

Conversation: Climate Action Plan

Berkeley Climate Action Coordinator Timothy Burroughs will address updates on the core strategies of the Climate Action Plan including sustainable transportation and land use; building energy use; and waste reduction and recycling. If you wish to prepare for this local presentation please go to www.cityofberkeley.info/climateprogress/

When: Tuesday, April 3, from noon to 2:00

Where: Albany Public Library, Edith Stone Room
1247 Marin (at Masonic), Albany

Also on the agenda, the LWVBAE Natural Resources/ Healthy Planet Climate team will give an update on the emissions standards from the California Air Resources Board; background on California’s groundbreaking legislation AB32, the Global Warming Solutions Act, and SB 375, its enactment; its oversight by regional agencies; and how our climate team is helping to spearhead the Vote Climate network among Leagues to efficiently streamline information and participation.

Environmental Concerns

Our April speaker will be Mike Lynes, Conservation Director and General Counsel for Environmental Matters of the Golden Gate Audubon Society. The meeting will be held on Monday, April 9, 2012.

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The Rules Have Changed for Elections in 2012

There are significant changes for the 2012 elections. The “Top Two” primary system will be used in June; online voter registration could be up and running in the summer; and redistricting means that many voters will see different names on the ballot and/or new district lines and numbers. To avoid confusion at the ballot box, keep in touch with the latest election information by going to the League of Women Voters of California website, including SmartVoter/org and CAVotes.org.

Top Two Primary System

There are actually two primary elections taking place on June 5, 2012:

- The Presidential Primary, which is a partisan party nomination process used to select candidates for President and county central committees, and
- The state-wide “Top-Two” Primary elections for congressional and state elective offices.

The Presidential Primary produces “party-nominated candidates” for president who then appear on the November General Election ballot by party. This is the type of primary that California voters are used to. The “top-two” primary system, however, produces two “voter-nominated candidates” who have received the two highest vote counts and who then advance to the November General Election. Even if one of the candidates receives more than 50 percent of the votes, there is still a runoff between the top two vote getters. With the “top-two” primary system, all candidates running for an office are listed on one ballot, regardless of their party preference. All voters may vote for any candidate on the list.

Currently, there are court challenges to the Top-Two Primary system, based on the ban on write-in votes in the General Election for Top Two offices and on constitutional issues of third-party access to the ballot and voters’ right of choice.

Online Voter Registration

In October 2011, the Governor signed into law SB 397 allowing the state to begin registering voters online before the completion of a planned new statewide voter registration database. State elections officials and the Department of Motor Vehicles are currently working on the technical details of using DMV digitized signatures for matching registrations submitted online.

Online registrants will be required to provide their birth date, the number from their valid California driver's license or California ID card, *and* the last four digits of their social security number. In the last statewide election, the LA County Registrar's office received 64,000 registration affidavits the day *after* the deadline. The Registrar stated that he was certain that if online registration had been in force, many more people would have voted in that election.

Redistricting

New state district maps have been drawn by the Citizens Redistricting Commission last year for Congressional, State Senate, Assembly and Board of Equalization districts. Many voters will now find themselves in a new electoral geography, with new district boundaries for the upcoming electoral cycle. Some voters will see unfamiliar names listed on their ballot as incumbents; for some there will be no incumbents running; others will see multiple incumbents listed on their ballots for a single contest. For example, there are three dozen new districts in the state, due to growth in the state's population, and these will have no incumbents listed on the ballot. In the City of Los Angeles, there are five newly drawn districts, with two incumbents sharing the same district.

To learn more, see the CAVotes redistricting update at <http://cavotes.org/issues/redistricting-implementation>.

There you will find links to the new maps for Assembly, State Senate and Congressional districts, as well as important information about the challenges to the new redistricting maps that may affect implementation at election time.

For answers to frequently asked questions about the California primary elections, you can go to the Secretary of State's website: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/2012-elections/june-primary/faqs-primary-2012.htm>.

Remember: May 21 is the last day to register to vote in the June 5, 2012 primary election.

Jean Safir

California's Budget Crisis Highlighted at League Regional Meeting

The League of Women Voters of California, in collaboration with the San Jose-Santa Clara League, presented a Regional Workshop in San Jose on February 25. You will elsewhere in this issue of the VOTER find reports from Helene Lecar and Jean Safir on the other topics covered at the Workshop. This one is about the California State Budget, its broken process, and what might be done to fix the problems. The presentation was led by Syeda Inamdar, a Director on the League's State Board.

Here are some factoids:

- a. more than 1/2 the state budget goes for public education
- b. the largest single source of revenue is the state income tax (highly volatile and hard to predict)
- c. much of the budget is predetermined and not subject to influence by the Governor or Legislature; and Propositions 13 and 98 influence the rest
- d. under the new rules, a majority of the Legislature can now pass the budget, but it still requires 2/3 approval to pass revenue increases

According to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), California's nonpartisan fiscal and policy advisor, the budget crisis is the result of poor budgeting practices, examples of which are:

- a. failure to build up reserves in good times
- b. tax cuts and corporate tax breaks
- c. the growing aging population

The population growth has averaged 307,000 new Californians per year since 2002. But many new Californians are unemployed, creating a net loss for the balancing act of the state's revenues and expenses.

Recently, the state has made greater progress in making budgetary structural changes, but there is still much more to be done. The keys to achieving budgetary reform:

- a. addressing revenue volatility by building up reserves
- b. adopting performance-based budgeting
- c. moving to a two-year budgeting process
- d. improving program reviews

Sherry Smith

Privatization Discussed at League Regional Meeting

In its day-long Bay Area workshop, the LWVC addressed some difficult questions we will all be thinking about this spring: the state budget, the privatization study coming to consensus ; and the significant changes in law that will affect voters' choices in the state's June 5 Primary Election .

The panel addressing privatization was facilitated by Cathy Lazarus, a member of the national League's Privatization study committee and the Director of Public Works of Mountain View. The other panelists were Jane Light, Director of Libraries for the City of San Jose, and John Tang, a private entrepreneur who has helped the San Jose Water Company privatize some functions in order to continue ongoing public services in the most economical way.

Ms. Lazarus began by reminding us that privatizing has been going on since Colonial days, with all our toll roads and utilities developed by private interests because governments back then had neither the power nor the revenue to undertake such projects on their own. She pointed out that there was no one right answer, that either partner, public or private, can succeed or fail in running some service. If the public won't pay, neither system will work. Building and/or maintaining public facilities requires adequate funding no matter who is in charge.

What's good about privatizing?: The panel pointed out that in a time of shrinking public budgets, some external agency or company may be more nimble. They may have more modern IT systems, and don't have the same constraints as public agencies. Union negotiating rules may now make public employee benefits packages higher than the private sector pays, and purchasing codes, set up to prevent corruption and graft, may slow down or limit an agency's freedom to get work done economically.

At the same time, **people opposed to privatizing** point out that it is sometimes used as a vehicle for breaking the power of a public union, or reducing the "living wage" provisions built into many unions' negotiating rules.

Before contracting out, a government agency should consider: What is the problem to solve? What will be gained by privatizing? Have all the options been explored? Are there successful examples elsewhere of privatizing the service in question?

More specific questions an agency must consider before bringing in a potential partner are:

1) Is there a competitive private market? There must be at least 3 external vendors, so the government has someplace else to go if the contractor is unable to perform adequately.

- 2) Transactions should be revocable. If the public sector unit disbands, the government's expertise disappears. How will the public's interest continue to be served? And what would be the cost of reconstituting the original staff of public specialists if the partnership dissolves?
- 3) What are the contractor's disclosure requirements on matters like profits or changes in project personnel? Who decides about changes in the quality of service? What is the process/ channel for public input on an ongoing basis?
- 4) How does the bottom line determine policy? If the contractor is not local, the alignment between needs and providers may not match. The private contractor is interested in profitability and the government is interested in the quality of service provided. How will differences be resolved? The state of Florida stopped negotiating with a private firm to run its state prisons when the contractor considered it necessary for the state to guarantee a 90% occupancy rate!

Are some public functions essential government services that should never be outsourced? The panelists agreed that issues affecting elections, the office of the city or county clerk, were all too close to the proper running of the government to be outsourced. Ms. Light mentioned the library's concerns about protecting the privacy of readers, but she pointed out that even sensitive agencies may find it cost effective and non-threatening to contract out a small portion of a public agency's mission, such as janitorial services.

Mr. Tang pointed out that privatization was not a silver bullet but rather part of a tool kit. Utility agencies, such as the water district he serves, have the issue of risk transfer to consider. What is the legal liability if the city lacks expertise when the agency's charge is to provide a critical, reliable service to the public?

In that case, partners need to spell out very clear performance metrics and joint expectations. The city may hire outside contractors to do work, but retain all decision making authority. In hybrid contracts, the government leases out a concession. The contractor controls operations, and may set rates on capital expenditures, but the city retains the assets. In such situations, for many functions, a regional authority oversees operations for a variety of different public-private partnerships. None of the panelists mentioned the current status of PG & E, another regulated public-private partnership whose seriously inadequate supervision of maintenance by both public and private overseers, still being investigated, resulted in deaths and massive property damage .

What does a government agency do if its internal control of some function has been outsourced? Panelists laughed and agreed that the government agency might hire another external party to be sure all essential issues have been addressed in the draft privatizing documents—in effect, outsourcing even the evaluation of the outside provider.

Helene Lecar

Program Planning Says “Stay the Course” Locally, Tweak Some National League Position Descriptions

Every two years, before the National LWVUS Convention (which will be in June) we are asked to review the U.S. League’s positions and let them know which to retain or update and which to prioritize for education and advocacy.

Every year, before our LWVBAE Annual Meeting (which will be May 24), we ask the members to discuss the issues on which they believe we should focus our time, talent, money, and reputation.

On February 7, as part of the League’s regular “Conversation” series, eighteen members of LWVBAE came together to participate in this year’s program planning session, for both levels of League.

The group decided that our current local LWVBAE positions and areas of emphasis should remain the same and be pursued in the 2012-13 program year. Our local positions may be read any time in the PDF file on our website, <http://lwvbae.org/position.pdf>. You may also get the position file by going to our homepage <http://lwvbae.org/> clicking on About LWV in the blue bar just beneath the masthead, then clicking on Local Positions in the red bar.

As for the national (LWVUS) positions, the group spent considerable time discussing the existing League position on Natural Resources, and especially the section on Environmental Protection and Pollution Control. The consensus of the group, reported to and adopted by the LWVBAE Board for sending on to LWVUS, was to propose descriptive word tweaking rather than anything necessitating a study or overhaul. For instance, under Land Use, to define “life” as “human, plant and animal”, and to add “habitat protection” to reasons for land acquisition. Also, use of the word “biodiversity” rather than “diversity”, in one of the bullet points under Water Resources. There will be a caucus at National Convention, where our suggestions will be made more clear.

National positions can be found at <http://lwv.org/content/public-policy-positions>.

As for areas of emphasis, we wished for the LWVUS to stress Climate Change, Health Care for All, and Representative Government. The “Fight ALEC” movement within the national League was seen as the place where we can be most effective. (ALEC is the acronym for the “American Legislative Exchange Council”, which the LWVUS identifies as a “factory for anti-voter legislation”. See <http://www.lwv.org/blog/meet-alec> for more information on the odious “ALEC”.

Thanks to all of you who participated in this annual exercise in League democracy.

Sherry Smith, President

Seven Billion and Growing: Population and Global Climate Change; the Big Taboo

Environmental Concerns February 13 meeting was on population with guest speaker Searle Whitney, founder of the Institute for Population Studies located in North Berkeley.

IPS’s mission is “to help solve environmental and social problems by including population size in discussions of those problems... and (to) empower people to determine, reach and maintain the best population size for their regions and the planet.”

The Institute forwards that by choosing now how many people our regions (and the Earth) should best support, we can choose our own future. If we continue to avoid the question, we’ll be pushed by biological and economic forces into a future that could be pretty dismal.

World human population growth of the last century is astounding. It required only 40 years after 1950 for the population to double from 2.5 billion to 5 billion. This doubling time is less than the average human lifetime. The world population passed 6 billion just before the end of the 20th century. Present estimates are for the population to reach 8-12 billion before the end of the 21st century. In U.N. projections, world population peaks at 9.22 billion in 2075.

According to IPS, amid this unstable growth scenario, more than one billion human beings do not have enough food and safe drinking water; global warming is disrupting our ecosystems and threatening billions of people with displacement and conflict; energy resources are becoming scarce and expensive; and in the U.S. sprawl destroys 2.2 million acres of forest habitat, ranchland and farmland every year.

This growth profoundly affects our environment, the pressure on natural resources, and the capacity of many nations to achieve sustainable socioeconomic development. The problem that we face is how to stimulate economic development to meet rapidly expanding human needs while ensuring that we do not destroy the natural resources and environment on which all life ultimately depends.

As part of the presentation Whitney showed a preview of the film, *Mother: Caring for 7 Billion* (www.motherthe-film.com), which sheds light on the controversial population issue by connecting the dots between population growth and humanity's most pressing social and environmental problems.

IPS and its website HowMany.org works to raise public awareness by exploring the links between population growth and environmental stories such as global warming, suburban sprawl, water rights, species extinction, and energy consumption; channeling funding toward education and research about population and the environment; and encouraging and facilitating popular discussion of how population and the environment interact.

"Those U.N. median population projections are not inevitable," Whitney said. "We are the major agent of change." Whitney emphasized that women are at the center of the population issue and until women speak up the paradigm won't change. "Population is enslaving," he concluded. "It's really a social justice issue."

IPS founder Searle Whitney graduated cum laude from Yale University and holds a Ph.D. from Harvard University in psychology / linguistics. He has lifelong interests in the environment and social justice.

For more information go online to HowMany.org or call 510-848-9062.

Gail Schickele and Carol Stone
Directors, Natural Resources

Mark Your Calendars

May 24, for Annual Meeting

Cynthia Cornejo, Deputy Registrar of Voters for Alameda County, will be the guest speaker at the League's Annual Meeting on May 24. She will address questions we all have about how the rules have changed for elections in 2012.

Save this date, time, and place, and bring your friends:

Thursday, May 24, 5:30-8:30

Northbrae Community Church

Details will be included in the May-June issue of the *Voter*.

Scrip

Andronico's is still offering the opportunity to buy and use their Scrip.

The League receives 6% of the amount we spend to purchase Scrip. If you are interested in participating in this program please contact Ruthann Taylor at 527-0673 or clydetaylor@att.net.

Vote With the League on June Election Ballot Measures

LWV California supports Proposition 28, the Legislative Term Limits Reform Act. This simple reform will help make our legislature more accountable and effective.

The current limits on how many terms an individual can serve in the legislature would be replaced by a twelve-year limit on the total number of years one could serve—whether in the Assembly, the Senate, or a combination of the two. Prop 28 would focus legislators more on serving their districts to get reelected rather than on lining up support from special interests to jump from office to office. It would enhance legislators' ability to develop expertise and get things done.

LWVC has taken a neutral position on Proposition 29, the California Cancer Research Act. This measure would add a one-dollar per pack tax on cigarettes sold in California, with proceeds to be used for cancer and other smoking-related health issues, anti-smoking campaigns, and law enforcement.

While the League supports the causes underwritten by this measure, we believe that earmarking state revenue for specific expenses reduces the flexibility needed by the legislature in setting budgets to respond to current needs. If funds are earmarked for specific expenses, we strongly prefer that this be accompanied by a sunset clause, requiring review of the expenditures on a regular basis.

LWV Bay Area Convention

Saturday, May 5, 10 am to 12 noon

Speaker: Will Travis, currently Sr. Policy Advisor to the Joint Policy Committee, formerly Bay Conservation and Development Commission director, on *Status of Regional Planning in the Bay Area*
Location - Lafayette Public Library.

All League members are invited to attend.

Join in Celebrating Voting Women & Elected Women on April 18

The final event in Berkeley's celebration of 100 years of women voting in California will be celebrated on Wednesday afternoon, April 18. It will include the showing of a film about suffrage, two panel discussions and a reception in the atrium and auditorium of Berkeley City College at 2050 Center Street, Berkeley.

The tentative schedule of events starts with the showing of "California Women Win the Vote," a new suffrage film by Martha Wheelock, during the college lunch break from

12:15-1:15 The filmmaker has been invited to introduce the film and answer questions.

At 1:30 Berkeley Community College President Betty Inclan will introduce the two panel sessions—the first will focus on how to increase voter registration and participation of young people and other under-represented groups, the second about the experiences of elected women both past and present.

From 1:45-3:30 "Occupy the Voting Booth," the first panel discussion will feature practioners and experts educating and increasing voter registration among young people and other groups. Panelists will include, Jenny Waggoner, President of the League of Women Voters of California, and a representative from the American Association of University Women; both have programs and collaborations to reach out to young people and others. The AAUW program, "It's my vote and my voice will be heard" includes training and a campaign. It is specifically designed to increase registration and voting by younger women between 18 and 25. The LWVUS is promoting its High School Voter Registration Project, in which LWVBAE is participating in addition to partnering with youth voting organization. In addition it is lobbying and supporting lawsuits to stop barriers to voting and encourage enforcement of voting rights laws.

Other panel members may include members of BCC's own Civic Engagement Club students on their April and May campaign to register students and young people to vote. Their campaign will use as its "hook" the June election parcel tax proposal that would increase funding for community colleges.

From 3:45-5:15 Elected Women: Getting Elected/ Doing the Job will feature women who are currently serving in elected office from or in Berkeley and women who have served in the past.

From 5:15 to 6 pm a reception will honor all Berkeley Elected Women past and present. Light refreshments

will be served. The entire program will be free and current and past elected women and all members of the public are warmly invited to attend.

Initial organizers and cosponsors of the group include Berkeley Mayor Tom Bates, Councilmembers Linda Maio and Susan Wengraf, Assembly Member Nancy Skinner and State Senator Loni Hancock and their staff members. At Berkeley Community College Political Science Professor Matthew Freeman and President Betty Inclan are working with Phyllis Gale, chair of the Berkeley Women Vote Centennial Celebration Committee, which is made up of Berkeley Historical Society, AAUW, LWVBAE, and Friends Of the Berkeley Public Library is joined by committee colleagues Nancy Bickel, Sarah Miyazaki and John Aronovici.

Final plans will be announced at lwvbae.org and via emails to League members.

Nancy Bickel

Help Insure That All Wanting To Register For The June Primary Can

Bill Chapman (527-0827, bill@classroomtools.com) and Nancy Bickel (526-4055, nkbickel@lmi.net) are in the process of reconstructing the network that we use to fill registration boxes in local libraries, post offices, schools, etc. If you would like to volunteer a bit of time each week or two to make sure that forms are available in one of these locations (or more if you are so inclined), please contact Bill or Nancy to find out more. The job is relatively simple. You'll be assigned a location, and will be asked to check it once a week (by phone or in person) to see that registration forms are available. If they aren't, you'll make a visit to fill the empty (or low) registration form box. After each visit or call, you'll fill out a simple form on our League web site with your name, registration box location, date of call or visit, and the serial number range for any forms you left. This information will be reported to the Registrar of Voters office so that it knows what has happened to the forms it has entrusted us to distribute. At the moment, we are asking you to commit only through the **primary election registration deadline, May 21, 2012**. If you find that you like volunteering your time in this way, we will be happy to have you extend your commitment through the general election in the fall, and beyond if you so desire. Thanks for considering our request.

Bill Chapman, Treasurer

Join Our Facebook Group

If you have a Facebook account, you can join our Facebook group. To do so use your browser to go to <http://www.facebook.com/groups/115967005108404/> Once there, click the Like button. That will send me a message notifying me that you'd like to join the group. I will then approve your membership, and Facebook will indicate when new posts have been made to the group.

Had you opened our page on the afternoon of February 29, 2012, you'd have seen something like what appears in the image below (although it would have appeared in color). On the actual page, you could have scrolled down to find even more entries. Most include links on which you can click to read more.

I hope to have the pleasure of approving your membership in the group soon.

Bill Chapman

Webmaster

The screenshot shows the Facebook group page for the 'League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany & Emeryville'. The page has a cover photo with the text 'Occupy the Voting Booth' and 'REGISTER - INFORM YOURSELF - VOTE'. The group has 19 members, 14 photos, and a 'Docs' tab. The main content area shows a post by Bill Chapman from Elizabeth Leslie Gassaway, LWVC, titled 'California's Political Geography (PPIC Publication)'. The post includes a map of California and text about the state's political geography. Below the post, it shows that Helen Hutchison likes it and a comment box. On the right sidebar, there are sections for 'Requests (1)' (Danica Robinson), 'Group Info' (1 new member this week), and 'Who else should be in this group?'. At the bottom, there is a 'Sponsored' section for 'MindMaple Software'.

Occupy the Voting Booth

REGISTER - INFORM YOURSELF - VOTE

League of Women Voters of Berkeley, Albany & Emeryville 19 Members Events 14 Photos Docs

Open Group Search this group Notifications

Write Post Add Photo / Video Ask Question

Write something...

Bill Chapman
From Elizabeth Leslie Gassaway, LWVC

California's Political Geography (PPIC Publication)
www.ppic.org

California has a well-earned reputation as a strongly Democratic state. But it has important, sometimes unexpected, geographic variation in ideology and opinions on specific issues. There are many places where conservative and Republican candidates might win elections in California including places ...

Like · Comment · Unfollow Post · Share · 13 minutes ago

Helen Hutchison likes this.

Write a comment...

Requests (1) See All

Danica Robinson

Group Info See All

1 new member this week

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, nonprofit, grass roots organization, that acts on selected governmental issues. It promotes political responsibility through informed and active participation in government. Membership is open to men and women, 18 years old and over.

Who else should be in this group?

+ Add Friends to Group

Sponsored See All

MindMaple Software
mindmaple.com

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League of Women Voters

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<http://lwvbae.org>.

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.



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Calendar — Berkeley addresses unless otherwise noted

March

24	Sat	9:30 am-noon	Privatization Consensus Meeting Cesar Chavez Public Library 3301 East 12th Street, Oakland	H. Lecar	549-9719
28	Wed	2:00 - 5:00 pm	Board Meeting, LWVBAE Office 2530 San Pablo Ave	S. Smith	548-1769

April

3	Tue	noon-2:00 pm	Conversation: Environmental Discussion Albany Library 1247 Marin Ave, Albany	C. Stone	549-0959
6	Fri	5:00 pm	<i>Voter</i> deadline	F. Packard	845-3037
9	Mon	7:30-9:00 pm	Environmental Concerns 1174 Euclid Ave	C.Stone	549-0959
12	Wed	11:00 am - noon	Membership Committee	P. Day	841-8243
16	Mon	1:30-3:00 pm	Health Care Committee, LWVBAE Office, 2530 San Pablo Ave	L. Wang	848-5765
18	W	12:15 - 6:00 pm	Celebrating Voting & Elected Women Berkeley Community College	N. Bickel	526-4055
23	Wed	3:00-5:00 pm	Board Meeting, LWVBAE Office 2530 San Pablo Ave	S. Smith	548-1769

May

5	Sat	10:00 am - noon	LWV Bay Area Convention	J. Safir	524-9088
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Save the date! Thursday, May 24, Annual Meeting