



The Voter

The League of Women Voters of Mendocino County

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March 2007
Susan Eveleth, Editor (707)937-3877

League Prepares To Meet & Greet Elected Officials

State Sen. Patricia Wiggins was the first elected official to respond to a League of Women Voters invitation to attend the Mendocino County league's second annual Meet and Greet event.

The event will be from 5 – 7 p.m. Friday, March 23 at St. Michael's Church at the corner of Franklin and Fir in Fort Bragg and the purpose is to bring coastal voters together with their representatives, one-on-one and face to face. It is open to the public.

At press time, several officials had accepted the invitation, including Sheriff Tom Allman, Superior Court Judge Jonathan Lehan, Hospital Board Trustee Michael Dell'Ara, Mendocino Unified School District Trustee Gloria Liner, Mendocino Fire Protection District Board Member David Gross and Mendocino City Community Services District Board Member Roger Schwartz.

Elected representatives from the hospital district board of trustees, school boards, water districts and fire protection districts have been invited as well as county and state officials.

Continued on page 3 (Meet & Greet)

The Candidate's Forum

Submitted by Barbara Auerbach

The Town Hall in Fort Bragg was packed on the night of March 2, 2007. Even the rafters were full. It was the evening that candidates for District Attorney of Mendocino got to present their platform. However, it was the audience that plied the candidates with questions for one hour and forty-five minutes that kept people at the edge of their seats.

The questions were packed with punches. The people wanted to know what each candidate thought their duties would be as the District Attorney of Mendocino County. The public wanted to know what would be done about; elder abuse, domestic violence, juvenile offenders, mental health, fish and game poaching, the growing market for methamphetamines, and many more issues.

The forum made a difference to the voters. The questions and the responses made it clear the importance of the position of District Attorney. A good District Attorney will make a difference in the safety and well being of a community.

Get on the candidates' websites. Listen to them on the radio and cable stations, ask legal professionals to evaluate the candidates' competence, and **then get out and vote!**

Remember to Vote April 3rd

Websites of Interest

LWVMC
www.mendo.ca.lwvnet.org

Smart Voter
www.smartvoter.org

Mendocino County
www.co.mendocino.ca.us/
Select Department,
Assessor-County Clerk-
Recorder

In this Issue:

Bylaws Amendment	7
Calender	8
Instant Runoff Voting	4
Meet and Greet	1
Membership	7
President's Message	2
Rally in the Valley	6
Review of DA Forum	1
State Program Planning	6
Voter Services	3

2006 - 2007
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President's Message

WHY I JOINED THE LEAGUE.....

On a sunny day in a crowded parking lot at a San Diego grocery store in 1969, I packed up my purchases and jumped into the driver's seat of my 1967 Dodge Dart. I happened to look over my left shoulder up into the passenger window of a van parked next to me. A camera lens jerked back into the interior and the van sped east down El Cajon Boulevard. There was masking tape over the rear license plate, and the van had a whiff of "government vehicle" about it.

Somebody was watching me.

I wondered why. I was just out of college, recently married and had a decent \$100-a-week job. I had gone to Girls State and Girls Nation, served as a VISTA Associate, never smoked marijuana, never been arrested and never received a grade worse than a B. Was it something I did? Something political? Something I believed in?

My heroes were Babe Didrikson, my dad, Hugo Black, Martin Luther King, Harry Truman, Althea Gibson and my granddad who was the sheriff of Bosque County, Texas in the early 1900s.

I packed that parking lot episode in my memory and got on with business. Life was good. Days and work were long and hard. Voting was my only political act. Then up popped another hero. Her name was Joy Picus and she was an L.A. City Councilman. She taught me a thing or two about the League of Women Voters. I realized (especially by watching televised candidate forums) that league members always were and always will be my heroes.

The other day I got to thinking about that parking lot in 1969. I got to thinking about how precious my rights are—and how they are protected by my vote. To me, that is what the league—and democracy—is all about.

I'm looking forward to our league's next event: Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials from 5-7 p.m. on Friday, March 23, at St. Michael's Church at the corner of Fir and Franklin in Fort Bragg. I want to shake hands with our elected officials, look them in the eye and listen.

I'm looking for an elected official who cares about our votes—somebody who knows the difference between a grocery store surveillance camera and the kind of camera that follows me out of the store into my home for no good legal reason.

One of the worst regrets of my life is a missed opportunity to get in a car and drive 75 miles to meet my hero Harry Truman, who was meeting and greeting students in his Independence library not too many months before his death. I had the chance but youth and stupidity overtook my enthusiasm. I'm wiser now and have resolved to never turn down the chance to meet a new hero. I'm thinking I may have that chance on March 23.

Many sincere thanks to the event committee: Barbara Matheson, Shirley Kirkpatrick, Doris Hammer, Jane Person, Carol Ann Falk, Dorine Real, Lee Tepper, Babs Levine and Emily Collins.

Please join us for this adventure. Come early and hook up with Doris Hammer. She will put you with an elected official you can introduce to our voters.

Let me know if you spot any hero contenders.

Voter Service News

By Pat Dunbar

Another election will soon be upon us! As you may already know, Mendocino County has a special election for county District Attorney scheduled for April 3. By the time you receive this “Voter”, you will probably already have your sample ballot, and if you vote by mail, your actual ballot, too. There are 3 candidates: Keith Faulder, Meredith Lintott, and Bert Schlosser.

I hope you attended the candidate forum on March 2, but if you missed it, MCTV will rebroadcast it several times before the election; also, a DVD copy will be available at the Fort Bragg library.

Many thanks to our cosponsors, Alliance for Democracy, Mendocino Coast Peace and Justice Center, and National Alliance on Mental Illness for all their help in putting on the candidate forum!

Please take the time to vote in this important election. Check your sample ballot, the Smart Voter website or the county website to be sure of your polling place; there are a few minor changes from the November polling sites. In addition to the regular mail return for mail-in ballots, you can take your ballot to any polling place on election day, or to the county elections office in Ukiah at any time up to close of polls on election day. If your mail-in ballot is damaged or lost, you can also vote a provisional ballot at any polling place on election day.

Meet & Greet continued from page 1

The idea for the event originated with the League of Women Voters in Oakland, where it is a popular fundraiser. The Mendocino League’s Meet & Greet was introduced last year by former President Barbara Matheson. She and co-chair Shirley Kirkpatrick designed the event to be a friendly, informal meeting between voters and representatives—with no program, no agenda, no speeches and no charge for admission.

League members have invited local high school students and boards of education student representatives. College of the Redwoods student body officers also were invited.

What can you do? Ask if you can bring savory finger foods (like sandwiches, quiche, cut fruits, or canapés). Dorine Real (964-2781) is coordinating refreshments.

Come at 4:30 p.m. to deliver appetizers and/or confirm your assignment with an elected official. Doris Hammer will match you with one or more elected officials. Please take those officials into the meeting room and introduce them to voters. Enjoy this chance to meet your representatives, represent our league, and share some gourmet league-cooked appetizers.



MISSION STATEMENT:

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

Special Election Sparks Instant Runoff Debates

When a state appellate court decision required Mendocino County to conduct a **special election for District Attorney on April 3**, several political organizations began to study the possibility of Instant Runoff Voting. Time and money were issues. The county would go for months without an elected District Attorney. With the possibility of three or more candidates, questions arose about costs of one or more special runoff elections.

Instant Runoff Voting (IRV) is a method of selecting a winner from a list of two or more candidates by one vote. The method was invented in the United States and has been used in Australia and Ireland for decades. The League of Women Voters of California adopted a position in 2001 (modified in 2003 and re-adopted at the last convention) that states: "Support election systems for executive offices, both at the state and local levels, that require the winner to receive a majority of the votes, as long as the majority is achieved using a voting method such as Instant Runoff Voting, rather than a second, separate runoff election."

INSTANT RUN-OFF VOTING (IRV)

Submitted by: Barbara E. Auerbach

I thought that commenting on IRV would be a relatively easy task. I found that attempting to get peanut butter off the roof of my mouth was easier. The actual instructions to a voter under an IRV system are quite simple and straight forward. The voter places a "1" next to their favorite candidate, a "2" next to their second choice, a "3" next to their third choice and so forth. It is important to note that you may also vote for only one candidate if you choose.

For example:

There were 100 people voting in an election, therefore there were 100 votes:

- Tom received 20 % of the votes
- Dick received 10% of the votes
- Harry received 30% of the votes
- Jane received 40% of the votes

Your choice was Harry because you placed a "1" next to his name. As it happens Jane received the most votes but not a majority of the number of votes cast. A formula often used for a majority in a single-winner office is 50% +1 of the votes.

The next step in the IRV process disqualifies the lowest vote getter. Dick is the lowest vote getter. His votes are disseminated to the candidates per the voters' second choices. All of the voters for Dick chose Harry as their second choice.

Recount:

- Jane has 40% of the votes
- Harry has 40% of the votes
- Tom has 20% of the votes

Jane and Harry are now in a tie. Tom having the least percentage of votes is eliminated and his voters'

choices for their next favorite candidate are now disseminated.

Second Recount:

- Harry received 15% of Tom's votes with a total percentage of 55%
- Jane received 5% of Tom's votes with a total percentage of 45%.

The majority of the voters chose Harry as their choice for office. Jane would have won in a plurality election even though there were more people who voted against her.

This IRV example achieves the goal of a runoff election with a single trip to the polls.

In a multi-race election, for example say three seats, the formula would be 25% plus one vote more.

Plurality voting

Plurality voting often known as "first-past-the post" voting appears to be the simplest election process. The voter goes to the polls on Election Day and votes his/her one vote for the candidate of choice. "One man (person), one vote" elects the candidate who comes in first at the polls.

The system is fast, cheaper, and easier to understand.

"The one-person-one-vote principle traces to the Supreme Court's 1962 decision in *Baker v. Carr*. At the time, legislative districts had wildly unequal numbers of people, and representatives from under populated rural districts controlled many state legislatures. In Maryland, 14 percent of the voters could elect a majority of the State Senate, and 25

percent could elect a majority of the State House. In Alabama, the county that includes Birmingham, which had 600,000 people, got the same number of state senators - one - as a county with barely 15,000 people.”⁽¹⁾

Voters who favor plurality voting may not be interested in electing the second best. These voters have specific issues that they feel only their candidate will address.

Plurality voting is used in 43 of the 191 countries in the United Nations for either local or national elections. Plurality voting is particularly prevalent in the United Kingdom and former British colonies, including the United States and Canada.⁽²⁾

YEAS for IRV

- IRV saves costly runoff elections, and lengthened costly campaigns.
- IRV saves attrition of voter interest by not having voters go to the polls more than once for a particular election.
- IRV is constitutional.

Duverger’s Law: predicts that constituencies that use first-past-the-post systems (plurality voting) will become two-party systems, given enough time.

Voters are pressured to vote for one of the two candidates they predict are most likely to win, even if their true preference is neither, because a vote for any other candidate will be likely to be wasted and have no impact on the final result.⁽³⁾

IRV allows “spoiler” candidates to run for office, while still allowing the candidate with the majority vote to win. Conservatives claim, under the plurality system, that Ross Perot was a spoiler when he split the conservative vote allowing Bill Clinton to win the presidential election. Democrats claim that Ralph Nader returned as a spoiler in the 2000 election by splitting the vote between Nader and Gore thereby allowing George W. Bush to win the election.

NAYS for IRV

- The system for counting ballots would have to change.
- Voters have to be educated to a new form of balloting.
- Voters who favor plurality voting are not interested in a second choice candidate.

The Electoral College would have to be amended out of the Constitution of the United States for IRV to be employed for presidential elections. On the other hand the Electoral College rids the presidential election of a “spoiler” candidate. It also may give the presidency to the candidate who did not obtain the most votes, as in the 2004 election. It will require a constitutional amendment to change the way we vote for our president. However, voting procedures at local and state levels can be changed without amending the Constitution.

Proposition A was placed on the ballot after a vote of 10-1 by the members of the San Francisco County Board of Supervisors. It will curtail runoff elections, which normally have very low turnout. Canceling these extra runoff elections will save the County of San Francisco \$2 million each time.

Watch for IRV in the next mayoral race in San Francisco on November 6, 2007.

References

- 1 .Question for Judge Alito: What about one person one vote? , Adam Cohen, New York Times, January 3, 2006.
- 2.”The Global Distribution of Electoral Systems” en.wikipedia.org/wiki/First-past-the-post.
- 3 .Maurice Duverger, *Factors in a Two-Party and Multi party System, in Party Politics and Pressure Groups* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972) pp. 23-32.

State Program Planning

by Barbara Matheson

In keeping with the League's grassroots process, 21 members met on Tuesday, February 13 to review all State League positions and help decide the agenda for the LWVC for the upcoming biennium.

After discussing all the positions it was the consensus of the group that all positions should be retained. The group picked **Voting Rights** and **Water** as its first and second choices for education and advocacy.

Agriculture and **Pre K through 12 Grade Education** tied for the third spot.

While the members did not wish to recommend any new study, they were concerned that legislative term limits was not addressed in any position. It was felt that if the League could not speak to this item, our League should recommend an update of either the Voting Rights or Election Systems positions to include term limits.

Following the meeting, I spoke with Trudy Schafer, the State League's Legislative Analyst, who explained that in 1992 the delegates to the National Convention voted to make the national League's position in opposition to term limits vertical, thereby allowing state and local Leagues to use it without additional studies. The State League does, therefore, work in opposition to term limit legislation.

Looking Ahead

The League will continue this process on April 10, from 9:30 to noon at the Episcopal Church located on the corner of Franklin and Fir streets in Fort Bragg. We will review all our Focal positions, hear reports from our local observers and discuss how all the League's positions (vertical) can be used to take local action. Hope to see you there.

Rally in the Valley

All League members are invited to attend the 2007 Convention of the LWV of California, to be held May 18-20 in Bakersfield at the Doubletree Hotel. Our league will send our new president and two voting delegates, but others may attend, as guests and/or volunteers. The Convention is the time to elect state officers and board members, adopt a state budget and programs for the next two years.

More than just a business meeting, the Convention is an opportunity to meet new friends, network with colleagues and attend discussion groups. Many new ideas and programs, proposed by state and local leagues offer a "smorgasbord" of topics to explore and debate.

Savor the flavor of small-town heartland America, for Bakersfield is located squarely in a billion-dollar agricultural industry. Delores Huerta, cofounder of the United Farm Workers will be keynote speaker.

For more information see the state league website: www.Lwvc.org

LWVUS Amends League's Bylaws

The LWVUS bylaws were amended at the last national convention and state leagues were asked to conform to a new mission statement and purpose, according to State President Jacqueline Jacobberger. The amendment dropped "of citizens." Member action is not required to make this change, but our board of directors voted to inform members in our VOTER. Our mission statement in Article II, Section 1 of our bylaws now reads:

The purpose of the League is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government, and to act on selected government issues.

The national league also has discontinued the practice of paid life membership in the league and requested that all reference to paid life members in our bylaws be deleted. This does not affect honorary life members, according to President Jacobberger.

Welcome New Members

Submitted by Shirley Kirkpatrick, Membership

We were not able to fit our list of new members into the last issue of the Voter, so we have an even greater list for this issue. The following new members have recently joined our local League of Voters:

Sue Arnold, Mendocino
Andarin Arvola, Fort Bragg
Barbara Auerbach and **Jim Corsar**, Caspar
Patricia Black, Mendocino
Win Bowen, Caspar
Roy Falk, Caspar
Susan Gardiner, Albion
Karen Havlena, Fort Bragg
Don Kirkpatrick, Mendocino
Mary and Jeff Kraut, Caspar
Gloria Liner and **Harold Hauck**, Mendocino
Ken Matheson, Little River
Don and Linda Prial, Mendocino

HAVE A FRIEND WHO WANTS TO JOIN THE LEAGUE?

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

Calendar of Events

- Tuesday, March 20** Board of Director's Meeting
Time 9:30 a.m. Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg
- Friday, March 23** Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials
Time 5:00 p.m. Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg
Members, please arrive at 4:30 p.m. to meet Doris Hammer. She will pair you up with an elected official.
- Tuesday, April 10** General Meeting (coffee at 9:30 a.m.)
Time 10:00 a.m. Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg
Program Local Program Planning and Observer Reports
- Tuesday, April 17** Board of Director's Meeting
Time 9:30 a.m. Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg
- Tuesday, May 15** Annual Meeting and Election of Officers, Board Members
Time 10:00 a.m. Location: Hill House, Mendocino
- May 18-20, 2007** Rally in the Valley State Convention
Location: Bakersfield