



League of Women Voters
North Orange
County
www.lwvnoc.org

VOTER

Nov.-Dec. 2007

714-254-7440
P.O. Box 3073
Fullerton, CA 92834

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Membership is open to men and women of voting age.

What Does Judicial Independence Mean?

Judicial Independence was one of the original principles of the Constitution. The founders of the United States had negative experiences with the judiciary that was controlled by King George III. They chose to establish courts that were independent so that people would be protected from an overreaching government.

The question of influence on judges remains. Courts can be pressured by the other branches of government, by the press or by the public directly. However, judges are to rule only on the basis of the facts and law in all cases before them; other elements should not affect the outcome of a case before them.

Independence does not mean a lack of oversight and accountability; judges can be disciplined for serious misconduct on or off the bench. All states have some sort of commission to investigate

complaints about judicial behavior. The commissions can recommend removal from office, public or private reprimand, censure and suspension, as well as involuntary retirement. State judges may also face impeachment or recall (where judges are elected.) Federal judges are also impeachable.

It is important that people know what judges do, and that they are indeed accountable even when they issue rulings that some people will find objectionable. Judges must be servants of the law and the Constitution, not of political bosses, the media, and special interest groups. Judicial independence assures that cases will be decided on their merits and that decisions are based on what is right and just under the law, not what is popular at the moment. This protects our individual liberties and our rule of law.

League Speakers Trained to Present Judicial Independence Programs to Civic and Service Clubs In Orange County

The "Promoting Judicial Independence" grant funded by the Orange County Inter League Organization and the Program on Constitutional & Legal Policy of the Open Society Institute provided the training session on October 20th for fifteen speakers to give presentations to civic and service clubs in Orange County. The training included an opportunity to discuss the judiciary issues, to see the script being given by Linda Rogers, and to plan for 20 presentations by each of the four Leagues.

If you know an organization that would be interested in scheduling a presentation on the issues facing the judiciary, contact Jeanne Blum at

714-962-9680 or email jeanne@gmail.com If possible, please include the name of the organization, contact person, telephone number, email, number of persons expected at a session, and dates requested. The presentation can be given in English or Spanish.

Visit www.lwvnoc.org to register for the March 1, 2008 community forum "Judicial Independence: Is Our Democracy in Danger?" The speakers for this forum include a California Supreme Court Justice, judges, lawyers, and former legislators. Save the date for this outstanding opportunity to hear about judicial issues from the legal community.

Read With League November 13

Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls

The November book selection is *Reviving Ophelia: Saving the Selves of Adolescent Girls*, written by Mary Pipher. In it the author describes the maze of difficult decisions facing our teenaged daughters and granddaughters in important areas such as alcohol, sex, drugs, weight and even personal interests. She offers suggestions and strategies for parents to help their girls into adulthood with their sense of self intact. This is an older book which continues to have much relevance regarding today's adolescents and modern society. If it is not available at your favorite book store, try ordering it through the interlibrary loan service at your local public library. The book is also available on audio cassette.

The informal book discussion meeting will be held at 7:00 p.m. on **Nov. 13, 2007**, at the home of Gabriella Koliass, 402 Ponce Ave., Placentia 92870. Come and bring a friend. This is a great opportunity to introduce a potential member to our League.

Mark the date for the final book discussion of the year on **Dec. 11, 2007**. We will be reviewing the humorous *Funny in Farsi: A Memoir of Growing Up Iranian in America* by Firoozeh Dumas at the home of Dr. Kay Bruce, 6207 E. Twin Peak Circle, Anaheim, 92807. The 2008 Winter and Spring book selections will be announced in the next *Voter* newsletter.

BY GINNY HAUSSMANN, LWVNOC Co-MEMBERSHIP DIRECTOR

LWVNOC Observer Corps Reorganized Fullerton School District Board of Education

I attended my first school board meeting on October 9th representing LWVNOC as an observer at the Fullerton School District Board of Education Meeting. This particular district is my old stomping grounds. I hugged a lot of people I hadn't seen for a while and got comfortable in a seat where I had spent many hours previously. Much of the business for this part of the meeting had to be conducted in closed

session. At the public meeting, I was treated to a short presentation of some positive middle school strategies. One of our members, Minard Duncan is President of the FSD Board. I also learned through various reports that one of our members, Sharon Quirk has won several Education Awards.

Members of this board are attending Governance Classes. To complete these classes, members must attend sixty hours of training. I plan to find out who sponsors these classes, where they are held and what they involve. It appears these classes are designed to make board members do their job effectively and legally. That is certainly a plus.

There were no public comments. The meeting ended with a budget report. I left a little early to get a smoothie for my daughter, who was feeling a bit under the weather. I then spilled the smoothie on all my notes. Hopefully the next meeting will go better. For that one, I will be going out into totally uncharted territory. I will be attending the Placentia/Yorba Linda School Board Meeting and it will be interesting to compare the two meetings.

BY ANITA SMILEY, LWVNOC Co-SOCIAL POLICY DIRECTOR



Anita Smiley, Charter Member of the newly reorganized LWVNOC Observer Corps.

FROM OUR PRESIDENT

MRI—(Not Your Doctor's Order)

North Orange County was one of 20 California Leagues selected by the LWVUS to participate in a specially-designed Membership Recruitment Initiative, referred to as MRI. The components of the MRI are specified by the LWVUS, although individual Leagues may select and shape these to suit their specific circumstances.

The MRI is intended to increase membership by making Leagues aware of new and creative recruitment tools they can employ. After the one-year MRI ends in November 2008, participating Leagues will be asked to evaluate the methods and materials suggested by the MRI. This means that our League will be somewhat of a laboratory. The LWVUS will share successful recruitment techniques with other Leagues throughout the nation so that they, too, can benefit from the findings of the MRI participants.

The NOC board has just approved the MRI recommendations that were presented by our membership committee. These include such activities as bestowing a Making Democracy Work Award to one or more deserving women in our community; screening films about women's suffrage at local libraries; and escorting community members to city council or school board meetings.

In addition, a special recruitment message will be added to all public events sponsored by the NOC, including Pros and Cons meetings, candidate forums, and Judicial Independence presentations.

Every NOC member can contribute to the success of the MRI in several easy but important ways:

Directly asking a friend to join the League;

Inviting an acquaintance to Lunch With League or Read with League;

Writing your own League story for the national Storybank;

Volunteering to pass out materials at public events.

There will also be opportunities for greater involvement. Committee members will be needed to create and manage the Making Democracy Work Award competition; to coordinate the escorts to council or board meetings; to advertise and moderate the suffrage screenings; and to lead or assist with numerous other projects. If you are interested to be in on the planning, please phone Arline Burgmeier at 714/828-8624 or e-mail her at aburgmeier@sbcglobal.net.

Mary Fuhrman, President, LWVNOC

Announcements

- LWVNOC is selling **Evening of Giving tickets** for the Brea Mall shopping event on November 18th. The \$10 ticket allows entry to the Mall for shopping from 7-10PM and provides discounts and eligibility to win prizes. Contact Joan Cohen to purchase tickets. 714-525-0023 or jfc72@roadrunner.com.
- Volunteer to serve as a **Half Day Poll Worker** for February's election. The Registrar of Voters has offered to LWV only, the opportunity to share a poll duty. If you would like to work the elections next year, Feb. 5, June 3, and Nov. 4, please call Jerry Young at 714-525-4037. Also let her know which shift you would prefer.
- Join the **League Observer Corps**. Volunteer to attend your City Council or School Board Meetings as an observer for the League of Women Voters. For more information contact Mary Fuhrman, 714-523-1585, maryfuhrman@pacbell.net

Habitat for Humanity

Key to Home Ownership

Many of us are probably thinking of Habitat for Humanity as being something that is done in depressed areas, somewhere else. Any remaining question about the topic was thoroughly cleared up at Lunch with League on September 27th at the Sizzler in Fullerton. Kristin Monji, a young woman not long out of UCI, is Development Manager of Habitat for Humanity for Orange County. In a fast-paced presentation, with ample time left for questions, she cleared up many misconceptions. She described the rather extensive program, active in the County for 20 years, having completed 122 homes here.

HFH was started by a couple, Millard and Linda Fuller, in Americus, Georgia. The growth of the organization was given a boost when ex-President Carter became heavily involved with it. (Carter will be in Los Angeles for a one-week build this month.) They now operate in 80 countries, and have 3000 affiliate organizations in the US, 600 in California.

But why are they building homes in Fullerton? The answer is that there are many hard-working couples in Fullerton, working at jobs which do not qualify for the huge mortgages required here. They may be firemen, pre-school instructors, medical technicians, clerical workers, etc. Habitat gives some of these people a chance to break the cycle of poverty which keeps many spending too much for rent, or commuting long distances, so they can never get ahead.

Families selected by Habitat are generally young, with children. They must be able to meet the payments on the home, must have clear credit records and stable employment. They are visited in their home, and must express a strong desire to settle in the community. If necessary, Habitat will provide mentoring in financial planning or any other field in which they feel the need for assistance.

If selected, the family must make a 1% down payment and sign up for a no-interest mortgage. They must also perform at least 500 hours of “sweat equity” during construction. If they need

training in construction skills, volunteer mentors provide instruction, and oversee their work as needed. Tasks calling for certified workers (plumbing, electrical, etc) are done by professionals. The remaining tasks are performed by volunteers—willing members of the community in addition to the selected family.

Each project is built to high quality standards, with materials designed to survive. The building and landscaping are designed to fit into the neighborhood. Houses may have from one to four bedrooms, and all have garages, not carports. The children become enrolled in local schools—one of the key advantages of permanent housing.

Help can be given in furnishing the new home, if needed. Habitat has connections with interior designers who have volunteered to help, and with suppliers of home furnishings who donate selected furniture and appliances for those who move in without adequate equipment.

One potential problem for Habitat is that some neighbors who learn of a proposed Habitat home, worry about depressing the value of their homes, or down-grading the neighborhood, or simple NIMBY feelings. Habitat works with neighbors in advance. They can show plans and can describe the incoming families. “Rejection” by neighbors has not been a problem, since the house styles and landscaping are selected to enhance the surroundings.

Funding for Habitat is entirely from private contributions. Cities may donate land, but provide no funds. The money for construction comes from Habitat, and they hold the loan papers so Habitat in effect owns the homes in perpetuity. In case circumstances cause a family to leave, the sale is handled by Habitat. They allow a modest appreciation in price to the departing owner, but can block any attempt to “flip” the houses for big gains in times of rising prices. The related problem of buyers being unable to keep up payments on marginal loans has been avoided by Habitat. They are conservative lend-

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Justice at Stake

Five Key States to Watch in Elections 2008

Justice at Stake is a nonpartisan national campaign of more than 45 partners working to keep our courts fair, impartial and independent. Justice at Stake Campaign partners educate the public and work for reforms to keep politics and special interests out of the courtroom – so judges can do their job protecting our Constitution, our rights and the rule of law. The following is a recent press release submitted by Justice at Stake. It highlights important issues and key states for the upcoming judicial elections in 2008.

WASHINGTON, DC - Thirty-nine state contestable Supreme Court seats in 21 states are on the ballot next year, potentially making 2008 the most expensive and acrimonious year ever for candidates seeking election to America's state courts. But threats to the fairness and impartiality of the courts may not end with contentious judicial elections: special interest ballot measures to tamper with the courts, and legislative efforts to inject politics into nonpartisan judicial selection systems, are also on the horizon for 2008.

"Partisans and third-party groups will once again crank up their war rooms in an effort to pressure courts to conform to special interest

agendas," said Bert Brandenburg, executive director of the Justice at Stake Campaign, a nonpartisan watchdog group based in Washington, DC. "An election year will give Americans a chance to reject political tampering with the courts that protect their rights."

Since 2000, candidates for state Supreme Court seats have raised over \$157 million. Broadcast television ads, which appeared in 22 percent of states with high court races in 2000, appeared in 91 percent of states in 2006. Now a new national group—the Democratic Judicial Campaign Committee—is vowing to spend millions more to unseat judges and justices across the country. The future of state judicial selection is the subject of an October 17 conference being organized by the Sandra Day O'Connor Project on the State of the Judiciary at Georgetown University Law Center.

Justice at Stake will monitor judicial elections and ballot measures, and regular updates will be available at justiceatstake.org. The group will be watching five states particularly closely: Alabama, Minnesota, Mississippi, Washington and West Virginia.

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ers, and have not had any foreclosures in Orange County.

Habitat is well aware of the trend toward "green" houses—those making minimal demands on energy, water, etc. They have built several such houses in Northern California, and the Bay Area houses are all "green", but the up-front costs have been high enough to discourage broad application. Costs are expected to come down with the current demand for minimal "footprint" housing, and broader application may follow.

Most Habitat homes have been single family dwellings, built on site. But they have made condominium-type homes in areas which are developing in that way. A local example is in Irvine, where the city needed more affordable dwellings

to meet requirements. Habitat stepped in and built the units, and the City gets credit for "affordability".

Some cities permit factory-built ("pre-fab") houses. Habitat has placed 60 in Orange County. The minimal "house" costs \$75,000 and up. Even with the added costs of land, site preparation, foundation, utility hook-ups, etc, they are a bit less costly than the hand-built houses. Many cities don't permit these houses, perhaps because they carry the flavor of mobile home parks, though the structures are far more sturdy and embedded in the terrain than portables.

For the fortunate citizens of Orange County who have qualified, Habitat for Humanity has indeed been a key to home ownership.

BY CHUCK GREENING. MEMBER LWVNOC

Rose Espinoza Receives National Caring Award

Rose Espinoza, Mayor Pro Tem of La Habra and member of LWVNOC, gives the inside scoop on her selection for the award in the following email to our reporter, Bette Frazier.



Rose Espinoza, winner of a National Caring Award with Executive Director, Val Halanmandaris. Rose's picture will hang in the Hall of Fame for Caring Americans along with other such notables as Rev. Billy Graham and Mother Theresa.

Received a letter as well as a phone call in August from the Caring Institute congratulating me as a finalist for the 2007 Caring Award. I went on the internet worried that this might be a bogus institute. As I read about the organization, my jaw dropped and wondered how I was selected.

Turns out someone within the organization recalled hearing of Rosie's Garage and submitted my name for nomination. The Institute's Executive Director, Mr. Halanmandaris, flew out to interview each finalist, a camera was set up to tape the interview. A month later I received a call from Mr. Halanmandaris notifying me that I was selected to receive the 2007 Caring Award along with other awardees. The ceremony will take place in Washington DC at the Frederick Douglass Museum on November 15, 2007.

Our city's motto is A Caring Community and here I am receiving the 2007 Caring Award, you might say I have been living our city's motto!

Recognizing Rosie's Garage is recognizing the neighborhood kids. In 1991 I believed that bringing tutorial assistance to a low income neighborhood could boost the kid's grades as well as improve their surroundings by having less kids getting into trouble. Seeing these kids become responsible adults, with better jobs than their parents, many attending college and yet others coming back to La Habra to give as volunteers gives me much, much gratification in knowing that I may have played a part in the molding of their character.

Podium Banner Marketing Project



A new project, constructing League podium banners, will soon be ready for interested Leaguers to undertake. The project on the one hand is capitalistic — selling the banners to other Leagues will add funds to our treasury. On the other hand, public relations-wise, the banners, which display our name and logo so vividly, will identify and publicize our organization wherever League speakers give presentations.

Participants in the construction project will cut, sew, press and package the 19 X 28 inch banner. Watch for further information. This may be a volunteer opportunity to which you can commit a few hours.

BY BETTE FRAZIER, LWVNOC DIRECTOR

Grass is Our Biggest Enemy

This was one important conclusion of a recent conference, “Linking Water and Land Use Planning in the Santa Ana Region.” Representatives of regional water boards, water districts, utilities, and other experts spoke on the issues.

In Southern California we are faced with what these experts call “the four horsemen of the (water) apocalypse”. The first of these is population growth. California does not have enough water to supply the expected population increase without improved efficiency. The second problem is that the Colorado River system is in the 8th year of drought. Scientists say the area has had many droughts lasting 20 years, and some lasting 100 years, so we could be in for many more years of low water flow from that source. Third, a federal judge has ruled that up to 30% less water can be pumped from the Sacramento River Delta in order to protect the delta smelt. This tiny fish is an “indicator species” of the overall health of the entire delta ecosystem. If delta smelt are allowed to disappear, then many other species would also disappear. Finally, climatologists predict maybe 10 to 15% less water will be available from mountainous areas due to global warming.

And so we come to grass. Our lawns use a huge amount of water, and we water them almost twice as much as they need. According to the experts, if we replaced 50% of grass with drought tolerant natives, and used Smart Controllers to limit unnecessary watering, we could reduce water use by 35%. This is about as much as we import from the Colorado River.

Rather than developing more and more distant suburbs, with more and more acres of lawns, roads, and parking lots with their polluted run-off, we need denser housing near mass transit. With denser development, more land can be left undeveloped. Open land, carefully chosen according to the natural water drainage, would allow flood protection, groundwater recharge, and habitat for animals in addition to park and recreational areas. Additional advantages would be less CO₂ released, more walking (which we desperately need), much less cost to build sewers, etc. The Metropolitan Water District has programs to help cities conserve water, and many of these ideas are being acted upon by cities.

BY FRAN MATHEWS, LWVNOC NATURAL RESOURCES DIRECTOR

CALENDAR

Consensus Meeting **Immigration Study**

Monday November 12
10:00-11:30AM

Placentia Library
411 Chapman Ave., Placentia
For Information contact
Linda Rogers
ashlandrogers@yahoo.com

Read with League **Tuesday November 13**

7:00PM at Gabriella Kolias'
402 Ponce Ave.
Placentia, 92870
714-524-3962
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LWVNOC Board Meeting **Tuesday, November 27**

Noon-2:00 PM
Fullerton JUHS District Offices
1051 W Bastanchury
Fullerton

Read with League

Tuesday December 11
7:00PM at Dr. Kay Bruce's
6207 E Twin Peak Circle
Anaheim, 92807
714-921-1308
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