



# The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

October 2008

Jane Person, President

## California Ballot Covers Wide Range Of 2008 Candidates, State Propositions



Mendocino County voters will find 46 candidates and twelve propositions on the November 4 General Election ballot.

Presidential nominees represent six political parties, including American Independent, Green, Peace and Freedom, and Libertarian as well as Democratic and Republican.

Other races include candidates for U.S. Representative District 1, California State Assembly District 1, Supervisorial Districts 1 and 2, Point Arena and Willits City Councils and directors

of three special districts including the Mendocino Coast Healthcare District. The League of Women Voters of Mendocino County will provide an in-depth discussion of State Propositions at 10 a.m. Tuesday, October 14 at St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg (corner of Franklin and Fir Streets).

The discussion will be moderated by Voter Service Chair JoAn Blackstone and details are on page 3.

Find important election about candidates, polling places, precincts, and vote-by-mail ballot status at right:

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

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

[www.co.mendocino.ca.us](http://www.co.mendocino.ca.us)

(click on Assessor-County Clerk-Recorder, then click on elections)

[www.vote411.org](http://www.vote411.org)

County Clerk-Recorder  
Election Information  
707 463-4371

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### November 4, 2008 Elections—Important Dates

October 6—Absentee Ballots Mailed

October 20—Last Date to Register to Vote

October 21—Last Day for Candidates to File for Write-in

October 28—Last Day to Request Absentee Ballot

November 4—Election Day (polls open 7 a.m.—8 p.m.)

December 1—State Certifies Presidential Electors

December 13—State Certifies Election Results

December 15—Electoral College Convenes

Get your copy of State Proposition Pros and Cons by clicking on the site on page 3 (shaded box)

2008-2009

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**VOTER Staff-- Barbara Auerbach, Becky Bowen, Susan Eveleth, Louis Hough, Charlene McAllister, Jane Person**

**President's Message****What happens when you vote by mail?**

The League sends a copy of the VOTER to our newspapers. *Advocate-News* reporter Connie Korbel sent an email to the VOTER publisher regarding a message from a Coast resident saying that there is much confusion about how votes are counted, especially votes by mail. People who are required to vote by mail are concerned that their votes aren't counted until it's too late to matter.

The biggest concern is that there's no point voting in the coming presidential election because the final tally for Mendocino votes aren't completed until after the winner has been declared. So we checked with Katrina Bartolomie, Assistant Registrar of Voters, to find out what really happens to votes by mail.

Your vote by mail ballot (VBM) goes out October 6. As the votes come in they go through a process: The envelopes are checked to see if there are any spoiled ballots or unsigned envelopes. If so, the Registrar's office sends a new ballot to the voter or a copy of their return unsigned envelope for them to sign. The returned envelopes/ballots are date stamped in and signatures are checked against the voter record. If a signature doesn't match, the voter is sent a letter to update the signature so the ballot can be processed.

Seven working days before the election, the office begins to open the mail-in ballots. The process involves teams of 2 workers checking for damaged ballots and remaking damaged ones so they will go through the vote tally machine. Both original and remade ballot are numbered. Mail-in ballots are processed and counted daily, a process that takes 2-3 days to complete.

If you'd rather, you can bring your vote by mail ballot to the polling place; however, it isn't included in the final Election Night tally to the Secretary of State's office since it hasn't gone through the process described above. The mail-in ballots received on Election Day are processed as part of the office's canvass period.\* During this period the Registrar's office is required to balance and verify the tallies with the same procedures listed above. So it makes sense to get your mail-in ballot in as soon as you know how you're going to vote since the canvass period normally takes 3 weeks to complete.

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\*Election officials have 28 days to complete this "official canvass." Results must be reported to the California Secretary of State 35 days after the election.



# Profiles in League

By JoAn Blackstone—Voter Service Chair

I was born in Los Angeles, California, attended but did not graduate from Compton College and California State University at Northridge. I worked in various retail support positions, including eleven years at Sears.

When the youngest of my four children started kindergarten and the eldest began his college career I started working toward my law degree (JD) from the University of West Los Angeles, which is now in Ingle-

wood. Admitted to the State Bar of California in December, 1974, my first position in practice was in house counsel for a major credit union trade association, the California Credit Union League.

I married Elliott Blackstone, a retired San Francisco police officer, in 1978 and gained 3 more children (all young adults). In 1982, I went into private practice in

San Francisco, primarily representing credit unions. I retired in 2005 due to my husband's declining health and care needs, after practicing law for 30 years. We moved to our long-planned retirement home at The Woods in June, 2006; Elliott suffered a final massive heart attack the following October. I am most proud of my wonderful blended family: 4 sons, 3 daughters, 14 grandchildren and 3 "great grands."



JoAn Blackstone

## League to Host State Proposition Pros and Cons Discussion

Six panelists will present an in-depth discussion of all 12 measures appearing on the November ballot on Tuesday, October 14 from 10 a.m.—2 p.m. at St. Michael's Church, Fort Bragg (corner of Franklin and Fir). The morning portion will include up to 10 minutes of presentation time and five minutes for Q&A's for each of the following "hotter" propositions: 2, 8, 11, 4, 7, 1A, 5 and 10.

After a short break, we'll continue with up to 10 minutes each for a discussion of propositions 6, 9, 3 and 12. Panelists will then respond to any remaining questions or requests for clarification.

Please bring a sack lunch. The League will provide coffee.

*For your copy of the League of Women Voters State Proposition Pros and Cons, click on this site:*

[www.ca.lwv.org/lwvc/edfund/elections/2008nov/pc/procon.pdf](http://www.ca.lwv.org/lwvc/edfund/elections/2008nov/pc/procon.pdf)

## What Happens When You Vote By Mail?

*President's Message Continued From Page 2*

The League's ballot measure Pro/Con meeting is October 14, so you might wait until after that date to send in your ballot. You may change your mind after hearing the League's arguments for and against each ballot measure.

The steps the Regis-

trar's office follows are outlined in the Elections Code Book and the processes are governed by the Secretary of State and the California Elections Code. Katrina Bartolomie said that vote by mail ballots definitely help determine the outcome of the races and are included in the Final Of-

ficial Report submitted to the Secretary of State within 28 days of the election.

You can check to see if your mail in ballot has been received. Your ballot envelope has a perforated receipt with a number on it. Tear it off and save it. Give the mail a few days

then call the Registrar of Voters Office and see if your ballot has been delivered (or check the county website's vote by mail ballot status).

We hope to see all members at the October 14 Pro/Con general meeting at St. Michael's in Ft. Bragg at 10:00 a.m.

**Jane Person**

## The Electoral College Yesterday and Today: Voting for President and Vice President of the United States.

by **Barbara Auerbach**

### The Origin of the Electoral College

Article II of the Constitution refers to Electors not the Electoral College. The original electors were considered wise men, non-political in nature and capable of selecting the Chief Magistrate of the United States (president).

Alexander Hamilton explains the mode of appointment of the Chief Magistrate of the United States in *The Federalist* Number 68: "...A small number of persons, selected by their fellow citizens from the general mass, will be most likely to possess the information and discernment requisite to such complicated investigations." (1)

The Constitutional Convention of 1787 rejected presidential selection by the Congress because it believed that such a system would make the chief executive too dependent on the legislature—a violation of separation of powers.

The concern of the smaller states was ameliorated because most delegates firmly believed that the Electoral College would rarely produce a President; that election would ultimately be thrown to the House of Representatives where the power of the small states was guaranteed because each state, regardless of size, would have one vote.

Direct election of the President by the people never received much consideration, probably for two reasons: First, direct election would not have safeguarded the power of the small states. Second, most delegates doubted the capacity of the people to evaluate talented and capable leaders beyond the borders of their own states. (2)

Additionally, communication among states was difficult, and transportation for receiving infor-

mation for campaigns was very slow. It was also felt that it was inappropriate for gentlemen to campaign for office.

The Constitutional Convention considered several possible methods of selecting a President. The plan was to have the people of each state select a number of Electors equal to the number of Senators and Representatives of their state. The Electors were to assemble and vote in the state in which they were chosen. This was specified in order to eliminate influence from other states and foreign powers.

The original Electors were not affiliated with political parties. They were men who were selected because of their superior knowledge, "men most capable of analyzing the qualities adapted to the station, and acting under circumstances favorable to deliberation, and to a judicious combination of all the reasons and inducements which were proper to govern their choice." (3)

The Electors would cast two votes. At least one vote would be for a candidate outside of their state in order to avoid voting for only "favorite sons." Electoral votes were awarded on a state level, on a winner-take-all basis. Even if a state race were extremely close, the winner received all of the state's electoral votes. (4)

Today Electors are often selected to recognize their service and dedication to their political party. They may be state elected officials, party leaders, or persons who have a personal or political affiliation with the presidential candidate. The voters in each state choose the Electors on the day of the general election. The Electors' names may or may not appear on the ballot below the name of the candidates running for President, depending on the procedure in each state. (5)

The Electoral College was intended to dilute the votes of population centers that might have

different concerns from the majority of the country. The system was designed to require presidential candidates to appeal to many different types of interests, rather than those of a specific region or state. (6)

Originally, the Electors were to cast their ballot for the President. The person with a majority (50%+) would become the President and the runner-up would become the Vice President. If more than one person received a majority, then the person with the most votes became the President. The House of Representatives chose the President in case of a tie. The Senate chose the Vice President if a tie occurred.

### The Twelfth Amendment to the Constitution

The Twelfth Amendment was introduced and then applied to the election in 1804, after problems had occurred in the presidential elections of 1796, and 1800. In the latter, Thomas Jefferson and Aaron Burr were tied for President. By this time political parties had taken root. Electors were voting for their parties, as they do now. The tie between the two men was finally broken in the House of Representatives after 36 votes.

The Twelfth Amendment to the United States Constitution altered Article II pertaining to presidential elections. Article II stated that the U.S. Electoral College would elect both the President and the Vice President in a single election; the person with a majority would become President and the runner-up would become Vice President. Problems with this system were demonstrated by the election of 1796 and, more spectacularly, the election of 1800. The Twelfth Amendment, proposed by the U.S. Congress on December 9, 1803, and ratified by the requisite number of state legislatures on June 15, 1804, required Electors to cast two distinct votes: one for President and another for Vice President. (7)

The Twelfth Amendment states that “The person having the greatest number of votes for President, shall be the President, if such number be a major-

ity of the whole number of Electors appointed; and if no person have such majority, then from the persons having the highest numbers not exceeding three on the list of those voted for as President, the House of Representatives shall choose immediately, by ballot, the President.”

### Current Discussions of Electoral College

The Electoral College was discussed recently in an article written by David Broder for the *Washington Post*.

On the one hand, Broder appears to be impressed with the persistence of Birch Bayh, the former Democratic senator from Indiana, to lead the charge to abolish the Electoral College. Broder also writes that the scheme for reform was invented by Professor John R. Koza, of Stanford University, and adopted by the non-profit group National Popular Vote. “It relies on the provision of the Constitution giving legislatures the power to ‘appoint’ their presidential electors. If legislatures in enough states make up a majority of the Electoral College (270 electoral votes) and pledge to commit those votes to the candidate winning the national popular vote, no constitutional amendment is needed.”

Broder warned, however, about the dangers of changing a system without fully debating the issue and of bypassing the amendment process: “A direct election scheme almost certainly would boost the already astronomical cost of presidential campaigns. It would likely offer new temptations for self-financed millionaire candidates to run as independents, knowing that their major party opponents would no longer have any assurance of electoral advantage.”(8)

A similar reform proposed and adopted by the non-profit group National Popular Vote is known as the Amar Plan: “Nationwide popular election of the president can be implemented if the states join together to pass identical state laws awarding all of their electoral votes to the presidential candidate receiving the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia. The proposed state legislation would come into effect only when it has been enacted, in identical form, by enough states to elect a President—that is, by states possessing a majority

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(270) of the 538 electoral votes.” (9) This plan would also bypass the amendment process.

### **Is There a Need for Reform of the Electoral College?**

The Electoral College provides that a candidate must demonstrate a sufficient distribution of popular support as well as sufficient popular support to win an election. In the 2000 election for President, George W. Bush had both sufficient popular support (popular votes) as well as a sufficient distribution of popular support (electoral votes) to prevail over Al Gore even though Gore had more popular votes.

“First-past-the-post” (plurality voting) is used to elect the President of the United States by popular vote. The candidate who comes in first at the polls wins the election, providing that the same candidate receives the majority of the electoral vote giving rise to a sufficient distribution of popular support.

Plurality voting brings into effect Duverger’s Law that applies when voters are pressured to vote for one of the two candidates they predict are most likely to win the election, thus encouraging development of a two party system. (10) This phenomenon is looked upon favorably by those who believe in the validity of the Electoral College and unfavorably by those who wish to abolish the Electoral College.

Proponents of the Electoral College system want a two Party system because it adds to the political stability of the nation. This system eliminates a multitude of political parties that might bring radical changes in policies from election to election. The two party system causes the major parties to assimilate third party ideas in order to win the popular vote.

Opponents of the Electoral College believe that a person with the minority popular vote, as in the 2000 election, would become President. It also makes it difficult for a third party candidate to obtain enough votes by the Electors to make a difference in the outcome.

Opponents see this type of election as strengthening the number of votes a small state has, compared to the population of a larger state inasmuch as each state receives at least three electoral votes regardless of its population.

On the other hand, supporters argue that the Electoral College system democratically reflects population centers by giving urban areas electoral power; that is where the most votes are. Thus together, urban states come close to marshaling the requisite number of electoral votes to elect a President. (11)

Supporters assert that the Electoral System works because there hasn’t been the need for a tie break in the House of Representatives since the Twelfth Amendment was adopted. Opponents deem that argument to be wholly undemocratic because each state in that situation would have one vote regardless of its population.

What to do about the errant Electors who cast their ballots as they wish and not according to the popular vote? It happens occasionally, but so far it has not changed the outcome of the elections.

Finally, there are other methods such as Instant Run-off Voting (IRV) in which voters have one vote and rank candidates in order of preference.

The VOTER welcomes your thoughts and ideas. Do you agree or disagree with the Electoral College System?

#### References

1. The Mode of Electing the President From the New York Packet Friday, March 14, 1788 Author: Alexander Hamilton, Federalist Papers Number 68

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## Local League Plans One-year Study of National Popular Vote Compact

By Barbara Matheson

Delegates attending the LWVUS convention this past May voted to study the feasibility of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact among the states as a method of electing the U.S. President. The complete wording of this compact can be found on

the LWVUS website).

This will only be a one-year study, which local consensus forms due to National May 1, 2009. A national study committee has been selected and they have already begun their work. This committee will produce all study materials, including pro and con arguments and

post them on the LWVUS web site in the next few months.

LWVUS will also provide consensus material to local Leagues. This will be a short project with our League probably holding one meeting in April to discuss and answer the consensus questions.

If you are interested

in serving on the local study committee, please contact me at 937-5162 or email me at

[ken@mcn.org](mailto:ken@mcn.org)

*Barbara Matheson is First Vice President in charge of programs for the League of Women Voters of Mendocino County.*

**[www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)** You can now subscribe to an electronic version of the National VOTER on this website

### 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.**

### The Electoral College — Yesterday and Today

*continued from page 6*



*Barbara Auerbach is a children's rights attorney and a frequent contributor to The VOTER.*

2. The American Electoral College: by Ellis Katz, Temple University

3. The Mode of Electing the President From the New York Packet Friday, March 14, 1788 Author: Alexander Hamilton, Federalist Papers Number 68

4. Electoral College: [www.dkosopedia.com/index.php/Electoral College](http://www.dkosopedia.com/index.php/Electoral%20College)

5. Electoral College: William C. Kimberling, Deputy Director FEC Office of Election Administration

6. Electoral College: William C. Kimberling, Deputy Director FEC Office of Election Administration

7. Electoral College: [www.dkosopedia.com/index.php/Electoral College](http://www.dkosopedia.com/index.php/Electoral%20College)

8. DAVID BRODER: Bid to Bypass Electoral College Dubious Washington Post writers Group, April 5, 2007

9. How to Achieve Direct National Election or the President Without Amending the Constitution: Part Three Of A Three-part Series On The 2000 Elec-

tion And The Electoral College By Akhil Reed Amar and Vikram David Amar

10. Maurice Duverger, "Factors in a Two-Party and Multi-party System," in Party Politics and Pressure Groups (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1972), pp.23-32

11. The League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, Choosing the President -1992 (New York: Lyons and Urford, 1992), p.121-122

## Sustainability 101: The Noyo Food Forest Story

By Jane Person

Three years ago the Noyo Food Forest was just an idea in the minds of a group of women meeting over pot-luck dinners and trying to think of a way to re-create “a connection between people, food, health, and their environment,” as their web-site says.

Now it’s a registered 501(c) (3) non-profit organization. It works with the Ft. Bragg Unified School District to run The Learning Garden at Ft. Bragg High School, partners with local organizations in starting the Head Start Family Garden Project, and coordinates the new Noyo

Come-Unity Garden at Thanksgiving Coffee in the South Harbor area. Its volunteers—some almost full time and others who come and go—plan, plant, compost, weed, tend, and harvest the gardens and offer part of the harvest for sale at the Ft. Bragg Farmers Market.

The flagship project of the Noyo Food Forest is The Learning Garden at Ft. Bragg High School. An ROP class, called “Organic Gardening,” taught by Sakima Bush, is also involved at this site. Youth interns worked in the Learning Garden this past summer, overseen by one of the founders, Susan Lightfoot.

Most of the food raised at the Learning Garden is sold to the school cafeteria to be served to the students at lunch. At first the organizers spent about \$800 buying compost; now community organizations and businesses donate waste materials, which can be turned into compost. This is one of the ways the garden and the community work as one here.

A food forest as envisioned by its founders, “is a multi-story garden arranged in 7 layers” beginning



*Susan Lightfoot (center) with Learning Garden interns.  
Noyo Food Forest Photograph*

with a canopy of taller trees, descending into bushes, shrubs, ground cover, and the root zone and climbers. At the Learning Garden, tall sunflowers overlook smaller produce like lettuce, and along the fences climbing flowers and dahlias add blue, yellow and red color to the hues of green plants and rich brown dirt. Several years ago this area was just an open field.

The Noyo Food Forest is now working with the Campbell Group and the Ft. Bragg Unified School District to install a new garden at Ft. Bragg Middle School.

The Food Forest partners in one way or another with many community organizations and individuals. When volunteers are needed, the word goes out, said Lightfoot, and people just show up. In addition, the

Food Forest is working with the Mendocino Coast Parks and Recreation District and school staff to offer an after-school enrichment program at Ft. Bragg High School. Lightfoot will teach a class titled “From Seed to Plate: Sustainable Eating for a Healthy Planet” through this program. Other organizations the Food Forest works with or is supported by include the Ft. Bragg City Council, the Noyo Headlands Unified Design Group, CELL, the Mendocino Free Skool Project, Safe Passages, Dirt Cheap, Parents and Friends, Inc., the Food Bank, and many more.

Noyo Food Forest organizers aim to have all Learning Garden instructions translated into Spanish as part of an outreach to the Latino population, estimated at approximately 30 percent of the Ft. Bragg community. One of the ideas behind the Noyo Food Forest is to work toward a sustainable community, with food security in the event of a disaster. Another goal is to encourage local food production and thus stimulate local economic development.

Out of these goals comes perhaps a larger one—a closer knit community, one with places for people of all talents and abilities to work in harmony with the natural world.

The Noyo Food Forest welcomes volunteers, as well as those who would like to help in the planning, teaching, and organizing. Call 707-964-0218.



# Binah Opens League Year with Offshore Drilling Saga—the history and the future



League members heard activist and board member Rachael Binah discuss what offshore drilling means to coastal residents at the league's first meeting of the year September 16 at the Harbor Lite Lodge, Fort Bragg.

*“Our connection to the ocean is emotional, intellectual, economic—and profound.”*

*“We need to go in a direction to seriously support alternative non-polluting energy to create green jobs to develop products the world needs to buy—to save our planet from possible demise. This is not an elitist concept.”*



Rachel Binah—photo by Eve Yeomans



Fort Bragg City Councilperson Dan Gjerde with member Lee Tepper.

Follow the progress of H.R.6899 and other offshore drilling federal legislation on the Library of Congress site:  
[www.thomas.loc.gov](http://www.thomas.loc.gov)

## Calendar of Events

2008

**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. social hour, meeting 9:30 a.m.**

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

Topic: The Greening of Fort Bragg

Speaker: The City Staff

**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, 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**

## October 2008

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## November 2008

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## December 2008

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## Board Briefs

Susan Eveleth has been appointed to serve as the league Action Chair. Susan has been VOTER Editor and is also a past president of the Mendocino Coast League.

Read your ballot carefully because some voting venues have been changed. Caspar Community Center is no longer a polling place. The Meeting Room at the Mendocino Coast Botanical Gardens has been added.

The League will sponsor a Candidate Forum for the two candidates running for the Mendocino Coast Hospital Board. The time and place will be announced.

Thanks to Roy Falk for designing and printing our League calendar/bookmarks. You may pick up one at the October meeting.

Calendar of Events  
Times and Places  
On Page 10

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

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

**It is easy to join the League of Women Voters**

*Membership is open to all men and women of voting age interested in a  
better government and more responsible, knowledgeable voters*

*Mail this application and dues to:*

*League of Women Voters of Mendocino County*

*P.O. Box 1128,*

*Fort Bragg, CA 95437*

Individual membership: \$50 per year. Two-person household: \$75 per year

\_\_\_ Membership Dues—Payable to LWVMC

\_\_\_ Donation—Payable to LWVMC

Name (s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

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