



The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

November/December, 2010

Jane Person, President

Charlene McAllister, Editor

LEAGUE TO EXAMINE REDISTRICTING QUESTIONS, HISTORY, ISSUES AT NOVEMBER 9, 2010, MEETING

Submitted by VOTER staff

Every ten years, following the US Census, all local, state and federal election districts must be re-mapped to account for a growing and mobile population.

First comes reapportionment, then redistricting—from congressional districts to state legislative districts and ultimately to the county level. This

process, including the periodic re-allotment of U.S. Congressional seats, is a mystery to many.



*LWV Redistricting Committee Study Chairperson
Charlene McAllister*

A League committee, chaired by Charlene McAllister, will explain the process and why is it important at the next general meeting at 10 a.m., November 9, at the C.V. Starr Center, 300 South Lincoln Street, Fort Bragg. Coffee will be served at 9:30 a.m., and the staff will take members on a tour of the facility after the meeting.

Please see story on Page 3.

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County Clerk-Recorder

Election Information

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[/acr/](#)

Click first on Elections, then click on Vote by Mail Status to confirm receipt of your mail-in ballot.

There is no LWV General Meeting in December

Happy New Year

**See you Jan. 11, 2011
The Next VOTER will be published Jan. 1, 2011**

LEAGUE CONCLUDES YEAR OF VOTER SERVICE, ACTION

LWVMC, led by Voter Service Chair JoAn Blackstone, finished an election year that included presentation of state proposition pro/con discussions prior to the June 8 primary and November 2 general elections, distribution of *Easy Voters* throughout the county and candidate forums for 5th District Supervisor, District Attorney and Superior Court Judge, Room 1. Action Chair Barbara Matheson led a study and initiated local LWV endorsement of County Measure C on the November 2 ballot (supported by the League's state and local finance position). Measure C proposes a half-cent sales tax increase that sunsets in 10 years to ease budget shortfalls.



Incumbent Meredith Lintott and C. David Eyster at the October 21 District Attorney LWV candidate forum in Fort Bragg.

2010-2011

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President's Message—Recently LWVUS called on TV and radio stations to refuse political ads paid for with money coming from front groups and organizations that fail to disclose their big donors.

“Secret campaign cash should have no place in our American democracy,” Elizabeth MacNamara, recently elected LWVUS president, said in a press release. She noted that candidates have to state that they approve an ad and maintains that large donors should do the same when they pay for election advertising.

“It’s not enough to know that an ad was paid for by ‘Moms for Apple Pie’ . . . the voters need to know exactly who gave the big money to such organizations to pay for the advertising,” MacNamara continued.

In January the Supreme Court overturned a 63-year-old law regarding campaign financing prohibitions, thus opening the floodgates to corporations and unions to spend at will on campaign advertising. The U.S. Senate has refused to act to require disclosure even though the House passed such a bill (supported by LWVUS).

The Supreme Court also overturned part of the 2002 McCain-Feingold Act that prevented unions or corporations from airing issue-oriented ads 30 days before a primary and 60 days before an election. Moreover, corporations, unions, and anybody else with money can set up political action committees that can contribute to candidates directly.

This gets worse. A candidate ad can be misleading and even defamatory. TV and radio stations cannot censor candidate ads, the argument being that they have no liability for content. Defamation is hard to prove in court; the plaintiff must “prove knowledge or reckless disregard for the truthfulness of the statement,” according to Saper Law (“Political Ads Fuel Financials and Feuds,” by Debora McAdams, Television Broadcast, October 18, 2010).

Saper cites several chilling examples of how this works out in the media. The mayor of San Juan Capistrano was the subject of an ad implying he was handcuffed and arrested 11 years prior, according to the Orange County Register. In Athens, Alabama, a hospital administrator told the local newspaper he was receiving many calls regarding a misleading political ad claiming a high occurrence of drug-addicted newborns at his hospital.

However, the media does have the option not to run non-



Continued on Page 5

REDISTRICTING 101—PREPARING FOR THE NOVEMBER 9 MEETING

Reapportionment: The process of re-dividing the 435 seats of the United States House of Representatives, based upon each state's proportion of the national population. The preceding decennial census is the baseline for determining how many House seats are allotted to each state. The total number of each state's U. S. House seats, combined with its two U.S. Senate seats, constitutes that state's number of electoral votes in presidential elections.

Redistricting: The process by which the boundaries of state legislative districts and United States House districts are drawn to reflect population shifts.

The number of members of the US House of Representatives is prescribed by law and has been set at 435 members since 1912. Each state is entitled to at least one representative and the remaining members are apportioned among the states in accordance with their relative populations. This population figure is determined by the census that is conducted every ten years and is required by the Constitution. One might think this a simple process, but the apportionment of congressional seats is made using a statutory formula.

The formula has changed several times over the course of the last two hundred years, and after the 1930 census, in accordance with a report from the National Academy of Sciences, Congress adopted the "method of equal proportions." This method of reapportionment is in use today and has been upheld by the Supreme Court (further information can be found at http://aceproject.org/ace-en/topics/bd/bdy/bdy_us).

Once the number of congressional representatives has been ascertained, it is up to each state to determine the boundaries of each district. Each state has its own constitution and laws and the requirements can vary. National law on the redistricting has developed over the years through the Supreme Court. The most recent federal regulations on the process have been set by the Voting Rights Act, passed by Congress in 1965 and amended in 1982.

California currently has 53 Congressional Districts and the State Legislature has the responsibility for

redrawing the lines (this could change if Proposition 20 passes).

The process for re-drawing the state legislative district boundaries currently rests with a non-partisan commission (this could change if Proposition 27 passes). There are 40 members of the California State Senate. Prior to 1968 the senate districts were restricted so that one county could only hold at most one seat. This led to Los Angeles County with a State Senator representing 6 million residents. The subsequent Supreme Court ruling compelled all states to draw up districts with equal populations. Of interest is that each State Senator represents close to 840,000 residents, more than the approximately 640,000 residents in each of the congressional districts. There are 80 Assembly Districts and each represents an approximately equal number of constituents—each district having a population of at least 420,000.

The process of reapportionment and then redistricting will begin after Congress has received the report on the 2010 Census. When legislators are responsible for redistricting, the process is often quite partisan and the results seen as politically biased. The United States is one of the few democracies in which legislators are still allowed to draw their electoral boundaries. Most countries have reassigned the role to independent commissions. There are signs that this could change as a number of states are looking at the adoption of redistricting commissions.

By Charlene McAllister

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.

REMEMBERING OUR FRIEND MARGARET SCULLY—WITH A SMILE

Editor's note: League Member Margaret Scully died October 20 at her Mendocino Village home—just a few days after she finished work on this profile with VOTER staff writer Susan Mitchell. She was a member of the Board of Directors, a fighter, and a friend.

By Susan Mitchell

Margaret Scully was born in Vancouver, British Columbia and was educated there and in California. She worked for the Los Angeles County Public Defenders Office from the early 1970s, when she was one of only a few women lawyers working in that position. By the time she retired in the mid-1990s, she had become the president of the California Public Defenders Association.

She truly loved her job, which must have been evident to Veronica Hamel, “hard-driving public defender”, who followed Margaret for several weeks in preparation for playing the role of Joyce Davenport in the television program “Hill Street Blues.” Margaret started out defending misdemeanor cases, which at the beginning of her career meant sometimes defending people accused of pornography, a subject unknown to her. She went on to assignments on felony trials and to supervision of new lawyers in the Public Defender Office. She also was a wage negotiator for lawyers in Los Angeles County.

A previous boss retired and moved to Mendocino with his wife and invited Margaret here for a weekend visit. Within 48 hours of arrival, she had bought a home in Mendocino. Having grown up in Vancouver and continuing to spend time there, she fell in love with Mendocino which she said was like Vancouver: “The most beautiful city and village with the best people, and [I have] so much

good fortune to live in both places.” She moved to Mendocino and joined the LWV after her retirement in 1995.

Margaret’s interest in the League began in Los Angeles when she found she could always count on the League’s recommended positions on voter propositions which were printed on the editorial page of the *Los Angeles Times*. She felt the fairness and analytical research done by the League led to conclusions she could trust. For more than 40 years, while not having time to actually be a member due to her very demanding job and raising children, she came to admire an organization she described as “totally political but at the same time totally apolitical” and trusted by so many organizations. She also

found admirable the League’s global reach: From local and state issues to national positions, from League observers at the United Nations to empowering women in Africa, Brazil and Paraguay. She fully understood and completely supported the League’s mission.

Margaret’s children Patrick, Suzanne and Andrew, who visited her often, have been the most vital part of her life “since birth and still are!” She loved playing the piano and was a member of Carolyn Steinbuck’s musical group. Besides belonging to the LWVMC, Margaret volunteered at the Mendocino Music Festival and Point Cabrillo Lighthouse. She so enjoyed living in Mendocino where she said she felt involved and stimulated by the beauty, people and opportunities found here.



Margaret’s son, Andrew, came with her to the Annual Meeting in May, 2010, when she was elected to the County League’s Board of Directors.

Calendar-Please Note Locations

- **Tuesday, November 9, 2010**—Redistricting
10 a.m. C.V. Starr Community Center, 300 S. Lincoln St., Fort Bragg
(9:30 a.m. coffee) TOUR OF CENTER AFTER THE MEETING
- **December—No General Meeting—Happy Holidays**
- Tuesday, December 14, 2010—Board of Directors Meeting, 9:30 a.m.
Fort Bragg Library meeting room
- **Tuesday, January 11, 2011**—The County Grand Jury
10 a.m. C.V. Starr Community Center, 300 S. Lincoln St., Fort Bragg
(9:30 am. coffee)
- **Tuesday, February 8, 2011**—State Programs, National LWV Convention
10 a.m. C.V. Starr Community Center, 300 S. Lincoln St., Fort Bragg
(9:30 a.m. coffee)
- **Friday, March 18, 2011**—Please Save the Date
Annual Meet and Greet Your Elected Official Event
Location to be Announced
- **Tuesday, April 12, 2011**—How to be a Participant in Local Government
10 a.m. C.V. Starr Community Center, 300 S. Lincoln St., Fort Bragg
(9:30 a.m. coffee)
- **Tuesday, May 10, 2011**—Annual Meeting, Program To Be Announced
Hill House, Mendocino

President's Message—continued from page 2

candidate ads. (Is there a bright spot here?) If a TV or radio station is aware that material may be defamatory it should conduct an investigation before running an ad or face possible liability for the defamatory content. Of course, court action is slow and expensive, and after the ad airs, the damage has already been done. This point is not lost on newly formed PACs, who are pouring money into non-candidate spin ads in this year's elections. (Dimming of bright spot.)

Analysts expect the media to bring in as much as \$3 billion from political and campaign advertising from this year's mid-elections. The winner of all this is certainly not the American people.

Jane Person



LWV Mendocino appreciates members who bought tickets to our virtual spring garden tour. Your generosity supports our programs and keeps us going. We thank the members who purchased tickets:

Doris Hammer, Jennifer Owen, Jane Gurko, Betty Barber, Shirley Kirkpatrick, Pauline Grzanich, Helen Williams, Carol Ann Falk, Mary Gealey, Sharon Dimauro, Patricia O'Reilly, Rachel Binah, Barbara Rice, Ilene Weeks, Jean Morley, Sharon Valenti, Charlene McAllister, Betty Stavely, JoAn Blackstone, Carl Moore, Janet Morris, Charla Thornbecke, Nancy Kleiber, Kathleen Cameron, Kendall Smith, Meg Courtney, Becky Bowen, Pat Dunbar, Jim Mastin, Barbara Matheson, Patricia Marien.

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.

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 _____

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