



# The Voter

## THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

March 2012

Jane Person, President

Charlene McAllister, Editor

### CASPAR COMMUNITY CENTER—MARCH 16, 2012

## GET READY, GET SET TO MEET & GREET

More than 60 local leaders received invitations to the League of Women Voters 7th Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials at the Caspar Community Center, Friday, March 16, 2012, from 5-7 p.m.

Sheriff Tom Allman was one of the first to respond to League Action Chair Barbara Matheson's invitation. He joins several county office holders including Supervisor Kendall Smith and Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder Sue Ranochak.

There is no program, no agenda and no speech-making at this event. It is free and open to the public and one of the few opportunities for voters to talk face to face with public officials, including fire, water, recreation and park and school district board members as well as Fort Bragg city council members. This is a chance for voters to meet leaders, get to know them, ask questions and enjoy appetizers and beverages.

Please invite your friends and help us by bringing a savory potluck appetizer for 10. Setup starts at 4 p.m. and the doors open at 5 p.m.

### LWV TO HOST FRIDAY NIGHT CANDIDATE FORUM

The League of Women Voters will hold a candidate forum Friday evening for two Fort Bragg residents running for city council.

Jay McMartin-Rosenquist and Scott Deitz are candidates who will speak at the forum Friday, March 2, 2012, from 6-7 p.m. in Fort

Bragg Town Hall, corner of Main and Laurel Streets.

Election Day is April 10, 2012, and the special election is to fill the council seat left vacant by the tragic death of council member Jere Melo in August, 2011.

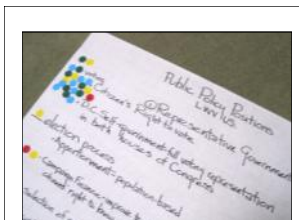
Only Fort Bragg residents may vote in the election and sample ballots will be mailed March 1. March 26 is the last day to register. According to County Clerk Sue Ranochak, the polling place will be St. Michael and All Angels Episcopal Church, corner of Fir and Franklin Streets.



*City Council Member and former Mayor Jere Melo seldom missed the League's Meet & Greet event. We remember his cheerful participation and we'll miss him deeply this year. Here he is at the 2009 Meet & Greet event with fellow Council Member Dave Turner.*

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*See how we voted at our January Program Meeting. Susan Mitchell's story on Page 5.*

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Louis Hough, Barbara Matheson,  
Susan Mitchell, Jane Person

**President's Message**—What better proof of grass roots power than the success of LWVUS's online petition to President Obama to appoint new commissioners to Federal Election Commission. The petition required 25,000 signatures to elicit a response from Obama, and more than that number answered the League's call.

The FEC is the agency charged with enforcing campaign finance laws. The League has called it "completely dysfunctional."

The League maintains that three of the six commissioners are refusing to follow the law and five are serving past their expired term. The FEC was the defendant in the Supreme Court decision now called Citizens United that essentially gave corporations the same rights as persons regarding political donations. Since then the amount of money pouring into Super PACs has been staggering.

In the petition posted on the White House's "We the People" website, the League notes the failure of Congress to require disclosure of campaign related spending and writes, "Nevertheless, you (referring to Obama) have failed to appoint new commissioners who would actually enforce campaign finance laws." In a press release (February 9) the League maintains that the only reason that leading presidential campaigns of both political parties are able to work with Super PACs is the FEC's refusal to enforce the law.

The League also takes the President to task for allowing his presidential campaign to allow surrogates to assist Super PACs in raising funds.

So what does the public do now? There are two movements afoot, one sponsored by LWVUS.

On February 16, the League and four other partners, including Common Cause, sent a letter to members of the U.S. House of Representatives urging them to co-sponsor HR 4010, the DISCLOSE 2012 Act which "would restore transparency to U.S. elections by requiring the complete disclosure of spending on big-money advertising in campaign elections."



*Continued on Page 3*

***President's Message—Continued from Page 2***

The letter outlines the problems created by Citizens United in opening the floodgates for big money interests: “Corporations and unions can now make unlimited secret expenditures seeking to elect or defeat candidates” and can make “unlimited and secret contributions to other entities that seek to elect or defeat candidates.”

The DISCLOSE 2012 Act requires disclosure by outside groups of large campaign contributions and expenditures of over \$10,000. It also requires a “stand by your ad” provision for ads run by such groups. In addition, it requires outside groups to certify that their spending is not coordinated with candidates. Importantly, it covers transfers of money among groups so that the actual sources of funds being spent to influence federal elections will be known.

The letter notes that the Supreme Court has already said disclosure is important in providing voters with information and that the Court has approved requirements in other cases. Quite simply, the letter says, “Voters deserve to know the source of funding for election advertising.”

The other movement that deals with the problem of unlimited and secret campaign expenses engendered by the Citizens United Case is an attempt to amend the U.S. Constitution so as to end personhood rights to corporations. This is a nationwide movement and, in the case of Mendocino County, is an effort to pass a county ballot initiative in support of a constitutional amendment.

It might be noted here that amending the Constitution is not an easy task. In Congress both the House and Senate must approve, by a two-thirds vote, a joint resolution to propose an amendment. If this happens, three-fourths of the state legislatures must approve it. Or, ratifying conventions in three-fourths of the states must approve it. The only time the latter method was used was to repeal Prohibition, the 21st Amendment.

However, even if the effort to repeal corporate personhood never goes this far, it does generate a lot of noise and press. State representatives may have some uncomfortable questions to answer if they ignore the movement entirely.

The message from both these movements is that a lot of people are angry and politicians would do well to listen.

*Jane Person*

## A C T I O N BY BARBARA MATHESON

**O** **R** **N** **E** **R** **LWVC** urges state legislators to pass SB 810 the California Universal Health Care Act, AB 1148, the California DISCLOSE Act, and SB 654 (Steinberg) which would protect existing housing funds of dissolving redevelopment agencies.

**The State League** supports The Legislative Term Limits Reform Act that will be on the June ballot. The measure reduces the total number of years an individual can serve in the legislature from fourteen to twelve, but allows all twelve years to be in one house of the legislature. Legislators would focus on serving their districts rather than courting special interests to run for a new office. Prop 28 would enhance legislators' ability to develop expertise in both subject matter and legislative process—and to get things done.

**The National League** supports H.R. 4010, the DISCLOSE 2012 Act, introduced last week by Rep. Chris Van Hollen (D-MD). This legislation provides disclosure requirements to cover the hundreds of millions of dollars in secret contributions to federal elections by non-profit groups and others. The legislation also requires timely disclosure by Super PACs.

## Calendar\*

- **Friday, March 16, 2012**

**Annual Meet and Greet Your Elected Officials**

5-7 p.m. Caspar Community Center

Please bring an appetizer for 10 people

Tuesday, March, 20, 2012, Board of Directors Meeting

9:30 a.m. Fort Bragg Library (**Note new date**)

- **Tuesday, April 10, 2012, General Meeting**

**National Privatization Study**

10 a.m.-2 p.m. Caspar Community Center

Coffee served at 9:30 a.m.

Lunch arrangements to appear in April VOTER

- **Tuesday, May 8, 2012, Annual Business Meeting**

**And Election of Officers, Board Members**

**And Potluck Lunch**

Time To Be Announced Caspar Community Center

**All General Meetings open to the public at no charge**

**All Board Meetings open to members**

\*Please note the Meet and Greet event as well as the League meetings in April and May will be held at the Caspar Community Center. We will keep members informed about developments at the Fort Bragg C.V. Starr Community Center.

## ***Local League Prepares Program About LWVUS Privatization Study***

*By Charlene McAllister*

The term “privatization” refers to the process of private, usually for-profit businesses, taking over public government-provided services.

This can include contracting with or selling to private parties the functions or agencies previously controlled or owned by governments.

LWVUS is currently conducting a study of privatization. The purpose of this study is to identify those parameters and policy issues to be considered in connection with proposals to transfer federal, state or local government services, assets and/or functions to the private sector. It is not to take a pro or con position on privatization, but rather to identify policy issues that should be considered when governmental bodies are considering any type of privatization.

At our April meeting we will review stated goals and the community impact of such transfers and identify strategies to ensure transparency, accountability, and preservation of the common good.

**Our Own Mother's Daughters and Sons  
We'd like to honor our mothers in the  
May VOTER  
Can you share a photo of your mother?  
Tell us her name, home town, and how she voted in  
presidential elections  
Send photos and copy by April 20 to:  
[casparbeck@comcast.net](mailto:casparbeck@comcast.net)  
or  
Becky Bowen  
15340 Seadrift Avenue, #94  
Caspar, CA 95420**

***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.***

## MEMBERS VOICE OPINIONS, PICK PRIORITIES AT PROGRAM MEETING

By Susan Mitchell

The January 10 League meeting at the C.V. Starr Center resembled a town hall meeting in the round. Twenty-eight participants were given a Summary of Public Policy Positions sent from the LWV of the United States.

Each local League in the U.S. is asked to participate in program planning by choosing positions it believes should be retained, deleted or emphasized by the national League for the next two years. Our "votes," along with those from Leagues across the country, will be submitted to the national LWV board of directors March 1. That board will then make recommendations to delegates at the national League convention in Washington, D.C., in June.

Convention delegates can accept, reject, change or add to the recommended program which is then passed along to State and local Leagues for action, advocacy or study.

The four broad position topics are: Representative Government, International Relations, Natural Resources and Social Policy.

In addition to these four, our League received requests for support from other Leagues around the country about issues of sentencing policy, support of a new national study of a Department of Peace and request to support a recommendation to the national LWV board of directors to make passage of the Frac Act a matter for urgent priority for the 112th Congress.

Request for support of the Frac Act came from the LWV of New York State to submit this request to the national LWV board of directors by

January 15 when the board was scheduled to consider legislative priorities for 2012. Our group unanimously voted to adopt this request to prioritize LWV support of passage of the FRAC Act, which would repeal the gas industry's exemption from the Safe Drinking Water act and require disclosure of chemicals used in the fracking process. Fracking is hydraulic fracturing of geologic formations to extract natural gas.

The local January program was organized by League member Becky Bowen, who asked to have chairs arranged in a large circle. The list of position summaries was displayed on a cork board. Each member of the circle was given the chance to speak on the topic he or she thought most important. Some of the opinions shared:

"Equality of opportunity in the areas of education, employment and housing."

"Resources and environment are my concerns."

"It's time to talk about gun control. People used to use their fists to settle things and I think they should go back to that!"

"The reason the League exists is under real attack. The right to vote is being taken away and those most affected are the people who have no voice and no time or energy to fight against it."

"Eliminate corporate personhood."

"I'm putting two dots on healthcare reform."

"We need never to forget what we have won on the issue of protection of women's reproductive rights."

Each member voted for four positions they thought most important by placing a stick-on colored dot next to the position posted on large sheets of paper on the cork wall.

In first place, receiving 20 votes under the Representative Government, was Citizens Right to Vote. To stress their belief in the importance of that issue as it related to campaign finance, members cast a number of second place votes to support an effort by the Los Angeles chapter to urge the LWVUS to support "repeal of corporate personhood via constitutional amendment or other effective means" (see Jane Person's President's Message on Page 2). On January 16, a list of Leagues that supported this action emerged on the internet. In six days, 28 Leagues around the nation indicated support (our League was the seventh to sign on).

The national LWV board subsequently voted not to support a Constitutional amendment, but to establish a Campaign Finance Reform Task Force and to make the issue a legislative priority.

In third place (under Natural Resources) 15 people voted on all aspects listed in Environmental Protection and Pollution Control, including water, air quality, energy conservation and renewable resources.

The next highest number of votes was cast for protecting reproductive rights choices and constitutional rights of privacy. Other topics that received votes included campaign finance reform, individual rights, early intervention for children at risk, a strong United Nations, improving the tax policy, funding entitlements and health care and the fair treatment of all immigrants.

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 are due now.

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 \_\_\_\_\_

Please send me more information:

Name/Names: \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City: \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail: \_\_\_\_\_

Please make checks payable to: League of Women Voters of Mendocino County

And mail to: LWVMC

P.O. Box 1128

Fort Bragg, CA 95437

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

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

Library of Congress  
Legislation Status  
[www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov)

**We Support  
Fort Bragg Measure A**  
Our League has voted to support Measure A, the Sales Tax increase for the City of Fort Bragg. We urge all our Fort Bragg members to vote YES on Measure A in this all "mail-in" special election. Ballots must be received at the Registrar of Voters Ukiah office no later than 8 p.m. on Election Day, March 6, 2012.