



# THE VOTER

September-October 2015

Read online at <http://www.lwvbae.org>

Volunteer Opportunities 4

CPUC New Rate Structures 5

## Money in Politics: Campaign Finance Limits vs Free Speech Rights

Fall Meeting Thurs. Oct. 8, at 5:15 pm  
Northbrae Community Church  
941 The Alameda, Berkeley

To kick off our Money in Politics national study this fall we'll show clips from a compelling new documentary **Pay to Play: Democracy's High Stakes**, introduced by its award-winning producer **Holly Mosher**. Holly's previous films on related subjects included *Money Talks: Profits Before Patient Safety* and *Free for All!* on election fraud.

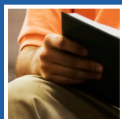
Two local non-partisan leaders against hidden campaign contributions, **Jay Costa**, Executive Director of **CounterPac**, and **Miriam Marks**, Data Director of **MapLight**, will illuminate some of the questions League members we'll be wrestling with in the new national study on campaign finance.

*continued, p. 4*

**Sign Up for Supper:** At 5:30 pm enjoy a tasty buffet supper prepared by our master chef Rainey Sykes. Register and pay for the supper on our website at [www.lwvbae.org/league-news/fall-meeting-oct-8-515-money-in-politics/](http://www.lwvbae.org/league-news/fall-meeting-oct-8-515-money-in-politics/). Paypal will accept your credit card payment for \$17. Or call the office at 510-843-8824, give us your name—be sure to mention that it's for the fall meeting—then pay \$17 by check at the door.



**Climate Team** p. 2  
*Putting a Price on Carbon*  
*"Solving the Climate Crisis:  
Carbon Pricing 101"*  
David Brower Center, Berkeley



**League Studies** pp. 3-4  
*Higher Education*  
*Money in Politics*



**Voter Services** p. 4  
Sept. 13 *Solano Stroll*  
Sept. 22 *LWVBAE Nat'l Voter  
Registration Day at BART*  
Oct. 18 *Berkeley Sunday Streets*

## Senator Loni Hancock

*"Working for Democracy: Reflections of an Activist"*  
League of Women Voters Community Luncheon  
Monday, September 21, 2015 11:15 - 1:30 pm  
Hs Lordships, 199 Seawall Drive, Berkeley Marina



**Senator Loni Hancock**, California State Senator, District 9, will speak on *Working for Democracy: Reflections of an Activist* at the League of Women Voters Community Luncheon, September 21, 2015 in Berkeley.

We're celebrating Senator Hancock for her accomplishments of nearly forty years of public service with our "Spirit of the League" award. The Senator has long championed campaign finance reform

health care reform, environmental protection, public education, and improvements to the state correction system. With colleague Senator Holly Mitchell she now tackles long-needed state tax reform to Proposition 13. The League joins Senator Hancock in supporting this "Make it Fair" campaign, just as we have worked with her on many campaigns during her seven years in the state Senate, six years in the Assembly, and as a Berkeley Mayor and Council Member.

Our community "Spirit of the League" award will be presented to **Berkeley READS**, an adult and family literacy program that is provided free by the Berkeley Public Library to help people improve reading skills.

The Community Luncheon is the League's annual fundraising event. Doors open at 11:00, the program begins at 12:00 and ends at 1:30. Books Inc. will sell books relevant to Sen. Hancock's topic and other books of interest.

**Mark your calendars and invite your friends!**

Questions? Please call the LWVBAE office at 510-843-8824 or email us at [luncheon@lwvbae.org](mailto:luncheon@lwvbae.org).

- Angharad Jones, chair, Luncheon Committee

Community Luncheon tickets are \$80 each. They may be purchased with a credit card at [www.lwvbae.org/2015-annual-luncheon/](http://www.lwvbae.org/2015-annual-luncheon/) or by mailing a check with the registration form that can be downloaded from the link above to LWVBAE, 2530 San Pablo Avenue, Suite F, Berkeley, CA 94702. Sept. 14 is the deadline for reservations to reach us.

### Welcome New Members:

Carol Brownstein  
John Caner  
David Lieberman

#### Deaths:

Ruth Hinkins

- Mina Jenner, Membership Committee

#### Donations:

Judith Bloom  
George Crowe  
Ann-Marie Hogan  
Yvonne Koshland  
Helene Lecar  
Catherine Lynch  
Ruby MacDonald  
Hillary Reinis  
Jean Safir

Many thanks to our Donors,  
- Elizabeth Russell, Donations Secretary

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



### Climate Change Team in Action – Join Us

Our League will co-sponsor a forum, **Putting a Price on Carbon**, with the Citizens' Climate Lobby, Ecology Center and Berkeley Climate Action Coalition. The forum, **"Solving the Climate Crisis: Carbon Pricing 101"** will be held Monday, November 2, 7:00–9:00 pm at the David Brower Center in downtown Berkeley. Learn more about revenue and spending options at Diz Swift's website **PriceonCarbon.org**, which has been endorsed by the LWVUS Advocacy Committee.

For several years, Carol Stone has been our League representative in the Community Choice Energy Working Group of the Berkeley Climate Action Coalition. Their efforts and others have led to Alameda County's feasibility study for a possible county Community Choice Energy Program with \$1.3 million allocated for this project. After LWVBAE Board approval, President Nancy Bickel brought this to the Alameda County Council, which consists of six local leagues, to get their support. They have approved in concept.

Committee members are working hard to help pass SB32 (California Global Warming Solutions Act: emissions limits equivalent to 40% below 1990 levels by 2030 and 80% below 1990 levels by 2050) and SB350 (Clean Energy and Pollution Reduction Act of 2015). At the LWVC State Convention in San Diego in May we held a successful caucus on these two bills to get Leagues mobilized. In Berkeley, committee members met with Mayor Tom Bates to discuss greenhouse gas reductions and how we can help pass these bills. During session recess is a good time to lobby legislators. Janice Blumenkrantz, Cynthia Lloyd, Bob MacDonald and Ruby MacDonald are working with Bay Area League President Linda Craig and state League representatives Trudy Schafer and Joanne Levitt to move the bills forward. State League has asked Leagues represented by swing assembly members to lobby their representatives using a sample letter and talking points. The Climate Team has written a sample letter. Ruby prepared a contact list of Leagues with critical votes. Tools are in place for when the State League moves forward with a Call to Action. Both SB32 and SB350 have passed the Senate. The vote in the Assembly will likely be in September.

Carol Stone helped organize a pop-up caucus on "Crude Oil by Rail" at the League State Convention, an issue of state- and nationwide concern. Slides and information originally presented at an Environmental Concerns meeting last year by Leslie Stewart (Diablo League) were used at the caucus. We plan to write a "letter of concern" to the state League about this issue, quoting positions of relevance regarding hazardous materials. This could then be forwarded to the national League.

We're looking ahead to plan climate caucuses at the League National Convention in Washington, D.C. June 2016. LWVUS President Elizabeth MacNamara has requested having one caucus focus on how to pose climate questions to candidates. Our Team will brainstorm on possible questions. Please join us with your input.

- Regina Beatus, chair, Climate Change Team

### DIRECTOR OF UC LAW'S AWARD-WINNING SEXUAL VIOLENCE PROGRAM: KIM THUY SEELINGER AT ANNUAL MEETING



Kim Thuy Seelinger, Director of the Sexual Violence Program of UC Berkeley Law School's Human Rights Center, spoke on *"Conflict Zones and Living Rooms: Accountability for Sexual Violence"* at our May Annual Meeting. The program won a one-million dollar 2015 MacArthur Foundation Award for Creative and Effective Institutions.

Ms. Seelinger presented an overview of the work of the program at sites around the globe. The program provides technical assistance in countries, encouraging knowledge exchange, and spreading the lessons learned among them.

She offered illustrations of cooperative work with the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. Sexual violence in war zones doesn't stop when people go to refugee camps. The camps are not safe havens. The Human Rights Center works with programs for survivor care and assistance, which guide victims from health care to police to legal aid. One of the most important and long-lasting aspects is community outreach and education. Sexual Violence programs work in countries with antiquated rape laws, where child soldiers inflict and suffer psychological injuries and the socio-economic status of women is low.

"The MacArthur award was very nice, as a vote of confidence in our program," commented Ms. Seelinger. "But the real reward comes from seeing the impact of one's work in diverse ways—so we are constantly striving to keep our work practical."

- Sherry Smith, Program Coordinator 2014-15

## ACCESS TO & FUNDING OF CA HIGHER EDUCATION: JOIN THE NEW STUDY

Interested in the problems in public higher education here in California? Want to help find some solutions? Work on the state study of higher education now through the



Carol Thomas

winter. Committee members will help shape state League higher education policy. LWVBAE is coordinating efforts with the Oakland, Piedmont and Alameda Leagues, but all local Alameda County Leagues may send a representative. Leslie Smith, LWV Oakland, will chair the group. Meetings are scheduled for 10 am on the third Saturday of each month at the LWVBAE office, 2530 San Pablo Ave., Berkeley, September 19, October 17, November 21, and, if needed, December 19, 2015

For information about the issues, please see the packets posted on <http://lwvc.org/study/education-0>

The Committee will distill the facts and issues and present them to our members at meetings next spring. We'll help members reach agreement [consensus in League lingo] on policies for a new state League higher education position. The state League will then be able to advocate for or against key legislation on public higher education.

I'm chairing our League's study group. I'm looking for some folks to join me in exploring these issues in higher education: access, affordability, preparedness, equity, and funding.

Interested? Please send me an email at [carolthomas@lwvbae.org](mailto:carolthomas@lwvbae.org)

- Carol Thomas, chair, Higher Education Study for LWVBAE

*According to California Competes, a council of independent business and civic leaders, an effective higher education system is the cornerstone of the American value to guarantee access to economic opportunity.*



*The California Master Plan for Higher Education, a framework document conceived in 1959, coordinates the responsibilities of the UC, CSU, and community college systems. However, since 1959, the plan has seen a decline in state funding, changing demographics, and a complete technology revolution.*

## GOOD NEWS!

### Economic Inequality Team Report 2014-15

Minimum/Living Wage is a LWVC Priority for Education & Action for 2015-17



*Pat Kuhi is largely responsible for organizing the campaign of Leagues across the country that prompted the LWVUS Board to change its application of the Meeting Human Needs policy position as described below. Pat and the Team support Leagues across the country in their local efforts by posting useful materials on our webpage <http://www.lwvbae.org>. - Nancy Bickel*

At its 2014-15 meetings, the Team: 1) studied all aspects of the problem and looked for gaps in LWVUS positions that prevent the League from addressing the whole scope of economic inequality and 2) searched the news media for articles on the topic to put on our webpage for League members and the public.

The Team initially supported efforts for a state Study on Raising the Minimum Wage/Support for a Living Wage, but the successful effort of LWVBAE and many Leagues at the LWVUS Convention in 2014 prompted the national Board to announce in 2015 that local and state Leagues may use the "Meeting Human Needs" position to lobby for raising minimum wages and living wages at local and state levels. A state study was no longer necessary. [[Details on Meeting Human Needs Team Page.](#)]

We developed a list of causes of the current economic inequality and began to describe various aspects of the problem, such as: the shrinking of the middle class; homelessness; housing; education; and legislative gambits by supporters of the top 1% to protect their financial interests.

All members of the Team were required to read at least one of the following: Robert Reich, **Aftershock, the Next Economy and America's Future**, 2013; Thomas Piketty, **Capital in the Twenty-First Century**, 2014; Elizabeth Warren, **A Fighting Chance**, 2014; or Joseph Stiglitz, **The Price of Inequality: How Today's Divided Society Endangers our Future**, 2012. Several members attended a Forum on Income Inequality organized by the Eden Area League. Helene Lecar's comprehensive report of the Forum will post on the webpage.

- Pat Kuhi, chair  
Economic Inequality Discussion Team  
[pat@kuhi.net](mailto:pat@kuhi.net)





## IS MONEY = FREE SPEECH? TWO LWVUS STUDIES COME TO BAE; JOIN THE TEAM!

- Is money=free speech?
- Does it require a constitutional amendment to reverse the impact of the SCOTUS "Citizens United" decision?

At 2014 LWVUS Convention, the national board and delegates looked at these questions. LWVUS positions on money in politics didn't adequately address these issues so update studies were approved. If you want to understand these questions and find possible answers, please join the study committee.

**You can do so by contacting [president@lwvbae.org](mailto:president@lwvbae.org).**

The first planning meeting for the local LWV Oakland study committee was Aug 1. It was a working meeting focused on defining steps and dividing up tasks. Katherine Gavzy at [Kathgav@comcast.net](mailto:Kathgav@comcast.net) is organizing the Oakland League study, which will be a joint league study.

Materials for the studies provided by the national League <http://forum.lwv.org/member-resources/article/national-study-structures-democracy-webinar> and <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>

The Constitutional Amendment Sub-committee, headed by Helen Hutchinson will study the process of amending the U.S. Constitution. Material on this part of the LWVUS study on the structures of Democracy and the consensus questions are available on our website and the study guide is coming soon. <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/constitutional-amendment-study>

- Deborah Malbec, LWVBAE Communications Team

## Fall Meeting: Campaign Finance from p. 1



As CounterPac.org website reports, Jay Costa has a deep background working for transparency and reform surrounding money in politics. Former Program Director at MapLight, he led the organization's web and data projects, and as National Coordinator for Rootstrikers, an activist organization created by Harvard Law School professor Lawrence Lessig and political activist Joe Trippi. CounterPac tackles the problem of dark money and independent campaign committees by persuading candidates to reject their support through specific actions and pledges.



Leading MapLight's data projects, Miriam Marks helps MapLight fulfill its mission to throw "light on money and politics." MapLight gathers detailed data from public and reliable sources so that researchers—and voters—can easily find out where candidates get their big contributions and which lobbying groups, individuals and corporations are funding candidates and campaigns. MapLight and the California League have partnered to combine SmartVoter.org's broad and reliable information about candidates and campaigns and MapLight's rich information about campaign funding sources in a single website Voter's Edge.org.

*The panel presentation at 6:30 is free and open to the public. Audience members will have time for discussion and questions before the end of the meeting at about 7:30.*

## Volunteer Today for Our Community Outreach and Voter Registration Events

It's street festival time again. LWVBAE will be on the ground for the Solano Stroll and Berkeley Sunday Streets. Expanding beyond traditional voter registration to let people know the great action the League is doing, our Teams will bring handouts on our Action issues, Program events and Studies and membership brochures to publicize our work and plans, attract new members and register voters.



**To step up our game, we need Volunteers to cover Action, Program and Voter Registraton:**

**September 13, 10 am - 6 pm Solano Stroll:** We need 3-4 volunteers for each 2-hour shift for this community outreach event -- about 20 individual volunteers. The setup shift starts at 8 am; our booth must open before 10 am when the parade starts. (Phyllis Gale, Event Leader - [voterservices@lwvbae.org](mailto:voterservices@lwvbae.org))

**October 18, 11 am - 5 pm; Berkeley Sunday Streets:**

We need 3-4 volunteers for each 2-hour shift -- about 24 volunteers. The setup shift starts at 10 am; we open at 11 am. (Ruby MacDonald, Event Leader - [Ruby@lwvbae.org](mailto:Ruby@lwvbae.org))

**Sign up online** at on the Voter Services Team Page at [lwvbae.org/voter-services-team](http://lwvbae.org/voter-services-team). Problems signing up? Email Event Leaders Phyllis or Ruby and we will help you!

## LWVBAE National Voter Registration Day at BART

**September 22, 2015 4 – 7 pm**

We're doing something exciting and different this year. We've requested BART "expressive activity" permits to put voter registration tables in the designated public areas at the Ashby, Downtown and North Berkeley BART Stations. Promptly at 4:00 pm we will be ready for the evening commuters.

Some sister Leagues in Alameda County also will be signing up with BART so that many Alameda County BART Stations will register voters on Sept 22. Registrar of Voters Community Outreach staff will join us.

Help us welcome rush hour potential voters from 4 to 7 pm. We need 12 volunteers to cover the 4-hour shift and three leaders to supervise at the stations.

(Deborah Malbec, Event Leader - [media@lwvbae.org](mailto:media@lwvbae.org))



**Sign up online** at on the Voter Services Team Page at [lwvbae.org/voter-services-team](http://lwvbae.org/voter-services-team). Or Email Event Leader Deborah or another of the leaders and we'll help you!



## LWVBAE Natural Resources: Environmental Concerns Speaker Series

**Tuesday, September 15** a speaker from the California Natural Resources Agency kicks off our Speaker Series with a report on the **California Climate Change Symposium** co-hosted in Sacramento with CalEPA and the Nobel Prize-winning Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) August 24-25. The Symposium featured cutting-edge climate research of keen interest to California policymakers and the public, including presentations on climate change and current drought; potential impact of prolonged drought on state agriculture; sea-level rise and storm surge in San Francisco Bay and the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta; and measurement of carbon emissions from major cities.

**The Fall Series talks also will include** speakers from UC Berkeley on California agriculture and the drought, and an expert from the EPA Pollution Prevention Waste Division who works on cutting-edge food waste prevention, reduction and recycling issues including local efforts to produce renewable energy from food waste.

*Except for our first talk, rescheduled to Tuesday because of Rosh Hashanah, talks are on the*

**SECOND MONDAY OF THE MONTH SEPTEMBER through MAY 7:30 to 9 pm**

**1174 Euclid Avenue (at Crystal Way, just north of Eunice)**

Contacts: Carol Stone at 510-549-0959 or [seastone11@hotmail.com](mailto:seastone11@hotmail.com)  
or Gail Schickele at 415-922-6627 or [gail.schickele@gmail.com](mailto:gail.schickele@gmail.com)

## California Public Utilities Commission Sets New Electric Power Rate Structures

On July 3, the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) voted to change the electricity rate structure of utilities, such as PG&E, for the first time in 15 years. Approved was a partial compromise between elements of a proposal by Commissioner Michael Florio and some items that were favored by the other four commissioners, including President Michael Picker.

Changes in the Public Utilities code had been mandated by AB 327 (2013), which required the CPUC to eliminate the steep 4-tiered rate structure in which the rate for the highest usage was about three times as expensive as that of the lowest usage. That rate structure was created in 2000-2001 to reduce the incidence of blackouts and encourage conservation. With time, however, many in the lowest tier were paying less than cost, while those in the high tiers were paying much more. This structure had the environmentally beneficial effect of making it attractive for high users to install their own solar panels if they could afford them. However, it had the negative effect of imposing high costs on low income, large households living in temperature-challenged regions of the state. Rates of customers who earn twice the poverty level or less (CARE category) are discounted by law. Major revision of the rate structure by the CPUC had begun three years ago.

The following changes have been approved, most over a several year period: the number of tiers will decrease from 4 to 2 with only a 25% rate difference; a new "superuser" category of ratepayers will be assessed at about twice the baseline rate; a minimum bill of \$10 will begin this year (\$5 for CARE customers); CARE customers will receive a slightly larger discount; time-of-use rates will impose higher charges for peak demand periods (late afternoon to early evening); greater efforts by utilities in educating ratepayers in conservation and efficiency practices will be required, as mandated by AB 327.

These new guidelines will now be the framework for a new set of rates, which will increase for some, decrease for others, but the actual income of PG&E remains fixed by its costs and return to investors. As usual, all stakeholders had something to complain about. These rates will not apply to customers with solar panels, as their rate structure will be set later this year.

*- Bob and Ruby MacDonald*

# Victory!

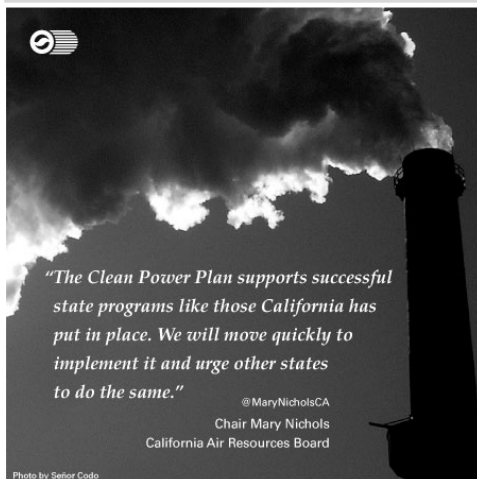


The League is celebrating our historic legal victory – with the ACLU and others – that restores voting rights to nearly 60,000 released prisoners whom the former Secretary of State disenfranchised in 2011. Our victory in the *Scott v. Bowen* case is a major step in our struggle to make sure all Californians can vote!



## Clean Power Plan Prevails

President Obama unveiled the final version of the long-awaited Clean Power Plan, calling it "the biggest, most important step we've ever taken to combat climate change." The plan will reduce U.S. carbon (CO<sub>2</sub>) emissions by 32% compared to 2005 levels. The Clean Power Plan calls for renewable energy to grow from its current 10% of today's U.S. energy use to 20% renewables by 2030.



## BOARD 2015-2016

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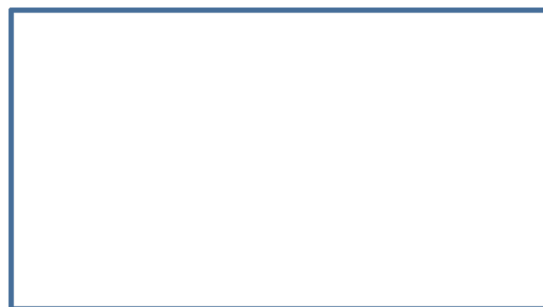
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## Calendar

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

### September

3 Thurs	7:15-9:00p	<b>Communications Team</b>	D. Malbec	527-8683
11 Fri	10:30-12:00p	<b>Voter Services Team</b>	P. Gale	548-0591
13 Sun	10:00a-5:00p	<b>Solano Stroll</b>	P. Gale	548-0591
15 Tues	7:30-9:00p	<b>Environmental Concerns</b>	C. Stone	549-0959
18 Fri	1:30-3:00p	<b>Climate Change Team</b>	R. Beatus	524-6904
19 Sat	10:00-12:00p	<b>Higher Ed Study Team</b>	C. Thomas	928-8246
21 Mon	11:30-1:00p	<b>Annual Community Lunch</b>	A. Jones	548-3606
22 Tues	3:30-7:30p	<b>Nat'l Voter Registration Day</b>	D. Malbec	527-8683
24 Thurs	7:15-9:00p	<b>Board Meeting</b>	N. Bickel	684-6302

### October

2 Fri		<b>Nov-Dec Voter deadline</b>	G. Schickele	415-922-6627
5 Mon	10:30-12:00p	<b>Voter Services Team</b>	P. Gale	548-0591
5 Mon	7:00-9:00p	<b>Action Committee</b>	D. Swift	548-4808
8 Thurs	5:00-9:00p	<b>League Fall Meeting</b>	N. Bickel	684-6302
12 Mon	7:00-9:00p	<b>Environmental Concerns</b>	C. Stone	549-0959
16 Fri	1:30-3:00p	<b>Climate Change Team</b>	R. Beatus	524-6904
17 Sat	10:00-12:00p	<b>Higher Ed Study Team</b>	C. Thomas	928-8246
18 Sun	11:00a-5:00p	<b>Sunday Streets Berkeley</b>	P. Gale	548-0591
22 Thurs	7:15-9:00p	<b>Board Meeting</b>	N. Bickel	684-6302

### November

2 Mon	10:30-12:00p	<b>Voter Services Team</b>	P. Gale	548-0591
2 Mon	7:00-9:00p	<b>Action Committee</b>	D. Swift	548-4808
9 Mon	7:00-9:00p	<b>Environmental Concerns</b>	C. Stone	549-0959

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Jeanette Zerneke

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of **The VOTER**  
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[www.lwvbae.org/newsletter](http://www.lwvbae.org/newsletter)

*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*