



Bay Area League Day Feb. 6, 2016

Reinventing Bay Area Transportation for the 21st Century



Metropolitan Transportation Commission, State of California

Bay Area League Day in 2016 will look into ***Reinventing Bay Area Transportation for the 21st Century***. Join fellow League members at Maple Hall in the City of San Pablo as our keynote speaker, State Senator Jim Beall, and our three panels of experts, speak about funding, technology and how to change the culture of transportation planning.

One theme followed throughout the forum will be how these topics affect Social Equity - is social equity overlooked in funding efforts, how can tech serve the underserved, and how can we make access affordable for all.

For the first time, League Day will be held in Maple Hall Community Center, 13831 San Pablo Avenue, City of San Pablo. Located at Alvarado Square inside the City Hall complex, the venue is served by AC Transit bus routes 72 and 76, and has onsite parking.

Registration begins at 9 am with refreshments. The program runs from 9:30 am to 2:30 pm. Lunch will be served midday.

Fees for lunch and attendance: \$35 prepaid (\$20 without lunch) and \$40 at the door (\$25 without lunch). Online signup is available. Look for more information in *The Bay Area Monitor* or call Alec MacDonald at 510-839-1608.

<http://bayareamonitor.org/2015/11/30/registration-now-open-for-bay-area-league-day-2016/>

Money in Politics

Consensus Meetings January 9 and 19

League members will participate in expanding and shaping the national League's policies on money in politics on January 9 and January 19. Add your own voice to the League's official position on campaign finance; participate in our League's decisions on the Money in Politics national study. You have two opportunities to join the discussion - Saturday, January 9, 2016, from 9 am to 1 pm in downtown Oakland, at 436 14th Street at Broadway, just across Broadway from the 12th Street BART station, or Tuesday, January 19 from Noon to 4 pm at the South Berkeley Public Library, 1901 Russell St., two blocks from the Ashby BART station. Use BART or form carpools to avoid a parking headache.

All members can participate in the discussions and the decision making, but each League will record and submit its own consensus report to LWVUS. The study committee, drawn from the Berkeley, Albany, Emeryville, Alameda and Oakland Leagues will present the study material. As always, members of the public are welcome to attend and listen.



Expand League Policy The Money in Politics Committee is studying the national League position on campaign finance to expand it to cover newly prominent sources of funding such as 501(c)4 non-profits and super PACs (political action committees). The study will consider whether political spending is protected speech under the First Amendment and if such spending should be protected at the expense of other goals in the League's current position: to ensure the public's right to know, combat corruption and undue influence, enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office, and to promote citizen participation in the political process.

At the end of the study, the League should have a robust and relevant position to lobby against the corrupting influence of money in politics. Tools to be considered include contributions limits, spending limits, public financing, and exposure of all now dark or hidden contributions and contributors. - Nancy Bickel, President

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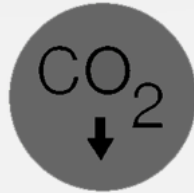
Save the Date!
Bay Area League
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Albany GHG Reduction 2



Student Forum on
Higher Education 4
Affordability and other Barriers to Access



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Welcome New Members:

Candace Capogrossi
Adena Ishii
Gloria Leonard
Leila Pedersen
Welcome back Henry Olson
- Mina Jenner

Many Thanks to Our Donors

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Nancy and Peter Bickel	Bruce Harris
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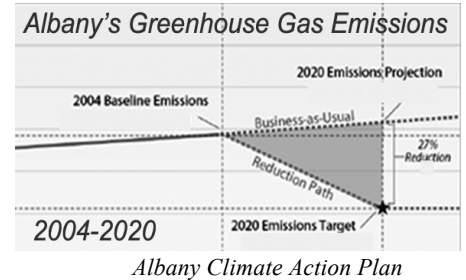
Friends and family honor the memory of Kitty McLean

- Elizabeth Russell, Donations Secretary

Your membership payments and contributions to LWVBAE,
now a 501(c)(3) organization, are tax-deductible.

Albany Takes Strides to Reduce GHGs

In 2006, Albany's City Council committed the city to reduce greenhouse gas pollution (GHGs) by 2020 to 25% less than the amount it released in 2004. In 2010 the City Council adopted a Climate Action Plan (CAP) with measures to reach this goal.



Since then, Albany's Sustainability Committee has worked on a revenue source to fund implementation of some of the CAP measures. For instance, Albany has yet to develop and implement residential and commercial energy conservation ordinances, which would require upgrading building energy efficiency at the time of sale. This is due to a lack of funding for staff to develop and implement such ordinances.

The Committee has recommended a two percent tax on imported building energy (electricity and natural gas) to provide funds for reducing GHGs. Accounts enrolled in California Alternative Rates for Energy (CARE) would be exempted. CARE provides reduced cost energy for low-income households. With this structure, the proposed tax would raise about \$200,000 per year.

The Committee recommends dedicating the revenue to mandatory building energy assessments (following Berkeley's lead), subsidizing energy conservation retrofits, and providing a fund for grant matches and staff research.

LWVBAE sent a letter supporting the revenue measure as proposed, which Action Chair Jill Martinucci reinforced by public comment to the City Council. A majority of the Council commented in support of putting the proposed measure on the ballot. However, there was concern that operating the three proposed programs simultaneously on the proposed revenue would not be feasible.

In response to this, the local group Carbon Neutral Albany has proposed the building energy assessments should be funded in the first years and the energy retrofit subsidies in the later years. This would allow the development of the latter program to be based on data gathered from the former program, as well as the best findings from this active research area.

If placed on the ballot and passed, this tax measure would be a model for other cities and counties to increase the cost of polluting while using the revenue to reduce pollution.

I am grateful for LWVBAE's support in this endeavor.

- Preston Jordan



Student Forum on Public Higher Education: Affordability and Other Barriers to Access

Students from local universities will present the issues they and their families face in the struggle to achieve a college degree during our February 16 meeting at 12 Noon at the Berkeley Public Library. Many assume that college access is available to all qualified students and grants and scholarships



are obtainable for those needing financial aid, but this is not always the case. Many of us managed to complete college decades ago when public higher education did not need a

LWV study, but that was when the University of California did not charge tuition, and the cost of housing and other living expenses was affordable for ordinary families. Today's students face a multitude of hurdles to complete college, as demonstrated in California, one of the nation's lowest per capita rates of residents holding a BA degree.

We heard some of this story in 2014 when the League gave its *Spirit of the League* Award to Adena Ishii, who initiated a program to assist community college students in transferring to a four-year campus. At the February meeting, we will hear from some students helped by the program and others recruited by Sara Funes, a junior transfer and currently UC Berkeley's "Vote Everywhere" ambassador. Funes is also a member of the LWVC committee responsible for the Study Guide for our consensus meetings (to be held in March) that will result in new LWVC policy on public higher education.

We will be inviting members of our sister Leagues in the East Bay and San Francisco. We will meet in the large Community Room on the third floor of the Berkeley Central Public Library at 2090 Kittridge Street, convenient to public transportation. Come at noon with a bag lunch and with your questions. This promises to be one of the most stimulating meetings of the new year, as well as an occasion demonstrating the success of the community outreach efforts of our own LWVBAE.

- Doris Fine

Berkeley City Council Approves Minimum Wage Increase



Daily Cal, Dec 15, 2015

Berkeley workers earning the minimum wage could be making \$4 more per hour by 2020. At their November 10 meeting, after hours of public testimony, the Berkeley City Council approved in concept an expanded minimum wage schedule that locks in increases through 2020. The goal is to provide "a long-term solution to the fundamental problem of working people living in poverty due to stagnant wages."

The Labor Commission presented a proposal that would have increased the minimum wage to \$20 per hour by 2020. Ultimately, the City Council approved a substitute proposal, co-sponsored by Councilmembers Droste, Capitelli, Maio and Moore, that establishes stepped increases up to \$15 per hour for large businesses (55 full-time-equivalent employees or more) by 2018, and \$15 per hour for small businesses by 2020. Subsequent increases are to be based upon the Bay Area Consumer Price Index (CPI).

LWVBAE lobbied the City Council (September 2015) in favor of the increase, citing the LWVUS position that "social policy in the United States should promote self-sufficiency... and that the most effective social programs are those designed to prevent or reduce poverty."

This proposal will continue increases to minimum wage after the current wage reaches its final rate of \$12.56 per hour in 2016. The Council is expected to approve the final language early next year.

- Jill Martinucci



Financial Education Blog, Izakomaneza Torgiwaet

When:
Tuesday
February 16,
Noon to 2 pm
♦ ♦ ♦

Where:
Downtown
Berkeley Public
Library, Shattuck
& Kittredge
Streets

Do You Have 30 Minutes for the League?

We've listed "one day and you're done" and short recurring tasks in a story of the same name on our website. One may be just right for you.

LWV Bay Area Monitors Regional Issues

The Bay Area League and its *Bay Area Monitor*, published bi-monthly, are powerful but hidden treasures of our multi-level League organization. LWV Bay Area is an inter-league organization that oversees regional issues such as transportation, air quality, water, open space, and land use issues on behalf of its members, the 20 local leagues in the 9-county region. The Bay Area Board works with representatives from local leagues and supports several committees that observe and advocate on specific issues. For example, LWV Bay Area's Climate Change Team meets the 4th Wednesday of each month from 1:30 - 3:00 pm at our own office in Berkeley in collaboration with our local Team, chaired by Regina Beatus.

LWVBAE's local liaison to the Bay Area League is Regina Beatus, who represents us to the Bay Area Board and reports to us on LWVBA's activities. Three LWVBAE members serve on the Bay Area board: Eloise Bodine is Treasurer; Sherry Smith serves as Education Fund VP and oversees the Monitor Project; and Janice Blumenkrantz is Air Quality and Climate Change Director.

The Bay Area Monitor, edited by Alec MacDonald, includes thoughtful reports on key regional issues. You may read or subscribe to the on-line edition at <http://bayareamonitor.org/> The December 2015 - January 2016 issue includes the following articles:



- The Congestion Conundrum
- Keeping Microplastic out of the San Francisco Bay
- Refining Refinery Regulations: Air District to Vote on New Rules
- The Working Grass: Four-legged Land Management

Plan for ABAG - MTC Merger Moves Forward

The Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) agreed on October 28, 2015 to proceed with a plan to merge the two agencies, rather than to simply transfer the ABAG planning staff to MTC. In the meantime, MTC will continue funding ABAG through the FY 2015-16.



They will hire a mutually acceptable consultant to conduct a jointly funded merger study and develop a merger implementation plan (MIP) for the two agencies by June 1, 2016. The process will be jointly overseen by the MTC Planning Committee and the ABAG Administrative Committee, who are already working together on Plan Bay Area 2040 (the second round of the SB 375 process).

The LWVBayArea sent several letters to both agencies (you will find posted on our website <http://www.lwvbayarea.org/advocacy.html#letters>) expressing concern about MTC's original proposal. We urged the continuation of funding for ABAG, and a thoughtful study of a merger that would include all ABAG programs, with full ability for public input. For 50 years, we have wanted a consolidated regional agency.

Stay tuned, we expect there will be a point that Leagues will need to attend meetings and speak out.

- Linda Craig, President, LWVBA

New Video - Solving the Climate Crisis: Carbon Pricing 101

A forum describing the basics and complexities of carbon pricing and some of the proposed systems, followed by audience questions and discussion. The event was sponsored by the League of Women Voters, Berkeley Climate Action Coalition, Citizen's Climate Lobby, David Brower Center, Ecology Center, and Sierra Club, San Francisco Bay Chapter.

See: <http://lwvbae.org/CarbonPrice101>



Berkeley Fair Elections: Small-Donor Public Campaign Financing

During a special November 10 meeting, the Berkeley City Council considered placing on the November 2016 ballot the “Berkeley Fair Elections” proposal, which calls for a system of “small donor” public financing for local candidates’ campaigns funded through the General Fund.

As proposed, candidates for Mayor, Council, School Board and Rent Board would be eligible to receive matching funds for campaign donations from the City through a new elections fund if they agree to limit donations to \$50 from individuals only. They would qualify for the program by raising \$500 of donations between \$10 and \$50 from at least 30 different sources. Each electoral category would have a maximum (eg: Council candidates would be limited to \$40,000 per campaign). The overall cost to the General Fund per year was estimated at just over \$400,000.

LWVBAE, acknowledged within the proposal as one of the co-authors of the original draft in 2014, has been conditionally supportive. In a letter to the Council, we wrote that the “League of Women Voters favors public funding as the best, long-term campaign finance strategy at all levels of government. We believe that Berkeley voters should have the opportunity to consider and vote on this measure.” We are particularly interested in public financing that encourages smaller donations from more people with the expectation that “effective candidates of modest means with good ideas and broad community connections would be able to run competitive campaigns –and win more often” and “a more diverse group of candidates might be elected to office.”

We share concerns about the overall cost of the program in light of both competing budget priorities and Berkeley’s already restrictive limits on campaign donations.

At the meeting, coalition members introduced amendments to the proposal to address a variety of Council concerns:

1. limiting eligible offices to Mayor and City Council
2. allowing out-of-area \$50 donations (though not matched)
3. including an evaluation after two election cycles.
4. increasing the matching cap for Mayor from \$100K to \$120K.

Council unanimously sent the proposal back to the Fair Campaign Practices Commission requesting they merge these amendments. They expect to entertain a new draft in February 2016.



- Jill Martinucci

Outside Organizations Hire Our League To Oversee Their Board Elections – You Can Help!

The League of Women Voters periodically has been asked to assist with organizational Board elections, and within the last several years has done so for Berkeley Community Media organization that provides oversight of Berkeley's local public access cable TV channels; the Oregon Park Senior Apartments Cooperative Board (under a court order); and the Cooperative Center Federal Credit Union (known by most as the Co-Op Credit Union). We have been able to earn several hundred dollars annually through these organizations contracting with us. Each of these elections requires three or four League volunteers to commit for a few hours each over a limited time period---usually just a day.

The League of Women Voters has a well-deserved reputation of unbiased fairness when it comes to providing information about election issues and producing forums with Berkeley/Community Media, the organization that produces Berkeley’s local public access cable TV channels, to help

voters make up their minds about candidates for office. That reputation has led to many local Leagues being asked to assist with overseeing Board elections for other nonprofit entities like homeowner associations, credit unions, and student body associations. We are referred to as a "third party independent" overseer, or sometimes a "teller of elections," and some organizations' by-laws require the use of this independent "teller" or overseer---the League having no "horse in the race" and thus assuring fairness of the election process.

For our League, this all began in the 1970's when we were asked to assist with poll-watching and vote tallying for the Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC), which led to our assisting with the Berkeley City College (then Vista College) student elections. Back in the day, the ASUC election brought us a good deal of revenue (in our last year of performing this service, it was \$10,000). With the computer age taking over many such functions, the ASUC eventually turned to on-line voting and our services were no longer required.

But, since then, we continue to realize new opportunities. If you're interested in helping out (the task is quickly grasped), you are welcome to join the team we can call upon when groups contact us to provide our highly-regarded private election services. Please contact Sherry Smith at js1589@berkeley.edu if this is a task that interests you.

- Sherry Smith

A Call to Voter Services Volunteers for the 2016 Election Year



The Voter Services Team's next meeting is Monday January 11, 2016 at 10:30 am at the LWVBAE Office, and there are many activities for us to cover to support a successful election year, including registering young people and keeping boxes of voter registration forms stocked at key locations in Berkeley, Albany and Emeryville.

Registering Young People to Vote

In a recent letter to state school district superintendents, high school principals and others, Secretary of State Alex Padilla and State Superintendent of Instruction Tom Torlakson launched a new and continuing series of "California High School Voter Education Weeks" in September 2015. These weeks also will be held in spring and fall 2016. According to Secretary Padilla and Superintendent Torlakson:

"Voter turnout in California's 2014 general election among eligible eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds was a dismal 8.2 percent. A person in this cohort was more likely to get arrested in 2014 than to cast a ballot. Thus, your help in fostering civic engagement and participation in democracy is more urgent than ever."

Under Ruby MacDonald's leadership, the Voter Services Team is working with the Berkeley High School to implement in-class voter registration. LWVUS studies indicate this approach is the most effective.

Maintaining Voter Registration Boxes

Volunteers are needed to fulfill LWVBAE commitment of stocking voter registration boxes in Berkeley, Albany and Emeryville. Recently, Phyllis Gale and Adena Ishii attended a meeting with the Alameda County Registrar of Voters staff. The Alameda County Leagues assured the Registrar's staff that we are committed to maintaining and stocking "Voter Registration Boxes full of Voter Registration Forms." This includes some income for the participating Alameda County Leagues. LWVBAE typically receives between \$800 - \$1,000 a year to support our local voter services activities. As a part of that contract, LWVBAE is committed to maintaining 30 boxes in Berkeley, Albany and Emeryville. At our January 11, 2016 meeting, we will review our current locations and the folks that keep the boxes full. We need volunteers to make this a reality.

Con't next column

Mark your calendar for January 11, 2016 to attend the Voter Services Team Meeting at 10:30 am at the LWVBAE Office. There are many other items on our agenda to talk about in order to make Election Year 2016 a success!! Please contact Phyllis Gale at 510-508-4389 or at voterservices@lwbvae.org

LWVBAE Natural Resources: Environmental Concerns Speaker Series

January 11, 2016

The COP21 climate talks concluded mid-December with much political celebration and an equal if not greater amount of criticism for not going far enough. To better understand the outcomes from Paris, join us for a presentation from Claire Greensfelder, from the Women's Global Call for Climate Justice, a coalition of more than 24 international environmental, women's and human rights networks from across the world; and Tom Kelly, executive director and founder of KyotoUSA, a non-profit that encourages local governments, school districts and communities to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. Both were in Paris for the climate talks and will share what it was like both inside and outside the official meeting.



February 8, 2016

When early white settlers came to the Bay Area, they were enamored with its climate but missed the tall hardwood trees of the East Coast and launched large scale tree planting projects across the region that have become our neighborhood forests. The eucalyptus tree planting project was abandoned shortly after the turn of the century when it was discovered the trees did not produce quality lumber, but the forests are still with us, creating fire hazards and ecological concerns that East Bay residents must face. Join us for a presentation from Jerry Kent, former assistant general manager of the East Bay Regional Park District, who will address East Bay Hills vegetation and fire history, including introduction and proliferation of blue gum eucalyptus trees across the East Bay and how the planting of the fast-growing Australian tree has transformed the natural ecology of the Bay including the fire landscape.

The meetings take place 7:30-9:00 pm at 1174 Euclid Ave. (@ Crystal Way, just north of Eunice) in North Berkeley. Join us for the second Monday of the month Sept. through May. Contact Carol Stone at 510-549-0959 or seastone11@hotmail.com or Gail Schickele at 415-922-6627 or gail.schickele@gmail.com

This Changes Everything: New Documentary Reflects Climate Unity

Never has the promise of global solidarity behind a post-carbon planet and renewable energy felt stronger than while I was viewing the documentary *This Changes Everything* at December's Environmental Concerns meeting.



I did not want to miss my aunt Gail Schickele's invitation to view the new film based on a book by Naomi Klein, who has been an influential figure on my life. Klein's book *The Shock Doctrine* taught me details of geopolitical events about which I had only a cursory understanding. This year I met Chilean youth who regarded her as a hero for details *The Shock Doctrine* shared with their generation regarding the brutal dictatorship of Augusto Pinochet. We bonded over the right for a people to decide their fate. With this new film, Klein is uniting the global community once again.

I was aware of some of the indigenous-led blockades in the Alberta tar sands region; a Vancouver friend spent much time aiding the efforts there in recent years. As we watched the film, that same friend was traveling to a South Dakota blockade highlighted in the film. His involvement showed me how one's connection to these opposition efforts can move from being viewed through a screen to being on the ground in solidarity.

As a journalist in Crescent City, I have written about American Indian youth and river activists from the Klamath River basin, who have taken solidarity-building trips to the Malaysian Borneo and the Brazilian Amazon to fight mega-dam projects there. The Klamath Basin participants told me that the indigenous people of the Borneo and Amazon who led blockades and other opposition efforts were astonished to learn that North American indigenous people are still alive and well, giving them strong inspiration to continue their fight knowing they are not alone. This was the message I received from Klein's film, as well: Climate activists are not alone.

A country like India might be told by the West that large-scale carbon-based projects are a necessity for progress, but it does not mean that the people of India agree. It was powerful to see not only rural Indian villagers protest a power plant in their backyard, but to see this fight taken up by the urbanized, middle-class sectors of India, as well. Similarly, the Beijing protesters in the film demonstrate that climate change is an urgent issue for under-developed countries.

People across the planet are not alone in their desire to imagine and fight for a new world that sustains all of its inhabitants — humans, plants and animals alike. Big thanks to LWVBAE for holding events that reaffirm the unity we have and can grow to fight climate change.

- Adam Spencer

PG&E Again Making News about Electricity Rates

The California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) made the news earlier this year when it approved electricity generation rates for most of PG&E's customers. CPUC has now (Dec. 15) announced its proposal for rates for homeowners who install rooftop solar. Public comments will be taken until January 7 and the final decision will probably be made by the end of January. This announcement was generally welcomed by all but the utilities because, although some modest increases are included, the large increases that had been proposed by the utilities were basically rejected. In particular, CPUC is preserving the reimbursement of customers who generate more electricity than they use.

A very readable article on the proposal is here: <http://www.greentechmedia.com/articles/read/breaking-california-net-metering-2.0-keeps-retail-rates-for-rooftop-solar>

A second contentious electricity rate issue involves customers who leave PG&E to join a CCA (Community Choice Aggregate). PG&E wants to raise the "Exit Fee" two-fold for those customers. This fee, officially the Power Charge Indifference Amount, supposedly compensates PG&E for loss of their investment in infrastructure resulting from customers' leaving PG&E. Environmentalists think that such an increase in the cost to CCA customers will negatively impact the sustainable energy industry. In response, CPUC will hold public hearings the first half of 2006.

The CPUC website (cpuc.ca.gov) is daunting, but there is a Public Advisor Office that is very helpful in providing callers and emailers with information, reached at (415)703-2074 - Bob and Ruby MacDonald



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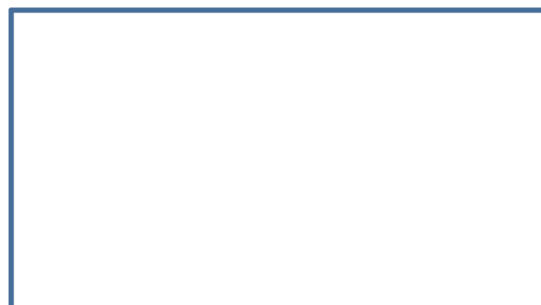
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Calendar

Locations and details may change. Before attending please check our on-line calendar at www.lwvbae.org/calendar. Area code is (510) unless otherwise noted.

January

9 Sat	9:00-1:00p	Money in Politics Consensus	K. Gavzy	508-9062
436 14th Street at Broadway, Oakland. across from 12th St BART Station				
11 Mon	10:30a-12:00p	Voter Services Team	P. Gale	548-0591
11 Mon	7:30-9:00p	Environmental Concerns	C. Stone	549-0959
14 Thu	7:00-9:00p	Action Team Meeting	J. Martinucci	847-4797
16 Sat	10:00a-12:00p	Higher Ed Study Team	C. Thomas	928-8246
19 Tues	12:00-4:00p	Money in Politics Consensus	K. Gavzy	508-9062
South Berkeley Public Library, 1901 Russell St., two blocks from Ashby BART station				
19 Tues	7:00-8:30p	Climate Change Team	R. Beatus	524-6904

February

1 Mon	10:30a-12:00p	Voter Services Team	P. Gale	548-0591
5 Fri		March-April Voter deadline	G. Schickele	415-922-6627
6 Sat	9:00a-2:00p	Bay Area League Day	more info:	839-1608
8 Mon	7:30-9:00p	Environmental Concerns	C. Stone	549-0959
11 Thu	7:00-9:00p	Action Team Meeting	J. Martinucci	847-4797
16 Tues	12:00p-2:00p	Student Perspective on Higher Education Access	D. Fine	653-5031
23 Tues	7:00-8:30p	Climate Change Team	R. Beatus	524-6904
March				
5 Sat	10:00a-12:00p	Higher Ed Study Team	C. Thomas	928-8246
7 Mon	10:30a-12:00p	Voter Services Team	P. Gale	548-0591
10 Thu	7:00-9:00p	Action Team Meeting	J. Martinucci	847-4797
14 Mon	7:30-9:00p	Environmental Concerns	C. Stone	549-0959
15 Tues	12:15p-4:00p	Higher Education Consensus	C. Thomas	928-8246
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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