



# The Palo Alto *VOTER*

Vol. XXX No IX  
May 2015

The League of Women Voters of Palo Alto  
[www.lwvpaloalto.org](http://www.lwvpaloalto.org)

## Come to your LWVPA Annual Meeting!

**Speaker:**  
**Betsy Bechtel**  
Board of Trustees  
Member,  
Foothill-DeAnza  
Community College  
District



### “The Community College Challenge Today”

**Saturday, May 9**  
**9:30 am - 12:00 pm**  
**Lucie Stern Community Center**  
**Community Room**  
**1305 Middlefield Rd, Palo Alto**

LWVPA members will enjoy a light continental breakfast and:

- Vote on the budget for 2015-16
- Elect Officers, Directors and the Nominating Committee for 2015-16
- Adopt LWVPA Positions, Programs and Issues for Emphasis for 2015-16
- Provide directions to the new Board

Look for your Annual Meeting Kit in your mailbox soon.

RSVP to [lwvpaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:lwvpaoffice@gmail.com) or call the office at 903-0600.

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### Lunch with League:

**Vic Ojakian**

**Behavioral Health: from Santa Clara County to the State of California Programs**



**Tuesday, April 21**

**11:45 am - 1:00 pm**

**See page 6**

## Message from our President

The first day of May is celebrated in many parts of the world as **May Day, Labour Day, International Workers Day, or under the less-familiar U.S. label of “Law Day,”** so named in 1958 by President Eisenhower and still in effect. Each year the American Bar Association designates a theme for Law Day, and this year’s is **“Magna Carta: Symbol of Freedom Under the Law.”** The theme commemorates the 800<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the signing of the Great Charter between England’s unpopular King John and a group of rebellious barons.



“That’s all well and good,” you might be saying, “but what’s it got to do with me?”

As it happens, plenty! Enjoy your freedom of speech? Like your Fifth Amendment right to due process? You can thank those defiant barons whose demands back in 1215 led to the Magna Carta—which in turn laid the foundation for our constitutionally-protected privileges today.

For America’s founding fathers, the Magna Carta symbolized the “rule of law,” the idea that a government *is bound by the law in dealing with its people*. The promise of the Fifth Amendment to our Constitution that no person shall be “deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law” paraphrases the Magna Carta’s 39th chapter. The exhibit of the Magna Carta at the National Archives in Washington, D.C. calls the document the precursor to the freedoms written into our Declaration of Independence, the United States Constitution, and the Bill of Rights.

Just as LWVPA celebrates the rule of law, we also take seriously the privilege and responsibility to vote for those who will make our laws, statutes and regulations. Occasionally we vote on ballot measures or initiatives instead of, or in addition to, candidates. A good example is taking place right here, right now: residents of the Palo Alto Unified School District are being called on to *vote by mail* on **Measure A, the parcel tax for schools**. Please read your *Voters Guide* when it arrives from the League and be sure to mail in your informed vote by May 5.

And then come to the **LWVPA Annual Meeting on May 9!** In keeping with this year’s emphasis on education, our Annual Meeting speaker will be **Foothill-De Anza Community College District Trustee Betsy Bechtel**. We will meet in the lovely Community Room at the Lucie Stern Center, beginning at 9:30 a.m. and ending at noon. The board nominations include some exciting new folks who will bring fresh perspectives and skills to the League, so please plan to be there to meet and welcome them.

*Ellen Forbes*

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

#### OFFICERS

**Ellen Forbes**  
*President*  
[president@lwvpaloalto.org](mailto:president@lwvpaloalto.org)

**Bonnie Packer**  
*1st Vice Pres., VOTER Editor*  
[bbpacker@comcast.net](mailto:bbpacker@comcast.net)

**Phyllis Cassel**  
*2nd Vice Pres., Advocacy*

**Marlene Prendergast**  
*Secretary*

**Doris Petersen**  
*Treasurer*



#### DIRECTORS

**Veronica Tincher**  
*New Voices; Smart Voter Liaison; LAT support*

**Trina Lovercheck**  
*Voter Service*

**Christine Logan**  
*Membership*

**Mary Alice Thornton**  
*Program Planning; League-a-Thon*

**Betty Gerard**  
*Publicity*

**Liza Taft**  
*Voter Registration; VOTER Distribution; Health Care*

#### OFF-BOARD

**Nancy Olson**  
*eAction Alert*

**Arnold Petersen**  
*Budget Committee Chair*

**Diane Rolfe**  
*Community Outreach; Education*

**Sigrid Pinsky**  
*Education*

**Ginger Johnson**  
*Higher Education*

**Jeff Rensch**  
*Housing and Transportation*

**Luise Maier**  
*Hospitality*

**Pat McGuire**  
*Webmaster/LAT support*

**Karen Sundback**  
*Water/Natural Resources*

*Nominating Committee*  
**Alice Smith, Chair**  
**Megan Swezey Fogarty**  
**Pat Saffir**  
**Christine Logan**  
**Doris Petersen**

## April Board Meeting Summary

**Increase in State and National Member Dues.** The State League budget anticipates an increase in dues per member of \$2.50 over the next two years. The National League will increase its dues by \$1 per member per year. The Board discussed the impact of this on members of smaller Leagues that may not have the necessary funds. The Board will consider this issue again in May so our delegates to the State Convention will have a position as a basis for discussion.

**Buena Vista Mobile Home Park Housing Issue.** The Palo Alto League is supporting the retention of affordable housing in the form of a trailer park at the Buena Vista site in Palo Alto. This is a controversial issue that has activated many housing organizations in the past months. The Board approved a letter to be presented to the City Council on April 13 regarding this issue.

**Program Activity.** The Board discussed our League's activities in program this past year in order to assess what is left to complete, given the accomplishments (or lack thereof) of the various agencies we speak to. This will be a subject for our Annual Meeting discussion and is discussed elsewhere in this *Voter*.

**Strutting Your Stuff at the LWV California Convention.** California Leagues are asked to tout their accomplishments in the past year at the Convention to raise awareness of the magnitude of League action throughout the State. Our Board enjoyed highlighting our many activities that we could brag about at the Convention. Examples: LAT funds at the \$15,000 level,

New Voices applying for a Yellow Rose Award for our outreach project about voting to youth and parents, our winter luncheon meeting with School Superintendent Max McGee that 110 people attended, and the voter registration efforts at the Veterans Administration and at naturalization ceremonies.



*Marlene Pendergast, Secretary*



### Mail-in Ballot Election for PAUSD Parcel Tax Measure A

#### Dates to remember:

- You must be registered to vote by **April 20**.
- All registered voters will receive a ballot the week of **April 6**.
- The last day to request a mail-in ballot is **April 28**.
- The mail-in ballot must be postmarked by **Election Day, May 5**, to be counted.

See Page 4 for more information about this important measure.

## League of Women Voters of California 65th Convention 2015

**May 15-17 in San Diego**  
**Act NOW to get a spot!**



Great news! We will probably have one unspoken-for delegate spot for the Convention next month. The whole event takes place May 15-17, and I want to encourage you to take advantage of this opportunity. League conventions are always fun and super-educational—and this one will be in beautiful San Diego. LWVPA pays for delegates' airfare, hotel and Convention registration, so your only expenses will be meals and whatever League Marketplace items might be just too tempting to resist.

All the Convention info is available through the links at <https://lwvc.wordpress.com/2015-registration/>. Please let me know by April 21 if you would like to join our other delegates. Believe me, it's a great chance!

*Ellen Forbes*



## Advocacy Report By Phyllis Cassel

### LWV Palo Alto

**Measure A, the PAUSD Parcel Tax** At the March 3 Board meeting the board approved signing the ballot measure in favor of Measure A, the school parcel tax. The Measure A campaign needs callers, money, signs placed on street curbs and advertising. To learn more about the campaign or to volunteer go to the Measure A web site at <http://supportpaloaltoschools.nationbuilder.com>

**Composting Food Scraps** The Board sent a statement to the Palo Alto City Council encouraging the Council to approve adding food scraps to the compost containers and approving the expenditure of \$387,000 to establish the program. There will be an increase in the charge of about 6.1%, for a 32-gallon garbage service or about \$2.32 cents.

**Buena Vista Mobile Home Park** LWVPA sent a letter on March 4 thanking James Keene, the city manager, for setting aside \$8,000,000 towards purchase of the property, conditional upon Palo Alto Council approval of the funds at a future date. Several of our members attended the Buena Vista demonstration at City Hall on March 9. At the Council meeting on April 13 a hearing was held to decide if the financing package offered to the residents meets city standards. LWVPA Board voted at its April 7 meeting to send another letter encouraging the city to try to negotiate the purchase of Buena Vista to preserve it for affordable housing.

### LWV California

**“Motor Voter” Registration** The 20-year-old federal Motor Voter law (National Voter Registration Act) was designed to make voter registration easy and accessible at state DMVs and other designated agencies. Recognizing that California’s DMV falls far short of that goal, last month the LWVC joined in sending a [notice letter](#) to Secretary of State Alex Padilla, urging him to work with the DMV to comply fully with the law. Conversations are now taking place that we hope will avoid the need for litigation.

On a related note, election administration circles are buzzing over the [Secretary of State’s interest](#) in the new Oregon law that makes registration automatic when someone gets or renews a driver’s license. LWVC has [pledged](#) to work toward making voter registration in California a simple, automated process while protecting those who do not wish to or are ineligible to register.

**Money in Politics** The focus of [LWVC advocacy in Money in Politics](#) is shifting as we emphasize the

Cal-Access disclosure system this year. We are participating in a working group that will share information and practices and make recommendations for rebuilding Cal-Access. (Cal-Access is the procedure used to report political donations and for the community at large to access that information.) LWVC will support a more limited number of bills in the legislature, in part because legislators are turning their attention to other issues. Please remember that decisions on state legislation are the responsibility of the state League legislation committee and the LWVC Board.

**Think Before You Ink** Signatures are already being gathered for initiatives on the November 2016 ballot. People are often asked to sign “just to get it on the ballot.” The League encourages you NOT to sign unless you think something really deserves to be on the ballot. Remember, your signature carries a lot more weight this year as, due to the low election turnout, it takes fewer signatures to qualify.



### VOTE YES for Measure A, the PAUSD Parcel Tax

*Note: This is a 100% mail-in ballot and the ballot must be post marked by May 5.*

Measure A continues the current Palo Alto Unified School District parcel tax with an increase in the tax from \$638 per parcel per year to \$758 per parcel per year. The tax will increase an additional 2% per year for 6 years. At 6 years the tax will end unless it is renewed with a new vote. There will be independent citizens’ oversight and a mandatory annual report to ensure that funds are spent properly. Seniors may opt out of the parcel tax and PAUSD will offer exemptions to all eligible groups. Passage of a parcel tax requires a two-thirds vote. LWVPA has endorsed the measure and signed the argument in favor of the tax. Our support is based upon the LWV California education position. The purpose for the increased parcel tax income is to make up for loss of \$1.8 million from the Cubberley lease, and the loss of income from State funding for special programs, to keep class sizes in elective classes below 30 and to provide increased programming for special services such as pre-K programs. The increase in property taxes that the school district is receiving will approximately cover the increase in the annual contribution required for the pension fund. The current parcel tax money is used to keep class sizes down. It pays for 66 full-time equivalent teachers which will continue if the parcel tax passes.

**Vote yes! Vote to provide the best education to each of our students!**

## The LWVPA Board Recommends the Following Local Program for 2015-16



### Non-recommended Programs

If a member of the LWVPA wishes to submit a Program item for the 2015-16 year that is not listed here, it must be submitted in writing, by April 30, to the LWVPA Board of Directors. It will then be listed as a non-recommended Program proposal at the Annual Meeting. The non-recommended Program proposal can be considered for inclusion in the Program by a majority vote of the members and adopted by a two-thirds vote of those present and voting at the Annual meeting.

#### Recommended LWV Palo Alto Program

Review local, county and state education positions for advocacy regarding the following education issues: early childhood education, Pre K-12 focus on emotional health, and civil rights issues in education (such as rape and bullying).

#### Recommended LWV Santa Clara County Program

Propose focus on advocacy and education to improve facilities and services for children at risk.

#### Recommended LWV California State Program

Recommend LWVC emphasis on Proposition 13 Commercial Property Reform

## LWV Palo Alto Board Recommended Bylaws Change

### Article 1X, Section 2

Annual Meeting. An annual meeting shall be held between March 15 and ~~June 1~~ *June 30*, the exact date to be determined by the board.

## Lunch with Heidi Emberling

### The Importance of Early Childhood Education



With education at all levels a primary interest for the League of Women Voters, Heidi Emberling, vice president of the Palo Alto Unified School District Board, discussed Early Childhood Education (ECE) at the Lunch with League on March 17. With a background as an Early Childhood Education Specialist, she warned that today “We may be creating a generation of kids who will not enjoy reading” due to fixed expectations that run counter to the way kids grow and learn. She sees “a seismic shift in pedagogy” in which academic pursuits are favored over play and social development. Play, she says, can be used to teach each child individually.

Legally, California doesn’t require school attendance until age 6. In practice, however, nearly all 5-year-olds attend kindergarten and half of the 3-to-4-year-olds go to pre-school. Currently all school districts are required to provide transitional kindergarten (TK), which is year one of a two-year kindergarten. The birthday age at which youngsters are accepted into kindergarten was changed in 2010 when at the request of 200 local teachers, then-State Senator Joe Simitian successfully introduced legislation to change the cut-off date from December 2 to September 1, phased in over three years. (Emberling noted that some parents were “red-shirting” their youngsters to hold them back a year in order to gain the advantage of added maturity.) Although California now offers Transitional Kindergarten, there

is now still no Early Educational Credential. In Palo Alto Unified, however, a specific professional development day is being offered to kinder and TK teachers.

Palo Alto Unified also created a “Springboard to Kindergarten” program at Greendell School which provides a 6-month kindergarten-readiness program for any child who has not experienced pre-school by the time he or she is registered for kindergarten.

With hundreds of long-term research studies promoting the positive effects of early learning, Emberling asked “Why aren’t we funding ECE as a nation?” The only ECE legislation passed in California was through an initiative drive (First 5 California), and another initiative in 2006 for Universal Preschool lost. Audience members who asked what actions could be taken were told that letters to the editor are one way to raise awareness for the need and great benefits to society of ECE.

In summary, Emberling urged, “In Palo Alto, let’s consider the importance of emotional, sociological and physical growth of the child from birth all the way through the school years.”

*Submitted by Betty Gerard*

## Save These Dates for Voter Registration Activities

This year we will help the Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters register New Citizens on

- Thursday, August 20 and
- Thursday, September 17



There are usually two ceremonies and possibly a third on each of those days.

**National Voter Registration Day is Tuesday, September 22.** On this day we plan to register voters at the **Palo Alto Veterans Hospital** as we have in the past.

I will be getting in touch with members who have helped before and I welcome anyone else who would like to help.

*Liza Taft*



**Our Palo Alto 2030 Summit Meeting on the Palo Alto Comprehensive Plan**  
**May 30, 8:30 am - 6:00 pm**  
**Mitchell Park Community Center**

League members are encouraged to attend.

Let's keep the summit's vision positive and solution-oriented.

Join the conversation on the future of our City.  
Share your ideas for Palo Alto now and in 2030.

Register at:  
<https://www.eventbrite.com/e/our-palo-alto-2030-the-summit-tickets-15744923490>

## LWVPA Committee on Public Higher Education in California

Our committee will reconvene in the summer. Contact Ginger Johnson if you are interested in joining us. Meanwhile, here's some food for thought:



The state has a program called Awards for Innovation in Higher Education. These awards cover all three branches of the state's higher education: community colleges, California State Universities and University of California campuses. The goals of the program are to

- Increase the amount of bachelor's degrees achieved.
- Let students achieve bachelor's degrees within four years after starting higher education.
- Let students transfer between California schools more easily.

Ideas that are being considered are numerous aspects of college life, from counseling to replacing textbooks or creating advanced outreach programs for high school students. One interesting idea includes a partnership between San Francisco State and San Francisco City College to develop small learning communities to help students during their first two years of college and create a clear transferring path.

Those of us on the LWVPA committee will be reading about initiatives like these as we prepare for our next meeting.

*Ginger Johnson, Committee Chair*

### Lunch with League

**Vic Ojakian**

**Tuesday, April 21, 11:45 am - 1:00 pm**

**Bay Café Restaurant, 1875 Embarcadero Road  
Palo Alto**

**Buffet lunch will be \$20 per person.**

**RSVP: [lwvpaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:lwvpaoffice@gmail.com)**

**or (650) 903-0600**

### Behavioral Health: from Santa Clara County to the State of California Programs

Victor Ojakian became involved in issues revolving around suicide after the death of his son Adam. As an advocate for better awareness and care around suicide issues, he and his wife Mary have become experts on the subject. In doing so he has become immersed in the general mental health issues in Santa Clara County. Vic served two terms on the Palo Alto City Council and has served as Mayor. He was a member of the Planning and Transportation Commission. In 2010 he and his wife Mary received a Tall Tree award. He is a long-time member of the LWV Palo Alto.

To link to the **BLUE HIGHLIGHTED** websites in the VOTER, you need to read this in a PDF format on a computer. Go to our website at [www.lwvpaloalto.org/VOTER.html](http://www.lwvpaloalto.org/VOTER.html) or email [lwvpaoffice@gmail.com](mailto:lwvpaoffice@gmail.com) to start receiving the VOTER as a PDF via email.

## Welcome, New Members!



**Beth Bunnenberg  
Diane Morin**

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

*Thank  
You!*

To the Voters Guide Crew;  
Writers: Joyce Tavrow and the Paly  
High students: Emma Chiu, Mary  
McNamara and Clara de Martel.

Readers and typo finders: Bonnie Packer, Ellen  
Forbes and Phyllis Cassel.

Thank you all for doing a great job!

*Veronica Tincher*

Please go to 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. It is that simple. Then when you get a message from our page, please share that message with your friends. That is how you can help spread the word. Thanks!



Hi, I'm Sue Hermsen and this is my trial run as *VOTER* editor!

I'd like to extend my thanks to all the board and off-board members who reviewed this *VOTER*, and for the invaluable proofreading of **Ellen Forbes, Betty Gerard and Trina Lovercheck**, and a special thanks to **Bonnie Packer** for her help and patient guidance in assembling this issue.

*Sue Hermsen*



## The LWVPA Book Club

will meet on

**Friday, June 5, at 10 am**

to discuss

**"Alexander Hamilton"**

by Ron Chernow

Believe it or not, this has been turned into a musical and is running off-Broadway with great acclaim!

The meeting is at the home of Veronica Tincher.

**Visitors Welcome!**



**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**

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**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](mailto:joe.simitian@bos.sccgov.org)

**LWVC GUIDE TO GOVERNMENT**

Locate your elected officials with your street address

<http://www.guidetogovernment.org/>

**CALENDAR**

**Thu, Apr 16, 7-8:30 pm**  
**New Member Orientation**  
Prendergast

**Tues, Apr 21,**  
**11:45 am-1 pm**  
**Lunch with League**  
Bay Café Restaurant

**Tues, May 5, 7-9:30 pm**  
**Board Meeting**  
Logan

**Sat, May 9, 9:30 am-noon**  
**Annual Meeting**  
Lucie Stern Community Center

**Wed, May 20, noon**  
**VOTER deadline**

**May 15-17**  
**LWVC Convention**  
San Diego

**Sat, May 30 8:30 am-6 pm**  
**Our Palo Alto 2030**  
**Summit Meeting**  
Mitchell Park Community Center.

**Tues, Jun 2, 7-9:30 pm**  
**Board Meeting**  
Tincher

**Fri, June 5, 10 am**  
**Book Club**  
Tincher