

The League of Women Voters of Alameda

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The VOTER is published 8 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 42
Number 6
September
2009**

VOTER

Political Responsibility through Informed and Active Participation

Is Alameda Headed Down the Same Path as Vallejo? City Treasurer Speaks at September Meeting

Although these are indeed unprecedented economic hard times, we certainly hope not! With almost daily news of cutbacks and layoffs everywhere, concerns are prevalent and rumors abound. Adding to the speculations is that with the recent signing of the State budget, Alameda could lose over \$2 million in property taxes to the State!

To learn what lies ahead in the future for us, we will present a program Sept. 24th, Thursday, on our city's economic status at the Alameda Free Library beginning at 7 p.m. City Treasurer, Kevin Kennedy, will present the highlights of *The Long Range Financial Forecast 2009-2019* report issued by the Fiscal Sustainability Committee. The City Council established this work group just over a year ago in response to the economic turmoil being experienced nation- and state-wide. Mr. Kennedy served as co-chair of this committee with City Auditor, Kevin Kearney. Working with 11 other appointed members of the community from diverse backgrounds and experiences, they reviewed all aspects of the City's current financial practices and policies. Their goal was to provide guidance to our leaders on how the City could live within its means, maintain its economic health, and avoid the devastating bankruptcy action our neighboring city, Vallejo, had to take.

Mr. Kennedy will cover the highlights of the forecast, including expenses, revenue sources, and in particular, potential funding shortfalls which can directly impact the services and programs currently provided. He will report on what the Committee identified as possible actions – such as cost efficiencies and additional revenue sources - the City could undertake to address these funding inadequacies.

This is a general meeting open to the public. Family and friends are invited to bring their questions and concerns and to hear the latest financial situation of our city and any updates since the signing of our State budget in July.



**Program Meeting – September 24th
7-9pm – Alameda Main Library**

(see article above)



CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

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

With Co-Presidents, Who is in Charge?

Good question! Kate Quick and Anne Spanier are sharing the Alameda League Presidency this term, and at the annual Board retreat on August 1st, the duties were divided up. Overall, responsibilities for setting the agenda for Board meetings and chairing will trade off. Kate will take September; Anne, October, and so on throughout the year term. (League year runs from July 1-June 30). The other areas of Board responsibility were set as follows:

Both: representing the League at public events, VOTER and web-site (Karen Scanlon) coordination, administrative duties, letter signing, signers on the bank accounts, writing thank-you notes, fundraising, Program (Marilyn Ng) oversight.

Anne: Membership

Kate: Voter Service (Joanne McKray) and Action (Karen Butter) oversight. Distribution of LWVC and LWVUS materials.

The board members in parenthesis are the leaders of our major areas of work, and rely on the members for assistance to get these big jobs done. The old saying: "Many hands make light work" really applies, so please contact one of them with your willingness to serve in the area of their responsibility.

Health Care Reform

Although health care reform is moving in the congress, the final House version will not be voted on until September. House members are asking the American public to read it and understand it in the interim. The fact that the bill is written in legal language and is 1,017 pages long makes the task daunting and open to misinterpretation. Once the HR 3200 is passed in the House it will be sent to the Senate for more revising. During this period a great deal of information and misinformation will make it into the mainstream news organizations, blogs and general "over the fence" discussions.

It is imperative that the public understand that heavily invested economic interests are in play here. Currently health care costs make up approximately 15% of US gross domestic product (GDP), which is higher than its next highest country, Switzerland. The Swiss spend 11.3% of their GDP on health care and provide universal coverage. Most health care insurers are "for profit organizations" and must pay shareholder profits. It is in their economic interest to "underwrite" membership in such a way as to cover only the young and healthy and to deny claims whenever possible, employing tens of thousands of people who sort through such forms 52 weeks of the year. As an example, Blue Cross of California spends 27% of its premiums, or 27 cents for every dollar of premium collected, on this overhead. A recent study on the administrative costs or the "underwriting" for all insurance companies in 2007 is placed at \$350

(Health Care cont”d)

billion. Industry wide that is roughly one out of every five premium dollars. Administrative costs are just one aspect, albeit an important one, of the rising costs of health care. For an excellent review of the issues underlying health care go to LWVFNUC.org home page and click on the Arizona study.

Because of the immense financial interests we can expect to see the insurance industry spend much of its profits creating myths about what the reform will create. Misinformation about diminishing quality of care once the “government gets involved” or the old “Harry and Louise” TV skit that implied people would lose their ability to choose their own physician will abound. Particularly troubling are myths associated with reimbursements for “end of life care” associated with “advance directives”, “living wills”, and power of attorney for health care. For example, a myth has started implying that “your doctor will determine when and how you will die according to this bill.” This is simply untrue. Doctors, are required however, to explain the need for every person to make an advance directive as to their wishes about how their care will be carried out should they (the patient) become incapacitated and unable to communicate it themselves. Powerful interests are not beneath suggesting scenarios that lead to the development of harmful and frightening myths. It is imperative that Americans familiarize themselves with actual meanings of these terms to dispel the myths that can be ascribed to them.

Here is a brief summary of terminology as defined by the American Bar Association.

- A **living will** (or "medical directive" or "declaration" or "directive to physicians") is simply a written instruction spelling out any treatments you want or don't want if you are unable to speak for yourself and terminally ill or permanently unconscious. A living will says in effect, "Whoever is deciding, please follow these instructions!" On its own, a living will is very limited—it usually applies only to end-of-life decisions, and standard instructions tend to be general. Unless you have a good crystal ball, it is impossible to anticipate every future medical scenario.
- A **health care power of attorney** (or health care "proxy," or "medical power of attorney") is a document that appoints someone of your choosing to be your authorized "agent" (or "attorney-in-fact" or "proxy"). You can give your agent as much or as little authority as you wish to make health care decisions. The decisions are not limited to just end-of-life decisions. Appointing an agent provides someone with authority to weigh all the medical facts and circumstances and interpret your wishes accordingly. A health care power of attorney is broader and more flexible than the living will.
- A comprehensive **Health Care Advance Directive** combines the living will and the health care power of attorney into one document. In addition, you may include any other directions, including organ donation or where and how you prefer to be cared for. Because it is more comprehensive and more flexible than the other tools, it is the preferred document.
- The best resource for an appropriate document is a legal officer or an attorney skilled in these matters. Your local bar association can help you find one. Or: Google **Health advance directives** and link to a site such as **The National Hospice and Palliative Care (NHPC)** and download a standardized form and follow the directions provided. All such documents should be stored in a safe and accessible place.

Anne Spanier

BOARD HOLDS ITS ANNUAL RETREAT

On August 1st, the Board gathered at Li Volin's home for several hours to work on the plans and programs for the coming year. We reviewed the League's performance over the past program year in meeting its goals of improving visibility, membership involvement and retention, and setting realistic priorities. We made some decisions about programs; plans for voter education, and discussed how we are going to share the President's job between Kate and Anne.

Since this was also a regular Board meeting we did conduct business - we appointed the five appointed members of the Board, who are Donna Vaughn, Electronic Communications, Karen Scanlon, VOTER editor and Web Master, Shubha Fpanse, Health Care Committee Chair, Juelle Ann Boyer, Smart Voter Team, and Marion Kappelas, at Large. We also appointed Anne Spanier and Juelle Ann Boyer as the Board members joining the Nominating Committee elected members, Audrey Lord-Hausman, Cindy Silva and Lena Tam. We named the members of the Executive Committee: Kate Quick, Anne Spanier, Dorothy Fullerton, Karen Butter and Sally Faulhaber. We readopted our Diversity and Non-Partisan policies.

Our general assessment of how we met our goals was positive, and we plan to work on these same general goals in the next year. We are going to find out more about social networking and how we can use it to improve our member communication and involvement. We are going to try to find more ways to raise money, and our new Treasurer, Robertamarie Kiley, is determined to help us to work more efficiently to keep track of our revenues and expenditures.

The Board hopes that every member of the League will find some League related activity, big or small to participate in this program year. We think it will be an exciting year for us all, and will need everyone's help to make it happen!

Recent Field Poll Highlights Need for League's Voter Service

California's electorate is becoming less and less representative of California's diverse residents, demonstrating that the League's role in expanding voter registration and education is vital to electing a government that represents the population

Registered California voters are more likely to be homeowners, older, better educated and living in inland areas of the state than they were 30 years ago, according to the Field report, which examined demographic shifts among the state's registered voters from 1978 through May of this year.

Among the most significant demographic changes that have taken place over the past three decades are these:

- As the percentage of white non-Hispanics in the overall population has dropped 26 points from 68.9% to 42.8% over the past three decades, white non-Hispanics' share of the state's registered voter population has decreased 18 points from 83.0% to 65.0%.
- These declines are offset by large increases in the proportion of Latinos and Asians. Latinos now comprise 37.0% of the state's total population (up 18.9% since 1978) and 21% of the state's registered voters (up 13 points). The percentages of blacks in both the overall population and among registered voters have declined only marginally, but there has been a big increase in the proportions of Asians/others. These voters now comprise 14.2% of the state's total population (up 8.7 points) and 8.2% of the state's registered voters (up 5.3 points).

Geographically, 46 percent of the state's registered voters live in its two largest metropolitan areas - the Bay Area and Los Angeles County - down from 55 percent in 1978. Republicans are moving inland faster than Democrats; only 33 percent of the state's GOP electorate lives in the two metropolitan regions.

"No state has changed as much," over this period, said Dowell Myers, a professor of demography at the University of Southern California and author of "Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America."

(Poll Highlights cont'd)

And while California's continuing financial crisis has some calling for changes to Proposition 13, the 1978 voter-approved measure which limits property tax increases, the comparatively large number of voters over 60 (28 percent) and homeowners (74 percent) make that unlikely, Corey Cook, a professor of politics at the University of San Francisco, and Myers said.

While some say that reapportionment may help dissolve partisan gridlock in Sacramento, Cook said the "geographic polarization" of the state - its increasingly liberal coast and conservative inland region - makes that more challenging., Myers said. "And that is not good for a democracy."

Read the full report online at field.com

LWV California President Hirohama Urges League Members to Demand Real Budget Reform

On July 24, our legislators left Sacramento for a little rest and relaxation, but not before handing Californians a revised budget that does not reflect the desires and priorities of the majority of the people.

This harmful budget erodes the California dream of a thriving society and a better future for our children. The League of Women Voters of California urges you to tell your legislator Californians deserve better.

The blame for the failure of our finance system rests partly on the requirement of a two-thirds vote to pass the budget or raise revenues. The two-thirds requirement gives a minority the power to dictate terms to the majority by forcing budget stalemates that lead to partisan bickering, and opportunities for "budget blackmail" demands by swing-vote legislators.

The result? While the legislature was on vacation, painful cuts were beginning to have severe impacts on the most vulnerable Californians:

- Cuts to welfare, health care, and in-home services for the disabled and elderly are leaving families without the care they rely on in hard economic times.
- Slashed funds for schools are forcing layoffs of librarians and nurses, cuts to arts and sports programs, and the elimination of summer classes.
- Funds siphoned from local governments are making it impossible to maintain basic services like public buses and clean parks

Our legislators return from their summer break today. Act now to tell your legislator to get back to work and support real reform through reduction of the two-thirds requirement to pass the budget or raise revenues. There are bills in the legislature right now that would reform the two-thirds vote requirement but are stuck in committee.

We are at a turning point in California. Without reform, we will continue the constant, draining budget battles, leave systemic problems unsolved, and shatter the California dream. Together we can make democracy work—[p](#)lease contact your legislator now.

Janet R. Hirohama, President, LWV California

Join or Renew your membership in the Alameda League Today!



Name _____

Other Names _____

(if a family membership)

Address _____ City _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

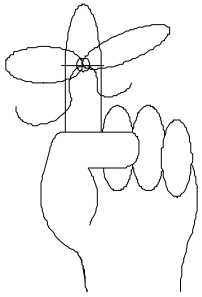
\$68 Single Membership \$85 Family Membership \$25 Student Membership Dues year is Jan 1 – Dec 31.
Dues assistance is available for those on limited income – Contact us at 869-4969. Make Check payable to LWV Alameda and mail to: League of Women Voters of Alameda, P. O. Box 1645, Alameda, CA 94501

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.



Dates to Remember

Sept 17th – 7:30pm –Board Meeting
Alameda Hospital – Room C

Sept. 24th -7pm – General Meeting
Alameda Main Library
Kevin Kennedy, Alameda City
Treasurer on City Finance.

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