7 million in 2011-12 and \$17 million in 2012-13.

Measure E will generate \$14 million per year for Alameda schools over the next 8 years through an annual special parcel tax on property in the City of Alameda. This new tax replaces two previous parcel taxes. Funding from Measure E will allow Alameda schools to protect strong core academic programs by maintaining qualified and experienced teachers, supporting small class sizes, keeping libraries and media centers open and staffed, supporting Alameda students in Charter schools, and retaining music, art and athletic programs.

"If this measure is approved homeowners and small businesses will pay an additional \$30 per month (\$350/year). The tax on commercial and industrial parcels will be reduced from \$0.015 per square foot to \$0.013 per square foot. The new tax is proposed to begin on July 1, 2010. Measure E contains strong accountability provisions requiring a citizen's advisory committee to review the expenditure, a yearly report to the Board of Education, and the deposit of proceeds into a special fund to be used only for purposes listed in the measure."

The League's Support for Measure E is based upon the 2005 League of Women Voters of California's *Position on Education: Pre-Kindergarten through 12*: "Support a system of public education that is adequate, flexible, equitable and sustainable; derived from a combination of revenue sources; and distributed fairly to support access and equitable opportunities for all students."



CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

Anne Spanier and Kate Quick
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters of
Alameda

President's Message

It seems election season is upon us again, and so soon after the Measure "B" vote. But yes, we have a new election, with a new "wrinkle" – this one will be Alameda's first vote by mail only. The measure, designated "E" has a June 22 deadline, but ballots will be mailed out in late May, and can be returned at any time up until the deadline. At the April board meeting, the Alameda League voted unanimously to support Measure E. An article as to our process and rationale can be found in this VOTER. We hope as many of our League members that can, join the campaign to get this vital measure passed.

Also coming in June is the regular primary election. This time we will be voting on just a few state propositions (see the "Vote with the League" on page 6) and some County offices. Of particular concern is who will represent us on the Board of Supervisors. There are three candidates, two of whom are well known to us here in Alameda. We will be holding a candidate's night and forums on both Measure E and the other propositions. It is likely that the service clubs and others will be asking for speakers as well. Jeff Cambra has again volunteered to do videos for us, so those who miss the forums can get the information on the web or the cable channels.

So I guess I am saying that our work is cut out for us this spring (and will be back in the fall with the congressional and municipal races). This is your opportunity to do something for your community – voter registration, distribution of voter education materials, helping with the forums, being a presenter at our pro and con sessions on the ballot measures, whatever job, big or small, we NEED you! Contact Joanne McKray right now to volunteer. The strength of our League is in our ability to find members who can help in both our voter education and advocacy efforts. Even when you do a small job, you are making our League stronger, not to mention our community a better place in which to live.

I do hope you are all planning to attend our Annual Meeting on June 5 at 11:30 a.m. at the Gold Coast Restaurant. This is our most important meeting of the year. We elect new officers and the board, and adopt our next year's budget, as well as hear from a good speaker (this time Interim City Manager Anne Marie Gallant, who will review the plans for the vision of the city center) and eat delicious food. All members who are paid up by May 1 will have an opportunity to vote at this meeting. I am pleased that the nominating committee has found a full slate of officers and elected board members, and look forward to our next year serving our community well.

You will be receiving this VOTER long after our annual Meet Your Public Official event is over, but I know it will be, as usual, a huge success, and I look forward to seeing everyone there. Being your President these past few years has been a huge honor and a great pleasure. I will be remaining on the Board, if elected, but not as President. So my thanks to all of you for allowing me to lead one of the best Leagues in California.

Kate

Leadership Council 2010 -The Next Ninety

Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, 300 J Street Sacramento, CA 95814, Saturday, May 15 - Sunday, May 16, 2010 Special events: Friday, May 14

Registration and information is available on the League of Women Voter's California Web site. The Program is available on the Members Only page. Visit ca.lwv.org/lwvc/aboutlwvc/council/2010. All are invited to attend the workshops and plenary session, although only official delegates are allowed to vote.

Is it Partisan or Simply Political?

By Anne Spanier

The League of Women Voters (LWV) is often called upon by other organizations to support a particular cause or point of view. This is because the League's stamp of approval can have a positive effect for a political cause. At times, the League does take a position on a political issue. Detractors sometimes call these endorsements "partisan"

There is a clear distinction between what is partisan and what is political. Encarta © World English Dictionary © & (P) 1998-2004 Microsoft Corporation, defines political as being *1. Concerned with party politics: relating to politics, especially party politics 2. concerned with government: relating to civil administration or government.* The same source defines partisan as *1. biased supporter: a strong supporter of a person, group, or cause, especially one who does not listen to other people's opinions*

The passage of the 19th amendment or the women's right to vote in 1919 was born of political strife. After more than 70 years of work, it became clear to the suffragists—that intense political action was needed in their cause. Carrie Chapman Catt, founder of the LWV, concluded that in spite of the Democratic President Wilson's apparent support of voting rights, he did little to advance their cause. Only after his public humiliation due to the imprisonment, beatings and forced feedings of the suffragists did he relent and sign the amendment.

Having learned that -political parties alone could not be counted on for action, the League no longer endorsed or supported a political party or their candidates. Only definition two remains in force today. *2. concerned with government: relating to civil administration or government.*

The League was founded to educate newly enfranchised women voters, on the political issues that affected their lives and does take formal positions on specific political issues after a comprehensive study. In the case of a national study, positions evolve via a process that engages hundreds of local Leagues throughout the country. State and local Leagues follow a similar, but smaller process. A final consensus report is developed with any of the three options of: 1) opposed 2) support 3) remain neutral. The consensus Position is presented to the appropriate assembly for a vote. In the case of National Positions, an assembly, representing all of the States and their voting delegates is held every two years. The Positions are published and in the case of Alameda are on the website at www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org

The above process assures that their political positions are not partisan. Whether or not to choose to use a Position to support or not support a ballot measure, for example, is determined after careful and deliberate consideration of LWV Positions by the League's Board of Directors. The Board of Directors of the Alameda League of Women Voters always follows this procedure and indeed followed this procedure in deciding to remain neutral in the Measure B ballot measure of February 2010.

Membership is open to all citizens of voting age. Join Us! Go to www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org

MEMBERSHIP TALK OVER COFFEE.

Join us on Saturday Morning for hot coffee and scones at the

High Street Coffee House at 10 am , May 22nd.

Bring those friends that would like to know more about us and join us this year. Call 522-3426 and let us know by Thursday May 20th if you are coming and bringing a guest. Any new members who have not had a chance to meet our members, please come too and get acquainted.

SAVE THE DATE FOR ANNUAL MEETING

Saturday, June 5, 2010
11:30am-3pm

Keynote Speaker: Ann Marie Gallant,
Interim City Manager
Topic: Alameda Civic Center Vision Plan

Location: Gold Coast Grill
1901 Park Street
Free parking in rear of building

League Interview with Assemblymember Swanson

On April 2nd, Alameda League member Juelle Anne Boyer interviewed 16th District Assemblymember Sandré Swanson. She was accompanied by League members from Oakland and Piedmont for this annual legislative interview.

1. Budget Dilemmas:

How will you prioritize the choices the Legislature needs to make to align the state's spending and revenue in a way that addresses the need for fair, sufficient and flexible revenue sources that can provide for state and local government services?

Assemblymember Swanson responded, in general, with "California should stand for something. It should reflect our highest priority. In my opinion this should be education." He emphasized the need to increase revenues in order to increase funding for schools at all levels. As a member of the Budget Committee, he will attempt to get the issue of increased revenues on their agenda for consideration.

He extends his support for education to rehabilitation in the prison system. Studies in other states show that rehabilitation reduces recidivism which reduces prison system expenditures thus releasing revenues for use in other areas such as k-12 and post-secondary education.

Mr. Swanson also supports the requirement for budget issues to be 55% or simple majority rather than 67%.

2. The Budget Process:

What proposals do you support to fix the budget process?

Simple majority for passage of budget and tax issues. Modify the law to allow the legislature to add items of budget/tax nature to the ballot with simple majority rather than 2/3 majority.

Create new revenues through the broadening of taxable items (e.g. add services), tax internet sales. Also the requirement for 2/3 majority to support local tax issues should be changed to 55%. Remove the "rule of minority" in tax related votes.

Under Prop #13, Malls and businesses should be taxed differently from residences when sold. Should have state taxes on merchandise sold on the internet and a tax on services.

There is no "fat" to cut. If you cut staff too far, you lose revenue ie: hold up permits and collections, etc.

3. Constitutional Reform:

What types of reforms do you think are important to make government function more effectively?

Assemblymember Swanson does not favor a convention as a solution; too broad and too many issues will become entangled.

There are three issues which need to be changed to relieve the current structural problem:

- a. budget and tax issues should be passed with a simple majority (50% + 1)
- b. change the term limits; time and structure
- c. approval for local taxes should be 50% + 1 or 55%

Also, term limits need to be changed. Currently the politicized nature of the current term limits creates a short sighted situation. Legislators need to consider the longer term. Need an initiative to restructure the terms without it applying to those currently in office.

4. General Question:

What other major issues do you think the Legislature must address in 2010? What are your priorities?

As cited above, Assemblymember Swanson sees Prisons as an opportunity to save revenues for other uses. Without rehabilitation, there is a 70% recidivism rate which is really wasted money. Additionally, in California, all persons released are paroled requiring a probation officer to monitor them. System is broken and flooded. Alternatively, providing rehabilitation (education, job training, addressing drug and mental health issues etc) and a network of services on release would be less costly over the long term.

He supports

- home ownership efforts such as tax credits
- adopting a budget on time to avoid higher interest costs on bonds freeing money for more construction projects and more employment
- retaining the senior safety net
- Education, senior care and youth services
- The new approach to health care and aligning CA practices with the new federal law
- Laws to eliminate human trafficking which rescue and rehabilitate the victims while treating the perpetrator as a profiteer allowing the confiscation of assets
- Deconstruction of prisons

Voter Ed Plans for June 8 and June 22 Elections

2010 is definitely an on-election year. The second and third of four scheduled Alameda elections are approaching, and in response the Voter Education Committee is working overtime planning activities for the coming six weeks. We will be holding public presentations, distributing election materials, and creating of videos for our website, public access TV, and blogs.

In addition to shorter presentations requested by clubs, we'll be holding two forums to which the public is invited. The first will be at the Main Library, 1550 Oak Street, on Thursday, May 13, at 7:30 p.m., and will concern issues on the June 8 ballot. The four candidates for Alameda County Board of Supervisors, District 3, have been invited to speak in the first half of the program, and League members will present the contents, pros, and cons of the five state propositions during the second half. The public is invited to come and bring their questions.

Our second forum will concern Measure E, the local school parcel tax proposition which is the subject of the June 22 mail-in ballot election. It will be held at Mastick Senior Center Social Hall, 1155 Santa Clara Ave., on Thursday, June 10, at 7:30 p.m. Speakers from the supporting and opposing sides will give presentations, but the major portion of the program will be devoted to the speakers responding to audience questions.

The election materials will include League booklets, giving the pros and cons of the state propositions, and a local sheet giving the pros and cons of Measure E. Quite separate from this totally objective information will be sheets giving the League's position on two of the state propositions (Prop 15 on the pilot program for public funding of candidates running for Secretary of State, and Prop 16 on whether establishing or changing provision of electricity by local companies should require two-thirds voter approval), and on Measure E. These materials will go out to over 30 sites, including libraries and schools.

Video production is a relatively new activity for the Alameda League, made possible by a member, Jeff Cambra, who enthusiastically has been contributing his time and know-how to the project. This time around, in addition to taping our two forums, we're aiming to make two half-hour productions. One will feature the candidates for the Alameda County Board of Supervisors seat, and the other the League's positions on Propositions 15 and 16 and on Measure E.

Presently we're looking forward to summertime, when we'll have two whole months down time before we have to begin work on the November election!

Joanne McKray

Bay Area League to Meet in Castro Valley

LWVBA Convention will be on Saturday, May 29 at the Castro Valley Public Library (3600 Norbridge Ave., Castro Valley). We will adopt positions and priorities for 2010-2012, elect officers, hear reports from local League and hear a speaker from the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. Delegates reflect the local League Membership

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 Education 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.

!VOTE WITH THE LEAGUE!

June 8 Statewide Election

Yes on Proposition 15

No on Proposition 16

Hear the candidates and pros and cons on the propositions May 13th, 7:30pm at the Main Library.
(see page 5)

June 22 Mail-in Ballot

Yes on Measure E

Hear the Pros and Cons on June 10th, 7:30pm
at Mastick Senior Center (see page 5)

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