



San Diego Voter

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March 2010

DO SPECIAL INTERESTS NOW OWN OUR ELECTIONS?

That is the question that will be addressed at the **March 24th LWV Luncheon on Campaign Finance Reform**. The recent "Supreme Court decision in Citizen's United v. the Federal Election Commission paves the way for unlimited corporate and union spending in elections and the drowning out of the average citizen's voice in our public policy debates." That is the response of Bob Edgar, President of Common Cause. So have we lost control of our elections? Is there anything we can do?



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See enclosed flyer for luncheon details

UNIT MEETINGS - FIRE PROTECTION IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

The County League Fire Study Committee has devoted the past eighteen months to researching the structural status of fire protection in the county. They have produced a report which is now on their website, www.sdilo.ca.lwvnet.org. They will be making presentations at the March Unit meetings and answering questions. Leaguers will be asked to endorse the recommendations printed in this article. If approved, they will be incorporated into the existing position which was adopted by concurrence with the East County League's position at their last convention in 2008. That position reads: Support a county regional fire protection and emergency medical system supported by a sustainable source of funding for prevention and suppression of fires. Increase cooperation among cities and unincorporated fire agencies as may apply. Expand mutual aid agreements.



Members are expected to read the report before the Unit meeting. Part of the report is printed here and on page 6. but try to look at it online as well. Please bring a copy to the Unit meeting. Members who do not have computer access will be provided with a copy of the report at the Unit meeting.

FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

I. Finding: There is a Need for a County Fire Department or an Improved Consolidated Agency

In the County of San Diego, there are more than 60 firefighting districts, departments, and services. These include one federal fire department (US Forest Service) and one state fire agency (CAL FIRE), which have the primary responsibility of fighting wild fires in the rural county. In addition, there are 18 cities and 29 fire protection districts -- comprised of rural fire departments, rural county service area fire protection agencies, and five water districts, which also provide fire protection. They are primarily responsible for structure fire fighting and emergency services. There are also six Indian reservations with their own fire departments, two airports with fire protection services, and several military fire departments on military property. There is no county fire department as exist in three other southern California counties. San Diego County recently formed a county fire authority (CSA 135) to unify the administrative support, communications, and training of 15 rural fire agencies (eventually) and approved \$15.5 million a year in funding.

Recommendation:

Consolidate fire protection both regionally and structurally in order to create unified programs which integrate fire services in the unincorporated areas of the county.

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July 2009 - June 2010
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Admin. Assistant Genoveva Martinez
Flexible hours — (call ahead, please)
Phone: (858) 483-8696 FAX: (858) 483-8396

Email: lwwsd@san.rr.com

Website: www.lwwsandiego.org

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President's Message

Our 90th anniversary celebration of the founding of the League of Women Voters has come and gone, leaving warm memories of a festive and illuminating luncheon in honor of the occasion. Since it coincided with the San Diego League's 75th anniversary, we made good use of the opportunity to take a long look backwards at the remarkable achievements of many generations of San Diego League leaders who have left their mark on our city's history.

Rather than resting on our collective laurels we, the latest batch of League leaders, can best honor those who came before us by continuing the struggle to bring about positive change and reform. For example, we are currently wrestling with an historic city governance question that will appear on the upcoming ballot. While staying out of the political fray is always our goal, it's never an easy job. The following recent League letter is self-explanatory:

To the Editor: San Diegans will be asked in June to vote on locking in the city's experiment with a "strong mayor" form of government. The League of Women Voters believes that the public should have more time to evaluate what will be a transformative City Charter revision – the first in 80 years.

The League proposed a separate choice on the June ballot to extend the trial period of the strong mayor system. The option to extend the trial period was made explicit when the strong mayor experiment began in 2004.

A representative from the Mayor's office attacked the League proposal during a City Council committee discussion last week. He said, "The Mayor believes that this measure, the League's measure, is a strategy to sink strong-mayor by confusing voters."



Quite the contrary, informing voters about complex and confusing matters of government has always been the League's high purpose. The League wants to give San Diego voters more time to make a wise decision about whether, when, or how to revise the San Diego City Charter. This is consistent with the League's longstanding commitment to the strengthening of voters' rights and democratic and ethical government.

Unfortunately, the public will not get the opportunity we requested. But as usual we will continue to provide voters with the educational forums and informed analyses for which we are well known. The months leading up to June will be very busy ones.

— Norma Damashek, Co-President

LWVSD Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters is strictly nonpartisan but wholeheartedly political, working to influence public policy through education and advocacy.

P.S. We've been getting lots of coverage about the 'strong mayor' question in the past couple of weeks., not only in community weeklies and our daily newspaper, but a long article today on San Diego News Network (www.sdn.com) and more in the SD Reader, local TV stations (channel 6 & 10), KPBS, even the Orange County Register and a website called Madison Square Garden. We're also drafting a ballot opposition statement. And the campaign has barely started!

— Norma Damashek

March Units: FIRE PROTECTION IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

Monday, Mar. 8 9:30—11:30 a.m.	Rancho Bernardo and Scripps Ranch	San Diego National Bank Community Room 2nd Floor 15789 Bernardo Center Dr, San Diego, CA 92128	Irene Dunny, (858) 613-0335 Bev Wilson, (858) 592-9664
Monday, Mar. 8 2:00 - 4:00 p.m.	Coronado Unit	Winn Room, Coronado Public Library 640 Orange Avenue Coronado, CA 92118	Nancy Cuddy, (619) 437-4597
Monday, Mar. 8 5:30 – 7:30 p.m.	Mission Valley	Mission Valley Library 2123 Fenton Parkway San Diego, CA 92108 (Next to IKEA)	Debra Blum, (619) 225-0353
Tuesday, Mar. 9 9:30 - 11:30 a.m.	La Jolla	Riford Center 6811 La Jolla Blvd. La Jolla, CA 92037	Joan Dahlin, (858) 454-5019 Sherry Bloom, (858) 459-7598 (619) 200-0300 (cell)
Tuesday, Mar. 9 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	University City	North University City Community Library 8820 Judicial Drive San Diego, CA 92122	Catherine Stoll, (858) 755-4119
Wednesday, Mar. 10 1:00 – 3:00 p.m.	Tierrasanta	Monterey Villa Clubhouse 5275 Rimpark Dr. /Apple Tree Lane San Diego, CA 92124	Carole Porter, (858) 279-5474
Thursday, Mar. 11 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.	East San Diego	College Rolando Library 6600 Montezuma Road San Diego, CA 92115-2828	Barbara Evje, (619) 462-4772
Thursday, Mar. 11 9:30 – 11:30 a.m.	North Shores/ Point Loma	LWV Office, 4901 Morena Blvd. #104 San Diego, CA 92117 *for this month only*	Shirley Walkoe, (619) 223-6314 Nancy Witt, (619) 222-7230
Saturday, Mar. 13 10:00 a.m. - noon	Southeast Unit	Malcolm X Library 5138 Market Street San Diego, CA 92105	Frances Bumpus, (619) 263-7335 La Quita Robbins, (619) 470-9095

LWVSD March Calendar

3/2	Tues.	5:30 p.m.	Board Meeting, LWVSD Office
3/4	Thur.	9:30 a.m.	Unit Council, LWVSD Office
3/5	Fri.	10:30 a.m.	County League Board Meeting, LWVSD Office
3/8	Mon.	7-9 p.m.	International Women's Day "Inter-generational Conversations," Women's History Museum, 2323 Broadway, Free. 619-223-8074
3/8-13			Units: Fire Protection in San Diego County
3/15	Mon.	10:00 a.m.	Membership Committee Meeting, LWVSD Office
3/16	Tues.	7- 8:45 a.m.	Sixth Annual Int'l Breakfast, Joan B. Kroc Institute for Peace & Justice, "Through Her Eyes," a talk-back from the United Nations, \$22. 619-223-8074
3/17	Wed.	10:00 a.m.	Education Committee, LWVSD Office
3/24	Wed.	11:30 a.m. - 1:30 p.m.	Lunch with League — Tom Ham's — "Do Special Interests Now Own Our Elections?"
3/26	Fri.	9:30 a.m.	Public Policy Committee, LWVSD Office
3/26	Fri.	12:00 (noon)	Program Committee, LWVSD Office

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“As a long-time supporter of clean money in elections, the League of Women Voters supports enactment of congressional public financing and repair and updating of the presidential public financing system. Enhanced small contributions through a fair elections system would provide candidates with clean funds, challenging both corruption and the appearance of corruption in our electoral system. We urge Congress to enact such legislation.”

Mary Wilson, President of the LWVUS.

So what type of legislation should be enacted and how effective would it be to help the onslaught of renewed efforts? Some say that Congress can target the federal contractors. Most of the justices agree that Congress may restrict free speech when there is a significant risk of corruption. When big pharmaceutical companies were able to donate to key congressional members who were deciding on regulations and rules regarding government spending on healthcare, the opportunities for corruption were obvious. This type of legislation will help.

Mary Wilson and Bob Edgar are both calling for a system of “Clean Elections” that will allow for candidates to run effective, competitive elections without the influences of special interests. This is what our luncheon will be focusing on: Clean or Fair Elections at the national, state and local levels with speakers for each level.

So what exactly do we mean by clean elections?

Clean or often called Fair Elections is a type of campaign finance reform that is voluntary and is being used in a number of states at the state and local levels. A candidate who agrees to run as a clean candidate collects a certain number of qualifying signatures with corresponding contributions that are usually \$5 or another minimal amount. The candidate files the signatures and contributions and if they are sufficient, the candidate qualifies for a certain amount of money to run an effective campaign. They agree not to raise any additional funds which means that they are not beholden to anyone except their constituents.

What are the benefits of clean elections?

- * Publicly funded elections save taxpayers money. When earmarks spent by Congress in 2006 were totaled, they cost more than \$305 per voting age resident. The cost for Clean Elections usually are \$2 -\$6 per voting age resident per year.
- * Clean Money reform helps control the spiral costs of campaigns. Matching funds decrease the incentive to outspend opponents and thereby spending amounts in locations that have Clean Elections have actually dropped.
- * Clean Money reforms increase voter participation. In Arizona, voter turnout increased by 22% from 1998 with traditional campaigns to 2002 with Clean candidates running. Maine, too, has had record turnouts ever since they converted to having Clean Elections.
- * Clean Elections make elections more competitive and give voters more choice.
- * Clean Elections have benefited Republicans and Democrats alike. This frees candidates from the money chase and allows them more time to talk with the voters.

Be sure to join us for this great program and lunch.

— Jeanne Brown, VP/Administration

TOPIC FOR APRIL: EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Students who start school behind tend to stay behind. Studies show that high quality early education helps close the school readiness gap before it becomes the achievement gap. Unfortunately for many children, access to early education is not possible. In San Diego County alone, more than 20,000 three and four-year-olds are left without access and the opportunity of early education.



At the **April Lunch with League**, League members will have a chance to learn more about early education; its role in decreasing the school readiness and achievement gap; its role in promoting academic and economic success; and a chance to ask leaders in education pertinent questions. Moderated by San Diego County Superintendent Dr. Randolph Ward, the forum will be held **Thursday, April 29, 2010** at Tom Ham's Lighthouse. Mark your calendars and stay tuned for more information in the next Voter. There will also be a short video on early childhood education at the April Unit meetings.

— Ruberta Castro, Education Chair



PARTY! PARTY!



Hats off to all of you for graciously taking the time to celebrate League's 90th Anniversary at the Prado in Balboa Park on February 12! We also tip our chapeau in appreciation to Sherry Bloom for providing a display of historic hats at this gala luncheon! And, thank YOU to everyone for contributing to the financial success of this event. Yes, it was quite the fundraiser! Thank YOU! Thank YOU!

We congratulate the Prado chefs for preparing such a fine meal, and the servers should take a bow for their classy presentation of each course. The historic Prado ballroom lent the right atmosphere as we enjoyed the rich history of both the National and San Diego Leagues. The program kicked off with a rousing song, "Hello Leaguers," followed by a review of the LWVUS history from 1920 to 2010, presented by emcee Anne Hoiberg, Co-President, LWVSD.

The most important question posed of this event was, "How do you shine a light on almost 75 years of educating the public and advocating for League issues?" Amazingly, the eleven presenters snappily covered those LWVSD years of civic accomplishments! And what a history of achievements, as presented by Louise Arnold, Debbie Blum, Joan Dahlin, Anne-Marie Kaukonen, Ramona Salisbury Kiltz, Marjie Larson, Alice McCauley, Nancy McCleary, Kay Ragan, Margaret Stevenson, and Mary Jean Word. Thanks are extended to the presenters, many of whom also "tightened" the script, in addition to the editing by Sylvia Hampton, Anne Hoiberg, and Shirley Larson. Led by Shirley Larson and Jeanette Smith, our singing of four other parodied songs added to the spirit of the day!

A highlight of the celebratory luncheon centered on the presentation by LWVSD Co-President Norma Damashek of the "Making Democracy Work" awards to Jeanne Brown, Diane Coombs, Beryl Flom, Joni Halpern, La Quita Robbins, and Mel Shapiro. These six individuals were honored for their activism in helping to make our community strong, vibrant, and fair.

As we look forward to the next celebration, the 90th Anniversary Committee also thanks members of the Honorary Committee and those of you who made an extra financial contribution to the event. Warmest of all thanks are proffered to Chair Susan Baer who effectively, capably, and intelligently orchestrated the whole event. Without her guidance, the event would not have been such a smashing success! Susan, hats off to you, too!

— Anne Hoiberg
and the other members of the 90th Anniversary Committee:
Jeanne Brown, , Shirley Larson, and Jody Tadder

Looking for a New Office

In July 2010 we will be asked whether we want to renew our office lease for another two years. Sherry Bloom (co-chair of the La Jolla Unit and realtor) and I are heading an ad hoc committee to find out what types of offices are available, to compare them to our present location, and to bargain for a better deal or save money by moving. We will consider cost, space, location, and other variables.

If this interests you or you have information that you could share with us, please contact Jeanne Brown at (619) 857-1807 or jhisten.brown@gmail.com. Thank you.



UNIT MEETINGS - FIRE PROTECTION IN SAN DIEGO COUNTY

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2. Finding: There is a Lack of Designated Funding for a County Fire Department or Consolidated Agency

The LAFCO Reports (See Resources) detail the financial restrictions on the County of San Diego to raise taxes or move existing tax funds to a county fire department. Under Proposition 13 (1978), a 2/3 vote of the electorate is needed to approve a tax to fund consolidated fire services in the county. Proposition 172, (1993) provided state sales tax funds to local jurisdictions, including counties, with which to fund public safety and fire fighting services. Under Board of Supervisors Policy A-126, all these funds are divided among the sheriff, district attorney, and probation departments of the county. The county funds its CSA 135 and other fire-related expenses from the General Fund. The county has commissioned a Deployment Study, due early summer 2010, which may detail funding sources for consolidating fire protections services.



Recommendation:

Designate dedicated and stable revenue sources to fund necessary fire protection services.

3. Finding: Smaller Cities in the County are Merging Fire Services

Since this study began, three East County cities, La Mesa, Lemon Grove, and El Cajon, have voted to consolidate the command of their fire departments. Other cities are discussing merging some or all of their fire services. The San Miguel Fire District has been formed from smaller volunteer fire districts.

Recommendation:

Encourage the merger of fire departments where feasible and support smaller jurisdictions in contracting for fire services.

4. Finding: Rural Fire Protection Services Are Well-Served by the Use of Paid and Volunteer Fire Fighters

Six volunteer fire agencies, two fire protection districts, and seven county service agencies in the rural county have agreed to consolidate. In the consolidation, command is exercised by a paid staff supplemented by trained volunteers. About 500 volunteers now serve in rural fire fighting.

Recommendation:

Maintain the present system of both paid and volunteer staffing.

5. Finding: Fire-Safe Building Construction and Property Maintenance in Fire Danger Areas Are of Major Importance

Experience in the 2003 and 2007 firestorms showed that property in rural areas and in cities and suburban developments had a better chance of surviving the fire when the structures were built to fire-safe standards and landscaping was properly maintained as recommended for fire-prone areas.

Recommendation:

Enforce rules and consolidated standards for fire-safe developments.

6. Finding: Continued Development and Promotion of Educational Programs Should Occur

Education of the public as to its own safety during a wildfire begins before the fire breaks out. All fire agencies have educational programs on safety in the home and in disaster preparedness. There also is web-based and print information on a number of governmental sites operated by the County, the cities, and fire departments and districts and other organizations such as the American Red Cross. These programs provide citizens with valuable and useful information.

Recommendation:

Promote citizen/homeowner fire-safe education programs and encourage understanding and protection of the county's unique ecosystems.

7. Finding: Expand Enrollment in the Reverse 911 System

During the 2007 firestorm, half a million persons were ordered to evacuate. This was the first widespread use of the "Reverse 911" system. Yet some persons did not receive the message via the Reverse 911 system because they had only cell or other phones, not land-lines. For their own protection and safety, citizens should be encouraged to register all their phones with the Reverse 911 system.

Recommendation:

Support residents' cell phone registration in the Mass Notification System (Reverse 911).

— Beryl Flom, V/P Administration

APRIL'S INDEPENDENT UNIT PROJECTS

If you aren't going to Unit Meetings, you are surely missing out on something this 2009-2010 year. The Program Calendar is unique in that the Units use their own ideas and passions to develop a program for one of the months. For the April Unit Meetings will present a variety of projects. If you would like to participate, attend the March Units and brush up on whatever they are doing and join in. Take your pick! Here's what's underway with the various units.

- ◀ **Rancho Bernardo** will report on their monitoring of the Balboa Park's commission to learn more about their challenges and decision making.
- ◀ **Mission Valley** is reading and discussing several biographies of Ayn Rand and her economic philosophy to try to understand this influence on Conservatives and Ultra-Conservatives and determine if it has influence on the attraction of the Tea Party.
- ◀ **University City** is working on types of pre-school programs offered in the San Diego area with visits and meetings in various schools, public and private.
- ◀ **East San Diego** is championing an ACTION program to remove blight from a defunct neighborhood development project .
- ◀ **Southeast San Diego** has developed an ACTION plan to gain expertise in the complicated process of applying for Social Security Disability to present to their community. They also want to have a community meeting to show the video - *Sick Around the World*.
- ◀ **North Shore / Pt. Loma** is researching "Clean Elections" – campaigns without the influence of private donations.
- ◀ **Coronado** is producing a "Bicycle Safety Program" to present to the community at their library – they feel it is so needed in this city by the sea.
- ◀ **Tierrasanta** is reviewing T.R. Reid's book, *The Healing of America*. He's the host narrator of the film, *Sick Around the World*.
- ◀ **La Jolla** is working to better understand what Californians can do to bring about a reform of California's state government with a constitutional convention and the petition process. California seems to be in deadlock from the current system of government.

Check the meeting days and times and visit this month and April.

— Jody Tadder, Unit Coordinator

SAVE THE DATE

San Diego's Earth Day Fair will be held on Sunday April 18, 2010, in Balboa Park from 10:00-5:00 p.m.

Similar to prior years, we will be hosting a booth and handing out information about the League, registering voters, and challenging participants with some type of "green friendly" game (to be decided-all ideas welcome). In 2009 we sponsored a "water challenge." Participants had to distinguish which water was tap, distilled, or filtered water. Mini trees were distributed to the earlier passersby.

We would appreciate your support by volunteering for a two hour shift: (8-10 a.m., 10-12, 12-2, and 2-4 p.m.) All of us who have previously volunteered have enjoyed our experience talking to passersby about the League, registering voters and encouraging them to become more "green" via our hand-outs and "fun" environmental games. We also love walking around and viewing the other exhibits, etc. before/after our shifts.



Why getting to the Earth Day will be easy...

Don't worry if you'd like to volunteer but are reluctant to do so as the transportation issue seems too complex. Shuttle busses will be operating from the County Administration Building to Balboa Park all day + if there's sufficient interest, the League will arrange for some to meet at Mission Bay at different times (the Information Centre at Clairemont Drive/ Mission Bay Drive), and then carpool to the event. So **SAVE THE DATE!!!** The April Voter will provide complete information.

Volunteers should contact Beryl Flom, 858-459-4406 or edflom@sbcglobal.net.

— Jill Elsner

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SAN DIEGO
4901 MORENA BLVD.
BLDG. 100, SUITE 104
SAN DIEGO, CA 92117

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LWVSD Diversity Policy

The LWVSD, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means there should be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League of Women Voters on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, or disability. LWVSD recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making. LWVSD subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that this inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs. LWVSD affirms its commitment to reflecting the diversity of Americans in its Board, staff and programs.



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RESIDENTIAL BROKERAGE
930 Prospect Street
La Jolla, CA 92037-4144
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