

Ranked Choice Voting

Saving Time and Money

By Sherry Smith

Lori Droste won Berkeley's District 8 Council race against three other candidates by a razor-thin margin.

The close race for Berkeley's District 8 City Council seat provided an ideal example of the advantage of Ranked Choice Voting over having to stage a separate run-off election to determine a winner. And it was a dramatic illustration of the importance, not only of each vote, but also of each vote cast for 2nd and 3rd choices.

Lori Droste won the election by a whisper-thin margin of 16 votes out of over 4,000 votes cast. She was one of four candidates running in the November 4 election for the District 8 seat vacated by Councilmember Gordon Wozniak, so none of the candidates was an incumbent. All four candidates, George Beier, Mike Alvarez-Cohen and Jacquelyn McCormick, as well as Droste, were well informed and campaigned energetically.

The final votes were counted through the Ranked Choice Voting process. We waited and watched the lead shift as provisional and Vote-by-Mail ballots were counted. The voter signature on the outside of the envelopes must be verified before the ballots can be opened and counted.

Eight days after the election we learned Droste had won with 50.19 percent of the vote; the runner-up, George Beier, conceded the race. There were 4,518 votes cast for first-choices, but nearly 400 voters apparently did not use their right to cast as many as three choices in ranked order.

Ranked Choice Voting (formerly known as Instant Runoff Voting) removes the need for expensive run-off elections

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between the top two vote-getting candidates. In the past, a run-off election had to take place the month following the November election, at an additional cost to both the City and the candidates. So the Ranked Choice system in Berkeley saves both time and money.

Berkeley voters adopted "Instant Runoff Voting" in 2004, but it was not used in a Berkeley election until 2010 due to delays in the approval by the California Secretary of State of the software needed to accomplish the task. In the interim, the process by which votes are cast was renamed Ranked Choice Voting. It has also been adopted in Alameda County by the cities of Oakland and San Leandro as well as Berkeley.

The election this year in District 8 was the first real test of the process, with the open seat attracting four candidates, none of whom had the advantage of incumbency. Previous elections did not provide good illustrations because of limited numbers of candidates participating.

Bay Area League Day

Join us Saturday, January 31 to hear about Bay Area-wide impacts of climate change. Speakers and panels will discuss:



- **How we measure progress** – greenhouse gas reduction goals already in place,
- **Adapting to sea level rise** – state, regional and municipal efforts, and
- **Environmental justice** – meeting the challenge.

The meeting is from 9:30a to 2:30p at the MetroCenter Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland, CA 94607.

Register online at <http://lwvbayarea.org/calendar.html>. The cost is \$35 prepaid (\$20 without lunch) and \$40 (\$25 without lunch) at the door. The deadline for prepaid registration will be Friday, January 23rd.

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Plan LWVBAE's Direction

January 20, 2015 "Conversation"

By Sherry Smith

At our annual program planning meeting on January 20, we'll set our education and advocacy priorities. This January we'll discuss priorities for Berkeley-Albany-Emeryville and the California League. Come join us at the **Albany Public Library's** Edith Stone Room, from noon to 2:00 to help us make these decisions.

Annual Program Planning meetings in every League give members the opportunity for members to bring their ideas about local League programming and discuss them with League colleagues. In alternating years, they also discuss National or State League programming.

Is there a policy area where you think the League should be active but we have never studied it? Or perhaps our position is out-of-date. What local or state issues do you think we should study? If you feel strongly about an issue, spend some time preparing a brief and persuasive proposal.

The State Convention will be held in San Diego May 15-17, and we need to look over our existing positions. Delegates to the LWVC Convention will vote not only on "issues for emphasis", but also on retention, update and deletion of positions, proposed studies, and the budget for these activities.

Before you attend Program Planning please review our positions at <http://www.lwvbae.org/league-news/prepare-for-annual-program-planning/>.

The proposals we send to the State will be available for discussion at Convention in San Diego May 15-17. At LWVC Convention delegates vote on adoptions of new studies, retention, update and deletion of positions; "issues for emphasis" and the budget for these activities.

ON THE WEB

To keep up with League news, check our website regularly at <http://www.lwvbae.org/league-news/>

Be a Part!

We're seeking Leaguers to share their skills and learn new ones as team members and leaders, Nominating Committee members, outreach coordinators, Board trainees, and others to connect us with community organizations.

Crude Oil Transport in the Bay Area



Environmental Concerns Speaker Series

By Carol Stone

MATTHEW STAVER / LANDOV PHOTO

Come hear **Leslie Stewart**, Contra Costa County Hazardous Materials Commissioner, Monday, January 12, 7:30-9:00p, speaking in the Environmental Concerns speaker series.

Increasing numbers of crude oil tank cars carrying crude oil are coming to the Bay Area; residents are concerned. Trains are unloaded at a Kinder Morgan facility and placed on trucks bound for a Tesoro-owned refinery in Martinez.

A unit train, 100 cars long, is designed to deliver 70,000 barrels of crude, or about 3 million gallons. These trains represent a controversial change in both the type of crude oil supplying the region's refineries, and the way it gets here.

Crude-by-rail is a shipping trend that has grown rapidly across the country as more oil becomes available from North

Dakota's Bakken oilfields and Canada's tar sands.

The California Energy Commission has predicted that in 2016 the state could be receiving more than 156 million barrels of crude oil by rail, representing 25 percent of all crude oil imports. In 2012, a mere one million barrels arrived via rail.

Worries over potential spills or fires from accidents have heightened with the prospect of such large volumes of crude traveling so close to local communities. While railroads point out that accident rates involving oil trains have been quite low, U.S. Department of Transportation figures show they are increasing as crude-by-rail grows.

For more information, contact Carol Stone action@lwvbae.org or Gail Schickele gails@bayarea.net

Climate Action Coalition

Working to reduce emissions and adapt to climate change

By Regina Beatus, for the Climate Change Team

The Berkeley Climate Action Coalition is a network of local organizations, the City of Berkeley, UC Berkeley and community members working together to help implement the City of Berkeley's Climate Action Plan. The LWVBAE has been a part of the Coalition since its inception. Carol Stone and Regina Beatus represent the League on the Steering Committee. Four working groups focus on:

Community Choice Energy: Also called Community Choice Aggregation, CCE allows cities and counties to buy electricity on behalf of those citizens enrolled. This gives communities the choice to purchase clean energy from renewable sources, ideally produced locally. The group is evaluating the use of CCE in our area and tracking the Alameda County Supervisors' CCE feasibility study. The Berkeley City Council just approved \$8,600 to the CCE Working Group for education and further informational outreach on the issue (story page 4).

Land Use: The Land Use Working Group advocates for land use that supports resilient communities, including more parks, bike paths and green spaces throughout Berkeley.

Transportation: Transportation is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions in Berkeley. The Transportation Working Group is looking for ways to reduce traffic congestion, exploring partnerships with local community groups and businesses to develop parklets under the City's pilot parklet program, and analyzing how the Sunday Streets program impacts behavior change.

Water: The Water Working Group is responding to the urgency of the drought and long-term outlook for our water needs. The Group does community outreach including water resource fairs and helpful tips on saving water.

The Berkeley Climate Action Coalition is open to all individuals. The Working Groups are dynamic and new groups can be formed as the need arises. The quarterly meetings feature organizations and speakers, plus give the opportunity to join one of the Working Groups.

Read more at <http://www.lwvbae.org/league-news/berkeley-climate-action-coalition/>

Home Energy Upgrade

Both the Environment and Your Pocketbook Can Benefit

By Bob MacDonald for the Climate Change Team



Is your house wasting more energy than necessary? As part of the goal to mitigate climate change, California has established Energy Upgrade California. An energy efficient house is now easily within reach and more affordable. There are two versions of Energy

Upgrade, both of which involve service from specially trained and certified contractors to make your house more energy efficient as well as increase its comfort and safety in a variety of ways. To encourage participation, rebates will be offered for at least another year.

The basic **Home Upgrade**, which qualifies for a rebate of \$1000- \$3500, provides for improvements that are readily identified. The **Advanced Home Upgrade**, in contrast, involves a rather extensive assessment of the house to identify energy losses that are significant but not so obvious. This option qualifies for up to \$6500 in rebates. It is clearly the best choice for the homeowners who are not aware of where their houses are wasting energy.

The author, whose house has undergone the assessment process, can attest to its thoroughness. It involved two knowledgeable workers spending three hours and using specialized equipment to examine every nook and cranny. I accompanied one of the men for nearly two hours, discovering a variety of undesirable features of my house (such as an opening in the cold air return to the furnace that was sucking air from the attic!) and in being impressed with how much this guy knows about heat transfer. In the meantime, the other worker was making a variety of measurements, such as how much the house leaked air (equivalent to a 17 in. square hole in an outside wall), how thick the insulation in the attic is (much too thin to be effective), whether the flue on the hot water heater was drawing properly (no—it leaks carbon monoxide), and whether or not the walls are insulated (some yes, some no). The assessment costs \$400, but \$300 of that is rebated if improvements are actually made, and, given what we learned, we will at least add wall, floor and ceiling insulation, fix some furnace ducts and get a high-efficiency water heater. See

<https://www.bayareaenergyupgrade.org/program-overview> or call the energy advisor at (650) 297-2842.

Higher Education Study

By Doris Fine

Public higher education in California is at a crossroads. Almost daily, there are news articles about the need for reform in terms of access, affordability, preparedness, equity, and funding.

Because LWVC does not have a position on public higher education that includes the CSU and UC systems, the League cannot comment on or advocate for or against any legislation on this situation. In recognition of the fact that education is the bedrock upon which democracy is built and sustained, a statewide study of Public Higher Education is now underway to help develop a specific position.

Articles on various aspects of the study will be published monthly in the spring of 2015 so that committees can begin to learn about the topics before the state study committee publishes the study kit and the study questions. The study itself will take place the following fall and spring. Local leagues are urged actively by forming local study committees. Those interested in forming a local study group contact Doris Fine doris_fine@hotmail.com.

Community Choice Aggregation

By Carol Stone



Community Choice Aggregation (CCA), also called Community Choice Energy, is a complex issue. Essentially CCA allows cities and counties to buy electricity on the open

market rather than from just one utility, choosing preferentially energy from renewable sources and, ideally, energy produced locally. In November,

the Berkeley City Council passed unanimously a grant of \$8,600 for CCA outreach and education.

The Community Choice Energy subgroup of the Berkeley Climate Action coalition will be working on a brochure, outreach, and a community forum on CCA (see also story page 3).

A Community Choice program would be an alternative energy service provider, with the intent to integrate energy supply with demand reduction in a manner that meets community goals related to climate action, employment creation, price stability and local control. This would provide electricity customers with an alternative provider option to PG&E, the incumbent investor-owned utility.

Communication Team seeks a member who knows or wants to learn social media.

Berkeley's Resilience Efforts

Timothy Burroughs Speaks at "Conversations"

Tuesday, February 17, 12:00-2:00p, Albany Library



How do we adapt to climate change ?

What about disaster preparedness?

Timothy Burroughs is Berkeley's Chief Resilience Officer.

Berkeley was recently selected as an inaugural member of the Rockefeller Foundation's [100 Resilient Cities Network](http://www.lwvbae.org/league-news/flooding-and-drought/), which provides some funding; we are one of only 33 cities selected so far, 11 in the U.S. To become completely resilient costs a lot. The City is looking at investment in climate adaptation and mitigation as not just for the short-term, but also for the medium- and long-term. Flexibility and innovation are key as we face each new situation and take advantage of opportunities as they come along. See story online at <http://www.lwvbae.org/league-news/flooding-and-drought/>

Is office management your forte?

We need your strong managerial skills to improve the many elements of managing our office. Organization skills, office décor, and public interaction. All are needed. Contact president@lwvbae.org.



Free Audubon birding classes for 4 lucky League members. Starts January 2015. Write president@lwvbae.org

Membership Report

In November-December 2014 we welcomed six new members.

New Members

Fred Fassett
Cathie Geddeis
Cynthia Johnson

Carol Olson
Emma Soichet
Laura Yopez

Boards and Commissions Study

Be a Part

We are looking at the effectiveness of Berkeley's Boards and Commissions and whether they promote good government.

There have been two past local studies of Boards and Commissions. As a result of the league's past urging, several recommended reforms were instituted such as better training for commissioners.

For information contact action@lwvbae.org, Carol Stone

Environmental Concerns

Peru Climate Talks

Monday, February 9, 2015, 7:30-9:00p

By Carol Stone

Based on encouragement from newly announced agreements between the United States and China, there was new momentum for the Lima talks. The deal between the world's two biggest carbon polluters was followed just days later by a US pledge to contribute \$3 billion to a fund to help poor countries deal with climate change.

Although there was urgency and optimism going into the talks, there was disappointment coming out. In Lima, each nation pledged to present an emissions cutback plan in March, with a grace period until June. The resulting aggregation of plans would be the foundation of the long-sought global pact to be made final over the next year and signed by world leaders in Paris in December 2015.

But this breakthrough in the Lima talks has one very big problem. The pledges are voluntary.

Donations to Our League

October-November 2014

Elizabeth Russell, Donations Secretary

To the LWVBAE General Fund

Regina and Morris Beatus
Samuela Evans
Lessly Field
Doris Fine
Bruce Harris
Kurt and Ora Huth
Erika Kunkel

Paul Matzer *in honor of Bob Compton*
Elizabeth Russell
Candace Simonen
Brad Smith
Sherry Smith
Andrea Washburn

To the LWVB Foundation

Shireen Burns
Karen Carlson-Olson
Kurt and Ora Huth

Vivian Scharlach
Sherry Smith

Many thanks to our donors.

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Economic Inequality Pat Kuhi
Education Action Cathy Lynch &
 Dianne McNenny
Env. Concerns Gail Schickele &
 Carol Stone
Health Care Li-hsia Wang



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The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages active and informed participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Calendar – Locations are the LWVBAE office, 2530 San Pablo Ave, Suite F, Berkeley, and area code is (510) unless otherwise noted. www.lwvbae.org/calendar

January

7 Weds 10:30a-12:30p
9 Fri 1:30-3:30p
12 Mon 10:30-11:30
12 Mon 7:30-9:00p

19 Mon 1:30-2:30p
20 Tues 12:00-2:00p

23 Fri 1:30-3:00p
27 Tues 2:00-4:00p
31 Sat 9:30a-2:30p

February

4 Weds 10:30a-12:30p
7 Sat 9:00a
9 Mon 7:30-9:00p

13 Fri 1:30-3:30p
16 Mon 1:30-2:30p
17 Tues 12:00-2:00p

20 Fri 1:30-3:00p
24 Tues 2:00-4:00p

Board Meeting N. Bickel 526-4055
Education Action Team C. Lynch 527-2173
Voter Services Team P. Gale 548-0591
Environmental Concerns C. Stone 549-0959
Leslie Stewart, 1174 Euclid Ave, Berkeley
Health Care Team L. Wang 848-5765
Conversation with League S. Smith 548-1769
Program Planning
Albany Library, 1247 Marin Ave, Albany
Climate Change Team R. Beatus 524-6904
Economic Inequality Team P. Kuhi 526-6589
v cn N. Bickel 526-4055
MetroCenter Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland

Board Meeting N. Bickel 526-4055
VOTER Deadline D. Swift 548-4808
Environmental Concerns C. Stone 549-0959
Report on Peru Climate Talks, 1174 Euclid Ave, Berkeley
Education Action Team C. Lynch 527-2173
Health Care Team L. Wang 848-5765
Conversation with League S. Smith 548-1769
Timothy Burroughs, Resilience in Berkeley
Albany Library, 1247 Marin Ave, Albany
Climate Change Team R. Beatus 524-6904
Economic Inequality Team P. Kuhi 526-6589