



VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CUPERTINO-SUNNYVALE

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KICKOFF EVENT FOR EDUCATION STUDY "THE FEDERAL ROLE IN EDUCATION"

WHEN: Saturday, February 26, 2011
9:30 - 10 AM - Registration and hospitality
10 AM - Noon -Speaker presentation and dialogue

WHERE: Campbell Congregational Church, Nelson Hall
400 W. Campbell Ave, Campbell

WHO: All LWV members in Santa Clara County are encouraged to attend in order to learn how this national education study will work

SPEAKER: Peg Hill, LWVUS board member and co-chair of the study

With the LWVUS year-long study of the federal government's role in education soon to kick off, local Leagues of Women Voters have the unique opportunity to hear about its scope and time-table from Peg Hill, co-chair of the national study. She will speak on Saturday, February 26, 2011, at the Congregational Church, 400 Campbell Avenue, in Campbell. Registration and hospitality is at 9:30 AM with the program from 10 AM to Noon.

The free public meeting is open to all League members in this area. It will have particular interest for local League education committees that will be organizing study sessions and possible forums on the topic. June 2012 is the deadline for reaching a national consensus on a position, without which the League of Women Voters cannot speak to federal education issues such as No Child Left Behind.

"We are extremely lucky that Peg Hill will be available to us," said Ellen Wheeler, chairman of the LWV of Santa Clara County's education committee representing all five Leagues in the county. A LWVUS director since 2010, Hill is League President in Richardson, Texas, and a Professor at the University of Houston – Clear Lake. Her longtime commitment to education includes more than 40 years as a teacher and long service on local and state education committees.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Here we are, waiting to see if there will be a special election in June. If there is, we will ramp up our usual efforts to educate voters so they can make informed choices. If not, there will still be a need for informed citizens. Our elected officials do our work, but they can't do it well if we're not paying attention and offering guidance. Have you seen a city council meeting lately? We try to make sure a League member attends or at least watches each city council meeting in Cupertino and Sunnyvale. Do you have any idea what the Santa Clara Valley Water District does? Most people don't, and yet it's responsible for the health of the whole watershed and the reservoirs that supply our clean tap water. The League is always looking for observers to attend meetings of elected officials and remind them that they do their work for the public and in the public eye. We watch for civility, transparency, and a willingness to listen to constituents. Interested in being an observer? Contact me at susan@mathinspired.com. Not able to be an official League observer but interested in being better informed about issues? Get involved with Voter Education or Voter Service by contacting Marilyn Howard MJZHactivist@yahoo.com. Even one event can let you learn a lot about candidates, public policy, or good government.

We are the ones who choose our government. If enough of us care about good government, and turn our attitudes into action, we can have it!

Susan

LWVUS PRESIDENT TO SPEAK AT STATE LEAGUE CONVENTION



LWVC announced that LWVUS President Elizabeth MacNamara will speak at its convention this year. Elisabeth MacNamara is the 18th president of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS) and chair of the League of Women Voters Education Fund (LWVEF). Ms. MacNamara was elected national League president in Atlanta during the League of Women Voters' 49th Biennial Convention and celebration of the organization's 90th anniversary.

EDUCATION STUDY COMMITTEE MEETS

The Education Study Committee held its first meeting. The members of the committee discussed the study process and the scope of the study.

The date of the next meeting will be set when more information is received from the national study committee.

It is not too late to join the committee. For further information, contact Roberta Hollimon at lwvcseditor@comcast.net.

Board Briefs

At its January meeting, your board:

- Set a date for sending the Community Appeal.
- Selected members for the budget committee and nominating committee.
- Agreed to support the Parcel Tax for the Cupertino Union School District and support the Parcel Tax for the Sunnyvale Elementary School District.
- Encouraged board members to consider attending the state League convention.
- Approved the Program Planning results.

Membership News

Thank you for renewing your membership: Mary Boyle and Delores Carson.

Thank you for including a donation with your renewal: Susan Hough and Alex Mennen, Dianne and Regis McKenna, and Sonja Messner.

Welcome new member: Lois Smallwood.

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WRITING ON RICHARD ROTHSTEIN'S REPORT ON REAUTHORIZATION OF ESEA

By Ellen Wheeler

LWVC Social Policy Director/Ed. Committee Chair LWV Santa Clara County/CSBA member



Renowned education researcher Richard Rothstein gave a talk titled "ESEA Reauthorization: Looking Ahead" at the California School Boards Association annual convention on Dec. 3, 2010.

Below is a summary of his remarks. For a more complete description of the work of Mr. Rothstein and other likeminded education leaders go to www.BoldApproach.org

The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) is more commonly known to most of us as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). Signed into law with high hopes by President George W. Bush with bipartisan support, its reauthorization is complicated by politics and politicians, not to mention principled discussions of educational philosophies and goals. As an experienced education observer Mr. Rothstein began his talk not about philosophies, but about . . .

The politics of it all

The impact of the 2010 election will be felt in ESEA. New Speaker John Boehner was an original supporter of ESEA, while the new chair of the House Education Committee, Rep. Kline, wants to keep the federal government out of schools. Will Speaker Boehner spend political capital on ESEA reauthorization? This is further complicated by the strange alliances in education. Some Democrats and Republicans are strong supporters of accountability and testing. Others are skeptical of testing and what they see is narrowing of the curriculum. The new Senate education chair, Democrat Tom Harkin, strongly supports labor (teachers) and has little interest in testing. But, we may get a coalition for special education funding. However, Republicans are generally opposed to increased spending. If special education gets more funding, what programs would we cut to allow for this?

Special education funding has grown. It's now 23% of all money in education, and the number of children identified is growing (whereas other education funding has fallen). **We'd be much better off spending more for high quality early childhood education, says Mr. Rothstein (See more below.)**

Let's review what NCLB/ESEA does:

1. Holds schools accountable for basic skills in math and reading, and requires students to pass an annual test on them;

2. Reports scores by subgroups within schools, instead of just by schools (as in the past). Subgroups include Hispanic, African American, Asian, White, low economic status, and special education.
3. Promotes "accountability" by penalizing schools if not all subgroups of students pass the annual tests.

Results of focus on subgroups, testing, and accountability:

1. Narrowing of curriculum, since what's tested (reading and math) is how a school is held accountable. What isn't tested (subgroups of reading and math, not to mention history, science, art, and music) isn't taught, or at least gets less time.
2. Narrowed focus on individual students that can reach "proficiency" (roughly grade level) with concomitant less attention to students who have already reached proficiency.

"Absurd goal" of 100% proficiency by 2014 and "Closing the Achievement Gap":

This violates everything we know about psychology - to set the same challenging standard for everyone. No educator in his right mind believes we can "close" the Achievement Gap.

Key longitudinal study on language acquisition by babies and toddlers (Hart and Risley):

1. Children START kindergarten with huge advantages or disadvantages. Why does Mr. Rothstein believe it's absurd to think we can close the Achievement Gap? Because kindergarteners start school with such a huge differential in normally acquired words. Betty Hart and Todd Risley tape recorded one full hour a month for 2 ½ years in 42 families, categorized as professional, working class, or welfare. By age 3 trends in amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of parent/child interaction were well established. Critically, children in professional homes heard 2,000 words per hour in the background, blue collar children heard 1,300 words per hour, and children in welfare homes heard 600 words per hour. . Extrapolating this verbal interaction to a year, a child in a professional family would hear 11 million words while a child in a welfare family would hear just 3 million. In fact, by age 3

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LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CALIFORNIA

February 2011

Dear League President:

Last week I attended the Redistricting CA conference in Los Angeles. The conference, put on by an alliance of organizations including the League and Common Cause, was created to train people to engage their communities in the new redistricting process. Seeing the healthy number of League members in attendance reminded me, once again, of how involved and committed our members are to every aspect of making democracy work, from beginning to end.

The League fought hard for the passage of redistricting reform in 2008. Remember how intense the Proposition 11 campaign was—the huge effort to get signatures to qualify the measure for the ballot, the emails you sent to mobilize your friends and family to vote, all the television and radio ads?

It is easy to be enthusiastic and active in the heat of a ballot measure campaign of finite duration. But it took years of patient coalition-building, legislative groundwork, and careful issue analysis to bring the initiative to the ballot in the first place. And, after the campaign is over, there has to be a lot of hard and unglamorous work done to make sure that the reform we fought so hard for is well implemented.

Now that the Citizens Redistricting Commission has begun its work, the League is focusing on educating about the new redistricting process, on training community members to take an active role, and on monitoring the work of the commission. These activities call for the steady commitment and active community engagement at which Leagues excel. I urge all of you to get involved by joining our redistricting observer corps, holding events to educate your community about how redistricting works and why it is important, and encouraging participation in the redistricting process.

The striking thing about the League is that we remain committed to the day-in, day-out work that comes before and after the election victory. The preparation and the implementation are the hard part. Our members know that. They are committed to the process. They are there for the long haul—as shown by the presence of those League members at the redistricting conference.

This kind of thoroughness, commitment, and determination are League values. There are many ways in which the League cultivates and passes on our values and our way of doing things, and our state convention is one of them. Workshops provide training and opportunities to network and learn from each other. Caucuses, speakers, and workshops inspire and energize. We share League lore and knowledge gained over the years. The way we conduct our business of adopting program, approving a budget, and electing officers and directors models the thoughtful process and civility we seek in our government. Come to convention in Ventura to learn, celebrate, and pass on the League values that make us so strong and effective!

Janis R. Hirohama, President
jhirohama@lwvc.org

LEAGUE NEWS

National – The LWVUS continues to work with national partners and state Leagues across the country to fight back voter photo identification legislation. In addition to the LWVMO testifying before its legislature, the LWVUS and coalition partners sent key legislators in Missouri a letter urging them to oppose ID legislation. If you are looking for a quick and easy way to track legislation in your state, the National Conference of State Legislators has a great online tool you can use.

State – LWVC announced that it will partner with *California Views and Forums* to produce a half-hour or hour-long broadcast and video to raise awareness about the Redistricting Commission and explain why public participation is important.

PROGRAM PLANNING RESULTS

Thirteen local League members attended the Program Planning meetings and agreed on the following: no new state study, retain all positions, and selected Voter Service, State and Local Finance, and Redistricting as the three Issues for Education and Advocacy.

No Child Left Behind

(continued from page 3)

the *children* from the professional families had a larger spoken vocabulary than the *parents* from the welfare families! These trends continue into elementary school and beyond.

2. Children START kindergarten with huge differences in their sense of self worth and belief that they can achieve. Another component of the Hart/Risley study spotlighted the quality of interaction between toddlers and their parents in the 3 groups of homes. 80% of the feedback to children in professional homes was positive. Working class children heard 50% positive comments. And, welfare children heard 80% negative comments.

So, what should we be focusing on?

Instead of punishing schools for not getting all students to proficiency, we should:

- Put our attention on high quality parenting and early childhood programs (beginning at or even before birth)
- Help every child get health, dental, and vision care (maybe at school-based health centers) so children can concentrate on their lessons, and
- Help students prepare for careers, not just college.

Join the League of Women Voters

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to all men and women of voting age who are U.S. citizens. Others are welcome to join the League as associate members.

Send your check payable to LWVCS to LWV Cupertino-Sunnyvale, P.O. Box 2923, Sunnyvale, CA 94087.

____ \$60 Individual member

Name(s): _____

____ \$90 Two members in a household

Address: _____

____ \$30 Student

City: _____ State: _____ ZIP: _____

____ Contribution \$ _____

Phone(s): _____

Email(s): _____

Membership checks are made out to LWVCS and are not tax deductible.

To make a tax-deductible donation, write a separate check to LWVCS Education Fund.

CALENDAR

February

Sat 26 9:30 AM **Education Study Event**
Campbell Congregational Church
Nelson Hall
400 W. Campbell Ave, Campbell

March

Mon 14 7 PM **Board Meeting**
Hollimon's
11155 La Paloma Drive
Cupertino, 95014

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

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FIRST CLASS