

**The League of
Women Voters of
Alameda**

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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 42
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VOTER

Political Responsibility through Informed and Active Participation

HEALTH CARE REFORM FROM THE PHYSICIAN'S PERSPECTIVE: Joint Lunch Program with the Alameda Rotary Club On November 3rd RSVP required!

Lately, health care has been vying with the economy for the news headlines. Much has been written about the inclusion or exclusion of the public option. Now we are reading about the insurance industry's dim view of the recently passed U.S. Senate health care reform bill. Much less, however, has been written about the medical profession's viewpoint on the whole issue of reform.

In early October, League members Shubha Fanse and Dr. Robyn Young attended a Commonwealth program on the matter in San Francisco. They asked one of the presenters, Dr. Lonnie R. Bristow, former President of the American Medical Association to be a speaker at our next program. Entitled "A Doctor's Insight into the Real Issues in Health Care Reform", this program will be held in conjunction with the Alameda Rotary Club at their business luncheon on Tuesday, Nov. 3rd. The event will be at the Grandview Pavilion, 300 Island Drive, next to the Alameda Municipal Golf Course.

Dr Bristow has served as Vice-Chair and Chair of the AMA's Board of Trustees and as President of the AMA from 1995-96. He has written and lectured extensively on medical science and socio-economic and ethical issues related to medicine. He received his M.D., M.A.C.P. from New York Univ. College of Medicine and is a board-certified internist. He has practiced medicine for more than 40 years with the last 15 limited to the practice of occupational medicine.

During those four decades, he has been involved in more activities than we have space here to include. Of particular note, as a member of the Institute of Medicine of the National Academy of Sciences, he served on its Quality of Health Care in America Committee. Its members compiled a widely-read report, "To Err is Human – Building a Safer Health System". It cited the fact that as many as 98,000 Americans die each year due to medical errors in hospitals. Calling for a nation-wide effort to reduce that number in half over the next 10 years, it triggered many changes in hospital systems design and operations that are still being implemented today.

We are very fortunate to have the distinguished Dr. Bristow speak to us and help us weight the various sides of this monumental issue of reform. His presentation will begin at 12:45 p.m. after the buffet lunch at 12:15 p.m. Dr. Bristow will stay until 2 o'clock to answer additional questions. The lunch costs \$20 at the door. If you wish to attend only the presentation, please arrive around 12:30 p.m. A \$5 donation to the Rotary's TRF Polio Plus will be requested. It is a project to eliminate polio through vaccination of children worldwide.

This joint program is limited to League and Rotary members. If you are planning to attend, please RSVP to Marilyn Ng at mjklm@yahoo.com by Oct. 29th and indicate whether you are coming for lunch or only for the program. If you have any questions, please call (510) 684-4243.



CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

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

Co-President's Message

Well, here it is, the end of October almost and we are only about six weeks into our League program year, but my-o-my are we busy little bees and off to a great start. We have had an informative, well attended program about the sustainability of our City's finances given by the City Auditor, Kevin Kennedy. We have had two letters to the editor published, one on the important issue of signature gathering rules for local initiatives. Our Co-President, Anne Spanier has met at Senator Nancy Pelosi's office with a group of women visitors from other countries to tell them about organizations like the League, which advance the causes of women and good government in the United States. She told them how the League was founded, and the principles we are still applying some 90 years later to educate ourselves and others on many issues which have a critical impact on the lives of women and children. Several of the women asked her to give them her e-mail contact information so they can follow up and want to do similar things in their home countries.

Looking forward, we have snagged the renowned Dr. Norman Bowen to speak on the United Nations at this month's program, and on November 3rd, thanks to the good work of members Dr. Robyn Young and Shubha Fanse we will be partnering with the Rotary to hear Dr. Lonnie R. Bristow speak on health care reform. Dr. Bristow was the national president of the American Medical Association and served in the Clinton administration. We will have an opportunity to hear from, and ask questions of, a very high profile medical leader on the subject of health care reform!

At our last Board meeting, we discussed at length the need for more participation in our membership committee, which is just forming under the leadership of Anne Spanier. One of our main goals for this year is membership recruitment and retention. Anyone wishing to help with this important work should contact Anne at anneleague@comcast.net. I think we are off to a fine start. I also think that our League is very fortunate to have so many smart, bold women and men to help us to be effective in our community. Thanks to everyone!
Kate



**Save The
Date**

**Saturday evening, December 5th
for the Annual Alameda League
Holiday Party – Look for Details in your
next VOTER**



**Dues
Are
Due**

**Please take a minute now to send your
renewal check along with the
membership form on page 6 in the
envelope provided with this issue.
Thank You!**

Tough Financial Times Ahead For Alameda

The League of Women Voters of Alameda recently asked City Treasurer Kevin Kennedy to present the findings of his committee, the Fiscal Sustainability Committee, to a general meeting of its membership and the public. This presentation supports the League's major positions on *transparency and accountability* as well as a strong position on *fiscal sustainability* in government. The state of California and many cities in the state are facing budget shortfalls. The national recession has intensified the problems. Additionally, the State is taking resources from the local communities to balance their budget making local budgets extremely vulnerable.

Recently, the city of Vallejo went into bankruptcy. They were unable to meet their financial obligations, most notably the pension and health care costs for their city employees and retirees. This event has been a wake up call for cities across California.

In order to plan as effectively as possible for the future, the city of Alameda created the Fiscal Sustainability Committee which recently released its report, *The Long-Range Financial Forecast, 2009-2019*. [It can be found at <http://www.ci.alameda.ca.us/gov/committee.html>]. The Chairs of this committee, City Treasurer Kevin Kennedy and City Auditor Kevin Kearney, worked with 11 carefully selected members of the community in gathering and analyzing data about the needs and resources of the city. Their goal was to provide an objective overview of the financial health of Alameda over the next decade.

The news was quite sobering. Substantial revenue increases are very unlikely in the near future. On the other hand, costs of city government are rising quite rapidly due to pension and health care costs. In addition automatic cost of living increases are written into contracts of many public employees compounding the issue even further.

The health care costs of retiring city employees have not been factored into the current budgets of the city, and will be coming due in the next few years. With a large number of city employees eligible to retire over the next several years the city is facing greater budget shortfalls. Asset maintenance is another budgetary problem not always specified in annual budgets. For specific details regarding these issues (check the following link http://ci.alameda.ca.us/gov/pdf/Bartel_OPEB_Report_2009.pdf).

We thank City Treasurer Kevin Kennedy, the Fiscal Sustainability Committee, and our City leaders in bringing forth the grim financial facts about our projected budget for the next decade. What can we, the citizens, do to help? As Mr. Kennedy recently suggested, we can talk to our Council members and City management about our concerns. The city leaders and the public will be asked to make some difficult choices over the coming years. Public input and creative suggestions can help the process of finding solutions to the City's economic problems and avert the City from following the path of Vallejo to bankruptcy.

Anne Spanier and Marilyn Ng

On Alert:

Seasonal Hazard Looms

by Alec MacDonald

(Reprinted from the Bay Area Monitor)

If you have ever been curious about how exactly your fireplace is connected to air pollution, here's an illuminating exercise to try next time you're online. Log on to www.epa.gov/oar/particlepollution, the page of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Web site that deals with particulate matter. You probably already have a basic understanding of what particulate matter is, but you can read an exact definition, along with information about its detrimental health effects, through this page.

Scroll down to the "Air Emission Sources" link, which will offer you a window into the EPA's national database of air emissions; specifically, you'll be able to find out how much particulate matter came from different sources according to the agency's most recent inventory in 2002.

You can sort the inventory results by location, and if you live in the Bay Area, you'll want to take note of just how much residential wood combustion (the use of fireplaces, woodstoves, and outdoor fire pits) surpasses other sources in the production of fine particulate matter (particles of 2.5 micrometers in diameter and smaller). Residents of Santa Clara County, for instance, will observe that wood burning there gave rise to more than twice as much fine particulate matter as did on- (continued on page 4)

Seasonal Hazard (continued from page 3)

road vehicles. Those in San Mateo and Alameda counties will see the same ratio, while residents of Marin, Contra Costa, San Francisco, and Solano counties will notice a ratio of three to one. The disparity was even greater in the counties of Napa (four times as much) and Sonoma (five times). Of all the nine Bay Area counties, in fact, residential wood combustion tops the list for each, with the exception of Contra Costa, where it was eclipsed only by industrial processes.

The figures are rather surprising, but then again, the region is home to an estimated 1.4 million fireplaces and woodstoves. One would expect these to have a substantial collective impact, especially when temperatures drop. As the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (Air District) reports, residential wood burning represents the region's largest primary source of fine particulate matter in winter, accounting for roughly one third of it on any given cold day.

In order to help alleviate this seasonal hazard, the Air District passed a wood burning regulation in July of 2008, and then rolled out a corresponding outreach program later that year. As part of the regulation, Bay Area residents were prohibited from burning wood on those days between November 1 and February 28 when the Air District issued Winter Spare the Air Alerts. Based on forecasts of the agency's Air Quality Index pollution measurement scale, these alerts were broadcast via a multitude of communication channels, primarily television, radio, Internet, and newspapers. Individuals could also sign up to receive alerts directly via phone or e-mail, while a hotline was set up for people who preferred to call in and check for themselves.

All told, the Air District ended up issuing just 11 alerts, lower than average for a season that could easily yield 15 to 20, depending on weather. If the region experiences heavier rainfall than usual in the coming months, for example, then the number could again be low.

Whatever lies in store for the second winter of wood burning regulation, the Air District looks to be prepared. Starting in November, alerts will be announced the day before they go into effect, so that news outlets have greater lead time to spread the word (last winter, alerts were publicized day of). And now, awareness about the program has already taken hold, with 12,000 residents currently on the phone alert list and 100,000 more on the e-mail one. Education about this issue should continue to increase, leading more Bay Area residents to change the way they view their fireplaces, and thereby improve the air they breathe.

League of Women Voters of Alameda Co-President Anne Spanier Meets With Women Leaders from Middle-Eastern Countries.

In October, fifteen women leaders from countries as diverse as Iraq, Morocco and the West Bank came to the United States to learn about women political leaders. The League played an important role in their visit. They were guests of the Institute of International Education (IIE). The Institute of International Education is an agency which operates under the auspices of the Department of State's International Visitor Leadership Program. Embassies in foreign countries screen applicants who are then chosen by the US State Department for specific programs. This organization sponsors hundreds of visitors who come to study our educational, business, political and legal systems. In some parts of the country visitors may visit agricultural areas and food production facilities.

The group spent some time in Washington and then came to San Francisco to learn about the role of the Speaker of the House, Nancy Pelosi and the various duties of that office. Additional objectives of the trip were to meet with members of non-governmental organizations, community organizations and volunteer groups. Other objectives of their visit were to discuss transparency in government and how the public holds the government accountable. The League of Women Voters was chosen as the group most fitting the category of a volunteer non-governmental organization which has as its core function, working for government transparency and accountability.

The women were employed in a variety of positions. One woman was the Mayor in a small city in the country of Jordan. Another woman from Bahrain was a researcher of women issues. Another woman from Syria was Head of the Operational Maintenance, Ministry of Telecommunication. Most women were with governmental agencies, but several were business owners. One was a senior reporter for Gulf News. About half of the women spoke English, but about half needed an interpreter for some of the dialogue.
(continued on page 5)

Middle East Leaders(continued from page 4)

The second part of the program centered on the League and its work. Anne told the story of the history of the women's fight for the 19th amendment and was surprised to hear that at least one woman in the group had purchased the DVD "Iron Jawed Angels" while she was in Washington D.C. The women in the group were surprised to hear that American women had been jailed and beaten in the streets while marching during this time. They were not surprised to hear that some women were removed from the parades by their husbands!

The women were very interested in how to assure transparency in their governments, and Anne described many of the roles the League takes in monitoring the government and advocating for electoral reform.

The role of sunshine laws and the Voting Rights Act were also discussed. Anne described the way that the League takes positions and showed the group League publications. "Know Your Representatives" was very popular with the group as they saw the potential for their own communities. It was clear that these women leaders were extremely interested in bringing more women into the political process and saw the League's work as a potent instrument in achieving that goal. It was heartening to be able to spread the word about the League to women eager for that information.

Why Be a Member of the League?

Are you aware of how important the nineteenth amendment has been in establishing women's full participation in American life through the right to vote? Are you aware of how that right to vote influences the way we live? Do you realize that the women who fought for that amendment went on to form the League of Women Voters? Do you know that the League of Women Voters is actively engaged every day assuring the rights not only of women but men as well? The members of this volunteer non-governmental organization work diligently to keep our elected officials accountable and to keep government processes transparent. Renewing your membership and asking some of your friends to join us as well will keep those dreams alive.

The alternative of not having accountability and transparency is unthinkable. Two events in the last few months have made that clear to me. In August LWVA sponsored the made- for TV movie, "Iron Jawed Angels." This film depicted the courageous struggle of our grandmothers to bring women into the mainstream of American life, by securing their voting rights. The movie illustrated the hard work, abuse, even the jailing of these women. Today we often take those rights for granted. We shouldn't.

On Tuesday of this week I met 15 women from Middle Eastern countries (see article on page 4). They told me of their struggles with governments that were often hostile to them as women and their eagerness to see women join the political process. They were eager to learn how the League was structured and how we function in the political process. This dialogue reminded me of how far we have come in our desire to foster democracy and women's full participation in American life. For it is through those rights, whether or not people are politically inclined or not, that women are able to enjoy the full fruits of citizenship. It also made me realize that this country and so many of our institutions, particularly the non-governmental ones, founded by volunteers and grassroots efforts act as a beacon to those people still struggling for their own freedoms.

Please fill in the membership form on the back of this page, write your check (\$68 individual, \$85 household, \$25 student) and use the enclosed envelope to mail today. We need you!



Shutterbug Needed

As the saying goes, a picture paints a thousand words, and our Alameda VOTER needs pictures! If you have a digital camera and attend League events, please consider bringing the camera along and taking pictures of speakers, members and guests. Pictures can be e-mailed to VOTER editor Karen Scanlon at yakitt@aol.com with a subject line of "for VOTER". Questions? E-mail or call Karen at 510-523-6456

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 94501

Education Fund donations are Tax Deductible

Donations to the League of Women Voters Educations 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

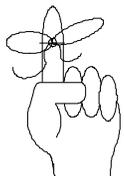
Turn your Trash into Cash for the Ed Fund

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.

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Dates to Remember

Nov 3rd - 12:15pm –Joint League
& Rotary Lunch Meeting on
Healthcare at Grandview Pavilion

Nov 12th – 7:30pm –Board
Meeting
Alameda Hospital – Room C

Dec 5th – Annual Holiday Party