

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 44
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VOTER

**Political Responsibility through Informed and Active
Participation**



March 24 League Forum with Joel Young: AC TRANSIT WHERE IS THIS BUS GOING?

AC Transit District Director-at-Large Joel Young will discuss the state of our local bus transit agency at the Alameda League's next public forum at Alameda Hospital, Conference Room C, March 24 from 7:30 – 9:00 p.m. Young will address transportation issues, including how AC Transit plans to meet its long-standing commitment to preserving and improving the quality and quantity of transit service for East Bay riders.

The AC Transit District, California's largest bus-only transit provider, carries an average of more than 200,000 riders a day. Amid reduced funding from federal, state, and local sources, AC Transit is facing a \$14 million deficit this year, trying to minimize service cuts, dealing with changes in bus and communication technologies, and restoring organizational unity in the aftermath of recent labor disputes. The agency also needs to hire a permanent general manager and a general counsel this year and plans to purchase 125-150 new buses, choosing between several propulsion technologies (hydrogen fuel cells, hybrids, clean diesel, compressed natural gas) and different manufacturers (domestic or foreign).

Joel Young will also discuss regional transportation issues, the prospect of fare increases, and the outlook for transportation funding in California. (Any significant increase in AC Transit's operating revenues would require a vote of the people.) There will be time for questions and a discussion will follow the presentation.

The public is welcome to attend this program at the accessible Conference Room C, first floor, Alameda Hospital, 2070 Clinton Avenue. There is ample free parking. Refreshments will be provided. Please invite your friends and neighbors to join other members of the League of Women Voters of Alameda and members of the community at this free event.

For more information please visit http://alameda.ca.lwvnet.org/Public_Events.html or contact LWVA Program Chair Cynthia Silva (415-576-2712; 408-318-3294 CEL; Cynthia.Silva26@yahoo.com).



CO-PRESIDENTS MESSAGE

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



January is the month in which each League counts its paid members and makes decisions about its budget based on those numbers. With a strong effort from the board with letters and telephone reminders, we were able to complete our drive on January 31, with 100 members. A certain number of voting delegates are allotted to us at convention time based on our membership numbers. In May our League will participate with voting members from all over the state at the Convention being held this year at Ventura Beach. The convention, held every two years, highlights state issues that are of interest and concern to our Leagues. Our State president, Jan Hirohama, speaks to government officials frequently on behalf of voters and of the positions our League takes to advocate for open, transparent and fair government.

Also in January, our Voter Service Chair Joanne McKray and her volunteers worked feverishly to produce a Pro and Con Forum on Measure A, the school parcel tax ballot measure. Unfortunately, one of the groups hastily pulled out of the debate, threatening a boycott, and picketing. See story on page 7

Not to be deterred, our volunteers under the direction of Audrey Lord-Hausman, next turned to other activities. A committee is forming to plan and execute the Meet Your Public Officials on Thursday, April 14. Our newly elected public officials will be there to meet their constituents in a pleasant venue. There will be some new and exciting additions to the event so mark you calendars and think about which of your neighbors, friends or relatives you want to bring along with you.

Our League is co-sponsoring a program (see page 5) with the Alameda Multicultural Center as a tribute to Women's History Month on Saturday, March 26. This is a good opportunity to bring your young relatives to witness little known heroes who worked against the injustice of segregation in Alaska.

The California League of Women Voters is also celebrating the state's 100th anniversary of women's right to vote in our state. California was one of the earliest groups of western states to give women the right to vote in 1911. It was not until 1920 that the 19th amendment was passed granting suffrage to all states in the union.

Our board meetings are held the 3rd Thursday of every month at the Alameda Hospital. At 7:30p.m. All League members are welcome to participate. Please consider joining us.

Anne

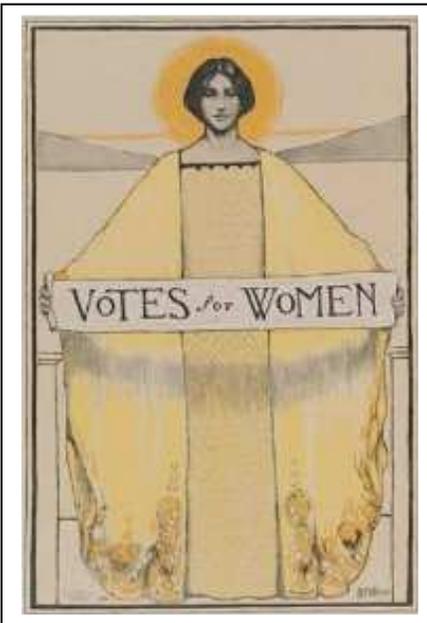
STUDY COMMITTEE MEMBERS WANTED FOR NATIONAL STUDY ON EDUCATION

The LWVUS has embarked upon the Education Study adopted by the membership at the last convention. Sometime this spring, materials will come from the LWVUS Study Committee, and over the summer and the fall of this year local Leagues will be participating in reviewing the study questions, gathering information, scheduling informational sessions and consensus meetings.

The scope of the study is "To study the federal role in Pre-K through grade 12 public education; limited to issues of equity, funding and standards/assessment."

As making drastic cuts to funding on the national level for education has already been proposed by Congress, and various proposals for re-engineering the way the federal government participates and directs educational standards have been made, this seems to be a timely and important topic. In order to participate in the study, the Alameda League will need about five people to make up the core committee which will perform its tasks from late spring into fall.

If you are interested in participating, or volunteering to lead the study group, please contact Jeff Cambra at jeffcambra@earthlink.com by March 31st.



OUR RIGHT TO VOTE IS 100 YEARS OLD THIS YEAR. TIME TO CELEBRATE!

On October 10, 1911, California became the sixth state to vote to grant women suffrage. It was a hard fought battle and quite surprising what areas of the state were strong in affirming the women’s right to vote. We usually consider the Bay Area a bastion of progressive thought on matters of equity and civil rights, but San Francisco voted no on the important ballot measure. The Los Angeles area voted yes, but only marginally. The majority of the yes votes came from rural areas!

The League is an outgrowth of the women’s suffrage movement, and it is logical that our role in educating ourselves and the community of voters began in earnest when we got the vote. Before we got the vote, a popular verse was chanted up and down the state:

“For the long work day, For the taxes we pay, For the laws we obey, We want something to say!”

On March 28, 1912 women were allowed to register to vote for the first time in California. On May 14, 1912, they voted for the first time in a presidential primary,

taking their place as a voice in national politics. They moved on from California to participate in the work to get nationwide suffrage passed, and it was eight long years before that happened.

To celebrate this 100th year of women’s suffrage in California, the League has asked the City Council for a resolution recognizing the event and the League for its work. The date for the presentation of the resolution has not yet been set, but it will be in the next few weeks. *Kate Quick*

MYPO Fundraiser is Important to the League’s Mission

Meet Your Public Officials (MYPO) is our yearly fundraiser that increases our ability to provide non-partisan information and resources, Candidates’ Forums, Ballot Pros and Cons panels, and many other League activities throughout the year.

It is a unique event where Alamedans, in a relaxed, social atmosphere, can mingle and speak directly with various elected and appointed public officials who have influence on issues affecting our community.

April 14 is the date – Mark Your Calendars. We need creative, energetic members to come together to ensure that the chapter’s fundraising goals are met, that all attendees leave feeling it was time well spent, that new and potential League members have a broad understanding of the organization, its members, and its accomplishments, and that everyone enjoys good food and drink.

MYPO is a rewarding way to contribute to our League’s work. We cannot do it without members’ support. Please join us.

Contact League members Liz Rogers, 865-1786; Audrey Lord-Hausman, 522-4651; Li Volin, 522-3242, for more information.

Do you have aluminum cans that can be recycled?



Contact Lyn and Jim Groh about their recycling effort on behalf of the League of Women Voters .All proceeds are donated to our League Education Fund.

Want to help in this simple environmental kindness? Drop your cans off at the Groh’s front porch at 1546 East Shore Drive. Cans don’t need to be crushed but should be in a bag for ease of handling

Contributions to the LWV Education Fund support citizen education, public engagement and research activities in Alameda. Contributions to the LWVEF are tax deductible.

THE IMPACT OF HEALTH CARE REFORM ACT ON MEDICARE

By Marilyn Ng

In early February, the Health Insurance and Advocacy Program (HICAP), presented a one-hour program at Mastick Senior Center entitled "Health Care Reform and Medicare: What It Means for You". The implementation of this reform measure brings good news to those covered by Medicare. First, there are **no** cuts to existing coverage. Second, there are some welcomed improvements such as the progressive increase in Part D prescription gap coverage and no co-payments for many preventive benefits.

The most significant Medicare change is the closing of the popularly known "donut hole" gap in the Part D prescription insurance coverage. This gap occurs when the total cost of prescription drugs reaches a set amount which was \$2830 in 2010. This amount is the sum of what both the member and Medicare have paid for the member's covered drugs. When that limit is reached, the member is responsible to pay the full cost of the drugs until the total out-of-pocket expense reaches \$4550. At that time, the coverage gap ends and the member is then eligible for catastrophic coverage for the remainder of the calendar year,

Beginning in 2011, this has changed and discounts will be given for both generic and brand name drugs. The member will be responsible for 93% of the cost for generic drugs and 50% for the cost of brand name drugs. These amounts will progressively decrease until 2020, when the member will pay only 25% of the cost for both generic and brand name drugs. This will then completely close the infamous coverage gap.

Future changes in Part D include the implementation of a uniform appeals process in 2012 that will have a better complaint tracking system. This process will be accessible by phone and Internet. In 2014 barbiturates (such as sleep aids), and benzodiazepines (psychotropic drugs) will be covered.

2011 changes to Part B include expanded preventive services with the establishment of an Annual Wellness Visit. This consists of a routine physical and the development of a personalized prevention plan based on current health and risk factors. There will no out-of-pocket costs for most preventive and screening services. These include vaccinations for flu, pneumonia and hepatitis B and screening tests for heart disease, diabetes, osteoporosis, and breast, cervical, colon, and prostate cancers.

In regards to 2011 premiums for Parts B and D, those with high incomes (\$85,000+ for individuals and \$170,000+ for couples) will pay higher premiums. The income levels are based on what is reported to the IRS. These levels will stay the same through 2019. As incomes rise over time, more people will be reaching these thresholds.

As for Part C Medicare Advantage plans, greater fiscal stability is projected through implementation of many regulations, rules, and guidelines. Payment reforms will be made and funding will be increased to fight fraud and abuse with the aim of improving quality and lowering costs in those plans. A major reform made this year for all Advantage plans is the mandatory out-of-pocket limit of \$6700 for members. This limit can be less if the plan chooses but it cannot exceed that amount.

Another reform being made is the gradual decrease of Medicare payments to these plans from 113% of Fee for Service to 101% in 2016. This decrease in payments may result in some cost-shifting to patients in the form of higher premiums and co-payments. However, Medicare will give bonus payments for high quality plans which are rated 4 out of 5 stars. Whether such bonuses could lower the premium and co-payment costs of members remains to be seen.

Lastly, enrollment periods will change in 2011. The Annual Election Period will be longer and earlier: Oct. 15-Dec. 7 instead of Nov. 15-Dec. 31. During this time, members can change their Advantage or Part D prescription drug plans or join for the first time. This will be effective for 2012. The Advantage disenrollment period will be at the beginning of the calendar year: Jan. 1-Feb. 15. Members can change once from an Advantage plan to *original* Medicare and obtain a stand-alone prescription drug plan *if* leaving an Advantage plan. However, members cannot change Advantage or drug plans during this period.

Seniors can obtain current information and assistance on health care coverage free of charge from the HICAP. This program is run under the auspices of the Legal Assistance for Seniors in Alameda County. Consisting of 40 volunteer counselors it helps consumer understand their benefits and rights regarding Medicare, Medi-Cal, and other related health insurance products. Their toll-free no. is 1-800-434-0222 and their website is www.aging.ca.gov/HICAP.

OTHER WEBSITE RESOURCES:

- Govt. Health Care Reform: www.healthcare.gov
- www.medicare.gov: 1-800-Medicare
- California Health Advocates: www.cahealthadvocates.org
- Medicare Rights Center: www.medicareinteractive.org
- Center for Medicare Advocacy: www.medicareadvocacy.org
- Kaiser Family Foundation: www.kff.org/healthreform

Two Opportunities to Serve the League County Wide

Smart Voter and the Alameda County Measure A (Health Care) Oversight Committee are both looking for volunteers. Either one of these positions would be a great chance to expand your knowledge of the League and get to know League members and operations on a county level.

Smart Voter County Coordinator

The Job with Smart Voter would be the County Coordinator and would involve Work with 7 local Smart Voter Coordinators (at least one from each local League in Alameda County) to make Smart Voter a rich source of information about candidates, ballot measures, and election events before every election. Among other tasks you would be the contact person with the office of the Registrar of Voters, obtaining the certified candidates list and wording for measures as they will appear in the ballot booklets, and work with the Northern California and Central Smart Voter Coordinators. Interested? For further information and a full job description contact Bonnie Hamlin Bonnie Hamlin (510) 658-6212Northern California Liaison for Smart Voter, <http://www.smartvoter.org/ca>

A.C. Measure A Oversight Committee

In 2004, voters in Alameda County approved Measure A to ensure essential funding for health care services for indigent, low income, and uninsured county residents. The Board of Supervisors established a Citizen's Oversight Committee of 15 members—two of those from the League. The Measure A Oversight Committee meets on the fourth Friday of each month from 9 a.m. to 11:30 a.m. at the AC Health Care Service Office at 1000 San Leandro Blvd, San Leandro,

Members review the activities of the preceding year of the many providers who receive Measure A funding to ensure the funds are spent according to Measure A requirements. The committee has a staff provided by the Health Care Services Agency to assist it in completing its duties.

Anyone interested may attend the meeting as an Observer. For further information about the work of the committee or attending as an Observer, email Suzanne at suzbarba@comcast.net. To review past reports, go to www.acgov.org/health/

Film Event in Recognition of Women's History Month Saturday, March 26th 2-4pm Alameda Main Library

The film *For the Rights of All: Ending Jim Crow in Alaska* will be shown in Alameda on Saturday, March 26th at 2pm. Following the film will be a discussion led by Kathy Paddock, niece of Elizabeth Peratrovich (featured in the film) and President of the San Francisco Tlingit-Haida Central Council. This outstanding PBS video tells the story of how Alaska Natives won passage of the 1945 State Anti-Discrimination Act, the first anti-discrimination law in the U.S.

Particularly inspiring is Elizabeth Peratrovich, whose Senate Hearing testimony turned the tide in favor of passage of the law. In 1988, the Alaska Legislature established February 16th as "The Annual Elizabeth Peratrovich Day," on the anniversary of the signing of the Anti-Discrimination Act. Every year since that day, her efforts to achieve equality and justice for all Alaskans of every race, creed, and ethnic background are remembered.

The film event will take place at the Alameda Main Library, 1550 Oak Street, Community Room B (1st floor), Alameda, CA 94501. The Library is wheelchair accessible and near bus lines 20, 21 & 51A.

This event is co-sponsored by the Alameda Multicultural Community Center and League of Women Voters of Alameda in recognition of Women's History Month. For information, call [510-521-9405](tel:510-521-9405) or e-mail alamulticultural@gmail.com.

League of Women Voters of Alameda Supports Measure A: Alameda Unified School District Special Parcel Tax Election

California is reducing its support for local school districts. Consequently, the Alameda Unified School District (AUSD) has cut \$7 million from its 2010-11 budget, resulting in reductions in programs and staff, reduced size of administration, and increased class size. In addition, the Board of Trustees has approved the closure of one middle school in 2011-12, up to four elementary schools in 2012-13, plus other future cuts.

AUSD is asking Alameda voters to approve Measure A. Measure A will generate \$12 million per year for Alameda schools over the next 7 years through an annual special parcel tax on property in the City of Alameda. This new tax replaces two existing but soon-to-expire school parcel taxes. Funding from Measure A will support specific programs including neighborhood schools, enrichment programs, K-3 class size of 25:1, counseling, adult education, and Alameda charter schools.

If this measure is approved property owners will pay \$0.32 per building square foot with a cap of \$7,999 per parcel. Parcels without buildings will pay \$299. An average homeowner with a 1600 square foot house would pay \$512/year with Measure A. However, this is offset by the elimination of the two existing parcel taxes. The proposed new tax would begin on July 1, 2011, and continue for 7 years.

Measure A contains strong accountability provisions, requiring a citizen's advisory committee to review expenditures plus an independent auditor to report on revenues and expenditures to the Board of Education and the community.

The League endorses Measure A because a quality education is an investment in our children's future and an essential component for a democracy. Measure A will help provide Alameda students with the necessary skills to succeed in the workforce. A quality public education system supports Alameda's economy and attracts businesses and families to our community. Measure A has strong support from the business community and is the result of negotiations between AUSD, Alameda leaders, businesses, and seniors. The League recognizes that parcel taxes in general are inequitable but school districts in California are limited in their ability to raise revenues. We believe that the revenues from Measure A are critical and further budget reductions would lead to an overall decline from which our district might not be able to recover.

In arriving at this endorsement, the League board was mindful of the views of the opponents. The Board heard two presentations and received written arguments highlighting the opposition's point of view. The Board also took into account that three of the City's business associations: the Chamber of Commerce, Greater Alameda Business Association (GABA), and the West Alameda Business Association (WABA) have endorsed Measure A.

"The League took the extra step to reach out to both sides to better understand the issues and arguments", said Alameda League Co-President Jeff Cambra.

League Co-President Anne Spanier elaborated, "In its deliberation, the board addressed the major opposition issues and concluded that they were not sufficiently substantiated or were outweighed by the benefits that passage of Measure A would bring to the community."

Support for Measure A is based upon the 2005 [League of Women Voters of California's Position on Education: Pre-Kindergarten through 12](#), which calls for the League to "Support a system of public education that is adequate, flexible, equitable and sustainable: derived from a combination of revenue sources; and distributed fairly to support access and equitable opportunities for all students."

Measure A Forum Cancelled Rather than Compromised

On Thursday, February 3rd at 7 pm, in the Main Library Stafford Room, the League of Women Voters of Alameda had planned to present a Pros and Cons forum on Measure A. Measure A is the school parcel tax ballot measure to be voted on March 8, 2011.

The League invited Robert Shemwell, Finance Director of the AUSD to present factual information as a foundation for understanding the Pro and Con presentations. The opponents of Measure A characterized Mr. Shemwell's presentation as advocacy, which was not the case. Mr. Shemwell, as an employee of AUSD is not permitted to advocate for either side. The League asked him to present information that Alameda citizens could use to evaluate the accuracy and import of statements being made by the supporters and opponents of Measure A. If the League had been given the courtesy of an inquiry, it could have clarified their misunderstanding and the whole concern could have been easily laid to rest. They would have discovered that it was our intention to share his presentation with both sides ahead of time so that they also could use the information in making their own arguments.

Mr. Shemwell was allotted 30 minutes for his presentation, which would have included time for questions. Citing bias in the time allocations, the No on A organization demanded 30 additional minutes for their presentation. Jeff Cambra, Co-president, who had worked with the two groups previously, tried to accommodate their requests, when they abruptly issued a press release withdrawing from the forum and threatening a picket instead.

The League explained in a story to the Alameda Sun that the standard format for a League Pro and Con event is one that discusses the current factual conditions of the issue at hand before the pro and con information is presented. Our printed material follows the same format. The Pro and Con presentations are given by supporters and opponents of a measure and are based on personal values and beliefs and differing points of view. We did not want to depart from our standard format. Hearing that the opponents were withdrawing and threatening a picket, the Yes on A organization notified us that they would withdraw as well. They cited concern about the distracting and negative effects on their campaign and were anxious to move on. In spite of the efforts our Co-president was not able to get the two sides to agree to continue with the forum.

We stand by our announced format and believe that it will give the community the best information possible to decide for themselves on the merits of the measure to be discussed. The League is perceived by the public as a highly trusted organization for data regarding campaign issues and we believe that adhering to this format as described above provides the necessary background and differing perspectives on this issue.

Please go to www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org to see additional information about Measure A.

Looking for a Few Good Leaders

The Nominating Committee is forming up to look for members willing to take leadership positions for the coming year. Luann DeWitt, Donna Vaughn and Karen Scanlon were elected to the committee at the 2010 Annual Meeting; Shubha Fanse, and Tracy Jensen have been appointed by the Board.

Job descriptions are posted on our League web site at <http://alameda.ca.lwvnet.org> so before you step forward to volunteer, you will know what you are getting into. But this we can assure any who decide to work in a leadership capacity that our League leaders get along and help each other to get the work done and when we have called on the membership to do work on special projects or elections, people have come forward to help. This is an opportunity to enhance your leadership skills, The Alameda League has produced people who have gone on to effective leadership positions on City Council, School Board, and State League Board

We want and need new people to step up and try taking the lead. That is how League grows in strength and numbers. Please consider saying **yes** to a call from the Nominating Committee. Join our leadership team and help make democracy work in our community!

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 Education 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

- 3/8/11 – Measure A Election
- 3/17/11 – Board Meeting - Alameda Hospital
- 3/24/11 - AC Transit Program, p1
- 3/26/11 – Women’s History Month – p5
- 4/14/11 – Meet Your Public Officials, p3
- 5/13-11-5/15/11 – State Convention in Ventura
- 6/18/11 – Annual Meeting featuring John Diaz as speaker.

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