



# Alameda Voter

Volume 36 Number 8

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## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS RECOMMENDS OCTOBER 2003 SPECIAL ELECTION

### ✓ NO ON PROPOSITION 53

*Oppose Proposition 53—Funds Dedicated for State and Local Infrastructure.* This measure would lock into the state constitution a new program of pay-as-you-go infrastructure funding. It is true that public works projects are needed, but Prop 53 is the wrong way to pay for them. Legislators would allocate funds, half to state and half to local projects of their choice, with no requirement for funding the projects of greatest need and no accountability. K-12 schools and community colleges would be excluded. Prop 53 does not provide new revenue but simply earmarks funds, even if that means cuts for essential health care, education, public safety, or other programs. Even in hard times, transfers from the General Fund might still be required, reducing the state's flexibility in setting priorities.

### DEDICATED SPENDING

### ✓ NO ON PROPOSITION 54

*Oppose Proposition 54—Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, or National Origin.* This constitutional amendment would ban state and local governments from using information essential to public health, education reforms, crime prevention, and civil rights enforcement—even though much of this data would still have to be collected to meet federal mandates. The medical "exemption" is poorly written, will invite litigation, and could jeopardize the use of information important in fighting cancer, heart disease, diabetes, the spread of infectious diseases and other illnesses. The California Medical Association and more than 40 other health organizations agree that Proposition 54 is bad medicine for all Californians.

### INFORMATION BAN

## Be a Smart Voter for the Recall Election

The League of Women Voters of California's (LWVC) award-winning website, Smart Voter (<http://smartvoter.org>), now has up-to-the-minute, easy to use, nonpartisan information on the California gubernatorial recall and ballot measure for the election Oct. 7.

Designed to help voters understand their choices better, Smart Voter offers extensive background

information on candidates. The list of candidates is up now, and all were invited to provide data for their free web pages. Candidates will soon be entering information about their qualifications and priorities.

In addition, Smart Voter has extensive nonpartisan information on the two statewide ballot measures on the ballot, and Smart Voter will provide polling place

information for 23 participating counties in which 87 percent of California Voters have registered. It is the only Internet site that will have this much polling information.

For information, call Trudell Een at 408-323-9611 or [director@smartvoter.org](mailto:director@smartvoter.org). Or contact the League of Women Voters of California at [lwvc@lwvc.org](mailto:lwvc@lwvc.org) or call 916-442-7215.

# Goals: More involvement, more visibility

By **KATE QUICK**  
Board President

**A**ugust was another busy month for the Alameda League. Most of our business was accomplished at our annual Board Retreat. We were able to plan our program year, define our roles, learn more about how to be successful members of a working group, set goals for the coming year, and best of all, have a lot of fun! Thanks to the hospitality of Lynn Groh, who hosted us at her cabin in Tahoe, and Lena Tam, who organized the great food, and Jean Fong, who took super notes and had them transcribed before our returning car engines had cooled off. My thanks also to our able Vice President, Li Volin, and all the other Boardmembers who made this a successful and very "complete" retreat. Judy Cox, from the Oakland League assisted us with skillful facilitation, and our thanks go to her as well.

I hope that you will all find the

programs planned and the many Voter Service and Study activities will stimulate your interest in being "In League" in a more active way this year. Our goals are to increase our visibility in the community and stimulate our members to become more involved in League programs and educational activities.

To this end, we will be starting up a monthly calling to let you each know what is being planned and invite you to become active in participating. Of course, in September, we are planning voter education and information sessions and distribution of written materials concerning both the Recall and the two propositions, 53 and 54. You will be getting information in the form of pros and cons on the Propositions, and a night was planned at the Mastick Senior Center on Sept. 23. to assist people with the very complex Recall ballot. We had someone there from the Registrar of Voters Office with a touch-screen ma-

chine, so people could see what they will face in the voting booth.

As just yesterday, the Ninth Circuit Court said it was putting the Recall Election "on hold", but was immediately promised appeals by the Recall proponents, we are unsure of the timing of this election. We'll let you know what is planned if we make any changes in times or dates of our pre-election educational activities.

I just returned from a wonderful 11-day cruise to Alaska. As we sailed up to some magnificent glaciers and witnessed whales, dolphins, otters, and eagles "close up," I thought about the work of the League on environmental issues, and was glad that there are many who continue the good fight to preserve our wilderness. The beauty of this huge and wild area, and of its wildlife are marvelous to behold. I hope each of you has the opportunity to see this great resource. It's a trip very worth taking.

## Opportunities to work together to help our schools

"There has never been a more important time to reach out to children," says Wilma Chan, California Assembly Majority Leader.

It's no secret—schools are facing difficult times. Bad economic times have resulted in teacher layoffs and cuts to programs that are critical to children's success. This has been especially tough here in the Bay Area where there is

a long tradition of supporting public education. While everyone continues to work together to fight for education funding, we need to get active now to help local schools.

Whether you lend a hand for a single day or volunteer every week, children need your help to succeed. Spend a day this fall with Assemblywoman Wilma Chan and hundreds of volunteers

sprucing up pre-school centers in Oakland and Alameda. Volunteers will garden, paint bookshelves, perform light carpentry, improve playgrounds and clean up. No experience is necessary, just energy and elbow grease.

Please mark your calendars: Saturday, October 4, Golden Gate Pre-School, 6232 Herzog, at 63rd Street -- 1 block east of San Pablo Av-

enue.

Saturday, Oct. 11, Woodstock Pre-School, 190 Singleton, off Main, Alameda.

Workdays start at 9a.m. and run until sundown. Continental breakfast and lunch will be provided to all volunteers.

For more information or to RSVP, call 510-286-1670 or go to <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a16/>

# Status of the League's most recent actions

By MIRIAM SCHIFFMAN  
Boardmember

*(This column is meant to identify some of our more recent activities).*

Based on information from our observer, we wrote a letter to the Alameda Board of Education to urge them to return to their previous practice of allowing public comment during the time the item on the agenda is discussed. We noted that the spirit, if not the letter, of the Brown Act is being compromised when public input is limited to a comment period before the agenda is addressed.

We also suggested that some time limits on speakers might help with controlling the length of meetings. This matter has continued and the Board was to discuss its meeting organization Sept. 23. Li Volin read the letter we sent earlier. Hopefully the Board members will make some changes.

When an opening on the City Council occurred, League Board as a whole and individual Boardmembers addressed the issue of how to select a new member. The city charter does not spell out how this is to be done if the vacancy occurs more than 60 days after election. In a letter and via personal contact we urged the council to create a process open to the citizens of Alameda. We suggested an invitation to the public to send resumes; public inter-

views of all the candidates and then a public process of selecting someone. We were pleased that the Council adopted the process used by the County Board of Supervisors and similar to the one we suggested. For those of you watching the process (as well as the councilmembers) there was the unanticipated tie; but the four councilmembers rose to the occasion and finally selected Marie Gilmore.

On the state level, League has declared it opposes Proposition 53, (Dedicated Funding for Infrastructure) and Prop. 54, (Banning Collection of Data about race, ethnic or national origin) which will appear on the next ballot. Please see the flier elsewhere in this Voter spelling out the reasons for League's stance. As a follow up, letters to the editor have been sent to our local papers in the name of our president expressing League's opposition to these two measures.

A reminder: When you receive a LWV News Action Alert asking for our action, please make an effort to write individually to the responsible officials. You can be sure that at the same time a letter will be sent from our League.

If you have any questions about an action item or think we should take action, please contact me or any other member of the board. My e-mail is [sandmrow2@sbcglobal.net](mailto:sandmrow2@sbcglobal.net). My phone is 749-9687.

## Open House for prospective and new members Oct. 4

New and old members are invited to an Open House Tea from 10 to 11:30 p.m. Oct. 4, and both are asked to encourage other Alamedans to come and find out about joining the League.

The event will be at 734 Palmera Court, Alameda

Members of the Alameda League's Board will be available to discuss what the League is all about. It's a great opportunity to meet the community and other League members.

Please R.S.V.P. by calling 869-4969 and leaving a message.

## War costs discussed Oct. 15

The League of Women Voters of Oakland World Affairs Committee joins the Mills College Department of Government in a discussion on the benefits and costs of U.S. unilateral military action in Iraq.

They will address the U.S. efforts in the War on Terrorism and other related issues. All are welcome Wednesday, Oct. 15, noon to 2 p.m., at the Mills College Student Union, 5000 MacArthur Blvd., Oakland

It will begin with a presentation by Professor Fred Lawson, who has taught world politics at Mills since 1985. He was a Fulbright lecturer at the University of Aleppo in Syria and at Aden University in Yemen.

Bring your own brown bag lunch.

For more information, call 568-2336.

## Keep in touch with League

Have you moved? Have you changed your phone number or email address? Does your League have the best ways to get in touch with you?

Don't let the League lose contact with you. Send any new contact information to Jean Fong, membership director. Write her at 734 Palmera Court, Alameda, CA 94501. Call her at (510) 522-7797. Or email her at [jfong1@comcast.net](mailto:jfong1@comcast.net).

## Calif. League shares \$250K for Smartvoter

The League of Women Voters of California was named Sept. 3 one of 25 laureates for the prestigious 2003 Tech Museum Awards: Technology Benefiting Humanity presented by Applied Materials, Inc. The Tech Museum of Innovation, located in San Jose, announced the laureates. In Silicon Valley where technology is considered a way of life, The Tech Museum Awards were developed to recognize the need to bridge existing technology in emerging countries and emerging technologies in developed countries.

The League of Women Voters of California has been selected a laureate for the Knight Ridder Equality Award.

The League of Women Voters is being recognized for Smartvoter.org, a comprehensive web site that provides objective, nonpartisan background information on the candidates and complex issues that appear on California's election ballots. Voters visiting the site can input their address to find their polling place and receive a customized ballot, local measure sites, related newspaper articles and more election sites. Smartvoter.org also provides a means for all candidates in participating counties to publish information about themselves and their candidacy directly to voters and without cost.

"We're honored that Smartvoter.org has been recognized as a tool that is improving the quality of life," said Trudell Een, Project Director for Smart Voter. "It is critical that California voters have access to objective and impartial information that enables them to make educated decisions about the future of their state."

On Oct. 15, at a black tie Awards Gala, Silicon Valley leaders and delegates from the United Nations will join together to honor all 25 laureates, and one laureate from each category will be awarded a \$50,000 cash hono-

rarium.

The awards, presented in partnership with the American Council for the United Nations University and Santa Clara University's Center for Science, Technology, and Society, are designed to honor individuals, for-profit companies, and public and not-for-profit organizations from around the world who are applying technology to profoundly improve the human condition in the categories of education, equality, environment, economic development, and health.

This year, an esteemed panel of judges considered more than 500 nominations, representing 70 countries. The 25 2003 Tech Laureates come from Bangladesh, Canada, Costa Rica, India, Indonesia, Kenya, Nicaragua, Nepal, and the United States.

"Reflecting the mission of The Tech Museum of Innovation, these awards recognize the innovators who use technology to improve people's lives," says Peter Giles, president and chief executive officer of The Tech. "Through these awards, The Tech inspires future scientists, technologists, and social entrepreneurs to harness the incredible power and promise of technology to solve the challenges that confront us at the dawn of the 21st Century."

For more information on the awards and laureates, visit <http://techawards.thetech.org>.

Judging for The Tech Museum Awards is independently conducted by Santa Clara University's Center for Science, Technology and Society, a global network of academic and industry experts dedicated to understanding and influencing how science and technology impact society. They assemble five panels of judges from around the world, recruited from research institutions, industry and the public sector, who judged the nominations on five set criteria.

## Board briefs

At its September 3 meeting, the Board:

- approved plans for voter service for the Oct. 7 election, including
- a public forum presenting pros and cons on Propositions 53 and 54 and an explanation of the recall process and ballot;
- distribution of Easy Voter Guides in Chinese, Spanish and English; and
- letters to editors opposing Propositions 53 and 54;
- agreed to support a request to City Council for a resolution on the Patriot Act;
- approved plans for an open house event for new and prospective members; and
- heard we have received from Supervisor Alice Lai-Bitker three Raiders tickets to raffle as a fundraiser.

## Correction

In the August issue of *The Alameda Voter*, Miriam Schiffman was incorrectly referred to as the 2002-2003 League president. She served as vice president. The editor regrets the error.

# Why state and local finances matter

*These two articles are the second in a series of monthly columns on California's state and local finances. Adapted from the newsletter of the Association of Bay Area Governments.*

The morning news details another mugging; it is news because, this time, it is in a "good" neighborhood. Pouring your morning coffee, you wonder why the police are not more vigilant. Later you hear that the mugger has been caught and this is not his first offense. You wonder what his probation officer has been doing.

Driving your grandson to school, there is additional graffiti on the overpass near the school, and last week's swear words have not yet been erased. As you leave your grandson at the school, you think about how large his class has grown, that the building needs paint, and that he has complained that there is no orange construction paper (and it's October!).

On the way to the grocery store you drive over another pothole. It is getting harder to avoid the corners where homeless folks stand with signs such as, "Will work for food."

You want to stop at the library on your way home, but realize that the library has cut back its hours and will not open until noon. You wonder why the city is not acting more quickly to solve the problems that are affecting your quality of life.

A cogent argument can be made that there IS a connection between the above thoughts and the fact that your community has fewer and fewer resources, and many of those resources have strings attached. The state's authority to allocate resources strikes at the very heart of a local government's ability to meet public demands and expectations. Although not "sexy," state and local finances matters more than we may have realized!



# Something to think about: Doing the math

Assume a neighbor earns \$1 million annually and you earn \$30,000. You buy a used Ford Escort for \$10,000. With a sales tax of 7% you pay \$700 in sales tax; this is 2.3 percent of your yearly income. Your neighbor buys a new BMW for \$40,000; he pays \$2,800 in sales tax or 3/10 of 1 percent (0.3%) of his income for the tax on his car purchase.

You each need a new refrigerator and purchase the same model for \$900. About \$63 in sales tax is almost 11 percent of your weekly paycheck. Your richer neighbor pays 1/3 of 1 percent of his weekly paycheck in sales tax for the same item.



You are contributing 12 times as much of your income in sales tax to support your state government as your neighbor, despite the fact that his income far exceeds yours.

It quickly becomes apparent that the sales tax has a far greater impact on the middle class and working poor than on the wealthy.

## Please register with e-scrip

Merchants contribute to organizations that participate in e-scrip. Each month we receive funds from that program.

If you have not yet registered with e-scrip, please visit: [www.escrip.com](http://www.escrip.com)

Our Group Name is Alameda League of Women Voters. Our Group ID# is 3606996.

You can register your Safeway card and your debit and credit cards. You need to include the expiration dates for the latter.

If you'd like help registering, please call Pat Caito at 522-2947 and she will be glad to do it for you.

Privacy is guaranteed and the funds we earn are electronically deposited in our bank account. If you shop at Office Max, Payless Shoes, Chevron, Big 5 Sporting Goods, Carl's Jr., and many more stores and use your debit or credit card we will get a contribution. Safeway is the local grocery card.

# Calendar of future events

**October 1, Wednesday, 7:30 p.m.** – Board meeting, Home of Luann DeWitt, 2917 Central Ave.

**October 4, Saturday, 10-11:30 a.m.**– Open House for New and Prospective Members. Meet the Board; Learn about the League; Sign up and become involved. 734 Palmera Court, Alameda. RSVP by calling 869-4969 and leaving a message.

**October 16, Thursday, 7:30 p.m.** – General Membership Meeting, Alameda City Hall, Third Floor, Room 360. The Patriot Act will be discussed.

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major policy issues, and influence public policy through education.

## Join the League of Women Voters

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:** \$50 for a single membership; \$20 for an additional membership at the same address. 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.

**Name:**

**Address:**

**Phone:**

**Email:**

The League of Women Voters  
of Alameda  
P.O. Box 1645  
Alameda, CA 94501

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