



# VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CUPERTINO-SUNNYVALE

January 2008

Volume 35 Number 6

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## The Cupertino-Sunnyvale VOTER

Published by the League of Women Voters of Cupertino-Sunnyvale.

Yearly subscriptions are \$10/year to non-members. Members subscribe through annual dues.

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## CANDIDATE FORUM

Thursday, January 10, 2008  
7:00 – 8:00 PM

## Cupertino City Council

Hear the candidates and ask your questions.

Cupertino Community Hall  
10350 Torre Avenue, Cupertino  
(between City Hall and the Library)

Forum information: [info@cs.ca.lwvnet.org](mailto:info@cs.ca.lwvnet.org)

For information about everything on your ballot visit  
[www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)

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## SUSTAINING OUR ENVIRONMENTAL QUALITY

Friday January 25, 2008  
9 AM – 12 Noon

Community Foundation Silicon Valley  
2440 West El Camino Real Suite 300  
Mountain View, 94040  
650-450-5400

What should be Santa Clara County’s sustainability indicators?

Meeting for members and public

Co-sponsored by the  
Leagues of Women Voters of Santa Clara County

## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

We had a wonderful event at the Del Monte Restaurant in Sunnyvale and really enjoyed hearing about the new Downtown from John Pilger, the Communications Manager from Sunnyvale. We're planning our next event in March and will focus on Education. Details to follow soon.

In 2008, we will have 3 elections. Please join us in the promotion of our forums and our website so more and more people become informed and take part in the election process. It should prove to be a very interesting year.

In wrapping up the year, I'd like to take a moment and thank the people that help to keep our League going - especially Roberta Hollimon, Marilyn Howard, Susan Hough, Louise Levy, Evelyn Lunstrom, Jason Spiller, and LaVerne Prentice. I'd also like to thank everyone that has helped with our forums and other events. As an organization that is dedicated to fair elections and informed voters, I'm proud to be a part of this team. I'm sure you've noticed some of the things going on in other countries like Venezuela and Russia. If every one of us ensure that we become educated and vote and help others do the same, we have a much better chance of our democracy surviving and thriving. If one chooses to let go and not bother any more, then our democracy starts to fail and special interests take over. Let's make 2008 one of the most active and productive years yet. I look forward to working along with you to help keep democracy working.

*Elaine*

## ELECTION INFORMATION

A general municipal election will be held in the City of Cupertino on Tuesday, February 5, 2008, in conjunction with the presidential primary election, to fill one council seat created by ex council member Patrick Kwok's resignation.

See page 1 for information on the Candidate Forum being held by the League.

League recommendations on the statewide ballot measures are on page 3.

An explanation of League's position on Proposition 92 (Community College governance and funding) is on page 5.

## Board Briefs

At its December meeting your board:

- Heard that a forum has been scheduled for the three candidates for Cupertino City Council.
- Learned that the County League Education Committee is encouraging Leagues to propose Education as an LWVUS study.
- Discussed arrangements for the December lunch.
- Decided to hold quarterly membership lunches.
- Heard that National Semiconductor has requested a "Pro and Con" presentation.

## Membership News

Thank you for renewing your membership: Donna and Scot Austin, Josephine Borucki, Eileen Grindeland, Norma Medlin, Barbara Rogers, George Tyson, Albert and Joan Wehde.

Thanks for including a donation with your dues: Andrea Harris.

Thank you Robert Stainton for your contribution to the Community Appeal. Thanks to Bev and Rick Olsen for donating their poll worker pay to the League.

We received a gift of from the estate of former member Virginia Smith.



# TAKING A SERIOUS LOOK AT THE “ACHIEVEMENT GAP”

by Ellen Wheeler

*Ellen is a member of localand County League of Women Voters Education Committees  
and a trustee for Mountain View Whisman School District*

In the largest gathering ever of educators in our state, over 4,000 people met in Sacramento for two days in November to attempt to understand the reasons for the “Achievement Gap” and to hear what works to combat it. State Superintendent of Instruction Jack O’Connell convened this first-ever gathering of experts and workers in the field, offering more than 100 workshops focused on four themes: Access, Culture/Climate, Expectations, and Strategies.

In his Opening Address Superintendent O’Connell showed us the stark facts: Whites and Asians score higher as a group on state tests than Hispanics and African Americans. This “gap” is present when our children start school and continues during their school years. Disturbingly, this gap cannot be explained by wealth or poverty. Low income Whites and Asians score higher as a group than middle class Hispanics and African Americans.

What can be done to close this gap and ensure academic gains by all of our students? Our keynote speakers shared their research and personal perspectives to help us understand these important questions.

Dr. Douglas Reeves delineated ten proven strategies to student success: [1] Teaching writing and note-taking, especially non-fiction writing; [2] Recognition of student achievement (“Trophy cases should line our school walls showing off excellent work by our children, not just excellent work by our athletes. After all, when all children are in 2<sup>nd</sup> grade they want to be high achieving. By 7<sup>th</sup> grade low achievers are their role models.”); [3] Alignment of standards, curriculum, assessment, and instruction; [4] Alignment of teachers based on student need, including placing our best teachers in our worst schools, and giving them the safety, time, and respect those teachers need at those low-scoring schools; [5] Modeling and mentoring of best instruction; [6] Engaging the classroom, including posting clear objectives for each lesson; [7] Deep content analysis and implementation of what works, AND ensuring that at least 90% of staff are trained on what works; [8] Monitoring progress by kids AND teachers; [9] Stop the “toxic feedback” that doesn’t work and use feedback that does have a lasting impact on student achievement. Examples of toxic feedback: zeroes for missed work; using the average or mean of all scores, instead of giving more credit for improving work; “semester killers” – the one big test or project that determines a student’s entire grade. Contrast this failure

environment with a “get it done” success model: if work is missed, make sure that work gets done and gets included in student’s grade; allow students to provide a portfolio of their best work. And lastly, [10] Ask teachers “What causes achievement?” 43% say “students” and 64% say “teachers.” When teachers believe they are empowered to make a difference, they will. Importantly, principals and superintendents should spend their time nurturing their excellent teachers.

“The Great Debate: Internal vs. External Factors in Closing the Achievement Gap” featured Dr. Chester Finn (internal) and researcher Richard Rothstein (external). Dr. Finn cited the internal workings of schools and the education system as the primary reasons for the continued achievement gap, whereas Rothstein’s position was that achievement gap is the result of larger societal problems, like no comprehensive health care system and poor housing. In fact, the No Child Left Behind Act cannot succeed when placed on top of these large societal problems, asserted Dr. Reeves.

Actor and community activist Edward James Olmos received a standing ovation for his speech. Olmos received an Oscar nomination for acting in the movie *Stand and Deliver*. His portrayal of now-famous inner city Los Angeles math teacher Jaime Escalante, and his lifetime of community work, helped attendees examine their attitudes about the achievement gap.

UCLA Professor William Ouchi, author of *Making Schools Work – A Revolutionary Plan to Get Your Children the Education They Need*, presented his follow-up research on successful models that 15 school districts are using: the Weighted Student Formula (WSF), Flat Districts, and Horizontal Schools. WSF gives extra funding for students with special needs, such as low income, special education, GATE, high mobility, and English Language Learners, stating that when money follows the student, funding is more equitable and schools get better results. Empowered horizontal schools of choice (“flat districts”) let parents choose which school is right for their child, and gives principals control of most of the money for their schools. Principals in such schools find that putting their money towards paying for lots of excellent teachers, instead of a traditional staffing structure, achieves much better results for students. Key to this success was greatly reducing student load per teacher in high schools.

## LEAGUE NEWS

**National** - Phase II of the League's Public Advocacy for Voter Protection Project is now in full swing, expanding critical statewide efforts to oppose voter disenfranchisement and improve election administration. To learn more about one issue that has a significant negative impact on voter participation, read Michael Slater's election reform feature from the current issue of the League's National Voter magazine.

**State** - The LWVC board agreed to SUPPORT, at a high level, the Voters FIRST redistricting reform initiative that will be gathering signatures for placement on the November 2008 ballot. Redistricting information can be found on the Leagues' Website at <http://ca.lwv.org/lwvc/action/redistrict/>.

**Bay Area** – The keynote presentation at Bay Area League Day, February 22, is “How the Regional Transportation Plan 2035 Can Address Climate Change.”

**County** – The Leagues of Santa Clara County are promoting “Education” as a national League study.

## THE LWVC OPPOSES PROP 92: TIME TO STOP DIGGING!

The League of Women Voters of California opposes Proposition 92, the community college governance and funding measure on the February 2008 ballot.

In light of the League's support for a community college system with sufficient resources to offer all Californians access to a quality higher education, some may ask why the League would oppose a measure that could increase funding and reinforce the college system's governance structure.

Perhaps the simplest explanation is the adage that says, “If you are in a hole, stop digging.” California has dug itself into a budget hole with what appears to be a permanent structural deficit, in which expenditures continue to exceed revenues. Unless significant changes are made, we will continue to find ourselves papering over shortfalls, even in relatively good years, and making painful cuts or going further into debt in bad years.

Proposition 98 and payment on the state debt must be paid for before any other expenditures, and the newest bond measures, added to the deficit financing bonds passed in 2004, have driven up the level of debt service. Add in all the other ballot measures that have created or expanded programs without paying for them, and there is very little money left in the General Fund for discretionary spending. In contrast, the League's positions on state and local government finance demand that we give preference to measures that *increase* the flexibility of the system, rather than tie the hands of legislators and the Governor even more when dealing with a difficult budget situation.

We strongly support California's community colleges, and we agree that there is need for systemic reform. However, we do not believe that Proposition 92 is the way to address these needs. Proposition 92 not only would mandate increased spending without regard for the overall state budget situation and without adding a new revenue source, but it also requires a cut in community college fees, even though they are low compared to other similar college systems and are waived for students with financial need. The basic problem is that we cannot support even more ballot-box budgeting without knowing what the real tradeoffs will be and who will ultimately bear the costs.

## 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 to LWV Cupertino-Sunnyvale, P.O. Box 2923, Sunnyvale, CA 94087.

\_\_\_ \$50 Individual member

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ \$75 Two members in a household

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_ Contribution \$ \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State: \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP: \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Checks made out to LWVCS are not tax deductible.