

LWV[®] League of Women Voters *of the* Monterey Peninsula

VOTER

April 2011, Volume 83, Number 7

General Meeting, Wednesday, April 13, 2011

Should Monterey Peninsula City Services Be Consolidated?

Local governments are experiencing not just a temporary budget difficulty. "It's permanent," says **LAFCO** (Local Agency Formation Commission), the agency tasked by Sacramento to help local government deliver services more efficiently.

With Sacramento's \$28 billion deficit, local governments are braced for a new round of fiscal impacts. More state services are expected to be devolved to the local level without additional income to provide them. The challenge will be to balance growing needs with less income.

To explore options and possible answers to this pressing issue, the League is hosting a panel discussion at this month's Lunch and Learn series. Guest speakers will include local elected

and appointed officials: **Alvin Edwards, Tom Frutchev, and Kate McKenna** (see back page for each speaker's profile).

"Courage will have to become the new hallmark of effective local governance," one LAFCO observer declared. All stakeholders will have to be convened, and all groups engaged in making difficult decisions about identifying and prioritizing core services, while saying "no" to new demands. For example, does California really need 5,000 different local agencies to deliver municipal services? Can agencies cooperate to share services? Will we see the same sort of local mergers (and failures) as on Wall Street?

(continued on page 2)

LWVMP General Meeting Luncheon

(General Meetings are held the 2nd Wednesday of each month)

Lunch begins 12 noon / Presentation starts 12:30

\$20 per person for lunch

(salad buffet, quiche, beverage, dessert)

Reservations are a must for lunch!

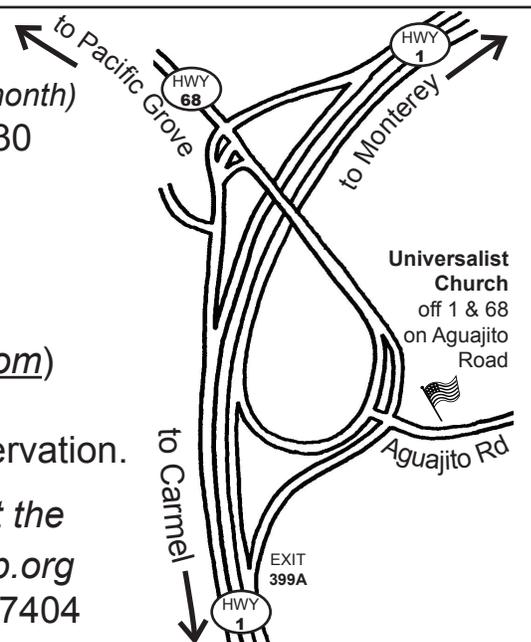
Contact Lorita Fisher

(phone 375-8301 or e-mail GLFisher@redshift.com)

Please pay at the door for lunch.

Lecture at 12:30 is **FREE** and does not require a reservation.

LWVMP General Luncheon Meetings are held at the
Unitarian Universalist Church <http://uucmp.org>
490 Aguajito Road / Carmel CA 93923 (831) 624-7404



The *PRESIDENT'S* Message

Time to Unite?

In an interesting parallel to this month's Lunch and Learn forum on consolidation, the LWV Monterey Peninsula board is proposing a study of a merger with the **LWV Salinas Valley**. It will be presented to the membership for approval at the May annual meeting. The LWVSV is also surveying the interest of their membership in a merger.

According to folklore, Monterey County was a single League until World War II. It split into two Leagues to reduce driving. Gasoline was rationed. Today, gas is still dear, but reunifying the two Leagues would provide important benefits.

A unified LWV Monterey County would make local action faster. Combined membership would create a larger pool of interests and workers. There would be efficiencies in having one **The Voter**, one telephone number, and one PO box, though it may be a challenge to pull together an organization over the large geographic area of Monterey County. But modern communications make it easier to maintain connections than in the pre-Internet days.

The two Leagues met several years ago to discuss this. Even so, we still have questions: Where will meetings be? Can events be made convenient to both memberships? How should leadership be integrated? Are our local positions compatible? I believe everything can be worked out. The state League has a checklist to use, and our advisor,

Jackie Jacobberger, successfully went through this process with the **San Mateo County Leagues**.

Alas, we won't be able to use an obvious new name, LWVMC, because it has already been claimed by **LWV of Moore County (North Carolina)**!

It's Up to Us

Last year, a scandal broke over excessive salaries for officials of the **City of Bell, California**. How did they get away with it? One commentator noted that the Bell community newspaper had closed in 1998. The regional press didn't have the resources to keep track of every public entity. So the scandal grew without the threat of scrutiny.

Traditional revenue support for newspapers is in decline: newspapers have fewer reporters to track local government, and Internet sites have not filled the reporting void. Who is left to poke around local cities and agencies? Who has the long memory to put current events in historic context? *This sounds like a job for The League of Women Voters!*

If you joined the League to promote good government, to press for more transparency, to encourage more informed participation, to watch the money, you came to the right place. But to increase our effectiveness, we need to be efficiently organized. If you want to get more involved in oversight of our democracy, call or e-mail me your ideas.

Dennis Mar DennisMar3@yahoo.com

Support LWV California "SmartVoter"

SmartVoter, the signature program of the **LWVC Education Fund**, lets *all* California candidates post their qualifications and positions, and gives voters access to information about local and national candidates and ballot measures, free on the SmartVoter website. SmartVoter isn't funded by LWV member dues: it relies on support from county registrars, city clerks, local Leagues, and individuals.

Have you helped to continue this important service with a personal donation yet?

Tax deductible contributions can be made at www.cavotes.org/about/donate (enter "SmartVoter" under "special instructions"), or by sending a check in any amount to: **LWVC Education Fund**, 1107 9th Street, Suite 300, Sacramento CA 95814 (with a note designating a contribution for SmartVoter).

*Thanks to **LWV Beach Cities** (Southern California) for reminding us to support this important program!*

LWVMP Legislative Interview with Assemblymember Bill Monning

Dennis Mar, LWV of the Monterey Peninsula President, and Beverly Bean, LWVMP Government Director, conducted a conference call interview with Assemblymember Bill Monning, (D) 27th Assembly District on March 23, 2011.

Mr. Monning is a long-time member of the LWVMP. Below is a paraphrased summary of the interview:

LWVMP - *On the budget dilemma, Governor Brown has proposed a package of budget cuts, increased revenue, realignment of services and funding between state and local governments, and some one-time fixes. What is your evaluation of the proposal?*



photo: www.friendsofbillmonning.org

BM - As a member of the Budget Committee and as a member of the Budget Subcommittee for Health and Human Services I am very involved in this. Governor Brown's solution for the 26.6 billion dollar budget gap is a proposal of one half budget cuts and one half revenues.

The choices made by Governor Brown are tough [Mr. Monning described the emotionally fraught health care hearings at length, saying that hundreds of people, some in wheelchairs, testified against the cuts].

At this point, the Assembly has passed the budget cuts. The revenues will come through

an extension of taxes scheduled for expiration. Governor Brown wants to put the tax extensions before the voters and it will require a majority vote to pass them.

Two Republican votes in each house are needed for the Legislature to place the proposal before the voters. These severe cuts will not be implemented until there is a balanced budget. The vote is targeted for late June. If the Legislature is unsuccessful, a citizen initiative will be needed to put the proposal on the ballot.

LWVMP – *What proposals do you support to fix the budget process?*

BM - There are areas in the budget process that deserve examination, but these are not immediate fixes as much as long-term goals:

The California tax code, developed during the manufacturing era, is antiquated, and requires greater equity.

For example, the changing economy brings into question the taxation of Internet sales in California. Vendors collecting taxes at point of sale is a possibility.

The ramifications of any new revenue streams such as an oil extraction tax, or increases in cigarette and alcohol taxes must be examined.

While **Proposition 25** has helped [the state budget can be approved by a simple majority and not a two thirds majority], raising revenue is still subject to the two thirds requirement. Polling data from voters say that reducing the

two thirds requirement would be a tough sell.

But I believe it can be done with enough political will, such as **Proposition 39** which passed after three tries and reduced the school bond requirement to 55 percent. This reduced requirement has allowed the successful passage of most school bonds.

LWVMP – *On the local front, if an initiative is placed on the ballot to form a new water district to buy out **California American Water Company**, what would this mean in terms of the enabling state legislation for the **Monterey Peninsula Water Management District**?*

BM - I am following the discussion closely. I haven't seen a detailed plan or an economic analysis regarding a buy out [of CalAm] that would persuade voters to that side. Any lessons learned from Felton FLOW [*Felton Locally Owned Water*] would have to take into account the high level of grassroots involvement.

As far as dissolving an elected body such as the Monterey Peninsula Water Management District, I would be very cautious and need to have much more discussion.

I believe that water is a public resource and that any body managing the resource in the remote case of a buy out should be elected by the public.

LWVMP - *What other major issues do you think the legislature must address in 2011? What are your priorities?*

BM - A Balanced Budget.

Health Care – I am Chair of the Health Committee and we have the responsibility for implementing the federal health care legislation in California.

For example, the committee has passed legislation to implement the medical exchanges for the uninsured. An additional 4.5 to 5 million

Californians will be eligible through these exchanges. I'm interested in maximizing the federal contribution in areas of prevention and wellness as the current trajectory of medical spending is unsustainable.

Public education and legislation is needed to help control preventable diabetes and heart disease, improve access to healthy foods and provide school breakfasts and lunches.

AB 669 – I'm carrying this bill which would add a one-cent-per-ounce tax on sugar-sweetened drinks (sodas, sports drinks, sweetened tea and energy drinks), sold across the state. Revenue from the measure would fund nutrition and education programs.

AB 753 – I have a new bill that would prohibit car rental agencies from renting vehicles which are subject to a safety recall.

For this year, I predict no legislation with an associated cost will get out of committee!

LWVMP - Which advocacy groups are effective in California and why? Which groups do you particularly listen to?

BM - I try to listen to all groups equally. If I meets a "yes" advocate, I seek out a "no" advocate. Effective advocacy groups are those which have deep knowledge of the issues, and are able to accurately present the arguments of the opposite side and then refute those points.

I am hesitant to name specific effective advocacy groups, but I will mention Health Access. Letters, e-mails and phone calls from constituents are individually tracked and are important in my decision-making process.

For more information on Assemblymember Bill Monning, go to <http://democrats.assembly.ca.gov/members/a27/Biography/default.aspx>

Beverly Bean beverlygb@gmail.com



Monterey Peninsula VOTER

published nine times per year

**League of Women Voters
of the Monterey Peninsula**

PO Box 1995 Monterey CA 93942

**Non-Profit Org.
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
Monterey, CA
Permit No. 115**

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED



Lunch & Learn with the League

Date: Wednesday, April 13, 2011: 12 noon lunch / 12:30 panel
Topic: *“Should Monterey Peninsula City Services Be Consolidated?”*

Speakers: **Kate McKenna** - Executive Officer, LAFCO Monterey / Deputy Executive Officer, CALAFCO / Member, American Planning Institute

Tom Frutchey - City Manager, City of Pacific Grove

Alvin Edwards - Council Member, City of Seaside / Fire Captain, City of Seaside (Retired) / Past President, Firefighters Union / Past Board Member, Monterey Peninsula Water Management District

See page 1 for details of the panel discussion and on attending lecture & luncheon