



The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

January/February 2015

Carol Czadek, President

Charlene McAllister, Editor

LOCAL MEMBERS TO SEND ACTION ADVICE TO LWVC AT JANUARY PROGRAM PLANNING MEETING IN CASPAR

League President Carol Czadek, Action Chair Nancy Kleiber, and Charlene McAllister will guide us through the process of State Program Planning at the January 13 meeting at 10 a.m. at the Caspar Community Center.

For League members, "Program" means issues we choose for concerted study, education and action at local, state and national levels. Program can include both education and action based on positions adopted after study and consensus.

Every two years, members of California Leagues engage in Program Planning for the state organization.

Based on results of this input by all state chapters, the LWV of California Board of Directors makes recommendations to the biennial convention delegates who will vote to adopt the program for the coming two year period.

The Program Planning process is part of what makes the League a grassroots organization: each League

member has an opportunity to influence selection of issues on which the state League will focus time, talent, and money.

At our January meeting, we will review the current State Program and ask for your input to identify important issues for the state League to emphasize for two years. This is your opportunity to learn more about the current League positions and to advocate for action. You can find the current California League positions at <http://lwvc.org/issues/all>

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League Will Look At Climate Change, Sustainability Issues At Feb. 10 Meeting
LWVMC Directors Dorine Real, Jary Stavelly and Patricia Marien will discuss climate change and sustainability at the membership meeting Tuesday, February 10, at the Caspar Community Center.

The program will include a review of recent reports on climate change issued from UN meetings in Peru and the status of LWV efforts to lessen carbon emissions. Community Activist Michael Potts, of Caspar, also will present information from his own extensive experience with sustainable living and design.

In Honor
And Remembrance
Of
Betty Stavelly,
Our Beloved Member,
Friend,
And Inspiration

1912-2014



Stavelly Family Photograph

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Please visit us on our new facebook page:
<https://www.facebook.com/LWVMendo1>

Editorial

Should Voting Be An Option or an Obligation?

By Carol Czadek



The LWV spends a lot of time and resources on protecting the right of all citizens to vote as well as encouraging all citizens to vote. Majority governments are now formed in this country with the support of barely one in five adult citizens, about the same as elected governments a century ago, when women were not allowed to vote.

Why should voting, the fundamental act of democracy, be an option, and not, like jury duty, or paying your taxes, a basic obligation of citizenship? If we're serious about reversing the decline of voting, perhaps it's time we considered making it compulsory. Imagine how satisfying it would be to focus our energies on promoting our Policy Positions.

The introduction of compulsory laws raises interesting legal, philosophical, political, and practical questions: Is forcing people to vote an acceptable way of increasing the legitimacy of democratic government, or is it an unjustified infringement of individual liberty? Is it compelled speech in violation of the First Amendment? Does the right to vote imply a right *not* to vote? Will any increase in voter turnout due to compulsion improve electoral outcomes, or will it make things worse by diluting the median level of political knowledge and sophistication among voters?

Thirty-one countries have some form of compulsory voting according to the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance. The list includes nine members of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and two-thirds of the Latin American nations. Australia is one of the countries that have compulsory voting, and the nation most culturally similar to the United States. Australia adopted compulsory voting in 1924 after turnout plunged from more than 70% in 1919 to less than 60% in 1922. By contrast, recent turnout by eligible voters in U.S. presidential election years has barely cracked 60%; in midterm elections, it has been hovering in the low 40's. Australians who fail to vote can be fined (or, in theory, jailed for repeated no-shows). Interestingly, the mandate to vote is overwhelmingly popular, with about three-fourths of those polled supporting the requirement.

Proponents offer three reasons in favor of compulsory voting. The first is straightforwardly civic. American citizenship is strong on rights and weak on responsibilities. There is less and less that being a citizen requires of us, especially after the

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EPA PREPARES PATH TO CLEANER POWER

In November, local League members responded to a call to action from Nancy Kleiber and joined more than 48,000 people who responded to a LWVUS appeal for public comments to the Environmental Protection Agency about the agency's Clean Power Plan.

In early December, Jessica Jones reported in an LWVUS press release that more than 8 million comments were submitted in support of the plan to cut carbon pollution from existing power plans.

The League urged the agency to work with states to regulate and reduce carbon pollution levels by 35 percent by 2030.

On June 25, 2013, President Obama announced executive actions to reduce carbon pollution. He directed the EPA to set new carbon pollution standards. On June 2, 2014, the agency announced the plan. The agency said the plan builds on efforts by cities and states to partner with the federal government to cut pollution.

Coal-burning power plants in the U.S. account for about 40 per cent of CO₂ emissions that contribute to climate change, according to the Department of Energy. The Environmental Defense Fund says there currently are no national limits on carbon pollution from power plants. LWVUS President Elisabeth MacNamara appeared at an EPA hearing in Atlanta in support of the plan, citing carbon pollution as the cause of climate change and threats to public health.

Comments that opposed the plan included those from the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection that argued the proposed plan was illegal and would result in higher bills and lower reliability for energy consumers, according to the *West Virginia Record*.

West Virginia Gov. Earl Ray Tomblin said "This rule would have devastating impacts on the economy of our state and our nation."

Carol Czadek—Continued from Page 2

abolition of the draft. Requiring people to vote in national elections once every two years would reinforce the sense of duty at the heart of citizenship. Over time, mandatory voting may cause current nonvoters to become more politically informed.

The second argument for compulsory voting is democratic. Ideally, a democracy will take into account the interests and views of all citizens. Higher voter turnout and an electorate that is more representative of the American population would change electoral and policy outcomes in ways that better reflect the aggregate preferences of the electorate. Mandatory voting would force parties to appeal to all voters, not just the committed base they can motivate to get to the polls. It would drive politicians and parties toward the center and toward compromise. Special interests would hold less sway.

The third is that mandatory voting would reduce the role of money in politics by reducing the cost of elections. Candidates, parties and outside groups would no longer have to devote resources to turning out voters. One might think that this would simply have the perverse effect of freeing up money to spend on ever more television advertising. But, there is only so much airtime, and only so much marginal return on advertising investment. Even more important, political candidates would change the way that they communicate their messages and reach out to the electorate. Campaigns featuring attack ads generally succeed by selectively lowering turnout among targeted groups, but once the prospect of lower voter turnout is removed, candidates would presumably reduce or eliminate the use of this tactic and focus on communicating on issues that are relevant and important to the voters.

Compulsory voting would be an important step toward changing politics for the better, and creating a more politically engaged citizenry. The United States Constitution gives the states enormous power over voting procedures. States from parts of the country with different civic traditions could experiment with compulsory voting. Observers – journalists, social scientists, citizen's groups and elected officials could monitor the consequences.

I think voting is too important to be left to personal choice.

MISSION STATEMENT

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS,
A NON-PARTISAN POLITICAL ORGANIZATION,
ENCOURAGES INFORMED AND ACTIVE PARTICIPATION
IN GOVERNMENT,
STRIVES TO INCREASE UNDERSTANDING
OF MAJOR PUBLIC POLICY ISSUES, AND INFLUENCES
PUBLIC POLICY
THROUGH EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY.

League of Women Voters of Mendocino County 2015 Meeting Calendar

Tuesday, January 6, 2015	Board of Directors Meeting 9:30 a.m. Fort Bragg Library Community Meeting Room
Tuesday, January 13, 2015	LWV State Program Planning Carol Czadek, Nancy Kleiber, Charlene McAllister 10 a.m. Caspar Community Center
Tuesday, February 3, 2015	Board of Directors Meeting 9:30 a.m. Fort Bragg Library Community Meeting Room
Tuesday, February 10, 2015	Climate Change, Sustainability Dorine Real, Patricia Marien, Jary Stavely 10 a.m. Caspar Community Center
Tuesday, March 3, 2015	Board of Directors Meeting 9:30 a.m. Fort Bragg Library Community Meeting Room
Friday, March 20, 2015	Meet & Greet Your Elected Officials Event 5-7 p.m. Caspar Community Center
Tuesday, April 7, 2015	Board of Directors Meeting 9:30 a.m. Fort Bragg Library Community Meeting Room
Tuesday, April 14, 2015	Mendocino Community College Barbara Rice 10 a.m. Caspar Community Center
Tuesday, May 12, 2015	Annual Business Meeting/Potluck Luncheon Time TBA
Tuesday, June 9, 2015	Board of Directors Meeting Time and Place TBA

All general membership meetings are open to the public at no charge. All board of directors meetings are open to League members.



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MENDOCINO COUNTY LOCAL PROGRAM PLANNING 2015-2016

Editor's Note: At our annual business meeting in May, members look at our local program, vote on existing positions, and make recommendations to the Board of Directors for emphasis or action in the coming year. Please take a moment to consider our current positions (whether to retain, drop, update or review) and make suggestions for next year. Keep in mind that additional study and action will require your help and participation. A copy of the current positions in brief are included with this VOTER as a separate pdf attachment in the cover e-mail or enclosed in the hard copy version.

Please indicate whether you wish to *retain, drop, update or review* the following issues which are our current program (positions). An update is a limited study, undertaken with a view to possibly changing the position, usually because circumstances have changed or new information is available. A review will not change the substance of a position, but is done to increase member understanding of the subject and its relevance for action.

CATEGORY	Retain	Drop	Update	Review
GOVERNMENT				
SPECIAL DISTRICTS (1991, UPDATED 2009)				
COUNTY BUDGET (1994)				
LIBRARY SERVICES (1991)				
NATURAL RESOURCES				
SOLID WASTE DISPOSAL (1991, UPDATED 1993)				
TRANSPORTATION (1991)				
SOCIAL POLICY				
HEALTH CARE DISTRICT (1999)				
SUSTAINABLE COMMUNITIES (ADOPTED AS ISSUE FOR EMPHASIS 1999, FULL POSITION 2005)				

If there are issues from the above list you wish to emphasize in the coming year (e.g. take action or do community education), please list and indicate how you will help:

If there are new issues you wish to add to the program, please describe below and indicate how you will help:

Please return this form to: Charlene McAllister, P.O. Box 332, Little River, CA 95456

(or email to charm@mcn.org) by March 1, 2015



NEW PROJECT LOOKS AT JUDICIAL BRANCH
Editor's Note: League Member Susan Mitchell called before the November election and asked how voters go about making a decision about judges on the ballot. We thought it was a good question and we're going to find out more.

Some 470 Superior Court judges were on the California General Election ballot in November, and 450 of them were unopposed. Mendocino County voters saw 12 judges listed on their ballots. Voters here were asked to retain a Supreme Court Justice and certain justices of the state courts of appeal.

How does a voter find out about judicial candidates?

The LWVUS recently partnered with the National Association of Women Judges which currently sponsors a project called *Informed Voters-Fair Judges*. The project is a non-partisan educational study of the judicial branch and seeks to raise awareness about the judicial system, to inform voters and to give voters tools to make informed decisions that result in fair and impartial courts. Topics under review include the role of courts and why they matter, how to hold judges accountable and how to assess a judicial candidate.

Other partners in the study include the American Association for Justice, the Brennan Center for Justice, American Board of Trial Advocates, National Asian Pacific American Bar Association, Hispanic National Bar Association and others.

According to the association's website, "NAWJ is the nation's leading voice for women jurists dedicated to preserving judicial independence, ensuring equal justice and access to the courts for women, minorities and other historically disfavored groups, providing judicial education on cutting-edge issues, and increasing the numbers and advancement of women judges at all levels to more accurately reflect their full participation in a democratic society." Members include federal, state, tribal, military and administrative law judges at both the appellate and trial levels from every state.

Our VOTER staff will follow developments in the project. More information can be found at

<http://ivp.nawj.org/>

Legislative Analyst's Office Provides Cool, Hard Facts About California's Budget

For those of us who just can't quite digest the \$2.2 trillion state budget, relief is here in "Cal Facts," 72 pages of easy-to-understand language published by the state Legislative Analyst's Office.

To know the budget is to know the people of California—all 40 million of us. Legislative Analyst Mac Taylor writes in the introduction: "Cal Facts consists of a series of charts and tables which address questions frequently asked of our office. We hope the reader will find it to be a handy and helpful document."

Here are a few handy and helpful facts:

- California's economy is the eighth-largest in the world.
- The state has a rapidly growing elderly population and by 2020, there is likely to be a Hispanic plurality (39 per cent of the population compared to 38 per cent white, 14 per cent Asian-American, 6 per cent African-American and 4 per cent "other.")
- 99 per cent of U.S. production of almonds and walnuts comes from California. Almonds are the state's leading agricultural export.
- Milk is California's top farm commodity.
- Adjusted poverty rate charts show there are about 9 million Californians who are considered "poor"—23.4 per cent of the state's population compared to 14.8 per cent of the population in the rest of the country.
- Housing costs in the state have grown faster than incomes.
- Most college students in the state attend public institutions (72 per cent vs. 66 per cent nationally).
- Most court filings involve traffic cases, usually resolved quickly. Two-thirds of court resources support criminal, civil or family law cases.
- 60 tribal casinos operate in 26 counties and bring \$7 billion in revenues after winnings.
- The state lottery operates in 21,000 retailers in all 58 counties, and produce \$1.8 billion in revenue after winnings.

<http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2014/calfacts/calfacts-2014.aspx>

PROCLAMATION

**IN RECOGNITION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY**

WHEREAS, The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan political organization, encouraging informed and active participation in government, striving to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influencing public policy; and

WHEREAS, our LOCAL Mendocino County League of Women Voters, is an exceptionally vibrant, engaged, and active organization on our Coast; and

WHEREAS, following the League's commitment to provide non-biased information to voters, it has hosted many events in our community; and

WHEREAS, though the list is long, a few highlights are: The Annual Meet and Greet event where elected officials can meet informally with the public; and Candidate Forums where people running for office present themselves to the public and answer questions; and

WHEREAS, because the League is committed to the ballot as a means for change, the members take it upon themselves to study the ballot measures at election time and, as they say, "Follow the Money" to get greater clarity on the measures; and

WHEREAS, the League will establish "action priorities". The top priority for 2013 is Money in Politics and the many facets of Election Reform. In addition, the national League will concentrate on Climate Change, Gun Safety and Immigration; and

WHEREAS, the League holds monthly meetings, open to the public, which include an educational topics on a variety of local issues; and

WHEREAS, the League has an excellent monthly newsletter called THE VOTER; and

WHEREAS, the League is open to both men and women; and

WHEREAS, the issues the League follows are those that affect every resident in our community.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, Dave Turner, Mayor of the City of Fort Bragg, on behalf of the entire City Council, do hereby recognize the League of Women Voters for all they do for our community

SIGNED this 12th day of November, 2013.

DAVE TURNER, Mayor

ATTEST:



Cynthia M. VanWormer, MMC, City Clerk

No. 12-2013



Good-bye 2014—It's been a year of transition and change—in our Community College District, with the election of a new assembly member and state senator, with a Meet & Greet event that included a tribute to a sheriff's deputy killed in the line of duty and with our sponsorship of the most candidate forums ever produced by this League in one general election. Thank you to a wonderful board of directors and to all our members. We look forward to 2015.

Membership in The League of Women Voters of Mendocino County is a bargain and a statement. You will be saying that you are committed to the ballot as a means for change and for providing non-biased information to voters. The issues your League follows are those that affect every resident's family and community. Get involved in the League of Women Voters. Dues for 2014-2015 cover the period between September, 2014 and September, 2015.

Please consider joining at one of these levels:

Susan B. Anthony Individual Membership \$55 _____
 Amelia Bloomer Two-member Household Membership \$80 _____
 Elizabeth Cady Stanton Membership \$100 _____
 Carrie Chapman Catt Membership \$250 or more _____
 Donation _____

Name/Names: _____

Address _____

City: _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Phone _____ E-mail: _____

Please make checks payable to: **LWV Mendocino County**
 And mail to: **LWVMC**
P.O. Box 1128
Fort Bragg, CA 95437

**The League of Women Voters
 of Mendocino County**
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Fort Bragg, CA 95437
(707) 937-4952

www.mendo.ca.lwvnet.org

www.ca.lwv.org

www.lwv.org

www.smartvoter.org/ca/state/

Status of bills in Congress

www.thomas.loc.gov

**National Assn. of Women Judges
 (in partnership with LWVUS)**
Judicial elections, accountability
<http://ivp.nawj.org/>

**National Commission
 on Voting Rights Report**

<http://votingrightstoday.org/ncvr/resources/discriminationreport>

CAL FACTS

**Report produced
 every 2 years
 by California
 Legislative Analyst's
 Office**
**with useful
 information about
 state budget**

<http://www.lao.ca.gov/reports/2014/calfacts/calfacts-2014.aspx>

Sources of Information about Money in Politics

www.moneyoutvotersin.org

<http://cal-access.sos.ca.gov/Campaign/Candidates/>

<http://www.fppc.ca.gov/index.php?id=14>

<http://cal-access.sos.ca.gov/Campaign/Measures/list.aspx?session=2011>

http://ca.lwv.org/sites/ca.lwv.org/files/Campaign%20Finance%20FACTS_1.pdf

<http://www.fec.gov/finance/disclosure/srssea.shtml>