



The Voter

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS® OF MENDOCINO COUNTY

March, 2016

Carol Czadek, President

Jary Stavely and Lee Tepper, Editors

March meeting

Meet Our Local Elected Officials at “Meet & Greet”

by Patricia Marien

North Coast Congressman Jared Huffman, Mendocino County Sheriff Tom Allman, and District Attorney David Eyster have indicated their intention, last minute schedules permitting, to attend the League’s 11th annual Meet and



Sheriff Tom Allman, District Attorney David Eyster, and Tom Owen chat at a previous “Meet and Greet”

Greet Your Elected Officials reception, set for Friday, March 18th, from 5-7 p.m. at the Caspar Community Center.

More than 60 local, city and county elected officials have received an invitation to meet voters in an informal, casual setting with no agenda, no speeches and no formal program.

Officials invited represent the Fort Bragg City Council, Mendocino Coast Hospital District, school, water and fire districts, and others. State

officials also have been invited.

Wine and hors d’oeuvres will be served. If you are able to help with food (no sweets please), please deliver them by 4:45 p.m.

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

Hope to see you there, and please bring a friend.



Representative Huffman



Vice-President Geisce Ly of CR, League member Shirley Kirkpatrick, and County Superintendent of Schools Paul Tichinin

LWV 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.



President's message

Income Inequality and Democracy

by Carol Czadek

Income inequality in America is a threat not only to our economy but to democracy.

Columnist Paul Krugman worries

that the country is in danger of being transformed from a democracy into an oligarchy like Russia, where a few powerful individuals control the government at the expense of everyone else. “We are on the road not just to a highly unequal society, but to a society of an oligarchy. A society of inherited wealth,” Krugman warns. “When you have a few people who are so wealthy that they can effectively buy the political system, the political system is going to tend to serve their interests.” The term 'oligarchy' might seem an exaggeration to those accustomed to thinking of oligarchs as despotic rulers who are incompatible with democracies like the United States. But Jeffrey Winters, a professor at Northwestern University specializing in the comparative study of oligarchies, is one of a growing number of voices who argue that America is a 'civil oligarchy' in which a tiny and extremely wealthy slice of the population is able to use its superior economic position to promote a brand of politics that serves itself, first and foremost. The oligarchs in America don't rule directly, he argues, but instead use their fortunes to produce political results that favor their interests. As Nobel Prize-winning economist Joseph Stiglitz puts it, “Wealth begets power, which begets more wealth.”

Thomas Piketty, an economist at the Paris School of Economics, warned in his book, *Capital in the Twenty-First Century*, that without aggressive government intervention, economic inequality in the United States and elsewhere is likely to rise inexorably, to the point where a small portion of the population will, in the foreseeable future, own perhaps half of the globe's wealth, or more. He predicted that the fortunes of those with great wealth would increase at a faster rate of return than the rate at which wages grow. This dynamic, he

predicted, would widen the growing chasm between the haves and the have-nots to levels mimicking the aristocracies of old Europe and plutocracies of banana republics. Some argue that an elite minority is also driving extreme political partisanship as its interests and agenda lose touch with the economic realities faced by the rest of the population.

Government policies ought to reflect voters' preferences. But, this relationship will not prevail if concentrated contributions skew candidates and elected representatives toward the interests of large donors and away from the interests of the voters in their districts. Research has found that a substantial majority of citizens believe that large campaign contributions have significant negative impacts on officeholders' actions, and lead to corruption in government. If voters believe that large campaign contributions shift an officeholder's votes away from supporting their interests, they are less likely to vote and otherwise participate in the political process.

But, as the reformers of the Progressive Era understood more than a century ago, a system caught in the spiral of wealth and power cannot be reformed from within. It can be changed only by a mass movement of citizens pushing from the outside.

So, regardless of who wins the presidency in November and which party dominates the next Congress, it is up to the rest of us to continue to organize and mobilize. Real reform will require many years of hard work from organizations such as the League of Women Voters. When individuals and corporations can spend unlimited amounts of money campaigning, and when society is marked by vast disparities in wealth, there is a real risk that democracy will become an oligarchy, as experts are predicting.

We as Americans must accept the responsibility of funding our own elections. We can't outsource it to the super rich anymore.

Thanks to *Dark Money: The Hidden History of the Billionaires Behind the Rise of the Radical Right* by Jane Mayer.

To Be Considered in the June Primary

by Jary Stavelly

The upcoming June 7th election, besides being a Presidential Primary, will feature several propositions and questions of interest to local citizens. Statewide, voters will cast ballots for or against Proposition 50, which would give the California Legislature the power to suspend members guilty of malfeasance. At right readers can find why LWV of California recommends voting in favor of this "prop."

Countywide, voters will consider the following question: "Shall a Charter Commission be elected to propose a Mendocino County Charter?" Public meetings have been scheduled (see article at right) to explore reasons to say yes to the proposal, and to introduce candidates for such a commission. In addition, county residents will consider Measure V, the so-called "hack and squirt" initiative, a proposal to disallow leaving dead trees standing after they have been killed. Information on a League-sponsored public forum regarding this measure is also to be found at right.

Finally, residents of the city of Fort Bragg will be asked to consider Measure U, a zoning ordinance making it illegal for any new social services to be provided within the downtown area of the city. This initiative has been sponsored by the group Concerned Citizens of Fort Bragg, and is being opposed by the group Go Fort Bragg. Both of these groups have made presentations of their views to the local League Board. More information on Measure U will be provided in the next VOTER.

Discuss the issues with your friends and neighbors, and don't forget to tell them about www.votersedge.org/ca, the new version of Smartvoter.org

Dead Tree Measure Forum

by Jane Person

The pros and cons of Measure V, to be voted on in the June primary election, will be the subject of the League's town forum at the Caspar Community Center on Friday, April 1st from 6:00 p.m. to 7:30. Ted Williams, Albion Little River Fire Chief, will present the pro arguments. John Anderson of Mendocino Redwood Company will deliver the opposing arguments.

The ordinance proposes to declare that "trees greater in height than 5 meters, intentionally killed and left standing for more than 90 days (except those created for the benefit of wildlife habitat) are a public nuisance and the party responsible shall be liable for any resulting damage" when three criteria, listed in the measure, are met.

County Charter Measure to Be Explored

by Jane Person

A town hall meeting to explain Measure W, the County Charter measure, is slated for March 22nd at the Redwood Valley Grange, 8650 East Road, Redwood Valley, from 7 p.m. to 9 p.m. The Charter Project of Mendocino County, the group which wrote the measure and circulated the petitions, is planning this and other meetings across the county, including another scheduled for Ft. Bragg on April 16 at the Senior Center. More information will be available in the April Voter.

LWVC Supports Proposition 50

from LWV of California

We support Proposition 50 on the June 7 ballot. This State constitutional amendment would give each house of the Legislature clear authority to suspend, with a two-thirds vote, a member *and* to withhold pay and benefits.

Prop 50 is a straightforward way for lawmakers to hold their own colleagues accountable for breaching the public's trust.

Such actions are highly unusual. Over the years, five senators have been expelled, and several senators accused of corruption resigned in 1985. The Assembly has never suspended or expelled a member

Mendocino County Sheriff Discusses Law Enforcement's Involvement in Mental Health

by Becky Bowen

Sheriff Tom Allman spoke at our well-attended February meeting about the state of the County jail in the wake of a federal mandate and state laws that reduce penalties for non-violent crimes and relieve overcrowding in state prisons by sending some inmates to county jail instead of state prison.

To understand what is going on with county jails all over California, we have to look at the bigger picture, history, and numbers, he said. "In 1972, there were 10 million people in California and 72,000 beds available for mental health patients. Now there are 38 million people in California and 4,000 mental health beds." So the current situation that finds state prisoners serving time in county jail is not just about inmate relocation—it's about how we manage legal and social services in the community.

"For me, it's all about mental health, mental health, mental health," Allman said. "It's not against the law to be mentally ill," he said, "but right now, the only place a mentally ill person can be locked up is a county jail." It's expensive and it's not working, he said.

He said any discussion about California Assembly Bill 109 (signed into law in 2011 that sends non-violent inmates to county jail instead of state prison) and Proposition 47 (approved by the voters in 2011 to reduce non-violent crimes to misdemeanors) has to include how the community deals with the mental health issue.

Now, if a person with mental health issues is arrested or detained in Mendocino County, s/he is taken to a local hospital emergency room where a representative is summoned to begin a process that leads to transport of the patient to a facility in either Solano or Sutter County for evaluation.

The Sheriff told League members he has formed a group to seek a five-year ½-cent tax measure on the November ballot to finance construction or acquisition of a building where evaluation, diagnosis and treatment can be carried out in

Mendocino County. Part of the proposal is creation of an 11-member commission to oversee the transition with approval of the Board of Supervisors. None of the monies generated from this revenue would go toward staffing the facility.

"It could be a good place to see alcohol and drug abuse rehab," he said, "And training for law enforcement will be a mission for this new facility in the future, too. A gun and a pair of handcuffs is not a solution."

Allman observed that prisoner and mental health issues always come back to money. Who pays for it and how much does it cost? Some money for local communities will come back to counties from the state, generated by savings from transfer of state inmates to county jails. The cost of housing an inmate in state prison is about \$35,000 a year, he said. A new psychiatric health facility (PHF) would mean future county savings, since mental health services could be provided locally.

There are ongoing projects here that show interest and intent to help people with mental health issues, he said. "I bet nobody at this meeting has heard about the Manzanita Project. Manzanita locations are open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. every day. A person can come and make a sandwich, do laundry or just sit and knit. It's not necessary to make an appointment, but there are qualified staff members available to provide help. Deputies tell me those folks who come into a Manzanita facility are falling off their radar screen." He described the project, a non-profit peer wellness group, as a way to improve quality of life for many and bring mental health services closer to home.

He concluded, "When we lock somebody up, we have to say that person is our neighbor, son, daughter, niece or friend. When their sentence brings them back to county jail, these are our people who went to our schools and played with our children. We have to come up with a local solution to a local problem."

Money in Politics Response Summary

by Carol Czadek

On January 12th our Mendocino County chapter met to respond to the National League's Money in Politics position revision study. Carol Czadek, JoAn Blackstone, Nancy Kleiber, and Cindy Plank led us through the background and penetrating questions until we had formulated a consensus response. Here is the summary which our league submitted to LWVUS.

I. Democratic Values and Interests with Respect to Financing Political Campaigns

- 1) What should be the goals and purposes of campaign finance regulation?
 - a) Seek political equality for all citizens: **Agree**
 - b) Protect representative democracy from being distorted by big spending in election campaigns: **Agree**
 - c) Enable candidates to compete equitably for public office: **Agree**
 - d) Ensure that candidates have sufficient funds to communicate their messages to the public: No consensus
 - e) Ensure that economic and corporate interests are part of election dialogue: No consensus
 - f) Provide voters sufficient information about candidates and campaign issues to make informed choices: **Agree**
 - g) Ensure the public's right to know who is using money to influence elections: **Agree**
 - h) Combat corruption and undue influence in government: **Agree**
- 2) Evaluate whether the following activities are types of political corruption:
 - a) A candidate or officeholder agrees to vote or work in favor of a donor's interests in exchange for a campaign contribution: **Agree**
 - b) An officeholder or her/his staff gives greater access to donors: **Agree**
 - c) An officeholder votes or works to support policies that reflect the preferences of individuals or organizations in order to attract contributions from them: **Agree**
 - d) An office holder seeks political contributions

Implying that there will be retribution unless a donation is given: **Agree**

- e) The results of the political process consistently favor the interests of significant campaign contributors: **Agree**
- 3) Optional Comments
 - a) 1d. – too vague
 - b) 1e – unclear of exact meaning of question (Exclude other interests? Just ensure a voice?)

II. First Amendment Protections for Speakers and Activities in Political Campaigns

- 1) Many different individuals and organizations use a variety of methods to communicate their views to voters in candidate elections. Should spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited?
 - a) Individual citizens, including wealthy individuals like George Soros and the Koch Brothers: **Some spending limits**
 - b) Political Action Committees, sponsored by an organization, such as the League of Conservation Voters, Chevron, the American Bankers Association, and the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers (IBEW), whose campaign spending comes from contributions by individuals associated with the sponsoring organization, such as employees, stockholders, members and volunteers: **Some spending limits**
 - c) For-profit organizations, like Exxon, Ben and Jerry's, General Motors, and Starbucks, from their corporate treasury funds: **Spending banned**
 - d) Trade associations, like the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the American Wind Energy Association, and the American Petroleum Institute, from the association's general treasury funds: **Spending banned**
 - e) Labor unions, like the United Autoworkers and Service Employees International, from the union's general treasury funds: **Spending banned**
 - f) Non-profit organizations, like the Sierra Club, Wisconsin Right to Life, Coalition to Stop

Gun Violence, American Crossroads, and Priorities USA, from the organization's general treasury funds: **Spending banned**

g) Non-partisan voter registration and GOTV (get out the vote) organizations and activities, like the LWV and Nonprofit Vote: **Unlimited spending**

h) Political parties, like the Republicans, Libertarians, and Democrats: **Some spending limits**

i) Candidates for public office spending money the candidate has raised from contributors: **Some spending limits**

j) Candidates for public office spending their own money: **Some spending limits**

2) The press plays a major role in candidate elections through editorial endorsements, news coverage, and other communications directly to the public that are often important to the outcome. Should such spending to influence an election by any of the following be limited?

a) Newspapers, like the New York Times and the Wall Street Journal: **Unlimited spending**

b) Television and other electronic media, like Fox News, CNN, MSNBC and CBS: **Some spending limits**

c) Internet communications, like Huffington Post, Breitbart, Daily Kos, and individual bloggers: **Some spending limits**

Optional Comments

a) 2c. –not to interfere with open access to the internet by users

III – Methods for Regulating Campaign Finance to Protect the Democratic Process

- 1) In order to achieve the goals for campaign finance regulation, should the League support
 - a) Abolishing SuperPACs and spending coordinated or directed by candidates, other than a candidate's own single campaign committee: **Agree**
 - b) Restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists? (Restrictions may include monetary limits as well as other regulations.): **Agree**
 - c) Public funding for candidates? Should the League support: (You may respond to more than one item in Question 1 c.)

i. Voluntary public financing of elections where candidates who choose to participate must also abide by reasonable spending limits? **No response**

ii. Mandatory public financing of elections where candidates must participate and abide by reasonable spending limits? **Agree**

iii. Public financing without spending limits on candidates? **Disagree**

2) How should campaign finance regulations be administered and enforced? (You may choose more than one response for Question 2.)

a) By an even-numbered commission with equal representation by the two major political parties to ensure partisan fairness (current Federal Election Commission [FEC] structure)? **No**

b) By an odd-numbered commission with at least one independent or nonpartisan commissioner to ensure decisions can be made in case of partisan deadlock? **Yes**

c) By structural and budget changes to the FEC (e.g., commission appointments, staffing, security, budget, decision making process) that would allow the agency to function effectively and meet its legislative and regulatory mandates. **Yes**

Comment Section

- 1) 1. c. –public airtime and messaging should be considered as an alternative or supplement to public financing
- 2) 2. b. –all should be independent
- 3) 2. c. - prefer c; should include odd number of commissioners

Action Alert

Important as it is to have an updated position on Money In Politics that reflects emerging First Amendment concerns, LWVUS is taking many needed actions based on our current position. Currently LWVUS is asking us to write urging our Representatives to cosponsor and support HR 425, the "Stop Super PAC -- Candidate Coordination Act" introduced by Representatives David Price and Chris Van Hollen, which would strengthen coordination regulations and stop Super PACS from evading the law.

Remembering Shirley Kirkpatrick

by Becky Bowen

Editor's Note: Shirley Morehouse Kirkpatrick died February 21 at Mendocino Coast District Hospital. A native of Scotia, Shirley grew up in Placerville and Healdsburg. She married Don Kirkpatrick in 1953 after both graduated from the University of California at Berkeley. Her long career in public education in Marin County, Winters and Fort Bragg was followed by three years in the Middle East where she and Don taught in the Saudi Arabian International Schools. The couple returned to the Mendocino Coast where she was active in the community. Here are some thoughts about Shirley and her service to the League of Women Voters of Mendocino County.)

Shirley Kirkpatrick invited me one day to join the local League Board of Directors for a year's term shortly after my husband and I moved to Caspar. When I said I didn't know much about the League, she said the rewards for service were great. "Besides," she said, "You can do anything for a year."

Rewards for service indeed. Shirley brought skills of dedication and persuasion to the League Board during the late 90s and first part of this century. She was tireless and cheerful and went quietly about doing the work that pretty much nobody wanted to do, including finding and nominating new board members and officers.

Her work for schools, church and organizations took her into many corners of the coastal community and when we gathered to pay a final tribute to Shirley on Sunday, February 28, the large crowd included artists, teachers, family members, writers, former students, woodworkers, musicians, gardeners and so many friends.

"I knew her well from writing classes we shared," League member Sharon Gilligan wrote. "She was a gentle poet who used words to make us smile and told stories of her travels and rich family life. Hers was a life to be admired."

Susan Mitchell wrote: "I met Shirley in writing class at College of the Redwoods several years after we moved here. I noticed that she and several other members were always missing on one Tuesday each month for 'League' and asked her about it. She invited me to lunch and convinced me not only to join the LWV but to go on the board straightaway."

"She was such a gentle woman in every sense of the word," Susan wrote. "I got to know Shirley and her husband, Don, and loved hearing about their lives in Saudi Arabia. She was also so strong and worked diligently to overcome any obstacle including suffering a stroke while on an Elderhostel trip to Canada. Prior to that time we also spent a lot of time together on the tennis court where she was an indefatigable partner and/or opponent."

"She will be so missed by the whole community and I will always remember her making me feel capable of actually being on the board and becoming more knowledgeable about all the things the LWV represents."

If Shirley had been a man in our world in our time, she surely would have been the kind of coach who teaches team members the best things about their sport, whether they win or not. Her work with the League supported her vision to find new members and new leaders. And she went about that task of nurturing and encouraging until she passed the torch to a new group of leaders ten years ago.

After I had served several years on the Board, Susan Eveleth, Pat Dunbar and Charlene McAllister asked me to consider serving as League President. I went home with a heavy heart to think it over and the phone rang. It was Shirley with her you-can-do-it-even-if-it's-the-last-thing-on-your-mind-and-you-feel-unworthy pep talk. "You will be sitting at a table where most of the board members have served as president, so you will have all the support. You will be fine, we will make sure of it. Besides, it's only for a year. You can do anything for a year."



LWVMC MEMBER MEETINGS

Below are the dates, topics, and presenters for the rest of the year's meetings. The public is invited to attend all member meetings at no charge. Meetings are scheduled on Tuesdays, except as noted. Refreshments at 9:30 a.m., program at 10:00. All will be held at the Caspar Community Center.

March 18th

Meet and Greet event,
stewards Jary Stavely and Patricia Marien

April 12th

Effect of State Regulations on
Local Water Systems,
moderator Pat Dunbar

May 10th

LWV Mendocino Annual Meeting
President Carol Czadek presiding

You are also welcome at LWVMC Board meetings, held on Tuesday mornings at the Fort Bragg Library Community Room. For Board meeting dates, see our website (www.mendo.ca.lwvnet.org).

Membership News

by Jary Stavely

We welcome Renate Langer, formerly a League member in St. Louis, MO, to our group. She recently married Dr. Glenn Langer of Little River, and has moved to join her husband in our community. Please also welcome new member Sue Boecker, a local resident who has attended several recent meetings, and who has decided to throw her lot in with us!

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