



The California VOTER



SPRING 2008

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The State Budget—The Crisis You Can't Ignore

Everything we care about is undermined or made possible by the state budget. In this era of budget deficits, the time has come to make real changes in the budget process. Cutting spending alone is not enough; everything should be on the table, including raising revenues through tax increases and elimination of tax expenditures (deductions, credits, and the like). Our 2007 Convention resolution about eliminating the ongoing budget deficit only recognized a \$3 to 5 billion problem—it is now \$16 billion! The challenge is that these funding issues cut across all of our League positions. ★



Visit our Web site www.lwvc.org for what you need to know about this crucial issue.

Act Now!

Join our campaign to put redistricting reform on the November ballot by supporting the California Voters FIRST initiative! Read more online: www.CAVotersFIRST.org.

WATCH YOUR MAIL: All members are about to receive a petition. Sign it, collect three more signatures, and return it by April 14!

WE NEED YOUR HELP: Contact Advocacy Assistant Maggie Young at myoung@lwvc.org or go to www.lwvc.org.

Redistricting Reform: What You Need To Know

Key problems:

- ★ Under current law, California legislators draw their own political districts. Allowing politicians to draw their own districts is a serious conflict of interest that harms voters.
- ★ Not surprisingly, 99% of incumbent politicians were reelected in the districts they had drawn for themselves in the last election. In the election before that, 100% of incumbents were reelected.
- ★ Politicians draw districts that serve their interests, not those of our communities. For example, cities such as Long Beach, San Jose and Fresno are divided into multiple

—continued on page 5



LWVC President Janis R. Hirohama and Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger at a redistricting rally for California Voters FIRST.

The California VOTER

Spring 2008

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Editor: Jennifer Waggoner

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League has two separate and distinct roles. The League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, which conducts our voter service and citizen education activities, is a 501(c)(3) corporation, a nonprofit educational organization. The League of Women Voters of California, a membership organization, conducts action and advocacy and is a nonprofit 501(c)(4) corporation.

The League never supports or opposes any political party or candidate. However, the League is wholeheartedly political and works to influence policy through education and advocacy. In an era of proliferating and powerful special interests, the League's advocacy in the public interest is increasingly recognized as an essential voice of democracy.

With membership comes the opportunity to work with well-informed, grassroots activists on a broad range of public policy concerns. The League provides members with opportunities to learn valuable, transferable skills, including how to organize and run productive meetings, write more effectively, speak in public, organize and run effective campaigns, conduct research studies, and coordinate general civic leadership training.

The League invites your comments, letters, articles, and book reviews. They may be sent, faxed or e-mailed to the LWVC.

The California VOTER is published by the League of Women Voters of California.

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Leg Committee: Your Priorities in Action!

People often ask how the League of Women Voters of California decides to take action on state legislation or on policy decisions of state boards and commissions.

Before Action: Study and Adoption of a Position

All League action begins with the adoption of a position. A League position is established after members have studied an issue and achieved consensus on policies and practices that would best serve the public interest. Action, therefore, begins with broad member understanding of an issue and agreement as to how we want it to be resolved. The League does not take action on issues on which it has no position.



Linda Craig, LWVC Advocacy Director, speaking at a workshop.

★ Read our positions online by selecting "Stands on Issues" at: www.lwvc.org.

Priorities for Advocacy from Convention

Realistically, we cannot be active on all positions at all times. Delegates to the LWVC Convention in 2007 chose the following priorities for the League's state advocacy this biennium: health care, education, and redistricting. This means that these issues are the major focus of the LWVC for taking action based on existing state or national positions. At Convention 2007, delegates also chose health care, education, and redistricting for community education. Community education is undertaken separately, by the Education Fund, in order to maintain a clear and essential separation between the two halves of our organization: education and advocacy.

Legislative Priorities for Advocacy from the LWVC Board

The LWVC board adopts "legislative priorities" in response to the Legislature's agenda and the League's interests. These reflect the overall advocacy priorities of the LWVC, but may also reflect current issues that were not selected for emphasis at Convention, and therefore may change from one year to the next. For instance, in 2007, redistricting, health care reform, and (in keeping with LWVC's support of bonds on the November 2006 ballot) sustainable infrastructure were adopted as priorities.

With the new year, the state legislative issues have changed, and so have our priorities. We currently face a state budget crisis, so fiscal policy issues now involve much more than infrastructure spending. Also, our redistricting work is no longer targeted at legislative action and instead will focus on grassroots activism for reform. Reform of our health care system and maintaining health care services in a time of severe budget deficits will likely remain at the forefront through the year. Therefore, our legislative priorities for 2008 are health care and the state budget.

★ Legislative priorities are discussed online at: www.lwvc.org/lwvc/action/legpri.html.

Case-by-Case: How We Decide to Take Action

The Legislation Committee is composed of the Advocacy Director, President, board program directors for Government, Natural Resources, and Social Policy, and two off-board members (currently Jack Sullivan and Fran Packard). They meet monthly, beginning in March, to make decisions and may meet by e-mail for urgent issues. The Legislation Committee is supported by off-board program directors and legislative consultants, who prepare analyses of legislation and make recommendations in their designated areas. Our staff in Sacramento consists of Trudy Schafer, Senior Director for Program, and Maggie Young, Advocacy Assistant (assisted by Communications Manager Elizabeth Leslie). ★

—Linda Craig

LWVC Advocacy Director, legislation@lwvc.org



FOR MORE INFORMATION

Visit www.lwvc.org/lwvc/action/ to learn more about League action.

Visit www.lwvc.org and select “Bill Status Report” to learn the status of all legislation supported or opposed by the LWVC.

Useful publications include:

Action Policies and Positions, Updated 2006, LWVC

Impact on Issues 2006-2008, A Guide to Public Policy Positions, LWVUS

How to... Take Action: Guidelines for Local Leagues, 2006, LWVC

10 Ways You Can Get Involved & MAKE A DIFFERENCE

- 1 Join the League and give the gift of membership to a friend
- 2 Sign up for our e-newsletter on our home page www.lwvc.org
- 3 Contact your government representatives when you receive a Call to Action
- 4 Join a committee of your local League or the LWVC
- 5 Read “Where We Stand” on California ballot measures for the next election
- 6 Ask us to train you to analyze legislation
- 7 Gather signatures for an initiative campaign
- 8 Participate in a study
- 9 Donate and ask your friends to support your cause
- 10 Discuss our positions with your local League, friends, and family

Donate Online @ www.lwvc.org



Sacramento CA
Sat & Sun May 17–18
Tour and Reception
Friday, May 16

LWVC Leadership Council 2008: Bridge to the Future

Invest a weekend, a day or just a few hours in being the best leader you can be!

This year's Council has something for everyone:

- ★ Engage in lively conversation with active, informed women and men from across the state.
- ★ Dive into the topics you care about: health care; mock elections; member recruitment; voter service; education and more!
- ★ Not a member? Attend workshops and learn the value of League training and networking at one of our biggest leadership events all year. You'll be hooked!

More information is available at www.lwvc.org or contact Trudy Jarratt, LWVC Vice President, at evp@lwvc.org.

Powered by Partnerships

Three new partnerships gave the Easy Voter Guide Project a powerful boost for the February 2008 election and we anticipate continued success in the June election.

The *Easy Voter Guide* was and will be featured by **Univision** in its “Ya es Hora, ¡Ve Y Vota!” public service campaign to encourage citizens to vote in the elections this year. KDTV Univision 14 and KFSF TeleFutura 66 joined with the National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) and other organizations to promote “Ya es Hora ¡Ciudadania!” (It’s Time, Citizenship!), a comprehensive national year-long civic participation campaign designed to inform, educate and motivate eligible legal permanent residents to apply for U.S. citizenship, register, and vote in the upcoming elections. “Ya es Hora ¡Ciudadania!” is evolving into the “Ya es Hora, ¡Ve y Vota!” (It’s Time! Go and Vote!) campaign. As part of this campaign, Univision promotes the *Easy Voter Guide* using television and radio programming opportunities. Four local California radio stations are running public service announcements and hosting promotional community events. The partnership also includes distribution support from Bay Area retailers Mi Pueblo Foods, Farmacias Remedios and Super Chavez. In addition, Univision representatives will participate as members of the Easy Voter Guide Project Advisory Committee, which provides advice and support to the Easy Voter Guide Project.

“As part of our ‘Ya es Hora, ¡Ve y Vota!’ public service campaign, this outreach aims to empower our Hispanic community with

relevant and current election information, so they are more aware of the issues and can make informed decisions at the polls,” said Carolina Echeverria, public affairs manager for the Univision stations.

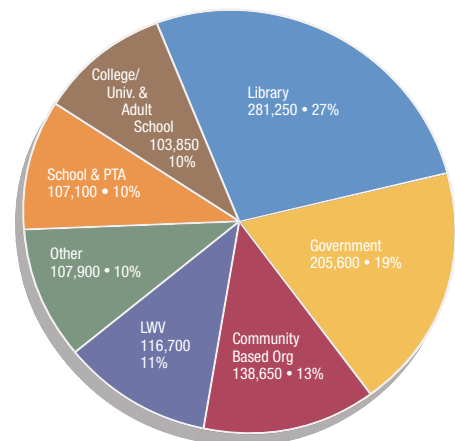
The **California Department of Motor Vehicles** also is giving the Easy Voter Guide Project momentum by displaying an eye-catching “Your Vote is Your Voice” poster in all of its locations throughout California.

The **AT&T Foundation** became an important funding partner with the Easy Voter Guide Project by awarding it \$25,000 for the primary elections.

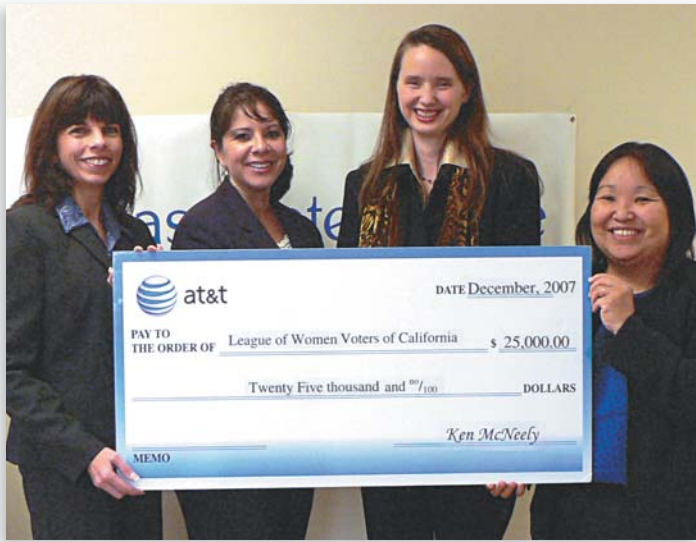
The nonpartisan Easy Voter Guide Project is a collaboration of the California Secretary of State, the California State Library and the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, with additional support from The James Irvine Foundation and the AT&T Foundation. *The Easy Voter Guide* has been published for every statewide election since 1994 and hosts a companion educational website at www.easylvoter.org.

Over one million *Easy Voter Guides* were distributed throughout California for the

Easy Voter Guide Orders for February, 2008 Election



“Our research shows that most Californians do care about the issues that affect them and their families. They just need help understanding the voting process and how issues in an election affect their daily lives.”



AT&T California Vice President Kathy McKim and Associate Director of Constituency Relations Ileana Winterhalter presented League of Women Voters of California Executive Director Jill Kaiser Newcom and President Janis R. Hirohama with \$25,000 for the Easy Voter Guide Project from the AT&T Foundation.

February 5, 2008 Presidential Primary Election by many diverse organizations, including community and faith-based organizations, libraries, schools, registrars of voters and local Leagues of Women Voters. In addition, over two million people were reached through newspaper reprints of the *Easy Voter Guide*.

There are 22.9 million people eligible to vote in California, however only 15.5 million are registered to vote (just about 68%). Our research shows that most Californians do care about the issues that affect them and their families. They just need help understanding the voting process and how issues in an election affect their daily lives. ★

—Elizabeth Leslie
LWVC Communications Manager, eleslie@lwvc.org



Use the resources on the Easy Voter Web site to get more Californians engaged in working together to improve our state's future: www.easyvoter.org/site/evguide/section.php?id=6.



www.yaeshora.info ★ www.univision.com ★ www.easyvoter.org

Redistricting *continued from page 1*

oddly-shaped districts to protect incumbent legislators. Voters in communities like Koreatown in Los Angeles and La Jolla in San Diego have no political voice because they have been split into as many as four different districts purely to protect incumbent legislators.

- ★ Under the current process, politicians are choosing their voters, instead of voters having a real choice.

Reform solutions:

- ★ Reform will make the redistricting process more open and transparent, so it cannot be controlled by one party or another. It will give us an equal number of Democrats and Republicans on the Commission, and it will ensure that true independents can participate—a voice that is completely shut out of the current process. In addition, this reform requires support from Democrats, Independents and Republicans for approval of new redistricting plans.
- ★ An Independent Citizens Commission will draw districts based on strict, nonpartisan rules designed to ensure fair representation. This reform takes redistricting out of the partisan battles of the legislature and guarantees redistricting will be debated in the open with public meetings, with all minutes posted publicly on the Internet. Every aspect of this process will be open to scrutiny by the public and the press.
- ★ This reform will put the voters back in charge.

—Chris Carson
LWVC Government Director, government@lwvc.org



www.CAVotersFIRST.org



Voting Trends You Can Tap Into!

The newly invigorated youth vote may increase voter turnout in 2008. **The College Connection program** has already shown great results: San Jose Evergreen Community College District was the top referring education site thanks to placement of a highly visible logo, a link to Smart Voter, and “My Ballot” being featured on their home page. Do you know a college you’d like to see participate?

Creating a place for a **video link** on Smart Voter reminds candidates that they have a new way to present themselves to voters. A video gives the voter the opportunity to react not only to a text document of candidate qualifications but also to a visual presentation of their accomplishments and vision. Encourage your favorite candidates to provide a link to streaming video!

Now that more **cell phones have web capability**, we have begun development of certain Web pages for use on a small phone display. Need to drop off your absentee ballot close to work, but aren’t sure where to go? Soon you can just look up nearby polling places on your phone!

The Power of Online Voter Resources

At last count, Smart Voter had serviced 48 local elections throughout California and several counties each in New York, Ohio and Pennsylvania in 2007. So many candidates, races and elections officers always present challenges, but we are proud to tell you that in each election the League served the voters well. Thanks to dedicated volunteers at the local League level who helped candidates set up their Web pages, answered voter questions, and filled many other roles to ensure comprehensive and accurate election information, we were able to handle 2.5 million page views in February, 2008!

Looking to 2008-09, not only are we providing information for a series of major elections, but it will be a year of transition and expansion for Smart Voter as well. With your help, and that of concerned volunteers and donors like you, Smart Voter is poised to service a multitude of elections, transition in leadership, and thoroughly examine our strategic plan to expand services to voters across the country!



Transition

After nearly twelve years as Smart Voter Project Director, Trudell Een is stepping aside. In that time, Trudell has ably guided Smart

Voter from its infancy to its current status of fully serving 90% of California voters with local information and giving state level service to the rest, expanding into several new states and winning awards from the US and abroad along the way. We are grateful that Trudell plans to remain on our Smart Voter Management Team as a volunteer, assuring that the transition to new leadership will go smoothly.

Candidates for the position are now being considered. We encourage you to refer qualified

candidates to the red **Job Opportunities** link on the left side of our home page: www.lwvc.org. We look forward to introducing you to our new Smart Voter Project Director soon.

Expansion

At the same time, our team is fully engaged in expanding Smart Voter to five new states in 2008. In 2007, we worked closely with an Alumni Consulting Team (ACT) from Stanford’s Graduate School of Business to develop a comprehensive, feasible plan for Smart Voter in the coming years. This talented team donated countless hours to develop the “Road Map” we will follow in our desire to bring the valuable assets of Smart Voter to all voters across our nation. Based on the ACT research, we are convinced that there is no better online election guide to help voters make informed decisions that affect the future of our democracy.

As members of our communities, we all have a stake in this effort. In our expansion, we are expecting each new League adopting Smart Voter to contribute what it costs to provide their voters with that service, just as our existing participants do. These contributions will be more vital than ever to the Smart Voter team’s efforts to:

- ★ Automate our technology to streamline operations for our volunteers
- ★ Expand our reach to new as well as long-time voters
- ★ Introduce an online personal ballot in states that don’t even have a sample ballot

The possibilities that lie ahead for Smart Voter can definitely transform our democracy. With your help, 2008 will not only be a monumental year for Smart Voter, but a most memorable one. Find out how you can get involved by contacting your local League or the Smart Voter team at www.smartvoter.org! ★

— Trudell Een

Smart Voter Director, director@smartvoter.org

Over 240,000 students across California participated in mock elections as part of the MyVote California statewide youth civic engagement project. Complete final results are available on the California Secretary of State's Web site: www.sos.ca.gov/elections/studentmockelection_08_results.htm.

With training and support from their local League, nearly 500 students at Santa Monica High School went to the polls on "Super Tuesday,"



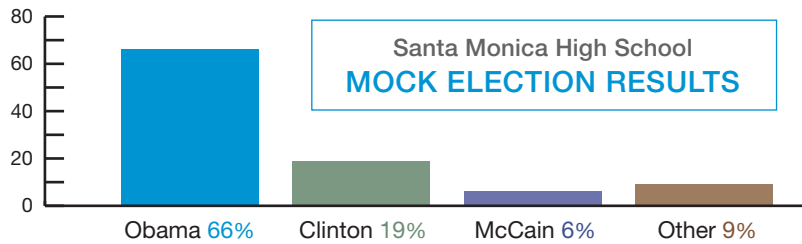
February 5. The mock election was organized by team leader Joan Walston (LWV Santa Monica), the high school's Associated Student Body, PTA Legislation Representative Shawn Barry, and SAGE (Students for the Advancement of Global Entrepreneurship), an international program that incorporates civic engagement projects and activities.

"What great potential to link the League with a new generation just coming into their own perspective of civic consciousness," said Amy Bishop Dunbar, LWV Santa Monica.

MYVOTE

STUDENT MOCK ELECTION

The Secretary of State's office has not yet posted results for Santa Monica High School, however, the *Santa Monica Mirror* announced the results as:



Several local Leagues participated in the mock February presidential primary and Monterey Peninsula, Salinas Valley, San Joaquin County, and San Jose/Santa Clara County Leagues are working to produce mock elections in their communities. A mock election workshop is offered at the LWVC Leadership Council this May in Sacramento (registration is open to members and the public at www.lwvc.org). Please attend the workshop and support mock elections in your community:

- ★ Moderate debates featuring local community members, or have students take on the roles of the candidates or the ballot measure proponents and opponents.
- ★ Serve as a mock election poll worker and train student poll workers.
- ★ Serve on a school's mock election planning committee to help decide how the election will be run, where the voting will take place, and what activities they want to sponsor leading up to the student voting days.
- ★ Sponsor a voter registration table at the school in the days leading up to the mock election voting period for students turning 18.

Contact me to help you and your local schools partner to engage youth in the election process. Visit the Secretary of State's website for details about the MyVote program and to find schools participating in your area: www.sos.ca.gov/elections/. ★

— Lois Ledger, LWVC Educational Activities Director, edfund@lwvc.org



We invite and encourage every League member to seriously consider serving on the LWVC Board of Directors. The next two-year term begins July 2009. Directors will be elected at the State Convention in May 2009. Local Leagues or individual members may nominate candidates (you may submit your own name) through **June 30, 2008**.

Giving your time and expertise at the state board level is an extension of all the good work you contribute to your local and regional Leagues. It is the next step in bringing your hard work to fruition, as well as a wonderful opportunity to broaden your horizons and meet fascinating men and women throughout the state. From our earliest days we have been a grassroots organization, and our success depends on a large grassroots base to encourage informed and active participation in government. Your participation will not only be an exciting and rewarding opportunity, but a great contribution to the League.

QUALIFICATIONS: League membership and a strong desire to carry out the League's mission of increasing understanding of major public policy issues and influencing public policy through education and advocacy.

SUBMISSIONS: Online and printable forms are available on our members-only Web site.

Committee Members: Chair, Beverly King (Santa Barbara), Bonnie Hamlin (Oakland), Sharon Mullenix (Pasadena Area), Lois Chaney (Kern County), Trudy Jarratt (San Luis Obispo County).

Not a member? Join the League of Women Voters.

The League of Women Voters of California is strictly nonpartisan; we never support or oppose any political party or candidate. At the same time, we are wholeheartedly political, working to influence public policy through education and advocacy. Membership in the League is open to citizens of voting age. Others are invited to join as associate members.

- Yes, I want to join. Enclosed is my check for \$55.00 payable to the League of Women Voters of California.
- Please sign me up for the monthly e-newsletter using the email address below.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Please complete and mail this form to: **LWVC**
801 12th St., Suite 220, Sacramento, CA 95814
916 442.7215 ★ 916 442.7362 fax ★ 888 870.VOTE toll-free
www.lwvc.org ★ lwvc@lwvc.org

Dues and gifts to the League of Women Voters of California are not tax deductible. Gifts to the LWVC Education Fund are tax deductible.



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CHANGE OF ADDRESS?

Please send change of address to:

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1730 M Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

FAX Attention: Member Services
202 429.0854

E-MAIL Attention: Member Services
lwv@lwv.org

REDISTRICTING
ACT NOW to Put Voters
Back in Charge!

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