



The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

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Jane Person, President

Charlene McAllister, Editor

Local, State Elected Officials Accept LWV Invitations to Meet, Greet Voters

Fourth Annual Event Set for Friday, March 13 in Fort Bragg

By Barbara Matheson

Dan Gjerde, Fort Bragg City Councilperson, and Jennifer Owens, Fort Bragg School Trustee, will be among the elected officials League members can chat with at the League's Fourth Annual Meet and Greet March 13.

Sixty-four local, city and county elected officials received invitations to meet voters in an informal, casual setting— with no agenda, no speeches and no formal program.



Fort Bragg City Councilperson Dan Gjerde accepted the League's invitation to attend the Fourth Annual Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials event March 13.

Officials include members of the Fort Bragg City Council, Mendocino Coast Hospital District Board of Trus-

tees, water and fire districts and others. State officials also have been invited for these face-to-face conversations.

The event will be at St. Michael's Church, corner of Franklin and Fir, Ft. Bragg, 5-7 p.m., Friday, March 13. Hors d'oeuvres and wine will be served, and donations of hors d'oeuvres are welcome. Please deliver them by 4:45 p.m.

Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials is free and open to the public.

Inside this issue:

<i>President's Message</i>	2
<i>Special March LWV Meeting Announcement</i>	3
<i>New MTA Lynda Hungerford</i>	4
<i>LWV Observers</i>	5
<i>National Popular Vote Compact</i>	6-8
<i>Calendar</i>	9
<i>Sustainability 101</i>	10
<i>Photos</i>	12

League of Women Voters of California Files Amicus Brief Opposing Proposition 8

SACRAMENTO— The League of Women Voters of California filed an amicus brief with the California Supreme Court January 15, 2009, supporting the legal challenge against Proposition 8. Proposition 8 amends

the California Constitution to provide that only marriage between a man and a woman is valid or recognized in California. The legal challenge to Proposition 8, which passed on November 4, 2008, seeks to invalidate the

proposition. Among those spearheading the challenge are the City and County of San Francisco, the County of Santa Clara, the City and County of Los Angeles and numerous individual Californians.

LWVC President Janis R. Hirohama said, "The League believes that Proposition 8 is unconstitutional and should be invalidated. It sets a dangerous precedent by singling out a particular group and depriving that group of a funda-

2008-2009

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President's Message

The League's Observers reports will be featured at our February meeting. These Observers attend meetings of public and government agencies and special districts to make sure these entities are doing the public's work in a transparent manner.

Without our observers, and others like them all over the country, these agencies might not have the good of the public in mind—like the agency described below. Okay, it's an extreme case of what can go wrong if nobody's watching.

A New York Times article (Dec. 15, 2008) called it the Railroad Disability Board that couldn't say no. The Railroad Retirement Board, headquartered in Chicago, with \$34 billion in assets (taxpayers money) has approved almost every disability application it has received, almost 98%. Until 1998 you could get disability for claiming "cretinism," "imbecility," or "middle class moronism." (How you could get a job with the railroad and then claim either of the first two terms seems to have escaped the imagination of anyone on the Board. Never mind trying to define "middle class moronism.")

The Board has also escaped the oversight of Congress and its own former inspector general. It has not met formally in 2 years, and as of December 2008, no meetings were scheduled. The three Board members, all presidential appointees, rarely even meet privately, according to the article in the Times. The former inspector, chosen to investigate waste, abuse, and fraud (from his home in Florida) collected thousands of dollars in awards from the Board he was supposed to oversee.

The Times also reports that since 2000, 93 to 97% of career employees at the Long Island Railroad retire early and receive disability payments from this Board. The Board routinely rebuffs proposed changes, and Congress accords it a low priority because as a former legislative counsel for the Board said, "There's no glory in that work."

So without accountability and public scrutiny agencies can fall prey to the usual human fallibilities of greed, laziness, or what have you.

Continued on Page 3, column 1



League of Women Voters of California Files Amicus Brief Opposing Proposition 8 —continued from Page 1

mental right. In doing so it threatens the rights of us all.”

The League’s amicus brief argues that Proposition 8 is an invalid amendment to the California Constitution because it violates the overriding, fundamental constitutional principles of protection of equality and human dignity. The League also argues the Proposition 8 does not apply

retroactively to invalidate same-sex marriages that took place before the measure took effect, because there is no clear indication of voter intent that it apply retroactively.

The LWVC has long opposed measures that threaten individual rights, including Proposition 22 in 2000, which also limited marriage to only being between a man and

a woman. “We oppose Proposition 8 because we believe in protecting individual rights and no person or group should suffer legal discrimination,” said Hirohama.

The law firm of Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP provided pro bono representation to the League in the filing of the amicus brief.



“The League believes that Proposition 8 is unconstitutional and should be invalidated.”

—LWVC President Janis R. Hirohama

Special March League Meeting Examines International Sustainability

Joself A. Brinckmann, herbal researcher, product developer and author, will present a program about international sustainability issues at a special meeting and potluck Saturday, March 28 from 11:30 a.m.—2 p.m. at St. Michael’s Church at the corner of Franklin and Fir in Fort Bragg.

Brinckmann, Vice President of Research and Development for Traditional Medicinals in Sebastopol, has worked extensively in the medicinal herbal products trade and has served as a consultant for United Nations.



President’s Message continued from Page 2

On the Mendocino Coast, most agencies operate as well as they can. Some, however, could perhaps operate more effectively-- whether it be observing the Brown Act, creating and following an agenda, or conducting

meetings where all views can be heard fairly--if their members received training. After all, we’re a coast of retirees and volunteers. We serve in our spare time and most of us didn’t lead public agencies in other lives.

The League is working

on ways to provide this training for special districts. Charlene McAllister, Special Districts Chair, is exploring ways to set up a workshop where these topics will be addressed. Look for more information in a later issue of the

VOTER.

In the meantime, come to the February 10 meeting to see how much better the Coast does government agencies than those big guys in Chicago.

Jane Person

Mendocino County League Welcomes New Management Training Advisor

By Susan Mitchell

MTAs (Management Training Advisors) offer training sessions on many subjects such as local action, fundraising, increasing membership diversity or on basic board orientation. They are also available to answer questions or offer help in problem solving.

Despite the fact this is Lynda Hungerford's first assignment as an MTA she is abundantly qualified. She was president of the LWV Sonoma County for three years, spent nine years as the Sonoma County coordinator of Smart Voter, two years on the LWVC board as Communications Director, webmaster of LWVSC website since its inception, has worked as local Voter editor, worked on four finance drives, chaired the LWVSC book group, and was chair of a local water study. She worked on a local transportation study, chaired a fund raising theater party and worked on various voter service tasks – all since moving to California in 1996.

Lynda joined the LWV in Illinois in 1970 after finishing her doctoral dissertation in English at Northwestern. When she joined the League, her two boys were three and one and as she said "the local League provided child care for meetings." She worked on many projects, some successful and some not. She helped support a ballot measure uniting two towns in Illinois that were divided by a single street – Division Street by holding a poorly attended neighborhood coffee. To this day the towns are still divided by "Division." Her next project was to chair the local study of day care which eventually resulted in the establishment of a parent-operated center for low income families that is still in operation today. "That kind of suc-

cess leads to lifelong loyalty."

She remained active in her local League until moving to California, serving as president twice. She participated in diverse studies including the U.S. Trade study, helped a bond measure pass for a new library and worked as action chair for the Equal Rights Amendment. Professionally, she

taught English for a number of years at Illinois State University. In 1981 she left academia for State Farm Insurance home office where she worked in information technology. As she says "I remain a technophile."

She moved to California in 1996 with her husband upon retirement. "He backed me in every project I undertook both in and out of the League even uploading photographs for Smart Voter for a number of years." Sadly, he died last

September. Her two sons are now adults, one a lawyer in Oakland and the other a consulting actuary in Boise, Idaho where she also has two grandchildren.

When queried about her interest in the League she said she doesn't remember watching Howdy Doody as a child but does remember the national political conventions of the time. One of her earliest memories is of Truman defeating Dewey when she was in the second grade. To quote Lynda "I love the League because within it, talking politics is not taboo; because at its best, the League tolerates dissent within its ranks; and because the League doesn't give up. When I joined, my interests tended to go to issues. Now I tend to treasure voter service and education. I have found many longtime friends in the League. You can't beat that." We look forward to meeting Lynda and tapping into such a deep well of information and experience.



Management Training Advisor Lynda Hungerford

OBSERVERS: THE EYES AND EARS OF THE LEAGUE

By Charlene McAllister

Basic to effective League activity in a community is an understanding how the local government works. A local League observer is the eyes and ears of the League, learning how government works and about issues that are or may become items for local study and action. League presence at these meetings can add to the League's visibility and credibility.

Open meeting laws ensures "the right of all citizens to have advance notice of and to attend all meeting of public bodies at which any business affecting the public is discussed or acted upon, with certain limited exceptions to protect the public interest and preserve personal privacy." Consistent with this purpose, the general requirement of the law is that "all meetings of public bodies shall be open to the public at all

times."

As an observer, you are exercising that recognized right to be present at any public meeting.

Being an observer can be interesting and fun. It puts the League on the inside, hearing decisions that will affect the community/state and the League.

If you would like to be a League Observer, contact Babs Levine at 937-0629 or babs@wildblue.net



Charlene McAllister



Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan 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.

Editor's Note: Our league's general meeting on Tuesday, April 14 will include discussion and consensus on the National Study about the Popular Vote Compact. Here is a synopsis of pros and cons. A complete version of these positions is at www.lwv.org Our meeting is Tuesday, April 14, 2009, 9:30 a.m., St. Michel's Church in Fort Bragg. Consensus Questions are on Page 8.

Support for the National Popular Vote Compact

Because the League already supports direct election of the president, arguments against the Electoral College (EC) are not included in the material supporting the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact).

Constitutional Issues The NPV Compact is a way to assure that every person's vote counts equally and that the person receiving the most votes is the winner of the presidency. The same result would be achieved by constitutional amendment but the U.S. Constitution is difficult to amend. The NPV Compact is a viable way to attain the same goal as amending the Constitution to eliminate the EC.

A constitutional amendment is not needed to effectuate the NPV Compact because states already have the right to implement changes in how electors are appointed.

The NPV Compact is a compact between states—a method of concerted state action that has long been sanctioned by the Constitution and the courts.

Evaluating Fairness A candidate can be elected president by receiving the most electoral votes even though he or she did not receive the most popular votes. This is not a result voters expect or desire. As election campaigns are now waged, major emphasis and resources are concentrated in key EC battleground states because that is where elections are won or lost. The NPV Compact would eliminate the emphasis on battleground states and would be more apt to assure campaign strategies that appeal to a broad spectrum of the electorate which would foster greater voter participation.

The argument that the plan would negatively impact states' rights is countered by poll results showing that most voters want their individual vote to count, rather than allotting them to electors representing the state as a whole.

Any claim that the NPV Compact is an unprecedented disregard for the U.S. Constitution ignores the reality that voting rights have been changed through state action many times. Women's suffrage, for example, was instituted by twenty states before passage of the constitutional amendment that made the right universal.

Mechanical Considerations Those opposed to the NPV Compact cite mechanical issues that might lead the NPV to fail, but the Compact includes provisions that address issues of enforcement, winning levels and recounts.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act and the NPV Compact are in harmony, assuring equality of votes throughout the United States.

League Issues Opponents say that the NPV Compact conflicts with the League's support of uniform voting standards. Supporters of the Compact advocate its passage in all states, which would result in uniform voting standards. It is true that the NPV Compact could be in effect for an interlude when not all states had signed on to it. The same could be demonstrated for other laws, such as the Equal Rights Amendment. Nonetheless, it must be remembered that uniform voting standards are not now in effect. The NPV Compact could help assure that every vote would be counted equally.

Further, implementation of a method which assures direct election of the president by popular vote is in keeping with the League's long-held position.

Opposition to the National Popular Vote Compact

There is little respect for the Electoral College (EC). The League opposes it and most voters want a direct popular vote. But is the National Popular Vote Compact (NPV Compact) an appropriate way to achieve that result?

Evaluating Fairness Voters supporting the candidate who receives the majority of votes in their state want their state's electors to support their choice. Adoption of the NPV Compact may require a state elections official to direct its state's electors to cast their ballots in support of a candidate who was not favored by the voters of that state.

Passage of the NPV Compact will result in the emphasis of presidential campaigns shifting from the battleground states to areas of large concentrations of population. So, while some voters are disenfranchised by the EC, others might be disenfranchised by the NPV Compact. Because the Compact requires entry into a contract with other states which binds state elections officials to direct electors to vote in a certain way, regardless of the outcome of the election in their state, states' rights are diminished.

In addition, one can question the advisability of a method that bypasses the normal constitutional amendment process in this manner.

Constitutional Issues Many constitutional scholars argue that this plan will lead to extensive litigation involving challenges to the NVP Compact on issues such as the scope of constitutional powers, the Compact itself, the need for congressional approval, the concerns of non-compacting states, and constitutional protections of state interests and their role in elections.

Mechanical Issues/Flaws The methods for enforcement of this plan are unclear. Opponents question the power and timing to withdraw from the Compact and the power to enforce compliance.

Others express concern about an onslaught of lawsuits between compacting and non-compacting states, as well as procedures in close elections.

The plan, allowing the election of a president by a plurality of votes, does not improve on the current system; neither the present system nor the NPV Compact requires that the president be elected by a majority.

Other Issues The Voting Rights Act requires pre-clearance for legislative changes. This, too, has the capacity to engender lawsuits to ensure compliance.

League Issues This proposal does nothing to achieve the goal of uniform standards of voting. The NPV Compact is effective when passed by states representing 270 electoral votes, effectively negating the impact on presidential elections of the voters in states which represent the other half of electoral votes. A system which assures no voter disenfranchisement is a better way to assure that every person's vote counts.

The League has long supported the abolition of the EC. Although the NPV Compact purports to foster the same result, it creates additional concerns. Amending the U.S. Constitution is a difficult process, and we should seriously consider supporting the normal amendment procedures to abolish the EC versus this specific "work-around."

Editor's Note: Here are consensus questions about the National Popular Vote Compact that will be put to the vote of our members at our General Meeting, 9:30 a.m., Tuesday, April 14, 2009 at St. Michel's Church in Fort Bragg. For a complete presentation of background, pros and cons, please go to www.lwv.org

National Popular Vote Compact Consensus Questions

Amending the Constitution

1. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

Action to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.

1. Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
2. The group could not reach consensus.

2. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

1. Because a compact has never before been used to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the chance that it might set a precedent for the future leads to the conclusion that it is better that the League continue to work for an amendment to the Constitution to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College.
2. Despite the novelty of the use of the compact approach to address a fundamental constitutional issue such as voting, the League should support the NPV Compact as a way of achieving an important goal.

The group could not reach consensus

Congressional Consent

3. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

1. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is not of sufficient concern to block the implementation of the plan.
2. The possibility that the NPV Compact will require congressional consent is sufficient to conclude that the plan should not be implemented without obtaining such consent.

The group could not reach consensus.

Enforcement

1. The NPV Compact contains sufficient enforcement provisions to assure smooth operation of the plan.

2. Although 4. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

it is not possible to determine whether the enforcement provisions will be sufficient to assure smooth operation of the plan, the plan should be passed anyway

3. Enforcement of the plan is likely to add uncertainty and bring the courts into the presidential election in ways that raise substantial concerns.
4. The lack of adequate enforcement provisions is sufficient to conclude that the NPV is not a viable plan.

The group could not reach consensus.

Uniformity

5. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

1. The uniformity of voting systems is more important to American democracy than the possibility that the NPV Compact can be adopted.
2. The NPV Compact is more important than uniformity of voting systems because it would succeed in achieving the popular election of the President.

The group could not reach consensus.

Popular Election of the President

6. Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.

1. It is more important to achieve the goal of national popular election of the President than it is to achieve the goal of abolition of the electoral college.
2. It is more important to amend the Constitution to abolish the Electoral College than it is to achieve the goal of popular election of the President by alternative methods, such as the NPV Compact.

The group could not reach consensus.

Achievability

7. Which statements reflect the views of the group?

1. The NPV Compact will have problems being passed because of the need for congressional consideration and the need for action by so many states. Agree Disagree No Consensus
A constitutional amendment to establish the direct popular election of the President and the abolition of the Electoral College will continue to have problems being passed. Agree Disagree

Calendar of Events

Tuesday, February 10, 2009 General Meeting: Observer Reports 9:30 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, March 10: Board of Directors Meeting: 9:30 a.m. – noon.

Final reports for Annual Meeting due

Friday, March 13, 2009: Fourth Annual

Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials

5 p.m. – 7 p.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

(See Page 1 for story)

****SPECIAL MEETING****

Saturday, March 28: General Meeting and Potluck Luncheon: 11:30 a.m. – 2 p.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

Topic: Sustainability

Guest Speaker: Josef (Jo) Brinckmann, consultant to the United Nations
International Trade Center (See Page 3 for announcement)

Tuesday, April 14, 2009 General Meeting: National Study 9:30 a.m. – 2:00 p.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

Topic: National Popular Vote Compact – discussion and consensus

NOTE: PLEASE BRING SACK LUNCH – COFFEE WILL BE PROVIDED

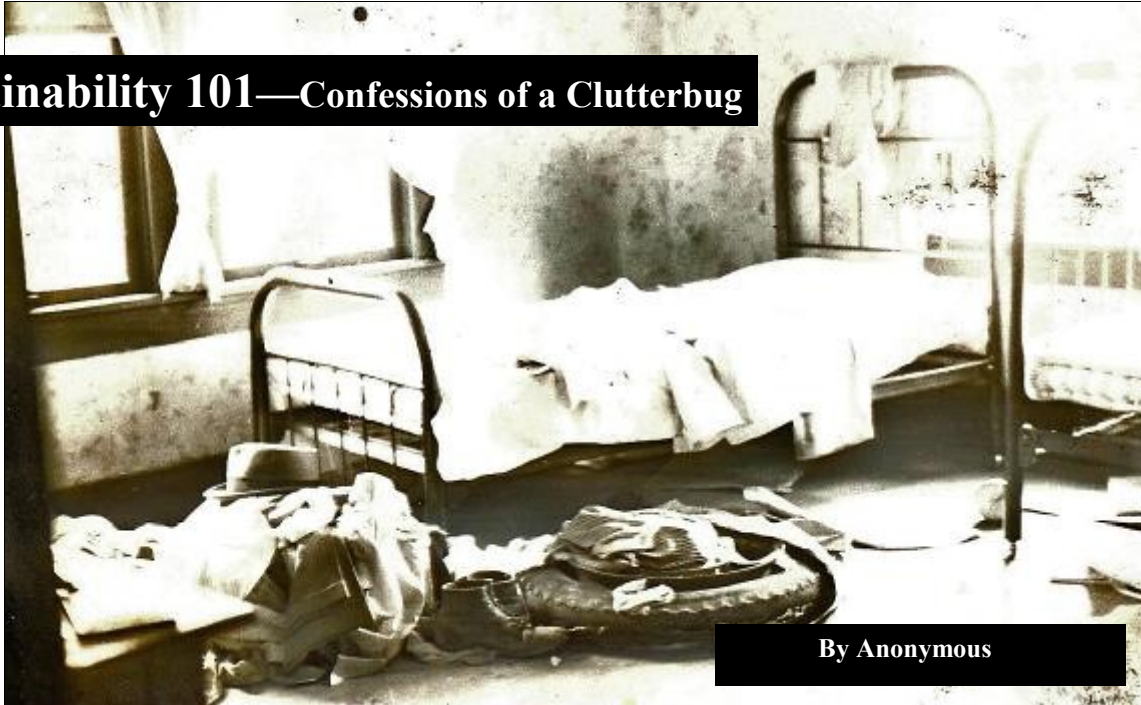
Tuesday, April 21: Board of Directors Meeting: 9:30 a.m. - noon

Tuesday, May 12, 2009: Members Annual Meeting and Luncheon (Time, Location TBA)

Tuesday, June 2, 2009: Old/New Board Meeting, Potluck Lunch 9 a.m. – 1 p.m.

Location: St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg

Sustainability 101—Confessions of a Clutterbug



By Anonymous

Here is a picture Mother took of my dad's room in a boarding house in Denton, Texas near North Texas State Teachers College some months before their wedding in 1939.

I offer it as proof that my obsessive collection of everything is not an affliction, but a genetic condition.

Seven years ago, I nearly drowned in clutter. When I eyed the oven as a potential storage spot for genealogy records, I knew I needed help. I signed up for a free public library clutter control lecture. Everything I know I learned from a one-legged professional organizer whose clutter control journey started with a closet floor full of useless shoes.

Our league's January sustainability meeting revisited the World War II slogan: "Use it up, wear it out, make it do, or do without." That is my goal and this is my story—and a bag of tricks for anybody who finds his/her mail in the most extraordinary places (like the refrigerator).

Folders—The "For Whom It May Concern" folder is easy to find in my desk drawer. Folders also hold the articles I rip out of magazines. Magazine and newspaper carcasses go the free recycling bin at the county transfer station.

Photographs—I never took a shot I didn't like. I learned to put favorite photos into scrapbooks. Memories were the important thing, not the unfocused duplicates. They were tossed and that was hard. Computers are a good photo storage solution, but I get a kick out of taking the scrapbooks off the shelf—and holding them.

Continued on page 11

The Closet—Once a year, everything unworn for 12 months is donated. The closet gets bigger. The 40-year-old pasteboard dresser was donated and replaced by a plastic sweater bag that hangs in the closet. This holds socks, unmentionables and tee-shirts. The bedroom got bigger.

Paper—Our world can get along with less paper. The birds, amphibians, reptiles, mammals, insects and lichen tell me so. On a whim, I cleared the decks in my office and left a small vase with a single rose. Suddenly, I could breathe better. The office started to buzz. Suddenly, I was “more interesting.” You could have fooled me. I was the same person who kept every rubber band I ever touched.

Junk Mail—www.directmail.com is only one of many sites that has mail preference registries. Legislation is coming that may put the Do Not Mail List right up there with the Do Not Call List.

The Library—There are magazines galore with clutter control advice: Cute little wall storage units that test my budget and miserable assembly skills. Easier to visit the library (or library websites). The local county library (www.fortbragglibrary.org) catalog has dozens of books about clutter control and storage in the home, and shares resources with Lake and Sonoma County libraries. And a trip to the library is another chance to donate. It is cheaper and easier to check out a book than find more shelf space.

Professional Help—There is a National Association of Professional Organizers. These are the kings and queens of clutter control who will put your life together—for a fee. The organization’s website will find a local clutter consultant if you enter your zip code. Happily, the job is up to us. There is no professional organizer within 50 miles of the coast.

Grit teeth, clean drawer—Here is the no-brainer that was a new idea to me: Keep like things together (batteries, extension cords in one drawer, all kitchen thermometers in one drawer and so forth). This will make it a snap to find things and make you look like a genius. Clean out one drawer and leave it empty. This will amuse and mystify siblings and spouses to no end.

When in doubt, don’t throw it out—Dad’s boarding room pile was all he owned, thanks to The Depression. He and Mother said all their assets fit into one car in 1939. Life was so tough that once they acquired something, they wouldn’t let it go.

I know how that feels. Clutter control is deeply serious business. These tricks worked for me, but beware: Don’t let enthusiasm for organization make you throw out your treasures. A pair of blue suede roller skates with yellow stripes lives in my closet. I think I’ll keep them.

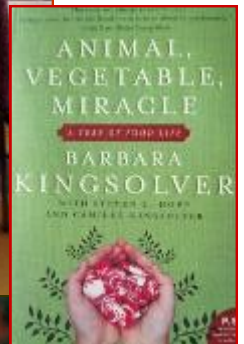
Editor’s note: This is part of a series of stories that address the league’s position on sustainability. If you have a story to share, please send it to Jane Person at jane@person@hotmail.com



Members Discuss Sustainable Communities, Community Gardening, B. Kingsolver Book At January League of Women Voters Meeting



Pumpkin grown and pumpkin bread baked by B. Auerbach



Member Ken Matheson



A box of fresh local organic vegetables is available every Friday from Noyo Hill Farm. Customers must sign up through email or by phone. The address is info@noyohillfarm.com Also, one of the January meeting sustainability panel members, Sakina Bush (right), teaches a gardening class beginning Feb. 8. Email her for more information or for answers to gardening questions: sakina@mcn.org.

Clockwise from center: S. Lightfoot, Noyo Food Forest; Panelists Kristy Van Wert, Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens; Gypsy Spring, Farmers Market; Chet Boddy, community planner, gardener, businessman.

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

www.lwv.org

www.smartvoter.org

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

**Library of Congress—Legislation
Status
www.thomas.loc.gov**

www.mendo.ca.lwvnet.org

www.ca.lwv.org

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 to 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.

\$50 One Year individual membership, \$75 two-person household membership

Please send me more information:

Name/Names: _____ **Address** _____

City: _____ **State** _____ **ZIP** _____ **E-mail** _____

**Please make checks payable to: League of Women Voters of Mendocino County
P.O. Box 1128
Fort Bragg, CA 95437**