

**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
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VOTER

**Political Responsibility through Informed and Active
Participation**

January Meeting

Program Planning

*How Local Leagues Give Direction to the
State and National League*

The Date: January 27th Thursday.

Location: 166 Basinside Way, Bay Farm Island

Time: 6 p.m.

The purpose of the planning program that we undertake each January is to advise our State and or National organization of our political interests and ask that they focus on them in their work in the coming year. This year we will be sending our ideas to the California State League. In addition we review our old policies and positions for currency. Our program for January will be a Soup and bread event at Anne Spanier's house. Desserts are gladly accepted. The entire League membership is invited.



Alameda League Holiday Party

When: Sunday, Dec 5th 5:30pm

Where: Li Volin's, 1506 Eastshore Dr., Alameda

Bring a dish to share (appetizer, side, salad or dessert) and/or a bottle of your favorite beverage and join the Fun! Ham and rolls will be provided. Let's celebrate the Holiday and the successful wrap-up up of another election cycle. Friends and family are welcome. Win a Door Prize!

Information: Karen at yakitt@aol.com or 523-6456



CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE



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

The November election, in addition to being a contentious one, was a busy one for the League members who volunteered for candidate forums, pros and cons presentations, voter registration, and the distribution of copious amounts of literature on this election. A week later our program chair, Cindy Silva, invited a guest from MAPLight.org who gave us an excellent introduction on how to track money in political campaigns. Their work is being cited in National newspapers across the country including USA Today. We are already discussing a return engagement for this important voter education tool and will be placing a link on our web site in the body of the article on page 4. Look for additional information in a coming Voter edition on how to access this information.

League members were also busy attending the Sunshine Committee Task force meeting on the latest draft of an ordinance to be placed before the voters. This ordinance will outline important rules for city officials to comply with the Brown Act and the California Public Records Act (CPRA). Giving the citizens time and adequate notice of all public meetings is important in maintaining democracy. Giving citizens access to all public records is also important. League members consider the Brown Act and the CPRA the cornerstone of open and transparent government. Currently League members are reviewing the wording on campaign financing rules prior to its adoption next month.

All work and no play is not our motto. Seven members of the book club, Robby Kiley, Felice Zensius, Diane Lichtenstein, Judy Cox, Anne Spanier, Marilyn Ng and Donna Vaughn had a fun and entertaining time discussing our November selection. We still have a few openings so look over our Book Club article below and see if you want to read and join us. Call 522-3426 for more information.

More play is on the horizon in terms of our annual Holiday Party. Mark your calendar for the Sunday evening event at Li Volin's wonderful house. She is once again being generous in inviting us all. Bring your beverage and a dish to share and a friend if you wish and be prepared for a pleasant evening.

Finally, a reminder that December 31st is our dues deadline.

Anne Spanier

Alameda League Book Club

The book club for November was fun and interesting. The book we all read (or tried to at least) was "What's The Matter with Kansas" and Felice Zensius did a great job giving us a short bio on the author, Thomas Franks is native Kansan. We met at Felice's house and had a spirited and enlightening dialogue about the ramifications of this culture change in Kansas.

Next meeting will be on Wednesday December 15th, at 3:30 at the home of Diane Lichtenstein. The book is Zeitoun by Dave Eggers. The story is about a man who rides out the chaos of Katrina. 349 pp.

On Wednesday January 27th we will meet at Anne Spanier's house for a review of Leap of Faith By Queen Noor of Jordan. She tells her story of her life as an American who marries a Muslim King of Jordan and lives happily ever after? 480pp

THE SUNSHINE TASK FORCE MOVES AHEAD

By Joanne MacKray

At its November 10 meeting the Sunshine Task Force, created by the City Council to secure public input on matters of concern to citizens, completed its first assignment - constructing a draft transparency ordinance. State requirements exist regarding open meetings and records, but a number of Alameda citizens have felt a need for greater access to information as the City conducts its business. The draft ordinance attempts to meet this perceived need.

The Task Force's second assignment is to create a draft campaign finance reform ordinance for the City Council's consideration. At the November 10 meeting the Task Force members began with a discussion of how constrained they were, citing the recent Supreme Court decision, Citizens United v. FEC, which among other things revokes a century old ban on corporate campaign contributions and an over a half century one on union contributions. Either type of institution may now make unlimited independent expenditures on behalf of any candidate. An earlier Supreme Court decision dating from the '70s, Buckley v. Valeo, set earlier constraints on controlling campaign contributions. In light of these federal Court decisions members agreed that about the only matters an ordinance regulating Alameda campaigns could cover were avoiding corruption, including undue influence of special interests, and contribution disclosure requirements.

Regarding campaign contributions Buckley v. Valeo ruled that contributing to campaigns amounts to exercising free speech, a 1st Amendment right. Therefore campaign contributions can be regulated only for the purpose of avoiding corruption or the appearance thereof, that is, to avoid a situation where donations are given to obtain legislative favors. Moreover any limits of campaign expenditures by candidates must be done voluntarily, because according to Buckley spending money to promote one's self involves free speech, not corruption.

The City Attorney has prepared a draft CFR measure which the Task Force will use as a point of departure for creating its own measure. The plan is for each member to prepare suggestions for additions, subtractions, or edits to the City Attorney's draft and bring them to their next meeting on December 9. The Alameda League was asked to do the same. We are pleased to comply; anyone interested in being involved should contact Karen Butter, Action Chair.

The Task Force's hope is to finalize their version of the draft at the December meeting, or at least by the January meeting.

CONTRIBUTE TO THE LEAGUE EDUCATION FUND!

By Kate Quick

You have all seen the request on the cover page of every VOTER newsletter you receive to contribute to the League's Education Fund. Why are these contributions important and how do they insure that our League of Women Voters is able to do its work?

Every expenditure we make comes from one of three sources; the part of the dues we keep after we pay our "per member payments" to the Bay Area League, League of Women Voters of California and LWVUS, or from donations and fund raising. We spend the majority of our money on voter education. Money you contribute to the Education Fund may only be spent on voter education activities; never on advocacy. These donations are tax deductible.

What kinds of money do we spend on voter education? Rent for facilities like the library, photocopying printed materials, advertising our events in newspapers and on blogs, distribution of the Easy Voter Guides, and an occasional honoraria for a speaker. Voter Service is at the core of our mission to involve and educate the electorate. In years such as the last two where we had "extra" elections, our Education Fund depletes rapidly. It is your donations which replenish it and allow us to meet our expenses for the next year's elections.

For the past two years, we have spent more than we have taken in. This is not sustainable. We are asking for your generous donations to the Education Fund – when you send in your dues, which are due now, please consider writing a second check to the LWV Alameda Education Fund and tuck it in your envelope. Thank you for your past generosity and for considering making an extra gift to the League's Education Fund.

VOTERS NEED TO TRACK THE MONEY

By Anne Spanier

It is no secret that money flooded the political process this last election. In almost every national and state race, the amount of money spent was directly proportional to the winning candidate. DeAnna Dalton, Development Associate for MAPLight.org described, for the Alameda League of Women Voters, how MAPLight.org provides data, research services and online tools that work together to show the patterns of money and influence in the political arena. Most voters know that moneyed interests influence the Congress' votes. Documenting the relationship often takes weeks of research. Now with the click of a mouse voters can discover these relationships replacing time consuming manual research.

MAPLight.org currently tracks money and votes for U.S. Congress, updating data within 45 minutes of each Congressional vote. Campaign contributions are tracked for Los Angeles city government and the California Legislature too. MAPLight.org is a small non-profit organization dedicated to providing information to voters. The recent Supreme Court Case *Citizens United* struck down a provision of the McCain-Feingold Act that prohibited all corporations, both for-profit and not-for-profit, and unions from broadcasting "electioneering communications." As a result of this recent decision, citizens were bombarded with campaign materials. To run for Congress, you need money. A lot of money. The Center for Responsive Politics reported that in the 2008 election a winning senator needed to raise on average \$3,900. per day or a total of \$8.5 million. To win a seat in the U.S. House members needed to raise \$1,900 every day during their two year term (or \$1.4 million total).

Interest groups provide the majority of support for a candidate. Once elected, politicians often pay back their campaign contributors with special access and favorable laws. This common practice is contrary to the public interest, yet legal. Elections are also good financially for the broadcast and print media. In fact, it is the exorbitant costs of television ads that require the continual need for fund raising. It is a vicious cycle which distorts the democratic workings of the elected officials. The only recourse the voter has is to simply click the mouse onto the MAPLight.org website.

The League of Women Voters supports transparency in all aspects of the voting cycle, including how campaigns are funded and how money is linked to voting patterns, once the candidate is in office. [MAPLight](http://MAPLight.org) is a great asset to our gaining this needed transparency.

BOARD BRIEFS FROM NOVEMBER 18TH

Action Committee:

- Reported to the Sunshine Task Force on the Campaign Finance Ordinance.
- LWVA speakers were available to address the ARRA Board at City Council.
- Beginning plans on how the LWVA to address the School Parcel Tax.
- Reviewing future of Ranked Choice Voting in Alameda.

*The League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Presents
Bay Area League Day 2011*

“Reduce, Reuse, Recycle: Taking it to the Next Level”

Saturday, January 29, 2011, from 9:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.
MetroCenter, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland, California

**Featuring keynote speaker:
Dan Reicher, Director of Energy and Climate Initiatives at Google**

And three panel discussions addressing:

What Government Is Doing

California Energy Commission Programming: Arthur H. Rosenfeld, Former California Energy Commissioner

Port Sustainability (Deconstruction, Cold Ironing, and Asphalt Reuse): Richard Sinkoff, Manager of Environmental Planning, Port of Oakland

Municipal Waste Reduction Programming: John Stufflebean, Environmental Services Department Director, City of San Jose

What Science Is Doing

Water Recycling: Lori Steere, Water Recycling Program, East Bay Municipal Utilities District

Hydrogen and Other Alternative Fuels for Transit: Jaimie Levin, Director of Alternative Fuels Policy, AC Transit

Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure: Bay Area Air Quality Management District

What We Can Do

Community Service, Recycling, and Secondary School Students: Nate Ivy, Service Learning Waste Reduction Program of Alameda County

Analyzing and Upgrading Home Energy Use: Karen Kho, StopWaste.Org (Waste Management and Source on/Recycling for Alameda County)

----- **REGISTRATION FORM** -----

The Cost of this year's Bay Area League Day is \$30 (\$20 without lunch) in advance or \$35 (\$25 without lunch) at the door. A light breakfast will be served to all who attend. To register, please write check to "LWVBA" and mail with this form to 1611 Telegraph Ave., Suite 300, Oakland, CA 94612.

Name _____ Local League _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Registration is also available through January 24 via PayPal at www.lwvbayarea.org
For more details call (510) 839-1608 or send an e-mail to editor@bayareamonitor.org

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.



MARK YOUR CALENDAR

- 12/5/2010 – Holiday Party – see page 1
- 1/28/2011 – Program Planning – see page 1
- 1.29/11 – Bay Area League Day - see page 5
- 4/14/11 – Meet Your Public Officials
- 5/13-11-5/15/11 – State Convention in Sacramento
- 6/18/11 – Annual Meeting featuring John Diaz as speaker.

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