



# VOTER

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF CUPERTINO-SUNNYVALE

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## AMERICAN DEMOCRACY AT RISK: AGENDA FOR RENEWAL AND REPAIR

*Excerpts from a speech by Kay Maxwell, LWVUS President, at State Council*

President Maxwell began by saying, "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.

"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.

"Democracy is at risk when long lines and faulty voting processes keep Americans from voting and having their votes counted. Democracy is at risk when partisan gerrymandering ensures that elections are over before the people vote. Democracy is at risk when government actions threaten basic civil liberties. And, democracy is at risk when special interest money plays a dominant role. We believe we must renew and repair our democracy so that it truly works for all citizens."

She said the four items on the League's Democracy Agenda are: Election Reform, Redistricting, Civil Liberties, and Campaign Finance and Lobbying Reform. After describing the need for action in these areas and the League's activities she concluded by saying, "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, non-partisan action is essential if we're going to reduce polarization, have real dialogues on issues and get something done. Citizens across the country must get involved. For anyone here who is not yet a member of the League of Women Voters, I ask you to join us. For those of you who are members, please redouble your efforts for the values we share.

"Thomas Jefferson once observed that it is the responsibility of each generation to give new definition to American democracy. 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."

*For the full text of Maxwell's speech go to [www.ca.lwv.org/lwvonly](http://www.ca.lwv.org/lwvonly)*

## PRESIDENTS' MESSAGES

I hope all of you are having a restful summer and not melting in the heat! We tend to slow down a bit in summer, as members leave on vacation and kids are out of school, but autumn is on its way and with it, election season. Candidate forums and Pro-Con talks are some of our most important work, and there are always opportunities to help out. Speaking of helping out, while I am grateful you elected me to another term as President, I am even more grateful for the election of Elaine Manley as Co-President, and the rest of the board. We all have such busy lives that the only way to get big jobs done is to share the load. I look forward to a year of teamwork and accomplishment!

*Susan*

I am excited to work with Susan as your new Co-President this year. We are getting ready for the election coming up in November and we have a major bill on health care to learn about and get the word out over the next 12 months. We'd like your help and we'd love for you to introduce a friend or two to our group and increase our membership. I have been a member of the League for over 20 years and love the Candidates Forums and Pros and Cons. I'd like to know what your favorite part(s) of League is. I would really like to increase our number of active members this year so I hope we get a chance to talk and find what areas are of interest to you. I'm also here to serve you so please let me know if there is anything you would like me to do for our League in particular. I can be reached at [elaine.manley@comcast.net](mailto:elaine.manley@comcast.net) or 408-246-5022. I look forward to talking with you soon. :-)

*Elaine*

## LWVCS ANNUAL MEETING

Members of the LWV Cupertino-Sunnyvale League met June 3 to conduct the business of the League: electing a new board and adopting the budget for the coming year. They discussed the proposed Immigration Study and adoption by concurrence of a position on the Abolition of the Death Penalty, two items that would come up at the national convention and on which our two delegates would be voting. The general feeling was that an Immigration study was timely. There was no agreement on the Death Penalty but there was concern about adopting a position by concurrence.

*Roberta Hollimon*

## COMMUNITY APPEAL A SUCCESS

The Cupertino-Sunnyvale League's major fund raising activity is its Community Appeal. This year's appeal raised \$1,800. Thanks to the 30 members of the community and League members who helped make this activity a success with their donations. Special thanks to committee members who made it happen: Fran Grabau, Roberta Hollimon, Susan Hough, LaVerne Prentice, and Rose-Marie Twu.

## Board Briefs

At its May meeting the board:

- Appointed Susan Hough and Roberta Hollimon as its delegates to national convention and Nancy and Don Burnett and Louise and Bob Levy as delegates to Bay Area Convention.
- Agreed to support the County Parks Measure.

At its July meeting the board:

- Heard a report on "One Care Now" campaign for health care reform.
- Voted to oppose the "Santa Clara County Land Use Initiative" because it conflicts with our principle of representative government.
- Appointed Roberta Hollimon to serve as County Council Chair.

**Deleted:** ballot measures when we have a position on the issue. The decision to take a stand on issues is made by the League Board at the appropriate level of government, local, county, state, or national, after the measures have been analyzed by a committee that examines relevant League positions... Members can help in this advocacy effort by learning why the League has taken a stand and passing that information on to friends. They can become even more active by joining a campaign committee.¶

¶ "When we join the League, we each subscribe to its mission. Therefore, it is up to each of us to find a way to help fulfill that mission. What are you doing to encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government and influence public policy through education and advocacy?"

**Deleted:** rch

## Membership News

Thank you for renewing your membership: Pearl Cheng, Len Doberne, Suzanne Ford, Jo Rawlins Gilbert, Carl Hage, Anita Herrmann, Robin Holmes, Marilyn and Sandy Howard, Bob Huddleston, Louise and Bob Levy, Patricia Lisin, Ruth Mansberger, Mona Norins, and Rose-Marie Twu.

Thank you for including a contribution with your renewal: Nancy and Don Burnett, Roselyn Friccero, Jo Gordon, Roberta Hollimon, and Kristine Kelly.

Welcome new members: Connie Brookner, Marjorie Cagan and Russ Howard.

## Community Appeal

Thank you for your contribution: Joan Fredrickson, Melvin & Carol Henry, Kristine Kelly, Otto Lee, Elizabeth Mulford, and Leanne and Chuck Untulis.

## MEETING IN THE MIDDLE

The League National Convention was billed as the Meeting in the Middle this year, and indeed it seemed to be that. This was my first time at the convention, so I was struck less by the substance of what we decided than by the process. It seemed to me that action on the convention floor should be required viewing for all legislators. Here you had people discussing contentious subjects intelligently and passionately, yet maintaining a level of civility and respect that allowed for decisions on the merits of the issues.

It really did seem a US in miniature, as individual states argued for states' rights while the majority pushed for a sweeping resolution, or as passionate advocates for change argued against prudent advocates for focus. But where in public life do we see this sort of reasoned discourse, this balancing of the desire to do every good thing with the desire to do a few things excellently, this listening to and learning from other points of view?

OK, I'm waxing rhapsodic here. But you had to be there. It's a tremendously exciting experience, even inspiring.

To get down to details, the national board brought two suggested items to the agenda: a three-year study of immigration and a concurrence with the Illinois position to work for abolition of the death penalty. With a certain amount of debate, these were adopted. In addition, the convention decided to support a voter-verifiable record, reiterate our long-time support of a system of checks and balances in government, and support Internet neutrality. This last one in particular the national board asks our patience on, as it is a sufficiently complex topic that, in the absence of a study, crafting the League's public statements on the subject will need to be done carefully.

Next convention, find a way to go if you possibly can. You'll be energized and educated, and you might even come back home prepared to hold local officials to a higher standard once you've seen democracy done well.

*Susan Hough*

## STATE LEAGUE COUNCIL

"Bright Lights of the League" gathered in Sacramento in May to attend the League of Women Voters of California's (LWVC) Leadership Council.

The business of the Council is to adopt a budget for the next fiscal year and it also affords an opportunity for delegates and visitors to hear reports on League activities at the state level and to participate in workshops that develop expertise in areas of interest to the League.

President, Jackie Jacobberger, began her remarks by referring to the founding days of the League and the program the League inherited from the National American Woman Suffrage Association—a program nicknamed the "kettle of eels." Jacobberger said, "Many times during this past year, I felt like I was reaching right into the middle of that kettle and trying to figure out which one League members wanted me to grab first." She added, "At other times it seemed like I had actually been dropped into the kettle of eels and was surrounded by those writhing creatures." Fortunately, she was helped by the board, staff and many others to grab many of those eels.

During the two days of the Council, delegates learned about many of the things that had been accomplished in the first ten months of the board's term. They also learned about projects and strategies that would help them become more effective in their communities.

Government Director, Chris Carson reported on Redistricting Reform—one of the Leagues' Issues for Emphasis in this biennium. She summarized the LWVC's leadership role in advocacy leading up to the November 2005 election. She also explained how on the day following the election, the League started working to lead a coalition and put pressure on the legislature to work on an acceptable redistricting bill. This bill has been in and out of committees and is currently in negotiations to put it on the ballot.

Director Carson also reported that the League commissioned a public opinion poll that tested redistricting messages among voters. Results of the poll, funded by the LWVUS, indicate that:

- 66% prefer having a redistricting by independent commission
- 86% want an open redistricting process (and an end to backroom dealing).
- 81% want the redistricting process to keep neighborhoods together.
- 59% view the LWVC as the most reputable and trusted organization on the subject of redistricting.

During the banquet, National League President, Kay Maxwell, spoke on American Democracy at Risk. See page 1 for excerpts from her speech.

*Roberta Hollimon*

## BAY AREA LEAGUE CONVENTION

All the local Leagues in the nine Bay Area Counties, twenty-one of us, are members of the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area (LWVBA), an ILO (InterLeague Organization) and through it we work together on regional issues that affect us.

Bay Area has a Convention every two years, in which officers are elected, budget approved, and program planned. This year Nancy Burnett and Louise Levy attended, representing LWVCS.

Linda Craig, LWV South San Mateo County, was re-elected president for a 2nd term. She urged each local League to choose and send representatives to the InterLeague Network, (IN) for exchange of information among the Leagues as well as between Bay Area and local Leagues. Internet Network meets on alternate months in the North Bay area and in the South Bay area. (Fran Grabau and Louise Levy have volunteered to be our local league representatives this year.) Linda also encouraged regular reports in our VOTERs on LWVBA activities.

The Bay Area MONITOR is published by the Bay Area League's Education Fund, supported by grants and donations (about \$60,000 this year). The MONITOR reports on the various government agencies affecting the region, such as the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) and the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) and also reports on special regional matters the League is following.

Board members gave the following reports on program areas.

- **Transportation:** regional planning by agencies is starting to combine housing, transportation, and land use for new developments.
- **Water:** wetlands restoration is proceeding slowly. For safety there is a need for diligence in filtering the water going into the Bay.
- **Air:** not all areas have rules regarding wood smoke, which has been a focus at the Bay Area League level. Cupertino and Sunnyvale are among those which lack ordinances to cover wood smoke. We were urged to help to get regulations passed in our cities.
- **Housing:** all Local Leagues were requested to send the Housing Elements from their General Plans to Patty Boyle, Housing Director (P.Boyle@earthlink.net).

Based on the number of local Leagues suggesting them, the following program priorities were adopted:

- **Hetch-Hetchy Improvements and Regional Water Needs** – information and education action priority.
- **Joint Policy Committee/Smart Growth Vision** - action priority to monitor this committee, whose representatives from MTC, ABAG and BAAQMD are trying to achieve Smart Growth objectives for the region.

*Nancy Burnett and Louise Levy*

## THE WORKING PARTY FOR CHILDREN

The Working Party for Children (WPC) is a statewide network of League of Women Voters members who are Children and Family Issues activists. The WPC began in 1993 after the LWVC Board of Directors adopted the action policy on Children and Family Issues. This policy is spelled out in detail in the LWVC *Action Policies and Positions* publication.

The WPC supports action on programs and policies that assure basic human needs are met, with an emphasis on children and families and health care for all in California. Our over-arching philosophy is that **all children are entitled to safe and nurturing care; that caring for children is a societal as well as a family responsibility**, and that **programs should be supported that prevent poverty and promote self-sufficiency**.

While a core group of WPC members meets in Los Angeles, WPC supporters statewide are linked by e-mail. It is hoped that each local League will have a member on this e-list. We track bills, policies and activities in the areas of child care and development, prekindergarten,

foster care, child support, domestic violence and child abuse, children's health, juvenile justice, welfare reform and meeting basic human needs. Some of our members serve as LWVC legislative consultants, recommending measures for League support or opposition.

WPC e-mail alerts are occasionally sent out urging action by members as **individuals** on state or federal legislation on which the League has not taken a position. Members are encouraged to make contact with the staff at local offices of their elected officials, keeping them apprised of issues of our interest and concern.

WPC members attend meetings of various organizations, boards and commissions that deal with our issues. The pertinent information exchanged at our regular meetings is sent to all on our e-list. Anyone interested in joining the e-list and receiving WPC minutes and other information is asked to contact Jean F. Cohen, WPC chair, at JCohenLWV@aol.com. Please include the name of your local League as well as your telephone number and e-mail address.

*Jean Cohen*

## LWVC ENDORSES ONECARENOW CAMPAIGN TO PASS SINGLE PAYER HEALTH INSURANCE

Years of pushing forward through health care studies and prior single payer legislation have led to SB 840 (Kuehl) that provides for universal health insurance for Californians. Initiated by Health Care for All-California (HCA), this bill with 39 coauthors has passed the Senate and the Assembly Health Committee, and now is poised to pass in the Assembly. The issue of universal single payer health care is in the public view and is a top priority for the people of California. Throughout this longtime effort, the League of Women Voters of California has supported HCA's efforts, including every legislative attempt to achieve universal single payer health care.

To work toward passage of SB 840, the LWVC has endorsed the OneCareNow Campaign, recently introduced by HCA. The campaign defines, in simple terms, a unique California vision for single payer health care. OneCareNow means one plan, now. It means one standard of high quality care for all. It means everyone will be in one risk pool and will be covered by one insurance fund.

OneCareNow's organizational framework for building the movement into a major political force is the statewide petition drive and 365-city campaign. The petition drive is spreading across the state and can be accessed at [OneCareNow.org](http://OneCareNow.org). It will continue to grow as advocates and petition signers spread the word about this viable solution to the health care crisis.

The central idea of the 365-city campaign is simple. Starting this August 12, there will be an activity held every day for a year in a different town or city that will focus on education and advocacy for universal health insurance. Activists will reach out to local

governments, schools, officials, officeholders and others to grow the support. These activities will begin in small towns and culminate 365 days later in the largest city, Los Angeles, on August 12, 2007. A week later, on August 19, 2007, people from these 365 cities and throughout the state will hold a huge rally in Sacramento to call for universal health insurance.

This campaign, and especially the petition drive, is critical to building the momentum to get SB 840 to the governor's desk this year. It only takes a simple majority to pass SB 840. Intense support from constituents will move the Assembly to pass the bill. The LWVC urges Leagues to participate in the campaign at the highest level possible for their members.

Passage of SB 840 paves the way for final enactment of universal health insurance. To this end, the OneCareNow Campaign will continue after SB 840 is passed. A companion bill, SB 1784 (Kuehl), was introduced this year to provide the funding mechanism for SB 840's universal insurance fund. Senator Kuehl and other legislators are working to define the complex details that must be added before this bill can move forward. SB 1784 will require a two-thirds majority to pass.

Working closely with HCA, the LWVC's eight health care committee members are well informed on the issues. Each member has been assigned as a resource person for about nine Leagues. All League presidents will soon receive more information to provide to interested members.

For more information, please contact Barbara Storey, program director for health care, at 619-231-8231 or [bs\\_lwv004@cox.net](mailto:bs_lwv004@cox.net).

*Barbara Storey*

### Help Make Government Work 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.