



# The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

September 2008

Jane Person, President

Susan Eveleth, Editor

## Members To Focus on Environment At September 16 Opening Meeting

### Rachel Binah To Discuss Recent Offshore Drilling Proposals

By Barbara Matheson

League member and community activist Rachel Binah will be the guest speaker at League's opening meeting Tuesday, September 16, at the Harbor Lite Lodge in Fort Bragg. Binah, one of the many organizers of the community's response to lease sale 91 in 1988 (which would have placed oil rigs from San Francisco to the Oregon border), will discuss the current proposal to drill off northern California's coastline.

Binah currently is Chair Emeritus of the Environmental Caucus for the California Democratic Party. She is serving her fifth term as a Democratic National Committee member and is attending her sixth Democratic National Convention.

She is the former innkeeper/owner of Dehaven

Valley Farm B and B in Westport and Rachel's Inn in Little River. She is a founding member of the Mendocino Coast Democratic Club, a former chair of Mendocino County Mental Health Advisory Board and current President of the Coast Toastmasters Club. Please join us at this important meeting. Rachel promises plenty of time for questions and discussion.



Rachel Binah—photo by Eve Yeomans

The League's position on offshore, oil/gas exploration was first adopted by the LWVC Board of Directors in 1983, and revised in 1988, and again in 1994.

It states: "*The League of Women Voters believes that policies, procedures and regulations governing offshore oil and gas activities should support the goal of wise management of resources in the public interest, with a high level of protection of the environment. Decisions on leasing, exploration, production, transport and abandonment must be the result of a process that provides opportunity for full citizen participation and that recognizes the appropriate role of local agencies. The orderly and prudent development of petroleum resources must be guided by national and state energy policies that recognize those resources as finite. We urge a decreasing reliance on fossil fuels and an increasing emphasis on conservation and renewable energy sources. Because of this and because of the impacts on the California coast that would result from increased offshore oil/gas activities, the League calls for a long-term suspension of both lease sales and new projects in the Outer Continental Shelf (OCS) and state Tidelands.*"

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2008-2009

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**President's Message**

It's the silly season, politically, as I write this in mid August. Ancient Romans took to the beaches or hills during the dog days, and modern Parisians leave town in August to escape the enervating heat. In this country political pundits just take leave of their senses.



Candidates paint each other as "Celebrity Obama" or "George-More-of-the-Same McCain." Meanwhile the Federal budget deficit is estimated to be about \$400 billion, given increased government spending and an ailing economy. Keith Oberman of "Countdown" reported that a video had surfaced titled "Is Obama Too Skinny for Voters?" A heavier Obama, the video implies, would appeal more to voters since people tend to vote for people they feel they have a lot in common with and about two thirds of the country is overweight.

The video of the summer, however, is a spoof on McCain's ad comparing Obama's celebrity with Paris Hilton's. It shows Hilton reclining by a pool in a skimpy bathing suit and now elevated to Presidential candidate status, saying, "I want America to know that I'm, like, totally ready to lead." Anchorwoman Maria Mileto and her colleague spent several minutes debating whether Hilton wrote her own script and whether McCain "got" the spoof. Their conclusion: she didn't and he didn't. Michael Greeneaux (The Root.com) notes that despite the largest deficit in our history and the rising number of deaths in Afghanistan, and a slumping housing market, we're talking about Cindy McCain's spending habits and Michelle Obama's college thesis.

Finally, An AP-Yahoo poll spent 10 days asking 1759 voters if the candidates' choice of pet ownership would influence their voting. The rather depressing answer was "yes."

Cooler weather will bring cooler heads, though, and that thought brings us to the Mendocino County League of Women Voters fall kick-off meeting September 16 at the Harbor Lite Lodge and to our fall program. See Barbara Matheson's article on the meeting and on our fall agenda where serious issues receive serious discussion. (We do know how to laugh, however.)

One of our projects this year is a Voter Registration Drive. This is at the core of what the League stands for, and we will have tables at places where people can see us. When this project is ready to go, you'll be notified. If you have some time to donate to this

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## FALKS ATTEND NATIONAL LEAGUE CONVENTION IN PORTLAND

**F**ormer president Carol Ann Falk attended the League of Women Voters National Convention as a voting delegate in June. The convention was held in Portland, Oregon.

The national league voted to focus on three areas:

- Global climate change and sustainability
- Health care and educating the community and members to be better advocates

- Development of a national popular vote study by the league

Delegates voted to amend league principles by adding this statement: "The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive and judicial."

Keynote speaker John Kitzhaber, former Oregon governor, told delegates healthcare in the United States was in critical condition. He urged citizens to "fix" the system.

The next LWVUS National Convention will be in Atlanta, Georgia in 2010.

League member Roy Falk also attended the convention.



*Carol Ann Falk*

VOTER staff

**BOARD BRIEFS:** If you vote by mail, consider holding off mailing your ballot until after the Pro/Con discussion of the state ballot measures at the League's October 14 meeting.

You may change your mind.

Pat Karch has resigned as League Secretary owing to other commitments. If you'd be interested in this job, which entails being on the Board, please contact Jane Person at 964-6351. Lee Tepper has a digital recorder he'll lend.

We need an addition to our group of League Observers. We have no one currently going to meetings of the Ft. Bragg School District. These meetings are held on the second Thursday of each month in Ft. Bragg. Contact Observer Chair Babs Levine.

### *President's Message*

*continued from page 2*

critical League mission, please call JoAn Blackstone, our Voter Services Chair. Other organizations do this job occasionally, but only the League of Women Voters has the reputation for complete impartiality since we do not support or oppose candidates or parties.

So far there are twelve measures on the ballot for November. The League of Women Voters of California will not

take a stand on two because League positions do not cover the issues in Prop 2, Standards for Confining Farm Animals or in Prop 12, Veterans' Bond Act of 2008. A detailed analysis is coming in September, so check the League Website.

We are excited about our program this year and with the opportunity to partner with other organizations to reach the community on top-

ics like sustainability. Please plan to attend the meetings and volunteer to be a part of the programs. JoAnn would like some help from you with the Pro/Cons (ballot measures), which will be held during a regular League meeting this year. There're other ways to be a part, and they'll be advertised in "The Voter."

One other way you can help in the voting process is to serve as a poll worker at the polls in November. Call

Susan Ranochak, Mendocino County's Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder, at 463-4371. Training is provided. Carol Ann Falk, Susan Eveleth and Barbara Matheson have served as poll workers for some years and will be happy to tell you what it involves and encourage you to sign on.

Be with us this year! See you September 16.

Jane Person

## WHAT ARE SPECIAL DISTRICTS, AND WHY DO WE HAVE THEM?

By Barbara Auerbach

Most of us on the coast are affected in one way or the other by districts we may not know much about. These are called special districts, and in the coming months the Mendocino County League of Women Voters and “The VOTER” will be discussing some of these districts in Mendocino County.

Government Code Section 50077(d) on special districts reads: *“As used in this section ‘district’ means an agency of the state, formed pursuant to general law or special act, for the local performance of governmental or proprietary functions within limited boundaries.”*

The California Senate Committee on Local Government asserts that “special districts localize the costs and benefits of public services” and “allow local citizens to obtain the services they want at a price they are willing to pay.”

There are approximately 4,800 special districts in California. Some of the services they perform include water and sewer services, park maintenance, fire protection, mosquito abatements, and closed captioned television.

The LWV and “The VOTER” will be making presentations and writing articles on the following:

1. How special districts are created
2. Types of districts—dependent v independent; enterprise v non-enterprise; and coastal districts
3. Funding for special districts, including taxation
4. Accountability standards
5. Special districts and the Brown Act, the Public Records Act, and the Political Reform Act
6. An independent special district’s governing board elections
7. Advantages and disadvantages of a special district

These discussions will help you, as a citizen, to determine your involvement in and ability to influence special districts affecting your life. The discussions will also explain why it is important to support your local special districts when fund-raisers are announced.

### November Elections Calendar – Important Dates

September 25 (approximate) – Sample Ballots mailed

October 6 – Absentee Ballots mailed

October 14 – League Pros & Cons program on ballot measures (there will be 12)

October 20 – Last day to register to vote

October 28 – Last day to request absentee ballot

November 4, 2008 – Election Day

Please consider waiting to cast your absentee ballot until after our October 14 Pros & Cons program on ballot measures. Be an informed voter.

## INSIDE OUR LEAGUE

**Note: This is one of a series on League members who are making contributions to the community. Please call a Voter staff member if you know someone you'd like to spotlight.**

When Barbara Auerbach moved to the Mendocino Coast several years ago, she planned a restful retirement throwing pots. Instead, she has volunteered to help the children and young people of the community much as she did when she was a children's attorney in Los Angeles.

Barbara is involved in two projects with children. One is called the Storybook Project. Created by Big Brothers and Big Sisters of Mendocino County, it involves County Jail inmates reading on tape to their children. She and League member Charlene McAllister go to Ukiah twice a month on Tuesdays and Thursdays to tape specially vetted inmates reading aloud a story from a donated storybook for their own kids. A CD of this reading is then sent to the inmate's family within two days. "It gives the child a voice connection with a parent," said Barbara; "It's so important for a child to have that connection."

Both men and women inmates are involved and may participate as often as they like. Many are studying for their GED, and this project is part of the educational program. Inmates are thrilled to be a part of the Storybook project, Barbara said.

Volunteers are needed. If you would like to be one, contact Patti McCluey, case manager, at 463-4809.

The second project involves Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. In Los Angeles Barbara represented children in Dependency Court, supervising 30 attorneys who dealt with

difficult children. Barbara was curious about what seemed to be wrong with these youngsters and spoke with a pediatrician working with mental health who cited a University of Washington study on brain damage in children whose mothers drank during pregnancy. Barbara then set up a conference with Dr. Astrid Hager of Los Angeles County-USC Medical Center, four attorneys and social workers to learn more. They learned that alcohol use during pregnancy could cause children to be unable to focus, to follow directions, and to see consequences of their behavior, in spite of having a normal IQ. Further studies have shown that 55 to 65% of people having problems with the law also have signs of Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder.

Barbara has been working with Partnerships for Healthy Babies, a multi-disciplinary group in Ukiah. The group puts together training programs on Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder for foster and adoptive parents, and social workers. They hope to expand the program to include attorneys and mental health workers. Bar-

bara has given three training programs and will be giving one for lawyers in Ukiah in September. Also, said Barbara, "Police and probation officers need to be aware of FASD when interviewing youth and adults because their responses may be a result of this disorder, especially when their responses may not reflect what actually happened."

In addition to these activities, Barbara volunteers at the Botanical Gardens. Last year she planted a pumpkin patch in the Veggie Garden, and the pumpkins became part of local school children's Halloween celebrations. Not much time left in her schedule to throw pots.



*From left: J. Person, Editor S. Eveleth, B. Auerbach, Molly*

### 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.**



## Calendar of Events

### 2008

**Tuesday, September 16, 2008 General Meeting: Sustainability 10 a.m.—noon**

Location: Harbor Lite Lodge, Fort Bragg

Speaker: Rachel Binah

Topic: Off-Shore Oil Drilling

A light brunch will be served at 9:30 a.m.

**Tuesday, October 14, 2008 General Meeting: November Election 10 a.m.—2 p.m.\***

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

Topic: Pro and Con Discussion on State Ballot Measures

\*Please bring sack lunch, drinks will be provided

**NOTE:** If you vote by mail, please consider waiting until after you attend this meeting

**Tuesday, October 21, 2008 Board of Directors Meeting 9 a.m.—noon**

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

**Tuesday, November 11, 2008 General Meeting: Local Study on Special Districts 10 a.m.-noon**

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

**Board of Directors Meeting 12:30 p.m.—3 p.m.** (board members bring sack lunch)

**Tuesday, December 9, 2008 General Meeting: Sustainability 10 a.m.—noon followed by**

**Holiday Luncheon and small group discussion in afternoon**

Location: To be Announced

**Note: No Board of Directors Meeting in December**

### Please Save These Dates for 2009

**Tuesday, January 13, 2009 General Meeting: State Program Planning and Review**

**Tuesday, February 10, 2009 General Meeting: Sustainability**

**Discussion of *Animal, Vegetable, and Miracle* by Barbara Kingsolver**

**Tuesday, February 17, 2009 Board of Directors Meeting**

**Friday, March 13, 2009 Fourth Annual Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials Event**

**Tuesday, March 17, 2009 Board of Directors Meeting**

**Tuesday, April 14, 2009 General Meeting: Sunshine Week and LWV Observer Reports**

**Tuesday, May 12, 2009 ANNUAL MEETING AND LUNCHEON**

# Profiles in League

Reflections by Jean Morley

**J**ean Morley was raised in Argentina, France and Yonkers, NY. Her bachelor's degree from Wellesley College is in political science and her master's degree from the University of Chicago is in public administration.

She worked in various personnel positions in the Federal government in Washington, D.C. and San Diego. When she retired in 1958,



Jean says: "for 14 years, I was a State Park Ranger's wife, chiefly in Anza-Borrego Desert State Park where I led hikes (not official ones) and volunteered in the Visitor Center, including naturalist walks. This is where we return each spring for a month of sun and fun. Everywhere I worked there were wonderful people. I am most proud of my husband and brother who are very supportive of my various activities. How else could this 90-year-old continue to enjoy the rich life of the Mendocino Coast?"

## LEAGUE MEMBERS FOCUS ON SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES FOR 2008-2009

By Barbara Matheson

As summer winds down and we head into fall our thoughts turn to getting back to our League work. The Program Committee has met and decided to make Sustainability the main topic for the 2008-09 League year.

We will have a total of four (possibly five) meetings on this subject. They will include our opening meeting on "Off-Shore

Oil Drilling" (see article Page 1); a meeting on what the City of Fort Bragg is doing to "go green," with a discussion on what things we can change in our own lives to help; reading and discussing Barbara Kingsolver's book *Animal, Vegetable, and Miracle*; having discussion with various sponsors of our many community gardens; and ending with a guest speaker on the proposed wave energy project. Mixed in will also be our Pro and Cons meeting on the

State Ballot Measures, a meeting about our local study of Special Districts, a meeting with our local League Observers, and of course our Fourth Annual Meet and Greet Your Local Elected Officials. A very busy and very exciting year.

Please be sure to check your VOTER for dates and times. We look forward to seeing all of you at our monthly meetings.



Barbara Matheson

## SUSTAINABILITY 101—A PERSONAL STORY

This is the first in a continuing series. Please send your personal sustainability stories to [janeperson@hotmail.com](mailto:janeperson@hotmail.com)

About six months ago, we decided to seek certification of our property as a wildlife habitat. This national program requires a property to have: food, water, cover and places for wildlife to raise young. Certified habitats conserve natural resources by eliminating fertilizers, pesticides and irrigation water—so soil,

water and air are protected as well as wildlife.

We enjoyed the pleasure of removing invasive non-native plants, sowing an organic garden and continuing to keep our cats indoors. This national program certifies areas as small as urban balconies and as large as public properties, buildings and parks.

We discovered our food tastes better and we appreciate the

sometimes hair-raising efficiency of our wildlife food web—without poison.

This is a simple, rewarding way to achieve sustainability in our own backyard—and supports the league position "to preserve ecological integrity."

We learned about this program at [www.nwf.org/backyard/](http://www.nwf.org/backyard/)

Win and Becky Bowen



Back to Basics—Our Caspar home was the 100,850th to be certified a wildlife habitat.

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

[www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)

[www.ca.lwv.org](http://www.ca.lwv.org)

[www.mendo.ca.lwvnet.org](http://www.mendo.ca.lwvnet.org)

**League of Women Voters  
of Mendocino County  
707 937-4952**

**County Clerk-Recorder  
Election Information  
707 463-4371**

SEPTEMBER 2008

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NOVEMBER 2008

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**CALENDAR  
OF  
EVENTS**

**General Meetings:  
September 16, 2008  
October 14, 2008  
November 11, 2008  
December 9, 2008**

See Page 6  
For Details  
and Board of Directors  
Meeting Dates

DECEMBER 2008

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