



The Palo Alto *VOTER*

Vol. XXXI No. III
October 2015

The League of Women Voters of Palo Alto
www.lwvpaloalto.org

Be a Part of the LWVPA Consensus Meeting on the Constitutional Amendment Process

October 17, 9:30 am - 2:30 pm

Moldaw Residences
899 E Charleston Rd, Palo Alto

This is your opportunity to be heard regarding a possible new LWVUS position on the Constitutional Amendment Process. We will be discussing the issues and attempting to reach agreement on our response to 15 consensus questions.

Mark your calendar and get started preparing to be a part of this important decision. See Page 6 for more information.

Lunch with League:



Imagine a US Constitutional Convention

Speaker: Robert Weisberg,
Stanford Law School
Faculty Co-Director, Stanford
Criminal Justice Center

Thursday, September 10
11:45 am - 1:00 pm

Bay Café Restaurant
1875 Embarcadero Road
Buffet lunch: \$20 per person

RSVP: lwvpaoffice@gmail.com
or (650) 903-0600

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A Forum on Public Higher Education in California

The County-wide Launch of the
LWVC Education Fund Study



Featuring Keynote Speaker:

Dr. Carol Christ

Director, Center for the Study of Higher Education, UC Berkeley

Panelists

Chris Funk - Superintendent, East Side Union High School District
Loo Loo Amante - President and CEO, Associated Students SJSU
Laura Casas - Trustee, Foothill-DeAnza Community College District
Dr. Patricia Lopez - Associate Professor, SJSU, Educational Leadership

Moderator

Wade Ellis - Former Professor, West Valley Community College,
National/International Math Consultant

Saturday, September 19, 9:00 am to 11:45 am

Hearthside Room, Foothill College,
12345 El Monte Road, Los Altos Hills

Park in Lot 5 <http://www.foothill.edu/news/maps.php>

Everyone is welcome!

RSVP: league@cs.ca.lwvnet.org

The League is a broadly based, nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and involved participation in government through voter service, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Message from our President



How would you define “fairness”? Scales of Justice? Kids cutting a brownie to share? Treating others as you’d like to be treated?

The League of Women Voters of California is part of a **fairness** coalition (**Make It Fair**, www.makeitfairca.com) that seeks to close the commercial tax loopholes in Prop. 13. The group has a powerful new spokesperson, Robert Reich! I hope you will take 13 minutes to watch his instructive and entertaining video at <http://on.fb.me/1gRzWUm>. He doesn’t just *tell* why California needs to reform Prop. 13; he *shows* why.



But there is a larger **fairness challenge** than one law in one state, a challenge the whole country faces: the ability granted to the monied—people, corporations and unions—to make unlimited contributions to parties and candidates, both directly and indirectly. That’s why the 2014 LWVUS Convention approved a review of our 40-year-old Campaign Finance Position. The world has changed drastically since 1974! The review is called **Money in Politics (MIP)**.

As one of MIP’s many resources at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review> says, “*The ability of the few super-rich to dominate politics, even if not in coordination with campaigns and not by bribing officials outright, is a crisis for a nation that seeks to conduct truly fair elections in which all citizens have an equal opportunity to participate.*” Even though the Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United* affirmed **disclosure** as a “primary antidote to money in politics,” the unfortunate truth is that both the Federal Election Commission (FEC) and Congress have failed to compel such disclosure.



In a democracy whose strength depends on *every voice* being heard, **is the status quo as fair as it should be?** Can’t we do better?

The League of Women Voters needs *your* input to help bring about change. Stay tuned for our **Money in Politics Review** dates!

After doing some recommended reading and then learning more from the local Review Committee, the members of LWVPA and other Leagues across the country will answer questions posed by the national League. Once the compiled responses are analyzed, we hope that a consensus sufficient to produce a new Position will emerge. Then we’ll all be able to speak out in new ways.

If you would like to be part of the **Review Committee**, for which LWVUS has prepared the materials, please let me know! The work will be brief but vital, and enlightening!

Ellen Forbes

LWV of Palo Alto: Officers, Directors, Off-Board Roster (650) 903-0600, www.lwvpaloalto.org

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Supervisor Joe Simitian Speaks Passionately About the Buena Vista Mobile Home Park at our Summer Social



This year at our Summer Social on August 19, Supervisor Joe Simitian shared his efforts to "save Buena Vista" mobile home park -- to protect 400 residents from eviction and retain 117 units of much-needed affordable housing.

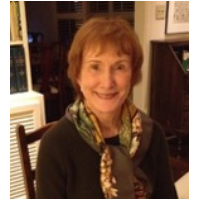
Why is it important to save the park? To answer this, Supervisor Simitian reflected on his own experiences in the 60s at Paly, where children of mechanics, teachers and child-care workers shared classes with the children of CEO's, to everyone's benefit. The 60s were a time of opportunity for those students, thanks to our excellent schools. Now in 2015, we find children in Buena Vista, largely Hispanic, enjoying the same sense of opportunity as 50 years ago. So saving the park is one way to preserve the open and diverse community that we treasure.

Prospects looked grim in January 2015 when Simitian strove to change the conversation from closure and eviction to a possible purchase. Everyone in the community contributed to this effort, notably the Board of Supervisors and our own City, who have jointly found more than \$28 million in funding, with other funds also available. The non-profit organization Caritas has stepped in with an offer to manage the park if purchase funds can be found. Money will also be needed to rejuvenate the infrastructure and individual units. At the time of the Summer Social, an offer had been made to the owner but no response had been received.

By the time you read this you may already know whether the purchase has gone through and the park has been preserved.

Jeffrey Rensch

September Board Meeting Summary



Constitutional Amendment Study.

The Board discussed planning and participation issues for an upcoming National Study of Constitutional Amendments. **The study must be completed by December 1, 2015.** The Board determined that: 1) the Palo Alto League will not combine with other Leagues; 2) **the general meeting on the study will occur on October 17;** 3) materials for the study must be provided to members through the *VOTER*, Website, and email blasts. (See page 6 for more on the study.) These decisions were based on the short time available for the study.

Money in Politics Review.

This is rather a rush job as well, although it is a Review and not a Study. The date for the consensus meeting was not determined, but the results must be submitted by February 1. **The Board plans to have a presentation on this subject for the Lunch with League event in October** and discussed possible speakers. There is a group of volunteers for this review and others are welcome.

Membership.

Russell and Fogarty presented a number of new ideas regarding membership for the Board to consider. **There will be a new member orientation in January.** Board members were asked to make a "friendly" call to existing members who have not paid their dues; this is an annual process. **The Membership Directory will be maintained on line this coming year** so that it can be updated easily for effectiveness and convenience. Booklets will be available for those who would like one. The new online membership list will be complete in January when membership is more confirmed. The non-membership information that is usually in the booklet will be available in September.

Communication Tool

Fogarty presented a plan to use Google Docs as a useful tool to provide information to League members online. This might be used for information about meetings or monthly activities. It would be kept current similar to the online membership directory.

Marlene Prendergast



Save These Dates!

Lunch with League
Topic: Money in Politics
Tuesday, October 20
11:45 am - 1 pm
Bay Café

Winter Luncheon
with Dr. Keith Humphreys
Stanford University Professor of Psychiatry and Behavioral Science
Wednesday, December 2
11:30am-1:30pm

Advocacy Report by Phyllis Cassel



LWVC

The LWVC has been following **85 bills** this legislative session covering issues of interest from education to voting rights and water. The CA legislature will finish hearing all bills by September 11. If you want to see the status on any of the bills LWVC is following go to the LWVC web site, at <https://lwvc.org/act-now/bill-status-report> and, right under 2015-2016, click on Bill Status Report. The bills are listed by League position area, i.e. hazardous waste, and bill number. The summary will list the current status of the bill and is updated every few days if action has happened. If there is a full bill to read, it will be found by clicking on the very tiny html. Letters stating League positions are listed under attachments. Below are a few comments on three of the bills LWVC supports.



SB799 (Hill) LWVC held a press conference with several coalition members including the CA State PTA, Children Now and others in support of SB799 (Hill). **SB799 will relax the restrictions, passed last year, on reserve funds for small school districts and basic aid districts** by exempting them from the budget reserve cap. The bill has passed the Senate and is being heard at the policy and service committee in the Assembly. Ellen has sent a thank-you to sponsor Hill and a request for support from Gordon.

SB32 (Hancock) Senator Hill is cosponsoring this important effort to **reduce greenhouse gases dramatically**. SB32 will require the CA Air Resources Board to approve statewide greenhouse gas emissions limits that are the equivalent to 40% below the 1990 level to be achieved by 2030 and 80% below the 1990 level to be achieved by 2050, as specified. The bill if passed and signed will authorize the state board to adopt an interim greenhouse gas emissions level target to be achieved by 2040. The bill also would state that the intent of the Legislature is for the Legislature and appropriate agencies to adopt complementary policies that ensure that long-term emissions reductions advance specified criteria. This bill is the next step following AB32 which we supported previously. A call to action was sent to local Leagues.

SCA 5 This is **the constitutional amendment to Prop 13** that will require commercial properties that are undervalued to be reassessed at full market value over a period of three years ending in 2021. The money will be designated for schools and the usual agencies supported by property taxes, and there are specific restrictions stating the legislature may not re-appropriate the money. Money for schools goes to the state for redistribution to school district by formula and money for local use goes directly to the normal agencies. The assessor is responsible for publishing the exact distribution of funds. All businesses will be exempt from tangible personal property taxes used for business purposes up to \$500,000. This exemption is designed to ease the pressure on small businesses. LWVPA has many members strongly interested in this potential constitutional amendment. If the legislature passes the bill by a 2/3 vote in each house, the amendment will then go to the 2016 ballot without the need to gather signatures. We anticipate being asked to work on the proposed amendment.

LWV Bay Area Action Report by Linda Craig, President LWVBA

Letters are posted at www.lwvbayarea.org/advocacy.html#letters.

Regional Standards for Priority Conservation Areas The League signed on with other groups to support changes in the process of designating Priority Conservation Areas (PCAs), an increase in the funding for PCAs from \$10 million to \$20 million and adjustments to other PCA requirements. Priority Conservation Areas are a key component of Plan Bay Area, as their designation allows their preservation to receive funding. We were supporting both the process and funding.



continued on page 5

More Information Available Online

BLUE HIGHLIGHTS in the VOTER are linked directly to pertinent websites.

If you are not receiving this VOTER in a PDF format, you can go online to www.lwvpaloalto.org/VOTER.html to access a PDF version. To start receiving the VOTER as a PDF via email send us a message at lwvpaoffice@gmail.com

LWVPA League Members Welcome New Citizens at August Ceremony

About 1,200 people from 50 countries became new citizens on August 20, 2015, at the Heritage Theater in Campbell. Once people become American citizens they have the opportunity to apply for an American passport and to sign up to vote. LWVPA League members were there to help with the Voter Registration activity.

In August there were three sessions. I wish to thank **Jean Lythcott, Mary Alice Thornton, Carol Stevens, Ellen Forbes, Nancy Peterson and Jackie Costanzo** who organized volunteers from the Southwest Santa Clara Valley League.

If you think this sounds like something you would enjoy doing **there is another opportunity on Thursday, September 17, 2015.**

There is also the opportunity to help **register new voters at the Palo Alto Veterans Hospital on September 22, from 10 to 2 PM** as we celebrate National Voter Registration Day.

Please contact me.

Liza Taft, Voter Registration

LWVBA Action Report Continued from page 4

Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Refinery Rules The LWV Bay Area sent a letter to the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) supporting its Five Point Action Plan to Address Refinery Emissions. In particular, the LWVBA supported the open process the Board used to involve the public in the consideration of new regulations, which will implement new health standards, and have a goal of reducing refinery emissions by 20%. The new regulations will include permit review for any existing refinery experiencing changes in its crude oil composition, and will add new measures designed to limit methane emissions.

Bay Area Air Quality Management District

Regional Climate Action Strategy LWVBA spoke on July 29, 2015, in support of the BAAQMD Climate Action Strategy. We were pleased that the District is moving forward to regulate greenhouse gases within the region, and agree with the priorities of energy efficiency, electrification and moving toward low/no-carbon energy sources. Sources of GHG within the Bay Area have been documented, by production source, and we look forward to the development of new rules and regulations.

News from New Voices For Youth



This fall, New Voices for Youth (NV4Y) looks forward to continuing its collaboration with Youth Community Services (YCS) as Project VOICE at Menlo-Atherton High School (M-A.) With support from a second year of funding from the YWCA of the Mid-Peninsula, students will produce a video about access to higher education, with particular focus on barriers to access for young women of color from underrepresented communities. Branessa Kunitz, who returns to M-A as the leader from YCS, will offer workshops for M-A students, drawing on her experience as staff at UC Berkeley admissions doing outreach to underrepresented communities.

NV4Y is replacing Chris Lawes who resigned at the end of the school year to pursue other projects. We are fortunate to have hired Shakeam Campbell who has been working at Urban Roots in Oakland as he completes his Masters in Graphic Design. At Urban Roots, Shakeam led a group of youth learning graphic design who created a poster campaign with the slogan (and the sponsorship of) "DetermiNation". The posters they created received wide circulation in Oakland.

At Siena Youth Center (SYC), as part of the summer program, New Voices' alumnae from M-A, Nimsi Garcia and Erendira Parra, led a six-week video program in which students filmed, edited and presented profile pieces. This fall at SYC NV4Y, Director Ana Angel will lead a class for youth who are new to video. She will be assisted by a couple of Siena students who participated in the Siena video academy. NV4Y still wants to hire a more senior student assistant who can work at M-A, Siena and at the weekend workshops.

The New Voices Steering Committee wants to grow! Please think about your availability to join us as we continue to nurture this important program at the beginning of its second decade!

Co-Chairs

Sheila Botein, LWV South San Mateo County

Veronica Tincher, LWV Palo Alto

THE LEAGUE CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT PROCESS STUDY

League members are listened to when we speak on an issue. Governmental entities recognize that we have studied the subject being addressed and represent the thinking of a substantial number of our members. Leagues study issues of the members' choosing at the local, regional, state, and national levels.

The framers of the Constitution deliberately made it difficult but not impossible to add amendments. A 2/3 vote of both houses of Congress must approve a proposed amendment, which then must be ratified by 3/4 of the states. These stringent requirements have forced Congresses to take the legislative route to accomplish their agendas.

Restraint is important because constitutional amendments bind not only our generation, but future generations as well. Thomas Jefferson warned that governments long established should not be changed for light and transient causes.

States, on the other hand, have liberally added amendments to their constitutions, many of a legislative nature. State amendments generally need a simple majority for passage and can be changed by another simple majority vote of constituents.

At present, we have 25 operable amendments. Ten are the Bill of Rights; others extend the voting franchise; some were added during the Reconstruction Period after the Civil War; and two cancel each other out: Prohibition (a failed attempt to change social policy) and its Repeal.

Recent years have seen an explosion of proposed constitutional amendments, and there have been more than 11,000 – some duplicates – since 1789. However, no newly proposed amendment has been adopted since 1971.

Technically, some unratified amendments are still “out there” and could be ratified because they face no time limits for state ratification. The chances seem slim-to-none for these three: a 1790 Congressional Apportionment Amendment concerning the number of legislators in the House of Representatives, the 1810 Titles of Nobility Amendment, and the 1861 Corwin Amendment to preserve the Union by means since made unnecessary.

There are other proposed amendments whose purpose has been addressed to some degree by legislation, such as the Child Labor Protection Amendment. The Fair Standards Labor Act was subsequently passed by Congress in 1938 and upheld by the U.S. Supreme Court in 1941.

Some more recently circulated amendments have a Congressionally-stipulated time limit for state ratification. Two examples are the Equal Rights Amendment and District of Columbia Voting Rights.

Included in the many amendments proposed but not circulated over the past few years are ones concerning a balanced budget, flag desecration, campaign finance, religious freedom, and



procedures for imposing new taxes. The first two have passed the House, and a version of the balanced budget amendment failed to pass in the Senate by a single vote. Others have considerable support: victims' rights, redefining U.S. citizenship, and an amendment to ease

requirements for future amendments. Since amendments are resolutions of Congress, those that receive the necessary 2/3 approval may be circulated without presidential agreement.

Both Republicans and Democrats have reasons for promoting amendments. The former want to seize the opportunity to implement changes denied them for several generations by being in the Congressional minority, and the latter are frustrated by the relationship between money and speech. Both parties have some problems with the Supreme Court's activism.

Our League study will discuss and reach consensus on 15 questions at our October 17 consensus meeting. The topics divide themselves into 3 parts as follows:

How to evaluate amendments proposed by Congress for additions to the U.S. Constitution;

The process of creating a U.S. Constitutional Convention based on Article V, initiated by the states. League's possible opposition to an Article V Constitutional Convention because of unresolved questions about the powers and process of such a convention;

How League should balance the practices agreed to in evaluating a proposed constitutional amendment in Part I with those examining the process in Part II. Should the evaluation guidelines from Part I and the process criteria from Part II always be applied, or may they be set aside in the overall context of any particular amendment proposal?

The study committee will present background information before members discuss the consensus questions at our October 17 consensus meeting. The Committee members are Liz Brownell, Betty Gerard, Diane Morin, Doris Petersen, and Joyce Tavrow, Chair.

For more information, including a list of the specific consensus questions, link to the LWVUS web site: <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/constitutional-amendment-study>

Joyce Tavrow, Committee Chair



Welcome, New Members!

**Alison Cormack
Ray Jadwin
Elizabeth May**


**We are so glad you have
joined the League!**

Santa Clara County Leagues of Women Voters present
SCC Juvenile Justice Public Forum
Wednesday, October 28, 11 am to 12:45 pm
Mountain View City Hall Council Chambers
**Keynote speaker: Judge Patrick Tondreau,
Chief Justice SCC Juvenile Court**
How the County Juvenile Justice System addresses
the needs and challenges of the youth / families
within its system, and for youth in the county.

Register New Citizens to Vote

**New Citizen Ceremonies in Campbell.
Thursday, September 17.**

**National Voter Registration Day
Palo Alto Veterans Hospital
Tuesday, September 22.**

The LWVPA Book Club
will meet on
Friday, October 23, at 10 am
to discuss:
“The Unwinding”
by George Packer

An inner history of the new America.
The meeting is at the home of Doris Petersen.
The LWVPA Book Club meets every two months. Non-
members interested in discussing the current book are
welcome.

Thank you to all the board and off-board members who reviewed this *VOTER*, and for the invaluable proofreading of **Ellen Forbes** and **Betty Gerard**. And thank you to **Liza Taft** for distribution and **Megan Fogarty** and **Lynne Russell** for labels.

Thank You!

Sue Hermsen, VOTER Editor

TELL US WHAT YOU THINK

Watch for our Annual Survey in your Email!

LWVPA is going digital! This year you will be able to complete our Annual Survey through SurveyMonkey. E-mail requests are coming soon.

Visit our Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/pages/League-of-Women-Voters-of-Palo-Alto/256504167760182?ref=bookmarks> - “Like us” and share with your friends. Help spread the word. Thanks!



**It’s easy to join the LWVPA —Do it now! You will be glad you did.
Joining at the local level makes you a member at all levels:
National, State, Bay Area and Palo Alto.
Men are encouraged to join. Dues grants are available.
For more information, call the League office (650) 903-0600.**

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ Zip _____

Phone (day) _____ (evening) _____ email _____

Annual membership: \$70. Additional membership, same address: \$35. Student membership: \$35.
Mail check with this form to LWVPA, 3921 E. Bayshore Road, Suite 209, Palo Alto, CA 94303.
Membership dues to the LWVPA are not tax deductible.

League of Women Voters of Palo Alto
3921 E. Bayshore Road, Suite 209
Palo Alto, CA 94303
(650) 903-0600

Address Services Requested

Dated
Material

How to contact your elected officials:

UNITED STATES

President Barack Obama (202) 456-1414
<http://www.whitehouse.gov/CONTACT/>

Senator Dianne Feinstein (415) 393-0707
<http://feinstein.senate.gov> - click "email me"

Senator Barbara Boxer (415) 403-0100
<http://www.boxer.senate.gov/>

Rep. Anna Eshoo (650) 323-2984
<http://eshoo.house.gov/>

CALIFORNIA

Governor Jerry Brown (916) 445-2841
<http://gov.ca.gov/home.php>

Senator Jerry Hill (650) 212-3313
<http://sd13.senate.ca.gov/contact-us>

Assemblymember Rich Gordon (650) 691-2121
<http://asmdc.org/members/a24/>

SANTA CLARA COUNTY

Supervisor Joe Simitian (650) 965-8737
joe.simitian@bos.sccgov.org

OTHER AREAS in CALIFORNIA

Locate your elected officials with your street address
<http://findyourrep.legislature.ca.gov>

CALENDAR

Thur, Sep 10, 11:45 am-1 pm
Lunch with League
Bay Café Restaurant

Thur, Sep 17
10:30-11:30 am and
1:30-2:30 pm
Naturalization Ceremonies
Heritage Theater, Campbell

Sat, Sep 19, 9-11:45 am
A Forum on Public Higher
Education in CA
Hearthside Room, Foothill
College

Tues, Sep 22, 10 am-2 pm
Registering Voters
Palo Alto Veterans Hospital

Tues, Oct 6, 7-9:30 pm
Board Meeting
Prendergast

Wed, Oct 7
November VOTER deadline

Sat, Oct 17
9:30 am-2:30 pm
Consensus Mtg -
Constitutional Amendment
Process
Moldaw Residences

Tues, Oct 20, 11:45 am-1 pm
Lunch with League
Bay Café Restaurant

Wed, Oct 28, 11 am-12:45 pm
SCC Juvenile Justice Public
Forum
Mountain View City Hall

Tues, Nov 3, 7-9:30 pm
Board Meeting
Thornton

Wed, Dec 2, 11:30 am-1:30 pm
Winter Luncheon
Garden Court Hotel