



President: Nancy Bickel

May-June 2003

Editor: Jean Safir

CALL TO ANNUAL MEETING

Monday, May 19, 2003 – 4:30 p.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda, Berkeley

Speaker Subject: THE FUTURE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

The bypassing of the United Nations Security Council by the United States government, in its decision to go to war in Iraq, has put a strain on US relations with the United Nations and a number of its traditional allies. This raises a number of questions for the future of the UN.

- What will happen to the concept of the UN as a peacekeeping organization?
- What will the role of the United Nations be in the rebuilding of Iraq? Will the US be able to restore its relationships with its allies within the UN?
- Will the United Nations continue to be of assistance in the rebuilding of other war-torn and underdeveloped countries in the Middle East and Africa?
- Will the US pay its dues to the United Nations? Will the US support UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other international organizations, which have specific functions in the international arena?

In This Issue

- p. 2 Welcome New Members
Board Briefs
Donations in March
- p. 3 I Joined the League Because ...
Education Committee
Speaker Series
- p. 4 Community College Study Update
- p. 5 County Budget Crisis
Interview with Gordon Wozniak
- p. 6 LWVC Supports Budget Initiative
Free Air-Time for Candidates
- p. 7 Letter from LWVUS President
Wanted: Dine-Around Hosts
- p. 8 Calendar

RITA MARAN, Ph.D., human rights specialist and scholar, will speak on the future role of the United Nations as a peacekeeping organization. Dr. Maran is a Lecturer in International Human Rights at the University of California at Berkeley. A Fulbright scholar in Indonesia in 2000, Dr. Maran taught International Human Rights Law at the University of Indonesia in Jakarta. She worked as a human rights analyst and as an election supervisor for the State Department and the OSCE in Bosnia and in Kosovo. In

(Continued on Page 2)

(ANNUAL MEETING: Continued from page 1)

1997 she lived in Sarajevo, where she worked with wartime victims of the three major ethnicities. As an associate of The Fund for Peace, she directs a Human Rights Education Project supported by UNESCO. Dr. Maran represents human rights NGOs at United Nations world conferences. She is the author of *Torture: The Role of Ideology in the French Algerian War*, and writes on the U.N., women's human rights, universality of rights and state sovereignty.

The **Annual Meeting will begin at 5 p.m.** with the business meeting. This will be the opportunity for members to vote on Board recommendations for the proposed program for the coming year, changes in the bylaws and election of new officers and board members.

The business meeting will be followed by a **buffet dinner at 5:45 p.m.** **Dr. Maran's speech will be at 7 p.m.**

The buffet dinner will once again catered by Shai's Delicatessen. The cost for dinner is \$15 and the **registration deadline is May 12.** Please send checks to the League office, or call and let us know that you will pay at the door. Members may bring their own dinners if they prefer.

We invite you to let us know if you would like a ride; we will be delighted to arrange one.

- *Eloise Bodine*, Program Vice President

<p>WELCOME NEW MEMBERS</p>

<p>Mark Coplan Diane McNenny</p>
--

- BOARD BRIEFS -

At its April 2 meeting, the Board

- planned to observe selected Berkeley boards & commissions in April;
- evaluated the duties of the office manager;
- appointed delegates to LWVC Convention;
- worked on plans for Annual Meeting;
- voted to recommend the same local Issues for Emphasis as last year: Housing and Elections;
- concurred with LWVC in support of the Chan bill to allow voter registration to and on Election Day;
- approved sending a letter to Alameda County Board of Education suggesting how they might increase their visibility;
- approved sending a letter to Berkeley Board of Education requesting a report on students' educational progress;
- approved appointment of Marion Luten to review LWVBAE's financial books;
- discussed reports from LWVBAE committees.

-*Ginette Polak*, Secretary

DONATIONS in March 2003**to the General Fund**

Virginia Blacklidge
Irene Hegarty

Kitty McLean
Doris White

to the Tribute Fund

*Diana Alves*¹
*Barbara Dales*¹

*Helene Lecar*²
*Evelyn Light*¹
Ruthann & Clyde Taylor^{1 & 2}

1 In memory of *Sally Severance*

2 In memory of *Dan Luten*

- *Evelyn Light*

I Joined the League Because...

So there I was one morning last spring, sitting in my window seat, sipping my coffee, reading the paper, and thinking about what the country would be like if all the citizens actually participated in their government. It occurred to me that, if our public schools taught all students from kindergarten through high school how the government works at all levels, how to participate, how to hold elected officials accountable, then we, the people, could really control our government.

Such a profound change to the school curriculum would be a big job! But I've finally realized (after September 11) that democracy is not a spectator sport, so, I wondered, where to start??? Later that same morning, a family friend dropped by for a visit. It was Terry Doran, a retired teacher, who is on the Berkeley School Board. After the family news catch-up, I hit him with my "You know what the schools should be doing" and he said, "You should join the League of Women Voters; that's what they've been trying to do for years and they have lots of experience."

That afternoon I walked over to the LWVBAE office and signed up. *Marj Rubinow* was on the desk and gave me a warm welcome and a copy of the *VOTER*, and suggested that I join the Education Committee. I did. I also started attending the Action Committee, the Speaker Series, and the Board of Directors so that I could meet members quickly and get active fast. I wanted to "catch up" from too many years of inactivity.

The League has turned out to be what I had hoped for and more. Not only are there many dedicated, experienced members (with ever-present senses of humor), but the LWV uses a grass roots consensus-building process to decide on policy, and we research issues before we decide if, or what, to advocate. These two characteristics were the missing pieces of my citizenship curriculum. Active citizens in a

democracy need the tools of research and dialogue so that they can see through campaign propaganda and seek the common good.

Anyone who would like to share ideas about teaching and about stimulating participatory democracy, please call me at 548-5292, or e-mail me at jinkybsg@earthlink.net.

Would anyone else like to share their "I joined the League because..." story? If so, please send it to *Jean Safir*, *VOTER* editor.

- *Jinky Gardner*, Education Action Chair

EDUCATION COMMITTEE

will meet in May and June at LWVBAE Office
Dates and Times to be Announced

SPEAKER SERIES

Thursday, May 8, 12 noon to 2 pm
Albany Public Library, Edith Stone Room
1247 Marin Avenue, at Masonic

The "Rebuilding Together Program" — formerly known as "Xmas in April" — will be the topic of the next Speaker Series meeting on May 8. The speaker will be Rachel Trachtem, Development Director, and Esete Menkir, Program Director. They will tell us about how this national organization began, when the local chapter started and how the program operates.

The meeting will be held in the Edith Stone Room, which is located at the rear of the library next to the parking lot. Bring a bag lunch if you like; juice will be provided.

This will be the last Speaker Series meeting for this program year. The committee will meet on Monday, June 9, at 10:30 a.m. at the League office to start planning next year's program. We would welcome any suggestions from the membership regarding possible topics and speakers. Suggestions can be sent to the League office, or by contacting a member of the committee, or by attending our meeting in June.

- *Barbara Nelson*, committee member

COMMUNITY COLLEGE STUDY UPDATE

This spring, to relieve the \$34 billion deficit expected in the state budget, the Governor made major cuts in the community college system's budget. Even though there are only a few months left in this fiscal year, which ends June 30, he cut \$161 million from the CC's current 2002-03 budget, taking a bite from the CCs that was twice as big as those taken from other public education systems.

Peralta has had just 3 months to cut \$2 million out of a total annual budget of about \$85 million, but that's only the beginning. Reductions for 2003-4 are now pegged at \$530 million system-wide, with the deepest cuts into programs that support the neediest students. Here in Peralta, that translates into a further \$12.9 million reduction out of the same \$85 million base. Disabled students' programs are penciled for a 45% cut, stipends for the neediest students under the EOPS (Economic Opportunity Programs and Services) will be down 43%, at the same time that student fees are raised from \$11 a unit to \$24 a unit. None of the revenue generated by the increase will remain in district hands; it all flows back into the state General Fund.

Other support services and salaries will be hit equally hard. Money for part-time faculty health insurance will be cut 50%, their paid office hours also cut 50%. No cost of living increases will be offered to any employees. Partnership for Excellence money, about the only discretionary funds that districts get, will be reduced by 45%.

At the same time, expenses for certain essential items are rising rapidly: Peralta's contribution to the Retirement System for 03-04 will rise from 2.89% to 9.5%, an increase of some \$1.4 million. Medical benefits will rise 15-20%, and insurance will be going up by 10-20%.

All over the state, districts are eliminating class sections, raising the number of students per class, and reducing the number of part-time faculty.

At Vista this summer, only 10 classes will be offered, and of these only two can earn students transfer credits to a four-year college. Educators anticipate that the fee increase and the reductions in aid statewide will cut the number of students who can enroll by about 200,000 in just one year. Peralta's enrollment loss is estimated at the equivalent of 2,000 full-time students.

For Peralta, this barrage of bad news comes at an already difficult time. Ronald Temple, the former chancellor, left office on March 19. Before he left, he fired Chief Financial Officer Tom Smith. The Vice Chancellor for Information Technology had already resigned. The Board of Trustees, in response to the loss of leadership, has appointed former Oakland Mayor Elihu Harris as Interim Chancellor until a new Chancellor is found. Like all district boards they are having to make very difficult choices with few alternatives available.

In an effort to marshal community support, the District held a Budget Awareness Day on March 26, bringing business leaders and community members in to formulate strategies to raise support for the colleges. Vista's student government organized a major student rally to Sacramento on March 17, which attracted some 10,000 students from all over the state. Further action is planned as the debate over the 2003-2004 budget continues.

- *Helene Lecar*, LWVC Study chair

SUPERVISOR CARSON SPEAKS ON COUNTY BUDGET CRISIS

Keith Carson, our representative on the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, told League members at the April Speakers Series that the county faces a major budget crisis over the next several years. Local government is the main deliverer of services to local residents, but is dependent on national and state government for most of its funding. Prospects for receiving that money are not good, Carson said, at a time when the federal government is facing a deficit of unknown magnitude and the state is facing its own deficit of at least \$35 billion. Both of those are expected to grow for at least the next few years.

Counties, and to a somewhat lesser degree cities, are severely limited, since Proposition 13 and other laws, in their ability to raise local revenues. The state even takes a portion of local property taxes and redistributes it to local schools. Some of that loss has been made up by the state collecting the Vehicle License Fee (VLF) and distributing that to local government. However, when the state had a surplus, the VLF was reduced, but the difference was made up to local government by other state funds. With the state's own budget problem, there has not yet been the political support in Sacramento to either raise the VLF or provide other funds for local government.

Carson also expressed concern about a proposal by Governor Davis to "realign" some social services by giving counties authority to run them as they see fit, but removing direct state funding. Under his plan, funding would come from increased income, sales and tobacco taxes. Counties are wary of this, both because over time, caseloads are likely to rise more than the funding, and because it is unlikely that there would be the necessary two-thirds vote in the Legislature to actually raise those taxes. [See article page 6.]

- Anne Henderson, LWVC Gov't Affairs Dir.

INTERVIEW WITH GORDON WOZNIAK

In a March interview, new Berkeley City Council member Gordon Wozniak responded to our questions about housing and commissions. The approval process for new multi-family housing projects, he said, is too long and frustrating.

While commissions provide for important public participation, some overlap in scope. Commissioners need to realize that staff time is costly. Setting a budget for each commission according to a work plan might be a reality check. All commissions should have clear duties and clear agendas, so that the public can know when items of interest are being considered. Commissioners should not serve for more than eight years; nor should they serve on two commissions simultaneously that have conflicting responsibilities.

He noted that the cost of staff time needed to gain Council approval for grants is large. He would favor giving the City Manager blanket authority to approve grants well above the present \$25,000 level, perhaps setting the bar at \$50-75,000. He would like monthly budget balance sheets presented to Council and wants Council to develop criteria for judging programs.

He is concerned about worker's compensation claims and the city's lack of good data bases (with the exception of the City Clerk's office). He advocates having requests for department budget increases be accompanied by concrete plans to increase efficiency.

Wozniak wants to see housing provided by UC for university staff. UC is a motor for the regional economy, he said, but the city loses many of the consequent benefits by not having affordable housing for faculty and staff, who are thus forced to live and spend elsewhere. Berkeley gets the traffic, while other cities get the fiscal benefits. Students might live on the transit corridors, but he would like to see faculty nearer the university, perhaps in converted large homes.

- Lois Brubeck, Action Vice President

LWVC Supports Budget Initiative

The League of Women Voters of California is supporting an initiative designed to alleviate the legislative gridlock that has increasingly bogged down the state budget process.

The Budget Accountability Act, an initiative recently filed with the Attorney General, would require a 55% vote of the State Senate and Assembly to adopt a state budget and related tax legislation, rather than the two-thirds vote now needed. The League has long held positions calling for a majority vote on budget and finance issues. We supported the recent successful ballot measure that reduced the vote requirement on local school bond measures from two-thirds to 55%.

A two-thirds super majority requirement means that the vote of a legislator opposing a measure counts twice as much as that of one voting yes. This has allowed a small minority to tie up the budget process for long periods. Members of the majority, on the other hand, have been able to avoid compromise by pointing to the minority's ability to stall the process. The two-thirds requirement has most often been used to extract concessions for their own districts or for their special interests.

The Act also includes several other provisions that meet public demands for more accountability on the part of state government. These include withholding salary and expenses from the Governor and legislators if the budget is not passed and signed by the Constitutional deadline. The Act would require the legislature to stay in session and not act on other legislation until the budget is adopted, except in response to an emergency declared by the Governor. It also provides for a "rainy day" reserve fund of 5% to be established in good years to cushion the state from severe cuts in a bad economy.

The state ballot pamphlet (Voter Information Guide) that goes to voters at each election would contain a brief summary of how the state spends the money it receives. In response to public dismay at news reports that legislators were openly threatened and punished by party leaders if they did not toe the party line on budget issues, the Act calls for such actions to

be the subject of investigation and possible censure by Legislative Ethics Committees.

The full text of the initiative is available in two parts at the Attorney General's Web site: http://caag.state.ca.us/initiatives/pdf/sa2003rf0004_a.pdf and http://caag.state.ca.us/initiatives/pdf/sa-2003rf0004_b.pdf

Free Air Time for Candidates

On April 3, a meeting was held at the Oakland Main Library to inform the public about the McCain-Feingold-Durban legislation before the U.S. Senate, otherwise known as the "free air time" bill. Cosponsored by the League, Common Cause, and the Greenlining Institute, the meeting brought us two excellent speakers, Paul Taylor and Meredith McGayhey, from Washington DC, to explain the details of the legislation and what it is intended to do.

The high cost of campaigning makes running for office unaffordable to everyone who isn't very wealthy themselves or able to amass a large "war chest" from supporters. Neither of these options gives us candidates who are likely to listen closely to their electorate.

The "free air time" bill would require that, as part of their public interest obligation, all radio and television broadcast stations must air at least 2 hours a week of candidate-centered or issue-centered programming for the 6 weeks preceding a primary or general federal election.

Half of these segments must air during prime time. The required programming would include debates, interviews, statements and formats that provide discussion, and would not include paid advertisements. The bill also provides a voucher system for candidates that can be used to pay stations for campaign advertising.

This bill should make the system more productive of useful information about the candidates and issues, less engrossed in name calling, and somewhat more available to third party candidates and candidates with more moderate finances.

Visit www.freeairtime.org for more detailed information about the bill, and to find out how you can support the measure.

- Jinky Gardner

February 3, 2003 Letter from LWVUS PRESIDENT TO MEMBERSHIP

At its meeting January 25 and 26, the LWVUS Board considered and acted on a wide range of topics of importance to our organization...

First, the Board set the League's legislative priorities for the new 108th Congress. And second, we discussed League action on the international situation relating to Iraq.

The Board adopted the following legislative priorities for 2003:

Top Priority and Core Issues:

- a. Campaign Finance Reform
- b. Election Reform

Action as Needed:

- a. Reproductive Choice
- b. Clean Air
- c. Oil Drilling in the Arctic Wildlands
- d. Title IX

In addition, the League will, when possible, take advantage of lobbying opportunities to achieve longer-term success on CEDAW (the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women), DC Voting Rights and Financial Issues, Health Care, and Global Warming....

On Iraq, the Board had a full and serious discussion, informed by the urgings of many Leagues that made suggestions on that topic. The Board agreed to reaffirm the statement made September 27 in a letter to President Bush that urged him to work with the UN in resolving the situation (copy attached). The Board agreed that Leagues should, if they wish, educate citizens through forums and/or letters-to-the-editor urging that the United States should act through the UN in developing, maintaining and protecting peace throughout the world. A copy of an additional statement that Leagues should use as a letter-to-the-editor or opinion piece is attached. Also included are excerpts from the LWVUS positions that apply to the situation with Iraq.

You will note that the League's statements on Iraq are positive statements supporting

international cooperation and urging that the U.S. work with the United Nations. I'm sure you understand that it is important that the League speak with one voice on this issue, as on all issues.

The Board will continue to monitor developments on our legislative issues and on Iraq to ensure that the League can respond appropriately throughout the year...

Sincerely,

Kay J. Maxwell, President, LWVUS

WANTED: DINE AROUND HOSTS for League of Women Voters of California Convention

Volunteers are needed to convene a group of 6-8 people attending the LWVC Convention for a no-host dinner at a local Oakland restaurant, **Friday evening, May 16, 2003.**

Conventioneers are invited to sign up to have a no-host dinner at one of 8-10 (or more) restaurants within walking distance or an easy bus or BART ride from the Oakland Marriott City Center at 11th and Broadway.

The DINE AROUND Committee has identified a large number of interesting, varied restaurants to offer for the event, but needs a designated League host for each place we list.

The hosts' responsibilities will include:

- gathering at 7 PM in the lobby of the Marriott with the people who have signed up to eat at "your" restaurant;
- going with the group to the restaurant where reservations will have been made for you;
- trouble shooting if necessary;
- dividing up the bill if the restaurant won't issue individual checks; and
- returning to the hotel with the group.

Contact DINE AROUND Committee Chair Bonnie Hamlin at (510) 658-6212 or by e-mail at bhamlin@igc.org if you would like to be a DINE AROUND host.

- Berkeley addresses unless otherwise indicated -

Printed On Recycled Paper
CALENDAR

MAY

- 7 Wed. 4-6p Board Meeting LWVBAE Office *Bickel, 526-4055*
- 8 Thurs. Noon Speaker Series: "Rebuilding Together" *B.Nelson, 644-1237*
Albany Library, Edith Stone Room, 1247 Marin Ave.
- 12 Mon. 7:30p Environmental Concerns 1340 Arch St.(*Bansner*) *C.Stone, 549-0959*
- 15-18 Thurs.-Sun. LWVC STATE CONVENTION -
Oakland Marriott City Center Hotel *Bickel, 526-4055*
- 19 Mon. 4:30-8p LWVBAE ANNUAL MEETING
Northbrae Community Church, 941 The Alameda *Bodine, 845-0974*
Speaker: Rita Maran, Ph.D., on THE FUTURE OF THE U.N.
- 22 Thurs. 7:30p Action Committee 1419 Grant (*Watts*) *Brubeck, 526-5139*
[Confirm with Lois]

JUNE

- 11 Wed. 4-8p "Transition" Board Meeting Place to be confirmed *Bickel, 526-4055*
- 13 Fri. Noon Deadline for Summer *VOTER jeansafir@att.net* *Safir, 524-9088*
- 16 Mon. LWVBAE Office Closed for the Summer *Taylor, 527-0673*
- 19 Thurs. 7:30p Action Committee 1419 Grant (*Watts*) *Brubeck, 526-5139*
[Confirm with Lois]



IT'S EASY TO JOIN THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

Just fill in the blanks below, clip and mail this information to us with your check for \$50 annual dues made out to:

LWVBAE
1414 University Avenue, Suite D
Berkeley, CA 94702-1509

Name: _____

Address: _____

Tel. Day: _____ Eve: _____

Fax: _____ E-Mail: _____

Joining the local level makes you a member at all levels: LWVBAE, Bay Area, State and National. Dues and contributions to the League are not tax deductible. Contributions to the LWVB Foundation are deductible to the extent allowed by law.

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS
of Berkeley, Albany and Emeryville
1414 University Ave., Suite D
Berkeley, CA 94702-1509

Non-Profit Org.
U.S. Postage
PAID
Berkeley, CA
Permit No. 29

