



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

VOTER

Summer 2006

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

Brea, Buena Park, Cypress, Fullerton, La Habra, La Palma, Placentia, Yorba Linda

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens 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.

Meeting In the Middle LWVUS NATIONAL CONVENTION Minneapolis, June 13-16

I must express my appreciation to the LWVNOC for sending me to the LWVUS 47th biennial convention in Minneapolis this June. I was amazed at how many intelligent, knowledgeable people could be in one room together, debating great issues, and arriving at decisions to lead this fine organization for the next two years. There were approximately 1000 people involved with about 750 voting delegates. The days were full from 7:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. with plenary sessions, workshops and caucuses. I attended as many of these as I could squeeze in. Meeting delegates from all over the nation and having an opportunity to share what is going on in our own local organizations was eye opening and inspiring.

In addition to adopting the rules, voting for our new officers and Board members, passing the budget and by-laws, we heard reports from our United Nations Observer, and a panel discussion on appointment vs. election of judges. Debating and passing the program issues was perhaps the most exciting. Delegates adopted by concurrence support for abolition of the death penalty and agreed on a three year study of immigration. We adopted resolutions raising to a high priority the issue of the erosion of checks and balances in American democracy, supporting a voter-verified paper ballot or paper record with electronic voting systems, and supporting the concept of Internet

neutrality by calling on Congress to protect equal access to the Internet. We also voted to approve all existing positions in the areas of Government, International Relations, Natural Resources, and Social Policy.

A number of other important issues were debated and defeated for adoption, mostly because of cost and time involved. These included health care reform, global warming, requiring cable and telecommunication companies to broadcast public affairs as well as provide support and capacity for more access to community media, an update of apportionment--or redistricting-- including examination of ways to make legislative bodies more representative and accountable.

At the banquet on Monday evening, Garrison Keillor, the guest speaker, kept us laughing throughout his monologue. He told us that the first thing he ever won was a \$15 check from the local LWV for an essay contest. It was a thrill of his childhood.

The next national convention will be in Portland, Oregon, in 2008. I encourage as many of you as possible to attend. even though we can only send two official delegates, others can become voting delegates by representing Leagues that have not sent their own members.

BY MARY FUHRMAN
LWVNOC VICE PRESIDENT ADMINISTRATION

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
NORTH ORANGE COUNTY**

PO Box 3073
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OFFICERS

Eileen Olmsted, President
Mary Fuhrman, VP Administration
Lee Sjostrom, Secretary
Marilyn Buchi, Treasurer

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Jane Bonfanti, Citizen Education and
Community Outreach
Dr. Kay Bruce, Development
Arline Burgmeier, Membership
Joan Cohen, Voters Service
Bette Frazier, Lunch with League
Eleanor Fumanti, Voter Editor
Fran Mathews, Natural Resource
Linda Rogers, Registrar Project
Wanda Shafer, Membership
Fran Shermet, Publicity
Sally Zivitz, Government

The League of Women Voters is committed to making democracy work across the country and around the world. Join us in educating and encouraging men and women to be active citizens and address the issues that affect our lives—election administration reform, campaign finance reform, civil and human rights, citizen engagement, judicial independence and criminal justice, education, health care, urban sprawl and our natural resources. Go online to lwvnoc.org and click on "Join LWV" to **become a League Member**, or call 714-254-7440.

From Our President

The 47th Biennial Convention of the League of Women Voters held in Minneapolis recently was a challenging and energizing event. Yet, for me, as President, the fact that League has lost over 1,000 members last year alone was the most salient and sobering revelation. As Mary Fuhrman, my fellow delegate, mentioned in her article elsewhere in this *Voter*, many important issues about the work of the League were fiercely debated and voted on. In short, there is lots of work left to be done. However, we will not be able to accomplish the tasks we have set for ourselves and our credibility as an organization representing a substantial proportion of the population is at stake if we cannot reverse this trend of shrinking membership.

The League faces competition for membership from a daunting array of single-issue organizations, as well as many political organizations that represent the whole spectrum of partisan points of view. Nevertheless, according to a recent poll in Ohio and California, the League was selected as the most trusted organization in the realm of redistricting questions. It is the only organization in the political arena that people know and trust as standing for good government and the rights of the voter. We do have a unique niche and we must retain it.

When you get your membership renewal letter later this summer, please respond promptly. We need you. But even more importantly help the League grow by recruiting a new member. On the local level, those who are already members recruit most members in the League. It could be a spouse or a grown child. It could be your best friend whom you've never before invited to join. It could be a politically active person in your community. Won't you do your part in helping us continue to be the premier, non-partisan, grass-roots political force for truly representative and responsive government?

Eileen

714-441-1659, info@lwvnoc.org

A Day to Remember LWVNOC ANNUAL MEETING



Presenting reports at Annual Meeting
Mary Fuhrman Marilyn Buchi, Linda Rogers
Jane Bonfanti, Directors LWVNOC

There are times when an event one is attending causes such pride and elation that one is figuratively floating up off the ground. This happened to me when I was fortunate enough to attend National League Conventions some years back....and again at several State Conventions. So it was quite a joy to experience that same off-the-ground feeling when our Local League held its own mini-convention, its Annual Meeting on May 20.

Inevitably, the tendency was to want to pat myself on the back for the good fortune of being among some very smart, very dedicated women who've made our League one to be emulated throughout the state. The meeting was held at the Brea Embassy Suites with its attractive indoor/outdoor (for patio lunch) setting. All about the meeting room, our various Directors had created a circle of posters featuring their activities, highlights that had enriched our year. We were

treated to oral descriptions of what they did and how it was done. Such energy and creativity! Check out the VOTER for informational reports.

Members voted to retain our Local Program - positions that enable us to lobby locally. We have a full staff of new and continuing Officers and Directors including a Treasurer. Our luncheon speaker, Christie Baird, presented an in-depth power point description of Prop 82, the "Pre School for All" ballot measure. Quite complicated with pros and cons that need serious consideration.

All in all, this was a perfect conclusion to an extraordinary year.

BY EDITH BOCKIAN,
LWVNOC MEMBER

League Denounces Erosion of Checks and Balances in American Democracy

Delegates to the League of Women Voters of the United States biennial national convention strongly denounced the rapid erosion of the American system of checks and balances and separation of powers taking place nationwide. "This Administration has undercut the fundamental safeguards that protect our rights as Americans," said Kay J. Maxwell, national League President. "It is time for Congress to stand up for the American people, rather than sitting on their hands."

The more than 700 state and local League members overwhelmingly supported the strong statement that called on Congress to play its vital oversight role as a co-equal branch of government responsive to the citizens its members represent.

"The League must stand up for a strong and vibrant system of checks and balances and separation of powers, said Kay J. Maxwell. "If we stand by and do nothing, this erosion will damage citizens constitutionally guaranteed civil liberties," Maxwell stated.

"The time has come to stop the deterioration of our Constitutional system of separation of powers and safeguard our individual liberties," said Maxwell.

AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AT RISK

AGENDA FOR RENEWAL AND REPAIR

Today, many of us share an uneasy feeling about the direction our country is taking. It comes in many forms, and covers a variety of issues. I want to share with you the concerns that we in the League of Women Voters have about the basic mechanisms of our government.

DEMOCRACY AGENDA

The League believes that American democracy is at risk and that now is the time to act. Years of band-aid solutions and neglect have allowed many of our government systems to grow weak. Our Democracy Agenda offers viable solutions to help overcome those weaknesses, and educate communities and citizens nationwide, on how to improve things. This effort is about protecting our electoral processes through election reform efforts and reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act; advancing our representative government through nonpartisan redistricting; preserving our constitutional rights by safeguarding civil liberties; and protecting against government corruption through campaign finance and lobbying reform.

Election Reform

The first item on our Democracy Agenda is election reform. We in the League have identified four steps that need to be taken to improve the administration of our elections:

The first step we recommend is professionalization of election administration. We need to rethink how we recruit and train poll workers, and we need to redesign the polling place.

The second step needed is to put “service” back in “voter service.” Somewhere along the line, we forgot that government has a responsibility to help voters, that voting should not be an inconvenience for people, and that the voter – the customer – should come first.

Third, we need to launch wide-ranging research and development efforts to apply 21st Century systems and technologies to the election process.

Fourth, we need a substantial and sustained investment on the part of the federal government. We need to get real about the resources that are required to run elections in a way that is consistent with this nation’s democratic ideals. Right now, we are paying the price for our miserly approach to the

administration of elections. And it is a price measured not in dollars, but in Americans’ declining faith that the system will serve their interests fairly and efficiently.

Widely viewed as one of our most successful civil rights laws, the Voting Rights Act has institutionalized the principles that outlaw discrimination in elections and protect the rights of minority voters. Unfortunately, some minority voters still face obstacles to voting, whether from attempts to dilute the strength of minority voters in unfair redistricting, or from an election official harassing a minority voter, or from the lack of bilingual ballots for citizens who have limited English proficiency – the contemporary equivalent of the last century’s literacy test. We must reauthorize Sections 5 and 203 to continue to provide a strong deterrent to voting rights violations.

Redistricting

Another issue that goes to the heart of the democratic system is the controversy over partisan redistricting, or gerrymandering. Today, with the advent of modern computers and growing partisanship, it is possible to create legislative districts where the results of an election will be known before any votes are cast or counted. It is time to do something about this trend. It is time to stop partisan redistricting and develop mechanisms in the states to ensure fair results, so that elections determine the shape of our legislatures. Voters should determine who represents them. A representative government demands fair processes that allow each voter’s voice to be heard, unencumbered by faulty mechanisms, unfair procedures, special interests or government interference.

To that end, the League espouses four basic redistricting principles for protecting the integrity of the electoral process. First, we support the bedrock constitutional guarantee of “one person, one vote.” Second, the redistricting process should promote full political participation by minority voters. Third, the redistricting process should be transparent and open to public participation. Finally, we oppose partisan gerrymandering because it subverts our democratic system. Representative democracy depends on the voters freely choosing their



League Leaders at LWVC Leadership Council
 Robbie Davis, Director LWVC; Kay J. Maxwell, President, LWVUS; Jackie Jacobberger, President LWVC

representatives rather than politicians choosing their voters.

We need nonpartisan reforms, such as independent redistricting commissions and requirements to keep communities together, and we need a political movement to achieve those nonpartisan reforms.

Civil Liberties

A third focus of the League's democracy agenda involves the basic civil liberties that under gird our entire system of representative democracy. The right to speak freely, to assemble freely, to read and debate freely on all subjects is the prerequisite for a vibrant democracy. When the government can investigate what books you read or take out of the library, when the government can carry out secret wiretapping without court approval, when the government monitors the meetings of citizens who speak out against government policy, and when the Executive Branch asserts the inherent right to disregard both international and domestic laws, then basic civil liberties have been called into question.

Many of the key provisions of the USA PATRIOT ACT undermine civil liberties, including the "sneak and peek" warrants that allow the government to search your home or business without notifying you or without a search warrant ahead of time. Protecting against terrorism is important, but so too is protecting against the possibility of government intimidation.

Campaign Finance and Lobbying Reform

The fourth and final item on our Democracy Agenda concerns the role of money and special in-

terests in American politics. The League has joined with other public interest groups to call on Congress to enact new safeguards against abuses in the lobbying process. We need new enforcement mechanisms to guard against congressional abuses. And, perhaps most importantly, we must attack a fundamental issue – campaign funding.

We need public financing of congressional elections, and we need to renew the presidential public financing system. The election of a President of the United States affects every voter's perception about our election system generally, and about how our government really works. The presidential election system sets the tone for American democracy.

Americans have said time and time again that special interest groups have too much influence over Washington. They want the average citizen to have just as much say in who becomes President as large corporations, lobbying organizations and wealthy donors. Our system belongs in the hands of its rightful owners – the American voters -and the League will continue to do its part, both at the grassroots level and nationally, to see that it happens.

CONCLUSION

The League's Democracy Agenda election reform and reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act; nonpartisan redistricting; safeguarding civil liberties; and campaign finance and lobbying reform – is also a citizen's agenda. Neither the League nor any other organization can accomplish change without the involvement of citizens; and that means each and every one of you. Citizen involvement is the key to making democracy work. And, nonpartisan action is essential if we're going to reduce polarization, have real dialogues on issues and get something done. Citizens must get involved. For those of us who believe that the active and informed participation of citizens is essential to our government, for those of us who work every day to engage our communities and the nation in the critical issues of the day, America is at a crossroads. We need every concerned citizen to join with us in protecting our representative system of government, and we need every concerned citizen to reach out and encourage others to participate in our cause.

BY KAY MAXWELL, PRESIDENT LWVUS

Excepted from a speech presented at
 LWV California Leadership Council
 May 6, 2006

Recognition and New Ideas

LWV California Leadership Council



LWVC Leadership Council meets biennially in Sacramento, not far from the California State Capitol.

On May 6 and 7, Janie Bonfanti and Linda Rogers attended the LWV California Leadership Council in Sacramento. In addition to having a great time and meeting many intelligent, enthusiastic and creative LWV members from across the state, Janie and Linda brought back some key ideas and some money-making possibilities. Addresses from Jackie Jacobberger, LWVC President, and Kay J. Maxwell, LWWUS President, outlined the focus for the coming year (redistricting and health care for LWVC, Democracy Agenda LWWUS), and the challenges of maintaining or increasing membership in the face of changing demographics and increased calls on everyone's time.

While membership is down by 1,000 nationwide, keynote speakers outlined ways in which different Leagues have increased their membership. The common denominator is getting League noticed. League has a wonderful reputation for honesty and integrity, which can be parlayed into opportunities to assume a visible role in the community and to reach new communities. Our banner project was enthusiastically spotlighted as an excellent way to share information with the voters AND keep the League name in the public eye.

With membership growth low, and with an increasing percentage of dues going to state and national per member payments, most Leagues are searching for new revenue sources. A recent law in California that mandates Homeowner Associations to use outside third parties to conduct their board elections has opened up an opportunity for Leagues to market their services as impartial election coordinators. A seminar was given on the regulations governing our involvement, and some Leaguers mentioned that they were charging per hour for election monitoring in their area.

Our own contract with the Registrar of Voters generated a lot of interest. Thanks to a tremendous volunteer participation, we have already stocked 55 sites with registration affidavits, distributing over 5,000 affidavits in about 6 weeks. The Registrar is very pleased with our results so far. Other Leagues provide temporary workers to the Registrar for processing absentee ballots, a huge task for the Registrar, and collect money for the service.

Janie and Linda found the weekend a stimulating opportunity to share ideas with other Leagues, as well as great fun. LWVC Convention will be held in Bakersfield next year, and LWWNOC is planning to send several delegates.

BY LINDA ROGERS
LWVNOC DIRECTOR, REGISTRA'S PROJECT

Smart Voter Street Banner Schedule

Keep your eyes peeled for our SmartVoter street banner as you drive through Fullerton and Placentia in the weeks leading up to the November election. Other North Orange Cities were already booked for the 2006 year and/or their set up prices were too expensive for LWWNOC budget. The banner is scheduled for Harbor and Valencia in Fullerton the weeks of June 26 and October 30, and Harbor and Chapman the weeks of July 31, and August 21. In Placentia, the banner was displayed before the June primary and will be displayed again on Chapman the week of October 16 and on Kraemer the week of the November election.

BY JANE BONFANTI, LWWNOC DIRECTOR, BANNER PROJECT

Hello Summertime

**The League of Women Voters of North Orange County Presents
A get-acquainted, something-different series
Of summertime activities for you**

**Thursday Brownbag Lunch with League at Craig Regional Park.
July 6 Pack your lunch and come join us for a picnic and
11:30 AM-1:00 PM discussion of a hot-button topic. \$3.00 park entrance fee.**

Craig Regional Park is located on the east side of State College Blvd, just south of Imperial Highway. Enter the driveway and pay a \$3.00 parking fee (the machine takes \$1 bills or coins) or park on State College Blvd. and walk up the driveway. Parking and the picnic area are behind the park office. Seating is at picnic benches. Bring a folding chair for more comfortable seating. And don't forget your lunch!

**Thursday Tour the Hsi Lai Buddhist Temple and enjoy a vegetarian
July 27 luncheon---\$7.00 per person. Meet in Fullerton and
9:00 AM-2:30 PM carpool to Hacienda Heights. Number limited to 20.
Call Arline at (714) 828-8624 for reservations.**

Meet at 9:00 AM in the parking lot at the NE corner of Chapman and State College in Fullerton. Park near the Office Depot store and we will arrange carpools. Maps to the Hacienda Heights facility will be provided. If this is not convenient, you can drive separately. Please call Arline at (714) 828-8624 to reserve your spot.

**Thursday Happy Hour International Pot Luck. Wine, beverages provided.
August 24 Bring an ethnic-type hors d'oeuvre or snack to share.
5:00 PM-7:00 PM Bring your spouse or partner, too.
At Arline's Cypress home. RSVP (714) 828-8624**

Directions to Arline's house: Take the 91 Freeway west. Exit at Valley View and turn left (south). Go about 2 miles to Lincoln. Turn right (west). Go about 2 miles to Denni. Turn left on Denni (opposite the entrance to Forest Lawn). Then turn left at the first street, Rainier. Follow Rainier around the curve for 2 blocks to Everest Circle. The house is 4547 Everest Circle in Cypress. Phone (714) 828-8624 to RSVP.

Save the Date

Sunday, September 10, 2006

LWVNOG Annual Kickoff Luncheon

Coyote Hills Golf Club, Fullerton



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Current and past issues of
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