



Alameda Voter

January 2005

SPECIAL EDITION INSIDE: INPUT NEEDED FOR STATE LEAGUE POSITION ON EDUCATION

Open House & Tea Jan. 15

It's time to encourage your friends to check out the League of Women Voters. Come to the Open House for New and Prospective Members, Sat., Jan 15, 10 to 11:30 a.m. The tea and continental breakfast will be at 734 Palmera Court.

This is a great chance to find out more about the League, meet the Board, and learn how you can get involved in League activities. Please RSVP by calling 869-4969.

A look at point development from Oakland side

There will be a public meeting on "Alameda Point Development from The Oakland Perspective" Feb.17, 7:30 p.m.

A panel discussion will discuss the impacts to Oakland on transportation, housing, and retail issues generated by Alameda Point Development.

The meeting will be held at a location to be announced in January Voter.

Calendar of events

Wednesday, Jan. 5, 7:30 to 9 p.m. : Board Meeting, LuAnn DeWitt's Home, 2917 Central Ave.

Saturday, Jan. 15, 10 to 11:30 a.m. : Open House and Tea for New and Prospective Members, 734 Palmera Court. (See story at left).

Thursday, Jan. 20, 6 p.m. : Consensus meeting on the fundamental issues challenging public education in California. Harbor Bay Community Center, off Mecartney, behind shopping center, across the parking lot from the Bay Farm Island Library. (Please see details on next page.)

Monday, Jan. 31: Members' only program review meeting. Announcement of details to follow.

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: \$53 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:

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The League of Women Voters of Alameda
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Still so much to be thankful for in the United States

I am writing this early in the morning on Thanksgiving Day. I'm thinking about not only what we have to be thankful for, but what is to come in the way of freedom, plentitude and grace in the next few months. This message is going to be a bit less about League, and a bit more about the context in which we do our work.

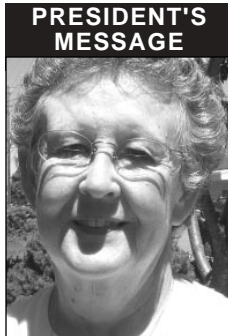
While there is much to despair and complain about in our recent electoral process, I am thankful that we live in a country that has an open (if not perfectly so) election system. We can support or oppose any candidate without fear of going to prison or losing other liberties. We can get out information in open forums and invite anyone we choose, because we have freedom of assembly.

Contrast this with what is going on this week in the Ukraine, where the election has been deemed to "not meet international standards of fairness," and the public is in an uproar over the tainted outcome.

Also, today's news is that in Burma some political prisoners are being released because of international attention and the desire of the country's leaders to hold an international event there in the near future.

While there are still problems

with access to the polls, and improper purges of "felons" in some states which seem to be race-related, I am thankful that we live in a country that has as its basic rule of law that eligibility to vote is not



Kate Quick

Lewis and Clark Expedition some 200 years ago. The expedition was voting as to where they would settle in for the winter. This democratic vote had as its participants an African-American (the slave, York), and a Native American female Sacajawea. What was wonderful about this story was not only that everyone in the group got to vote, but that someone was thoughtful enough to teach about the expedition and use the vote that happened as instructional material.

While there continue to be improprieties in fairness and trans-

based on race/ethnicity or gender. This morning I heard a wonderful little story on National Public Radio about a group of Washington State school children who were re-enacting a vote taken by the members of the

parency of the political process, I am thankful that we live in a country where these issues are brought to light and openly questioned. It is getting harder to maneuver by blatant gerrymandering or rule changing without someone blowing the whistle or taking the matter to either the press or to the courts. Oh, our elected officials are still "trying it on" whenever possible, but it comes to light quickly, and frequently there is a fast backing off.

There would be no League of Women Voters if we did not have these freedoms, and the rule of law underpinning them. Which brings me to why I am truly thankful on this day and every day – we are able to use these wonderful gifts to act on issues of concern to us: good government, the environment, international law, social justice, and education.

Let us not take this work lightly, and let us re-dedicate ourselves in the coming year to participate in making sure these freedoms are leveraged to the greatest degree.

I shall now come down off my soapbox and get to the feast! Happy Holidays to each of you and your families.

Board Briefs from November meeting

At its Nov. 3 meeting, the Board:

- reviewed our voter service activities in the recent election;

- appointed Cara Watkins and Liz Rogers to the Nominating Committee;

- discussed amendments to our bylaws: one to allow some deci-

sions by email, the other to base the quorum on the number of directors on the Board rather than the full number authorized under the bylaws;

- heard a report on the Measure A issue; and

- planned for our annual Holiday Party.

Access *The Voter* on the Web

The *Voter* is now available for viewing on your computer. Past issues have been uploaded as .pdf files. All you need is Acrobat Reader to open them.

The League's web site is www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org.

The League of Women Voters of Alameda

President: Kate Quick

Vice President Administration:

Luann DeWitt

Vice President Program:

Linda Hudson

Secretary: Sally Faulhaber

Treasurer: Pat Caito

Voter Editor: Cara Watkins

The current and past issues of the *Voter* are posted on our website:

www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org

The *Voter* is published 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Alameda

New members

The League would like to welcome four new members and thank them for their interest.

They are:

●Valerie Fong
2000 Grand Street
748-3908
fong@alamedapt.com

●Karen Scanlon
1259 Hawthorne St
523-6456
yakitt@aol.com

●Sheila Turner
107 Parfait Lane
864-1892

●Felice Zensius
48 Sand Harbor Road
865-4329

Water Privatization checklist OKed

In May of 2003 the LWVC Convention passed a resolution calling on the LWVC Board to look at state League water positions in light of the current trend toward the privatization of water utility functions.

Jack Sullivan coordinated efforts by Polly Smith, Roberta Boronovo (LWVC water consultants), and Diane Park (San Joaquin County League) to develop an approach to respond to original resolution.

This group developed a "Water Privatization Checklist" for use by local Leagues in evaluating local water privatization proposals. The checklist draws on existing state and national League positions and provides a mechanism by which local Leagues can decide to take a position for or against a water privatization proposal.

After considerable discussion by

the state Board, and input from a number of Board members, the LWVC Board approved the checklist at its meeting Sept. 12, 2004. The check-list appeared in the October UPDATE, a copy of which is sent to every League, and local League boards are free to begin using it immediately.

League members who want to see the checklist should ask their local League president for a copy or for instructions on how to view the October UPDATE on the member side of the League Web site. League boards or individual members who have questions about the checklist should direct them to me.

Jack Sullivan
Natural Resources Director
natural_resources@lwvc.org

Voting problems should be investigated and resolved

Statement by Kay J. Maxwell, President of the U.S. League of Women Voters

WASHINGTON, DC – "The League of Women Voters is deeply concerned about voting irregularities in the 2004 election. The appropriate officials must fully investigate these concerns through open and public processes. Election officials should look into problems quickly and thoroughly and fix what proves to be wrong. Transparency and a willingness to look into potential problems will strengthen voter confidence and ultimately improve our electoral system.

"It is important to ensure that every properly cast ballot is counted and to make improvements for future elections. Attention must be given to inadequate polling place procedures, problematic voting machines, voter registration system failures, casting and counting of

provisional ballots, and absentee voting issues.

"This was far from a perfect election. Although voter turnout reached record levels, the election system showed signs of stress and voters faced real problems. Two key areas deserve special inquiry. First, voter registration problems plague the system. These problems – from failures to fully process registration applications in time to bureaucratic requirements that blocked voter registration – must still be resolved by election officials. Second, the reasons for the very long lines that voters faced in too many states and localities must be thoroughly examined. Having to wait several hours to vote is an unacceptable barrier to citizen participation. What were the reasons? Were there not enough voting machines? Were these polling places poorly organized? Were long lines a greater

problem in minority or student precincts than in rural or suburban precincts? Changes clearly need to be made in polling place operations to address these concerns.

"Finally, the League calls on every voter who cast a provisional ballot to find out whether their ballot was counted. The provisional ballot counting process is still ongoing and must be monitored. But every voter who cast a provisional ballot has the right, under the Help America Vote Act (HAVA), to know whether it is counted, and, if it is not counted, why it is not counted. States are required to have a toll-free hotline or Internet system so voters can get this information about their ballot.

"The League's nationwide network of state and local Leagues will continue to work closely with election officials to identify and correct all voting problems."

