

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 6
September 2010**

VOTER

**Political Responsibility through Informed and Active
Participation**

Sunshine in Alameda

The Alameda Journal's recent editorial about the importance of "sunshine" and access to public records called for more transparency in local government. It could not have been more timely for Alameda, where we are grappling with issues of public access, open communications, and a lack of full disclosure related to several contract negotiations.

The Alameda City Council appointed the Sunshine Task Force earlier this year to ensure that Alameda's government is fully aligned with California's open government laws. The task force has worked hard to draft an ordinance that would improve Alameda's governmental transparency and accessibility of public records beyond what is currently required by state law.

On Saturday September 11, from 1:00-4:00 p.m., the City of Alameda's Sunshine Task Force will hold a public workshop in the Alameda Free Library's Stafford Community Meeting Room. The task force wants your comments and suggestions on its work to date to make Alameda's city government more open and transparent. The League of Women Voters will be at this event and we urge you to join us.

The League of Women Voters strongly believes that one of the fundamental principles sustaining democracy is open and transparent government. Our nonpartisan organization encourages active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy. To that end, the League has actively supported the California Public Records Act and the Ralph M. Brown Act, which have been pivotal in opening up government to citizen participation in our state. The Brown Act, which guarantees the right of the public to attend and participate in local legislative meetings was passed in 1953 after the public demanded an end to local legislative bodies meeting and acting in secret. The Act has grown and been modified over the years but it remains a strong guarantee of open government.

The second important guarantee of the public's "right to know" is the California Public Records Act (CPRA), passed in 1968. It mandates the disclosure of government records to the public upon request unless there is a specific reason not to do so. Citizens have a right to inspect public documents, and public agencies must make them available in a timely fashion at a reasonable cost. Other laws have been passed that supplement these two acts, but these two form the basis of governmental accountability and citizen access to public records and meetings.

Ensuring governmental transparency is a work in progress and it is one of the duties of citizenship. Please join the League of Women Voters as we work on behalf of all citizens to ensure open government here in Alameda. The Alameda Free Library is located at 1550 Oak Street in Alameda. The event is free and open to the public.

Anne Spanier



CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



Anne Spanier and Jeff Cambra
Co-Presidents, League of Women Voters
of Alameda

It Started With Tea and Cookies

I want to thank all my fellow League members for the warm welcome I have received these last few weeks. With the Board retreat under my belt and working with the board on a number of pressing issues, I can report to you that the Board is strong and committed to upholding the League positions in Alameda when it becomes necessary. Look for the League to have a greater presence in the City on a number of key issues, including the work of the Sunshine Task Force.

I wanted to use this first message to introduce myself and explain how I became involved with the League. I have lived in the bay area all my life, except for college, and moved to Alameda in 1986. My career experiences have been both diverse and challenging. I have been self-employed most of my adult life starting at age 14 mowing lawns for neighbors. Several years and a few businesses later, I started a glass decorating company that employed 45 people with sales close to \$1.5 million. In 1993, I sold the business and retired. Between then and now, I attended law school, worked as an attorney for a local city, and took early retirement last year. I still own an event production company and produce art and wine festivals in Northern California.

I was introduced to the League over tea and cookies at a membership drive event at the library. Initially, I viewed my membership as a simple financial contribution to support a worthy cause. Eventually, I started attending the forums and grew to appreciate the value of these events. Recognizing the importance of the forums to voter education, I offered my limited skills as a videographer to film and upload the forums onto the League's website so that residents could access this valuable information resource. As with any endeavor that one feels is of value, I decided to play a greater role in helping the League fulfill its mission . . . and here I am.

As a professional mediator, facilitator, and collaborative engineer, I have very strong beliefs centered around civil, respectful discussions between people with different positions, and I strive to be open to all points of view. I am most comfortable working in a collaborative environment and am willing to take a leadership role when the situation calls for one. I hope to meet each of you in the coming year at one of our events. As with any non-profit organization, it is the volunteers that do the heavy lifting and I want to take a moment to thank everyone for the donation of time and their dedication to League principals. We have a challenging time in the next few months. Together, we can fulfill the League's mission in grand fashion. Best wishes, thank you, and keep up the great work.

Jeff Cambra, Co-President
The League of Women Voters of Alameda

California Water

California water fights are not over, but a major battle has been postponed to the 2012 election.

The Water Bond has been taken off this November's ballot, and the pros and cons forum the League was planning for this September has been cancelled. Legislators and the governor who favored the bill feared it would fail; opponents wanted it to go on this ballot and fail. The 2012 version is likely to be slimmer and less laden with pork and to eliminate a controversial provision that would have allowed private corporations to own and operate water storage projects.

Less attention has been given to the other four bills passed last November. SB1, the Delta Governance/Delta Plan, replaces the CalFed structure with a seven member Delta Stewardship Council. This politically appointed body will be charged with creating and overseeing a new Delta Plan. It also establishes an 11-member Delta Conservancy Board, a sort of BCDC for the Delta.

SB6 mandates monitoring of groundwater levels. SB7 mandates agricultural water management plans. Agriculture water suppliers will have to measure water deliveries and adopt pricing structures based at least in part on the quantity delivered. Eighty per cent of the state's water goes to agriculture. SB8 appropriates funds from the 2006 water bond for grants in regional water management, flood control, storm water management, and community conservation plans.

None of these authorizes a peripheral canal.

Submitted by *Sally Faulhaber*

ANNUAL BOARD RETREAT

The Annual Retreat was held at the home of Li Volin on July 24th and was a day packed with new ideas, spirited dialogue and laughter. The morning started off with continental breakfast while looking out at the estuary waterway on a beautiful sunny morning.

The program began with a review of the goals of the previous year. The first, *Increasing Visibility and Maintaining Economic Stability* led to some thoughtful dialogue about how best to publicize our events. Jon Spangler, our public relations manager and Jeff Cambra, League co-president led the group through a brainstorming session that identified key points in the flow of communication starting with the originator of the event. How the information traveled from originator to board to various media outlets including our own Voter were examined in depth. This excellent process helped the board understand the number of news outlets that needed to be included in our new approach to Public Relations and publicity. While we will continue to pursue *My Word* pieces and Letters to the Editors, we now need to consider social media sources and other publications as new sources of publicity.

A brief discussion followed about co-hosting with other organizations citing our successful *Health Care Workshop* with the Rotary club earlier this year. The general consensus was that the Program Chair would work with Publicity and with the Board to identify possible hosting opportunities. Board Members were asked to be proactive about finding co-hosting opportunities for our Program Chair.

The next topic that promoted a spirited dialogue was that of *Economic Stability*. Our new Budget Director, Ted Frey announced the work he and Jeff Cambra had done on investigating the possibility of our league becoming a 501c (3) from our current status as a 501c (4). In view of the State League's desire to charge local Leagues for managing our Educational Fund monies, a number of Leagues are pursuing this change of IRS status to manage our own funds. The cost to our League would come in filing fees to the tune of \$400 on a one time basis. Ted presented the pros and cons of the action and after some debate the Board voted to direct Ted to pursue that action.
(continued on page 4)

Annual Retreat, continued

A discussion ensued about new ways to raise funds for the League to defray costs and reduce the need to raise dues when Per Member Payments (PMPs) from LWVUS, LWVC and Bay Area Leagues rates are raised. Changes in our IRS status allow some additional privileges. Dues, not just Education Funds, will be tax deductible. The new status will allow the League to apply for money through grant writing. . A number of interesting ideas were debated and will be reviewed over the next few months.

The second major goal was that of *Maintaining and Expanding Membership*. Carol Levinson, our local MTA and Membership coach (MGIK) spoke to the group about the need to be conscious at all times of the need to recruit new members. A membership chair is urgently needed. In the meantime Anne Spanier continues as acting chair, trying to find ways to stimulate interest in the membership. A book club, particularly non fiction works about issues of current interest, will take off this fall. Look for several more Coffee Shop drop-ins on Saturday mornings over the next few months. Members are encouraged to bring a friend who might like to join us. Come and meet other League members. They are fun, not too time consuming and the pastries are good!

The third and final goal of the last few years of *Setting Realistic Priorities* was debated. At the Annual Meeting, Anne conducted a survey of the members and asked the luncheon guests to rank four categories and Other in order of importance. Government reform was ranked as the most important, with voter service a close second and a distant third and fourth went to education reform and health care. No one suggested an OTHER. The Board accepted *government reform* as the major priority for the year. The sub categories under government reform in Alameda are the Sunshine Task Force, and Fiscal Sustainability. Voter Service promises to take a great deal of time this fall as there are numerous candidates, propositions and state officers on the ballot.

Improving Inter League Communication was added to the three goals already identified. . Anne asked various committee chairs to review their job descriptions on the League website and bring them up to date. They should include enough task descriptions so that an incoming individual will know how to “take over”. Complete task identification is important for recruiting new chairs, which can see what the expectations of the job will be. Another example of accountability and transparency in action. The League does walk the walk!

The Board moved on to appointments with Ted Frey as Budget Chair, Donna Vaughn continuing with Electronic Communications, Karen Scanlon, Voter Editor, Juelle Ann Boyer, Smart Voter Chair, and Shubha Fpanse, Health Care Coordinator. Five other Board members were elected at the Annual Meeting: Laurel Pantel, Sally Faulhaber, Dorothy Fullerton, Karen Butter and Mike Robles-Wong.

Board meetings will continue on the third Thursday of the month at the Alameda Hospital Conference Room C at 7:30. All League members are urged to join us, meet your Board of Directors and participate.

Anne



Incoming Budget Chair and Appointed Director Ted Frey listens to plans for the upcoming program year for the Alameda League at the Annual Retreat held July 24th at the home of Li Volin



Next Board Meeting

Thursday, September 16th 7:30 pm
Alameda Hospital
Conference Room C
2070 Clinton Avenue
Alameda

Voter Service Committee Update

Our fourth 2010 election season is about to begin, and with it some major changes in our voter service operations. Dorothy Fullerton joins me as Co-Chair of the Voter Service Committee, and I'm delighted to announce that she and Felice Zensius have agreed to become coordinators for two of our major election activities. Dorothy will organize the Propositions' Pros/Cons portion of our forums, and Felice will handle the distribution of the thousands of pieces of election information, some of which we create and all of which we take to schools, libraries, churches, senior centers, and community organizations each election. I will act as coordinator for candidates' forums.

Voter Service activities begin in late September. Please consider how you would like to help and contact Felice (wzfvz@sbcglobal.net), Dorothy (Dorothy.fullerton@gmail.com) or Joanne (joannemckray@gmail.com)

Joanne McKray
Voter Service Co-Chair

Alameda League Book Club Starts in October

The debut of our book club is tentatively set for Wednesday October 13 at 3:00 pm. The book chosen is "The Nine" by Jeffrey Toobin and it is a best seller on the Supreme Court covering the last 3 decades". Please call 533-3426 if you would like to read the book and participate.

GRANT WRITERS NEEDED

Have you researched and written for Grants? We need you!

Contact 510-522-3426

UN Women Born:

Civil Society Celebrates Creation of Gender Equality Entity after Four Years of Advocacy

The Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign celebrates the United Nations General Assembly resolution to establish "UN Women"-the new gender equality entity at the UN. This move has been sought by women's organizations and other civil society organizations around the world since the UN established a System-Wide Coherence Panel for UN Reform in 2006.

The GEAR Campaign is a network of over 300 women's, human rights and social justice groups around the world that have been working for four years to gain UN Member State and UN Secretariat approval for creation of a larger more coherent coordinated UN agency that can advance further the UN's mandate of working for gender equality as a crucial component of development, human rights, humanitarian concerns, peace and security.

As the new entity is developed, GEAR supporters will continue to advocate for four major elements critical to its implementation:

- Meaningful, systematic and diverse civil society participation at all levels
- Strong, country-level operational capacity and universal coverage
- Ambitious funding with stable and predictable resources aimed at reaching \$1 billion within a few years
- Strong leadership at the top with an Under Secretary-General who combines a global vision with gender equality expertise on the ground

For more information please go to the GEAR Campaign website - www.gearcampaign.org - or contact the GEAR Campaign at: gearcampaign@gmail.com

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 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.

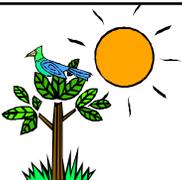
MEMBERSHIP COFFEE

We are planning a drop in for new members in October on a Saturday morning at a local coffee house. The time will be 10 a.m. with coffee and sweet rolls on us. The location and exact date will be sent via e-mail alert. The membership committee is asking each board member to bring one person, either an older non participating member or a new friend who joined recently or would consider joining. Stay Tuned for the final location and date

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SUNSHINE TASK FORCE WORKSHOP

Saturday, September 11th, 1 – 4pm
Stafford Meeting Room
Alameda Free Library
1550 Oak Street, Alameda
(See Article on Page 1)