

The Voter

The League of Women Voters of Mendocino County

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February 2008
Susan Eveleth, Editor (707)937-3877

Special Districts- February 12, 2008

Last May, LWV Mendocino County adopted as one of its issues for emphasis a look into Special Districts in Mendocino County. At the February 12th meeting, League member Barbara Auerbach will interview Frank McMichael, Executive Officer for the Mendocino County Local Agency Formation Commission on the subject of special districts. Mr. McMichael has spoken to our League in the past (About LAFCO) and we look forward to having him return. Following the interview process, there will be time for Q&A from the audience. Please read the article in this issue on Special Districts prior to the meeting.

Reminders for the February 5 Primary Election

The primary election will soon be here; all registered voters should have received sample ballots and voter information pamphlets from the county and state. Here are a few things to remember:

- If you vote by mail, you may send your ballot by mail, or take it to any polling place on election day
- You may vote a provisional ballot (to be validated later) at any polling place
- Voters not registered with a particular political party (i.e. Green) may request a ballot for the Democratic or American Independent primary; voters registered with a party will receive the ballot for that party
- There are 7 statewide ballot measures to be decided; all registered voters may vote on these measures even if not affiliated with any political party

**Make sure your voice is heard
– don't forget to vote!**

The Primary Process

“To gather together and make a great noise”

Historically a caucus, or perhaps once the most popular type of caucus occurred when party members gathered to out shout and overwhelm each other with their votes for delegates who will voice their opinions for presidential candidates at the state and then national conventions.

The caucus was the original method of choosing delegates who attended the national convention to nominate the presidential candidates. The caucus has died out in most states because it didn't necessarily voice the opinions of the populace. The voices were mostly those of the party bosses.

On the other hand a caucus encourages thoughtful exchanges of opinions and debates about proposed candidates and delegates who will be selected to voice these opinions at the convention levels.

The reform movement brought about the primary process which allowed more of the population an opportunity to be heard. The primary process encouraged more people to get involved in the selection of delegates. No longer did party leaders and elected officials dominate the national conventions.

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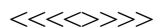
President's Message

What a pleasure it was for me to participate in our immigration consensus meeting in January. I was knocked out by the thoughtful civilized conversation we had that day! I want to thank everyone who worked on the immigration study. I especially want to thank Barbara Matheson, our Program Chair, who spent the time initially prescreening the extensive materials and organizing them into something manageable we could tackle. She also pulled together a dynamite panel of locals for our first immigration meeting. Many kudos also to members Sue Arnold, Rachel Binah, Ken Matheson, Joan Rudman and Barbara Matheson who presented background material at our second meeting. Rachel, Joan, Sue, and Ken were especially brave to jump in and volunteer to help as this was their first time to work on a study. Although in the case of Ken some arm twisting may have been involved.

Thanks to Rachel Binah, who was our brilliant recording secretary at the consensus meeting. I am so proud of the immigration consensus report we produced. A clear concise report on the seven questions as well as relevant additional comments by members has been sent to LWVUS. Check it out for yourself. Finally, I want to thank all of you members who made the effort to attend the meetings. Reporter Connie Korbell attended all three meetings and wrote terrific articles about them for the newspaper indicating to me the quality of our work. Immigration was definitely my all time favorite study.

SAVE THE DATE

On another subject, I am pleased to announce that Janis Hirohama, our dynamic LWVCA President, will be coming to speak to us on Saturday, April 19th. It isn't too soon to mark your calendar. You won't want to miss her! She is unable to be here for our regularly scheduled meeting April 8th so we have changed our April meeting date. If you picked up a bookmark with our meeting dates, please make this change on your bookmark as well. More details on this event, as we get closer to the date.



Meet & Greet Your Local Elected Officials - Round Three

By Barbara Matheson

The League's third annual Meet & Greet Your Local Elected Officials event will be held Friday, March 14, 2008 from 5 to 7 p.m. at St. Michael's Episcopal Church. This is the time to meet and chat informally with your various elected officials.

As in the past there will be no speeches, no agendas, and no set program. However, there will be lots of time to enjoy a glass of wine and plenty of good conversation with those who represent you. Invitees include members of the Fort Bragg City Council, various school boards, fire boards, community services district boards, county officials, plus state and national officials.

Please mark your calendar and save this important date. The event is open to the public so invite your friends to join you.

SPECIAL DISTRICTS - An Introduction

Note: This material comes from "A Guide to California Government", a LWVC publication and is available at <http://www.guidetogov.org/ca/state/overview/districts.html>

Special Districts are units of local government established by the residents of an area to provide some service not provided by the county or city. Some special districts are located within cities, but many are located outside city limits, in the unincorporated areas where one-quarter of the state's population lives. Suburban residents have often chosen to form special districts to provide needed services rather than form a city or annex their area to an existing city. Within California there are 58 counties, 468 cities and over 1400 special districts, exclusive of school districts.

The size of the area served by a special district can vary tremendously. A lighting district, for example, can be as small as one square block, while some water districts encompass several counties. Residents of many unincorporated areas are served by numerous special districts, each with its own set of boundaries.

In contrast to the broad constitutional and legal authority under which counties and cities operate, the authority of special districts is restricted to specifically enumerated powers and purposes. Special districts are limited in activity, in their ability to raise revenue, and in their power to regulate planning and land use.

Board Briefs

By Jane Person

Geri Anderson has volunteered to serve as the League observer to the Mendocino Coast District Hospital.

Janis Hirohama, president of LWVCA, will speak on Saturday, April 19 at St. Michael's. Time to be arranged. Her speech is in lieu of our regular April membership meeting. A light luncheon is planned.

Third Annual Meet and Greet will be held March 14. Letters will go out to elected officials shortly. This is a chance for elected officials to chat with their constituents and each other and for you to meet the people you voted for. Wine and hors d'oeuvres will be served.

Susan Eveleth has agreed to host the League phone number.

Welcome back to newly reactivated members **Mary Hannery-Kraut** (Caspar) and **James Houle** (Redwood Valley).

National LWV Convention: This will be held in Portland, Oregon June 13-17.

LWV Leadership Conference: This will be held in Sacramento May 17-18.

The first two special districts established in the state were irrigation districts, stemming from a need for affordable irrigation water in the San Joaquin Valley. By 1900, almost 50 irrigation districts had been formed to serve agricultural areas. Today close to 900 special districts supply water to rural, suburban, and urban areas throughout the state. In 1989-90, special districts engaged in 32 categories of activity.

To learn more about special districts, including governance, funding and formation, come to the February 12, 2008 LWVMC meeting.

Submitted by the LWVMC Committee on Special Districts

League of Women Voters of Mendocino County Position on Special Districts

Note: This position was adopted in 1991 by concurrence when LWV Mendocino Coast joined with LWV Ukiah to form LWV Mendocino County. Support of effective function of special districts to meet the needs of the people and the community.

- Special district boards should inform the public about budgets, elections and board actions.
- Special districts should coordinate and cooperate with other districts and governmental agencies which a view toward reorganization (including expansion, dissolution, or annexation where feasible).

Immigration Study Consensus

By Barbara Matheson

On Tuesday, January 8, 16 people, including 13 League members, two guests, and one reporter braved the cold, rainy weather and attended the final meeting on the National Immigration Study. Many attendees were still out of power so the warm fire, hot coffee, and good conversation was just what the doctor ordered. My thanks to all those who attended. Following is a summary of what was agreed to.

Question 1: Federal immigration laws should take into consideration criteria such as the following: Ethnic and Cultural Diversity, Economic, Business and Service Employment Needs, Environmental Impact/Sustainability, Family Reunification, History of Criminal Activity, Humanitarian Crises, Immigrant Characteristics, Rights of Workers to Safe Working Conditions and Liveable Wage, Rights of Families to Remain Together, Rights of all Individuals in the U.S. to Fair Treatment Under the Law, Education and Training.

After discussing this list of criteria for an hour and ranking each as *High Priority*, *Low Priority*, *Disagree*, or *No Consensus* the group consensus was that the three most important were:

- Rights of all Individuals in the U.S. to Fair Treatment Under the Law;
- Rights of Families to remain Together; and
- Rights of Workers to Safe Working Conditions and Liveable Wage.

Question 2 asked how unauthorized immigrants currently in the U.S. should be treated. We were given six options ranging from deporting all, to deporting some while letting others stay based on length of residence in U.S. or needs of U.S. employers. We did not want to have any of these options in the law. We also rejected several options that would assess fines. The consensus was that "all should be allowed to earn legal adjustment of status by doing things such as paying taxes, learning English, and studying civics, etc."

Question 3 stated that "Federal immigration law should provide an efficient, expeditious system for legal entry into the U.S. for immigrants who are:

- a) Immediate family members, joining family members already admitted for legal residence in the U.S.;

- b) Entering the U.S. to meet labor needs;
- c) Entering the U.S. as students;
- d) Entering the U.S. because of persecution in home country.

It was the consensus of the group that all these categories should receive "high priority" when drafting a new law.

Question 4a stated "In order to deal more effectively with unauthorized immigrants, Federal immigration law should include a Social Security card or other national identification card with secure identifiers for ALL persons residing in the U.S."

The group was unanimous in their disagreement to this proposal.

Question 4b asked whether Federal immigration law dealing with unauthorized immigrants should be enforced by including:

- 1) Physical barriers (we disagreed);
- 2) Increased personnel at various entry points (we ranked this a high priority);
- 3) More effective tracking of persons with non-immigrant visas (ranked a high priority);
- 4) Verification documents, such as Green Cards and work permits with secure identifiers (could not reach consensus);
- 5) Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee visa status (ranked a high priority);
- 6) Improved technology for sharing information among Federal agencies (ranked a high priority);
- 7) A program to allow immigrant workers to go in and out of the U.S. to meet seasonal labor needs (ranked a high priority);
- 8) Significant fines proportionate to revenue for employers who fail to take adequate steps to verify work authorization of employees (no consensus).

Question 5: The group was in agreement with the statement that **Federal immigration law should address and balance the long-term financial benefit from immigrants with the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.**

Continued on next page

Immigration Study Consensus - Continued

Question 6: The group was also in total agreement with the statement that **Federal immigration law should be coordinated with U.S. foreign policy to proactively help improve economies, education and job opportunities, and living conditions for nations with large emigrating populations.**

Use our Smart Voter website for election information

- Polling place locations
- Personalized ballot information
- Guide to the Candidates
- Detailed look at statewide measures and more

www.smartvoter.org

Primary Process - Continued from page 1

There are several types of primary processes. The three most widely used are the open primary, the closed primary, and the blanket primary.

The open primary allows for the voter to vote across party lines. The closed primary only allows the registered voter to cast a vote for the party with which that voter is affiliated. Lastly, the blanket primary, allows registered voters to vote in each of the primary elections.

The votes cast in a presidential primary election are votes that are cast for delegates who will represent the candidates at the national convention. The number of delegates for each state is dependent upon the population of that state.

In the California presidential primaries you may only vote for the party for which you are registered. You may change your party affiliation by re-registering for a different party at least 15 days prior to the primary election.

California currently has a modified closed primary system whereby “decline to state” voters may vote Democrat or American Independent but must request the ballot of one of those political parties at the time of the presidential primaries. Otherwise you will be given a nonpartisan ballot.

Once the presidential primary election is over, the Democratic candidates who received at least 15% or more of the votes in any Congressional District (there are 53 congressional Districts) will hold caucuses on April 13, 2008 to choose district level delegates.

The Republican party awards convention delegates to candidates on a winner-take-all basis. This system could give a Republican front-runner a substantial lead in delegates.

Finally, the delegates who reach the National Conventions are generally bound to cast a vote for their candidate for at least the first round. All bets are off after the first round.

Does anyone remember what happened at the 1968 Democratic Convention in Chicago?

Submitted by Barbara Auerbach

Mission Statement

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.

It is easy to join the League of Women Voters!

Membership is open to all men and women of voting age interested in a better government and more responsible, knowledgeable voters.

Mail this application and dues to:

*League of Women's Voters of Mendocino County
P.O. Box 1128, Fort Bragg, CA 95437*

Individual membership: \$45 per year two person household: \$70 per year

Membership Dues - Payable to LWVMC

Donation - Payable to LWVMC

Name(s) _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail address _____

**The League of Women Voters
of Mendocino County
P. O. Box 1128
Fort Bragg, CA 95437**

**Vote
in Primary
Election**

Calendar of Events

February 5 Presidential Primaries 7 a.m. to 8 p.m.

February 12 General Meeting 10:00 a.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg
Program: Special Districts.
Speaker: Frank McMichael, LAFCO
Refreshments

February 19 Board Meeting 9:30 a.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg
Social time

March 14 Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials 5 - 7 p.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

April 19 General Meeting 10:00 a.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg
Program: Janis Hirohama, LWVCA President
Refreshments

9:30 a.m.

9:30 a.m.

9:00 a.m.

9:30 a.m.

FEBRUARY 2008

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Websites of Interest

LWVMC www.mendo.ca.lwvnet.org
Smart Voter www.smartvoter.org