



# League of Women Voters of the Monterey Peninsula



## VOTER



November 2009, Volume 82, No. 3

### ***THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE***



In the first decade of the 20th century, my four grandparents emigrated from southern China to countries in the Western Hemisphere. They landed in places where citizenship was prohibited to them because of their ethnicity. They did fine in these countries. They raised and supported families. But did they ever think they belonged?

I don't know if they ever thought about voting. It's highly likely that in the Old Country, no one in government cared about their opinions either.

Voting is a core value in the League. The League is committed to protecting and enhancing every step of the process. This focus is one reason I belong to the League. When you total up the various League activities, we are involved in voting from start to finish.

**Registration:** while the state and national Leagues address the policy questions around registration, we do what we can to sign up new voters. I've sat at registration tables that rarely net any new voters. Does anyone have any ideas how we can do this more effectively?

**Education for students:** the Salinas Valley and Monterey Peninsula Leagues' Mock Election for 4th through 12th grade students is an innovative program ([www.MockElection.org](http://www.MockElection.org)). Participating teachers like it. But the bigger question is how many students will make voting a habit during their adult lives?

**Education for voters:** The League has a strong presence here—candidate forums, *Pros and Cons*, and Smart Voter. The public often turns to the League for clear and objective information. Thanks to all of our members who contribute their time and talent to these programs.

**Advocacy on issues of importance:** when Carrie Chapman Catt and her cohort founded the League of Women Voters, they came with a long list of items for action. The League was not a single-issue group. Today's League still has a long list. League does its due diligence. LWVMP identifies local problems, studies them, finds consensus among the members, and presents our views to the voters.

**Protecting voting integrity:** thanks to several knowledgeable and committed members, our League has taken on big issues more than once around voting integrity. With other community groups, the League developed a model regulation to increase the public's knowledge of a candidate's financial contributors. After effective advocacy, the city of Pacific Grove adopted this ordinance.

LWVMP has been pressing the national and state Leagues to increase the importance put on transparency in the voting process. LWVMP proposed resolutions at the last state convention and the last national convention. One passed and one didn't. We won't be ignored on this issue.

*Continued on Page 2*

## **The LWVMP**

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Vacant

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#### *VOTER Editor*

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JMelaugh@comcast.net

### **Appointed Positions**

#### *Executive Committee*

Bev Bean, Janet Brennan,  
Dennis Mar, Marilyn Maxner,  
and Jeanne Melaugh

#### *Luncheon Logistics Chair*

Lorita Fisher 375-8301  
GLFisher@redshift.com

#### *Video Webmaster*

Bob Evans 372-8323  
BobEvans13@me.com

### **President's Message continued from Page 1**

**No hanging chads on our watch:** This November election, the League is staffing two Pacific Grove polling places. I think it is wonderful that the League is trained and ready to conduct this last, important voting step. It takes 26 volunteers (10% of our membership) to make sure every ballot is collected and every voter is warmly greeted. Please consider volunteering for the June 2010 primary election.

**DENNIS MAR**

## **VOTERS SERVICE HELP**

HELP  
WANTED



If you are interested in serving on the Voter Services Committee, please contact Candy Ingram at 373-7823.

## **WRONG AGAIN**

My apologies to George...I just don't seem to be able to accurately provide his contact information. It should be:

**George and Judy Riley** 645-9914

Natural Resources Director  
1198 Castro Road

**Monterey, CA 93940-4935**  
GeorgeRiley@hotmail.com

## **SOCIAL POLICY DIRECTOR**

HELP  
WANTED



We need a Social Policy Director. The Social Policy portfolio includes child care, education, housing, juvenile justice/dependency, legal aid, and mental health care.

The director coordinates education and advocacy for the LWVMP on these issues. She/he would have to be available to attend board meetings at 2:00 on the fourth Wednesday of the month.

If you are interested in social policy issues or know someone who is, please contact Dennis Mar at 372-9388 or DennisRMar3@yahoo.com.

The League of Women Voters of the Monterey Peninsula publishes the **Monterey Peninsula VOTER** September through May. Submission deadline is the second Saturday of each month. Send copy to the *VOTER* Editor Jeanne Melaugh (622-0892) by email to JMelaugh@comcastl.net or mail to:

LWVMP, P.O. Box 1995, Monterey, CA

# ***Statement of the League of Women Voters of California at the Joint Informational Hearing on Constitutional and Budget Reform***

Many Californians feel that our state and local governments no longer function as they were intended and are calling for change. The League has long advocated for improvements in budget and fiscal issues, the initiative process, campaign financing, and elections and voting rights. The LWVC highlighted problems with California's governance and made suggestions for reform to a joint legislative committee hearing about constitutional and budget reform in the following statement made August 18, 2009:

As early as the 1950s, the League of Women Voters studied the state Constitution. **We support measures to secure an orderly and simplified Constitution**, with provisions that enable the legislature to deal with state problems efficiently and flexibly, and with responsibility clearly fixed. We testified in 1961 for the need to make a full review of the Constitution and worked through the 1960s for the passage of a number of amendments that were proposed as a result of that review. Despite the changes made at that time, certainly according to our standard the Constitution has gotten worse in the years since then. Clearly, the budget crisis alone has led many to the conclusion that it is time to consider substantial change. ...

**The increasing numbers of initiatives that have gone to the voters have taken us a long way from our goals.** The trend toward measures that have limited the ability of state and local government to raise revenues, coupled with other measures that require specific spending, has a serious impact on the Legislature's ability to set priorities and deal with a crisis. Some measures simply mandate appropriations, while others provide new taxes, usually from sources that affect the fewest voters. Often, little or no thought is given to how they will fit in with existing programs, whether the designated funding is sustainable, or whether it is consistent with overall tax policy. Measures often require that any new funding must be used only for the new program, even if similar existing programs are being cut back.

Groups that have gone to the trouble of organizing and funding initiatives also usually include language to limit the possibility of amending the initiative by requiring a supermajority vote for any legislative amendment, and this generally means

that unintended consequences cannot be dealt with short of going back to a future ballot.

The League has also studied the initiative process and has been active in supporting and opposing various measures on the subject. **We support retention of the direct initiative, but would also like to see the indirect initiative adopted as an alternative.** Especially considering the cumulative impact of the many initiatives that have affected the budget and both state and local finances, we believe that it is time to consider the indirect initiative process again.

Initiatives are often long and complex and may be poorly drafted. Even if errors are found, initiative proponents cannot correct them once circulation for signatures has begun. The direct initiative process lacks the significant benefits of the legislative process, which include public hearings and review by many different parties and the ability to make improvements as a proposal moves through the legislature. The indirect initiative incorporates citizen-initiated measures into the legislative process of review and revision, requires the legislature to be responsive, and offers the option for proponents to put their measures on the ballot if they have been rejected by the legislature.

**We continue to support other measures to improve the initiative process by making more information available to the public** through such means as improvements in the ballot pamphlet, posting of more information online, and increased disclosure of the funding of campaigns.

**Another area that needs to be examined is government finance.** California League members first studied and adopted a position on state and local finances in 1969 and have updated our position five times since then. It emphasizes the need for revenues that are both sufficient and flexible enough to meet changing needs for state and local government services, and a system of public finance that emphasizes equity and fair sharing of the tax burden as well as adequacy. Our present system of finance meets none of those goals.

**We advocate the elimination of the two-thirds vote requirement for passing budgets and revenue increases.** The two-thirds rule gives a

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*“Statement of LWVC...” continued from Page 3*

minority the power to overrule legislators elected by a large majority of California voters. Even in good budget years, this situation puts legislators of both parties in unreasonable negotiating positions and results in deals that may be far from the best policy for the common good.

The two-thirds rule for tax increases also helps perpetuate tax breaks that take billions of dollars from the budget each year. The great difficulty of ending a tax expenditure, despite the relative ease of creating one, makes systematic review almost impossible to mandate, and even those tax breaks that do not fulfill the goals set for them are seldom eliminated.

We welcome the examination of our state’s tax structure in order to achieve the goals of equity, fair sharing of the tax burden, and adequacy. **We support changes in the property tax assessment of nonresidential property** to require regular, frequent reappraisal and an end to the problem of business properties that are not reassessed, even though the corporations or partnerships owning them have had substantial changes in ownership. While we can support an increased budgetary reserve, we would oppose a cap on revenues or expenditures that would not allow the government to meet changing needs of the people for state and local government services.

Among other proposals for reform of state governance, **we support the extension (or elimination, if that were feasible) of legislative term limits**. Term limits have produced a loss of institutional memory and experienced leadership in the Legislature and have contributed to the government dysfunction perceived by many Californians. While the specific details of any proposal must be carefully examined, we are open to the possibility of this reform.

As major proponents of Proposition 11 of November 2008, **we are pleased that this reform—establishing an independent citizens’ commission to draw the maps for legislative and Board of Equalization districts—was passed**. We are working to ensure smooth implementation of the proposition as regulations are written to govern the commission selection process, and we will monitor the selection and operation of the commission. We will work to see that citizens throughout California are aware of the work of the commission and its importance and that they give input to the commission about their communities and needs for representation.

**We support improvements in the funding of campaigns for candidates and issues** and in particular support the California Fair Elections Act that will be on the June 2010 ballot. We believe that this pilot project will show the need for more public funding of campaigns to level the playing field for candidates and encourage broader participation in government by Californians of all backgrounds and interests.

... Although the League strongly supports the concept that systematic efforts to revise the Constitution are needed, **we have not taken a stand on the question of calling a Constitutional Convention or endorsed other methods such as a constitution revision commission**. We feel that consideration of this issue is an important public policy matter, and the citizens of California will benefit from engaging in the discussion of the need for reform and how best to achieve it. We have potential concerns about how such a convention would work. Much would depend on how it was organized and how delegates would be selected. We do believe that it should be limited in scope at least to governmental issues, and that opening it up to a broad range of social issues would be unlikely to produce any broad agreement.

**We also recognize the critical nature of the selection of delegates to a convention or members of a commission** in affecting their ability to carry out their functions. We have some experience with...these issues in the selection process for the redistricting commission established by Proposition 11. ...

Of course, no matter how the process of reform is designed, transparency will be essential. Democratic government requires that the citizen’s right to know be protected and that all government actions be open to public scrutiny.

Overall, given the crisis facing California, we believe it is necessary to address the problem before us. We will continue to weigh in on the policy matters highlighted today to the extent our positions allow us to do so. In addition, local Leagues of Women Voters around the state are undertaking education of their communities about the issues and the opportunities and are anxious to increase those efforts. As an organization dedicated to encouraging informed and active participation in government, we will work to help all Californians be aware of and involved in this crucial undertaking.

*—Trudy Schafer, LWVC Senior Director for*

# RESERVATION FORM

## November 2009 General Meeting

**WHEN:**

November 11, 2009, 12 noon

**WHERE:**

Elks Lodge, 150 Mar Vista Drive, Monterey, CA

**COST:** \$18.00 per person

**DEADLINE FOR RESERVATIONS:**

Friday, November 6, 2006

After this date call Lorita Fisher at 375-8301

**SEND CHECK TO:**

LWVMP, P.O. Box 1995  
Monterey, CA 93942

**NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**GUEST:** \_\_\_\_\_

(Please print.)

### WE'D LIKE YOU TO JOIN THE LEAGUE!

Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

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

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Email, etc: \_\_\_\_\_

Send me more information about the League.

I want an email reminder for the luncheons.

I want a phone reminder for the luncheons.

Email League news to me.

Please clip this coupon and mail it with your dues to:

**LWVMP, P.O. Box 1995, Monterey, CA 93942**

Enclosed is my check for the following level of membership:

- \$250 Carrie Chapman Catt
- \$200 Sojourner Truth
- \$150 Elizabeth Cady Stanton
- \$100 Susan B. Anthony
- \$ 75 Household (2 people at the same address)
- \$ 50 Single
- \$ 25 F or young persons and non-citizens

*Dues and contributions are not deductible for Federal Income Tax purposes. Contributions to the League of Women Voters of California Educational Fund (LWVCEF) are deductible to the extent allowed by law.*

### The LWVMP

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www.lwvmp.org

**Email Address**

LWVMPca@yahoo.com

**Mailing Address**

P.O. Box 1995, Monterey, CA 93942

### DIRECTIONS TO THE ELKS LODGE

From Munras Avenue turn on to Soledad Avenue. Go approximately two (long) blocks. Turn left, uphill, on Monte Vista. Continue another long block and turn left on Porta Vista. Turn right into the Elks Lodge parking lot.

### PROGRAM CALENDAR

#### November 2009

**November 4, Wednesday, 12 noon – 1:30 P.M.**

*Natural Resources Committee*

Mariposa Hall, Monterey

Contact: George Riley, 645-9914

**November 11, Wednesday, 12 noon – 1:30 P.M.**

*General Meeting:*

“Reforming California State Government”

Elks Lodge, Monterey

Contact: Lorita Fisher, 375-8301

**November 18, Wednesday, 12:30 P.M.**

*Election Integrity Meeting*

Mariposa Hall, Monterey

Contact: Bev Bean, 484-2451

**November 18, Wednesday, 2:00 P.M.**

*Board Meeting, Mariposa Hall, Monterey*

Contact: Dennis Mar, 372-9388



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**RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED**



Vote Vote

## ***LUNCH AND LEARN WITH THE LEAGUE***

**DATE:** Wednesday, November 11

**TOPIC:** Reforming California State Government—  
Is a Constitutional Convention the Answer?

**SPEAKER:** Robert Cruikshank

Mr. Cruickshank is the Public Policy Director for the Courage Campaign, where he has worked since late 2007 building one of California's fastest-growing progressive organizations. He is also a contributing editor at the website [www.Calitics.org](http://www.Calitics.org), which focuses on state politics. An historian by training, he is completing a Ph.D. dissertation on California political history in the 1960s and 1970s. Robert is a native Californian, raised in Orange County and educated at UC Berkeley. He currently lives in Monterey and teaches at Monterey Peninsula College.

**LOCATION:** Elks Lodge, 150 Mar Vista Drive, Monterey  
The \$18 hot lunch is at 12:00 noon and requires a reservation. The program is free, is from 12:30 to 2:00 p.m., and does not require a reservation.