

President's Message



Happy Fall, LWVBAE!

We've got an exciting season ahead of us. Since August, the Board has added new tools like Eventbrite and worked to preserve our institutional memory with a new policies and procedures handbook, championed

by our Program Director, Jessica Powell.

To foster a more supportive and inclusive League, our Membership Team is adding new events, like the **"Picnic with the League"** on November 11th from 11-2pm. There are also many exciting events to attend in our Environmental Concerns Speaker Series, featuring impressive speakers like Arlene Blum in November and Daniel Kammen in December (see stories at lwvbae.org).

The new study on election methods will look at proportional methods that may be more democratic than those used in our three cities (see story p. 2).

Our new teams, CivilTalk (formerly Making Democracy Work) and the Proposition 13 Reform Team, invite more members to get involved. CivilTalk brings folks from different sides of the political spectrum together for civil discussions. The Proposition 13 Reform Team is working to reform the **commercial** aspects of Prop 13, which would bring approximately \$9 billion to California schools and local services. See stories on page 2 and 3 and the calendar on page 4 or online for more information.

Finally, I'm excited to announce that we are reinvigorating the Health Team! We'll start with "Conversations on Health Care in California" on November 16th from 7-9pm at our League office (2530 San Pablo ave, Ste. F, Berkeley). We hope that this event will draw folks who are interested in staying involved on this issue to ensure that our League will be ready to act when the time is right.

Please join us for these events, and get involved when you can. It's only with your support that we can continue our important work.

Adena M. Ishii, President, president@lwvbae.org

Our Utility Users Taxes Encourage Greenhouse Gas Emissions: Let's Change That!



Utility user taxes in Albany, Emeryville and Berkeley indirectly encourage greenhouse gas emissions. The tax rate on each utility is the same, yet natural gas pollutes much more than

electricity. Our electricity supply has become much cleaner, so combusting a dollar of natural gas in our homes releases about four times as much greenhouse gas pollution as consuming a dollar of electricity. Consequently, our cities' tax structures work against our pollution reduction goals.

Our League is working to get our three cities to change their utility tax rates to encourage use of electricity and discourage use of natural gas. We wrote to both Albany and Berkeley City Councils. Both cities have taken action with resolutions asking PG&E to add the capacity to tax different utilities at different rates and asking the California Public Utilities Commission (CPUC) to require PG&E to do so. (For more info, see story on our website.)

If you know members of other local Leagues that might be interested in working on this issue, let us know at action@lwvbae.org. The more cities that request this change, the more likely it is to happen.

Preston Jordan, Action Director
action@lwvbae.org



Are Our Current Election Methods the Most Democratic?



Our new local proportional election methods study, approved by members at the fall meeting on August 27, will compare the two current election methods in use in our three cities to proportional election methods, for example, *at-large ranked choice voting*. Which method is more democratic or fair under what conditions?

If you would like to help shape this effort, please email the Action Director at action@lwvbae.org to join the study committee. Otherwise, we hope you will participate in the future election method “Consensus” meetings to decide on the policy position that LWVBAE will adopt.

Background: Our League has no position on the best method for electing most of the representatives in our cities. Both the state League and LWVBAE have positions supporting *instant runoff or ranked choice voting* for executive and other single seat offices, since it assures that candidates win with majorities rather than pluralities. This method is used to elect the Berkeley Mayor and Council members, but the other six elected representative bodies across our cities are elected *at-large*. The League has no position on *election at-large* versus *election by districts* other than that the Berkeley Council should be elected from a mix of the two. We have no position on a preferred system for *at-large elections*.

The League was prompted to study proportional election methods because our cities may have to make important decisions about their election methods soon. In Albany last spring, after five years of study, the Charter Review Committee recommended the *at-large form of ranked choice voting* as the best method for Albany. In response, the Albany City Council authorized the Committee to prepare a charter amendment specifying a transition to this method. Next spring, the Council will decide whether to put this amendment to the voters.

During the last decade, over 80 cities and 100 school districts statewide have been or are being compelled under the California Voting Rights Act to switch from the *plurality-at-large method* we use in each of our cities to *election by district* methods. This is because *plurality-at-large* has been found by the court to have a racially and ethnically discriminatory effect in every jurisdiction that has fought the change so far. In the past year, cities and school districts in the Bay Area have been compelled to change, including the City of Fremont and the Dublin School District right here in Alameda County.

Preston Jordan, Action Director, action@lwvbae.org

Voter Services Team

With May 21, 2018 as the last day to register for the June 5, 2018 Statewide Direct Primary Election, the Team calls on members to join the team to work on the Vote16 project to register local teens, other registration drives, outreach and speakers for the libraries, community groups, and more.



Do you have graphics, PowerPoint or presentation skills? We NEED your help to attract and motivate potential voters.

Assembly 9 will be an open race. Should we hold a primary candidate's forum? Volunteer and work with us to make this possible.

Would you like to manage a teen art contest for Voter Registration Posters? Contact Phyllis if you can help with any of these tasks. We can't wait to get started!

NOTE new meeting day and time: Third Wednesdays 1 pm or contact Voter Services Director Phyllis Gale, voterservices@lwvbae.org, to arrange to work with the team online or by telephone.

Fall Meeting Decisions

Two business items were on the agenda at LWVBAE's previous fall meeting: membership approval for our new local proportional election method study, and creation of a “set-your-own membership dues” system.

Members debated the proposed study vigorously. Carol Stone noted that the six-month timeline for a study was too short. Members approved the study with an amendment that removed the short time frame for the end of the study. The motion read:

LWVBAE shall undertake a study comparing proportional election methods to the plurality-at-large and single-seat ranked choice methods currently used in our three cities, with no deadline for the end of the study.

Moderating the “set-your-own membership dues” discussion, President Adena Ishii noted that this system would be crucial to fulfilling the League's goal of inclusion and diversity. The members approved the study with an amendment that the plan should be reviewed at the next fall meeting. The motion read:

To create the addition of a membership option that will allow members to set their own membership dues with a minimum of \$20, to be reviewed, at the next fall meeting.

Conversations on Health Care



What is single payer health care? What's the difference between the state and national health care debate? How will all of this affect me, and what can I do to advocate for myself and my community? If you have these or other questions, come to our Conversations on Health Care in California on Thursday, November 16th from 7-9pm at the LWVBAE Office (2530 San Pablo Ave, Ste. F, Berkeley).

President Adena Ishii will lead a conversation with a panel of knowledgeable health care advocates, including Hank Abrons, LWVBAE member and retired physician, and Pat Snyder, member of Health Care for All and a retired nurse and Legislative Consultant for the Health Care Program of the LWV of California.

The panelists will share their backgrounds and experiences, discuss the current state of health care in CA, and answer questions from the audience. This event is part of a larger effort to reinvigorate the Health Team. An active Health Team will enable LWVBAE to keep up with rapidly changing health care policies and conditions and to respond promptly and effectively. Kick off this effort with us by joining this conversation. Please email president@lwvbae.org if you are interested in the Health Team, and help us spread the word!

Prop 13 Reform Team



Working on Prop 13 Reform is a top action priority for LWVBAE in 2017-18. Team members are developing a Speakers Bureau (along with an online form to

request speakers) and an outreach list of groups who might want to learn more about the proposed reforms. Prop. 13 Reform is also a high priority for the state League, which has joined the Make It Fair Coalition of more than 200 community organizations. The proposed Prop. 13 Reform would make commercial properties pay their fair share of property taxes by reassessing them regularly; it anticipates raising \$9 billion more for schools and local services. Read background information on Prop. 13 and the campaign on our website.

The Team meets 3rd Saturdays of each month from 10 am to noon at the League office. Contact Team Leader Ruby MacDonald at ruby@lwvbae.org.

How Should Communities Reduce Violence? CivilTalk Forum Sign-up Now Open

December 3, from 1:15-3:30pm, we offer a **National Issues Forum (NIF)** demonstration in Community Meeting Room, Berkeley Central Library, with Dr. Craig Paterson and Carole Paterson, NIF Network Partners, who will lead the event. **Topic:** "Safety & Justice."



Get NIF's "Safety & Justice: How Should Communities Reduce Violence?" Issue Guide as a *free* download at <https://www.nifi.org/en/issue-guide/safety-and-justice> to get the flavor of the forum. You can also preview a starter video of a full forum on that site.

CivilTalk will facilitate while our team and interested participants learn to moderate discussions in deliberative style. All will weigh subsets of three basic options. Those participating may stay for follow-up discussion after the structured forum. The follow-up will cover moderator training questions.

Come to the Forum: We invite League members and others to participate in this Forum demonstration. You will learn how NIF leads civil deliberations on difficult issues. To join our Forum, please send an email to civiltalk@lwvbae.org. If a friend generally disagrees with your point of view, invite him or her along; pairs of opposing views have priority. Attendance limited.

Join CivilTalk's Research: 2nd Wednesdays, 6:15pm, Office

Contact: Marybeth Falzareno, mmbbme@comcast.net
Marybeth Falzareno, mmbbme@comcast.net

Many Thanks to Our Donors

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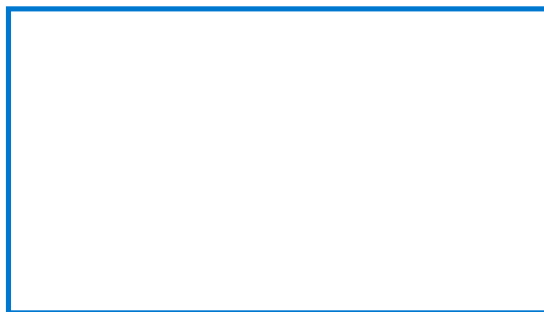
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Current and past issues of **The VOTER** are posted on our website www.lwvbae.org/newsletter

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

Calendar

All meetings at League office at 2530 San Pablo Ave. unless otherwise noted. Before attending, please check our on-line calendar at lwvbae.org.

October

21 Sat	10-12pm	Prop 13 Reform Team	Ruby M. (847) 309-2707
23 Mon	7-9pm	Board Meeting	Adena I. (818) 620-5821
26 Thurs	7-9pm	Action & Program Teams	Preston J. (510) 418-9660

November

4 Sat	9:30-12pm	Alameda County Council of Leagues of Women Voters	
8 Wed	6:15-8pm	CivilTalk Team	Marybeth F. (925) 639-3738
11 Sat	11-2pm	Picnic with the League	Adena I. (818) 620-5821
13 Mon	7:30-9pm	Environmental Concerns:	Carol S. (510) 549-0959
Arlene Blum at Northbrae Community Church			
14 Tues	6:15-8pm	Climate Change Team	Regina B. (510) 524-6904
15 Wed	1-2:30pm	Voter Services Team	Phyllis G. (510) 508-4389
16 Thurs	7-9pm	Health Care in CA	Adena I. (818) 620-5821
Panel Discussion			
18 Sat	10-12pm	Prop 13 Reform Team	Ruby M. (847) 309-2707
20 Mon	7-9pm	Membership Team	Jinky G. (510) 548-5292
(Call for Location)			
23 Thurs	7-9pm	Action & Program Teams	Preston J. (510) 418-9660
27 Mon	7-9pm	Board Meeting	Adena I. (818) 620-5821