



# THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

August 2008

Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

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## VA SECRETARY PEAKE URGED TO STOP BLOCKING VOTER REGISTRATION

### *Voting Rights Groups Encourage Voter Registration at VA Facilities*

Washington, DC—Today, leading voting rights groups called on James B. Peake, Secretary of the U.S. Department of Veterans Affairs (VA), to reverse a recent decision that prohibits VA offices and facilities from offering voter registration and potentially registering tens of thousands of veterans.

American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD), Common Cause, Demos and the League of Women Voters urged Secretary Peake to approve future state requests to allow voter registration at VA agencies and offices. This would be a reversal of his ruling on a May 1, 2008, request by California Secretary of State Debra Bowen that he agree to the designation of VA sites in her state as voter registration agencies, as permitted under the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA). Connecticut Secretary of State Susan Bysiewicz made a similar request on July 2, 2008.

“As a former secretary of state, I know how important it is for our veterans to be able to participate in our democracy,” said Miles Rapoport, president of **Demos** and former Secretary of State of Connecticut. “I urge James Peake to stop blocking voter registration by our vets.”

The national voting rights groups—in conjunction with their grassroots state-based chapters around the country—also sent letters today to chief election officials in each state, calling on them to request that the VA agree to the designation of its offices and facilities in their states as voter registration agencies.

“Designation of VA facilities as voter registration agencies is the single most important action that can be taken to help veterans participate in our nation’s elections,” said Bob Edgar, president of **Common Cause**. “We will be working with state election officials to make this a reality.”

In addition to the refusal to accept designation as a voter registration agency, the Department of Veterans Affairs has recently taken other steps that restrict voter registration opportunities for America’s veterans. On May 5, 2008, the Veterans Health Administration issued Directive 2008-025, prohibiting all voter registration drives at its medical facilities and raising legal barriers to activities by nonpartisan voter registration groups like the League of Women Voters.

“Secretary Peake’s actions are baffling,” according to Mary G. Wilson, president of the **League of Women Voters of the United States**. “Why is he standing in the way of non-partisan voter registration?” she asked. “Obviously, Secretary Peake is getting bad advice on how to help veterans.”

U.S. Senators Feinstein, Kerry and Akaka, and 10 Secretaries of State have separately called on VA Secretary Peake to rescind the new Directive and help veterans register to vote.

(Continued on Page 4)

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Dear Members,

I hope you enjoy reading the featured article from our National League's website Voter Registration at VA Facilities. Not only is this a timely subject during a very lively and interesting Presidential Election year, but it is an example of what our National League does: deal with the issues. This is also a great example of what you can find on our National League website. For those new to League, and as a refresher to current members our National, State and Local websites are a valuable source of information of what League is about and where we are putting our efforts. I encourage all that have access to the internet to check these sites out. In this Voter is information on the websites and how to access them. If you do not have internet access, be sure to read the National, State and Local Publication "The Voter" to get the news.

Having mentioned the Presidential Election above I want to remind you that our Voter Service Activities are starting early this year in August. We need your assistance at our forums in the County and voter registration events. We have a great opportunity to bring new voters into the political process. We also will introduce them our organization as a place to go for information and hopefully as a place to belong. Please check out the Voter Service article in this issue.

Do you like to draw maps? This month there is a meeting at Patty Beyer's home where you can draw a map and submit to the Districting Commission on how you think the city council districts should be laid out in Modesto. Please see announcement in this issue for details. This meeting will be fun and who knows- your map may be the one the Commission recommends!

Enclosed in this Voter is the annual membership survey. Last year we had a great response and I thank all of you who sent them in. I am now asking again for ALL members to send in the survey to let the Board know where your interests are and also what you would like to see our League do in the future. To confidently plan our activities for the communities in our county and for you, we need to know who will assist in making these events happen.

I hope you are enjoying the summer and hope to see you soon!

*-Ellen Meyer, President*

**DIVERSITY POLICY:**

League of Women Voters of Modesto in both its values and practices affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.

# Local Action

1. **West Park** – A letter has been sent to the Board of Supervisors and the Planning Commission to impress EIR issues of project size, farmland, water source, air quality, traffic, public safety, fiscal viability and fiscal liability.
2. **Farmland Mitigation** –The League is now listed as a stakeholder and we will be notified of meetings.
3. **Tivoli Project** - Tivoli Project has been approved with adequate precautions.
4. **Transportation Tax** - consensus meeting on the *Stanislaus County Better Roads/Safe Streets Program* **will be hosted at the home of Alita Roberts August 20, 7 pm. Please call or email Alita for directions and to RSVP.**
5. **STANCOG Blueprint Planning Meetings** – members are encouraged to attend these meetings
6. After consensus on the *Stanislaus County Better Roads/Safe Streets Program*, we would shift the focus of the local action committee on gangs and our current position to **Gang Violence**

## Local Action Announcement

The LWV Stanislaus County Local Action Committee is a watchdog group monitoring local issues, especially land use, affordable housing, elections and gang violence. We meet on a regular basis to discuss issues as they arise and to prepare position statements when appropriate. In the past year we have written many on local issues. We are always looking for new members to share their insights and passions.

*Patty Beyer, Local Action Director*

## LWVSC Board Highlights July 9, 2008

- LWVUS Convention added the following to its statement of Principles:  
*“The League of Women Voters of the United States believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of the balance among the three branches of government; legislative, executive, and judicial.”*
- *Facts for Voters* brochure has been revised. We will work with MJC for printing to distribute in time for the fall election season.
- Approved sending letter to County Supervisors and Planning Commissioners regarding issues of concern for the West Park Development Environment Impact Report.
- Consensus meeting on proposed county transportation tax scheduled for August 20.

*Marie Bairey, Secretary*

## Districting Commission Seeks to Adopt Official Draft Plan for Modesto’s Future

The Modesto Citizens’ Districting Commission has held five meetings to receive input from Modesto communities on how election districts should be determined. Through the meetings and the Commission’s website, [www.drawmodesto.org](http://www.drawmodesto.org), 27 different map suggestions have been submitted.

All maps submitted remain under consideration by the Commission. At its July 8 meeting, the Commission began focusing discussions on four draft plans which can be viewed at <http://www.drawmodesto.org/maps.htm>.

The Commission will hold **at least** four additional meetings to receive public input on the proposed districting draft maps, including the four maps in focus, and it encourages anyone interested to attend. Everyone is invited to share thoughts and opinions on any plans or options, especially views of the four plans reviewed at the July 8 meeting. **The Commission will continue to consider any draft maps that are submitted up until the time they select an official draft districting plan or plans.**

Please join Patty Beyer and Maria Alvarez to review the process and the maps that have been submitted to the commission and perhaps to draw your own map of where YOU think the boundaries might occur! Where? At the home of Patty Beyer on Tuesday, August 12th at 7 pm. **Call or e-mail her to RSVP.**

*Patty Beyer, Local Action Director*

## YOU ARE INVITED!

**Transportation Tax Consensus Meeting  
(Stanislaus County Better Roads/Safe Streets Program)**

**August 20, 7 pm**

**Home of Alita Roberts**

**Call or email her for directions and to RSVP**

**Modesto Districting Informational Meeting**

**August 12, 7 pm**

**Home of Patty Beyer**

**Call or email her for directions and to RSVP**

**Visit the [drawmodesto.org](http://drawmodesto.org) website for background information**

## Membership Renewal

Thank you to those who have remitted their 2008-2009 membership dues. Letters went out in early June and our fiscal year started July 1st.

A gentle reminder: members in arrears will be dropped after 3 months - September 30. We value each and every membership, so if you haven't already done so, please remit your dues for the new fiscal year.

If you cannot find your envelope, please include with your dues the information on the membership form below, and mail it to the League P.O. box.

*Colleen Norby, Membership Director*

**I WANT TO ADD MY VOICE TO  
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THE LEAGUE WOMEN VOTERS  
OF STANISLAUS COUNTY!**

Student Membership \$15 \_\_\_\_\_  
Individual Membership \$60 \_\_\_\_\_  
Household Membership \$90 \_\_\_\_\_

Please contact me with more information:

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

Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Phone (for directory): \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

**MAIL TO**

LWVSC  
P.O. Box E  
Modesto, CA 95352

**Welcome Our  
Newest Member**

**Bryan Justin Marks**

*We look forward to seeing you  
at our events!*

*Colleen Norby, Membership Director*

**Correction**

New member John Heinsius' name was misspelled in last month's Voter.....

## Voter Registration (Continued from Page 1)

“For veterans with disabilities, voter registration opportunities through the VA are essential,” said Jim Dickson, vice-president of **American Association of Persons with Disabilities**. “Veterans with disabilities have a harder time registering to vote through state agencies, so we call on Secretary Peake to help.”

State election officials meet next week at a conference of the National Association of Secretaries of State, which will be held from July 25-28 in Grand Rapids, Michigan. Many of these election officials are expected to discuss voter registration opportunities for veterans.

To read the full text of the letter sent to chief election officials in states, or for more information on voter registration activities related to the Department of Veterans Affairs and the NVRA, please visit [www.demos.org](http://www.demos.org), [www.commoncause.org](http://www.commoncause.org), [www.aapd.com](http://www.aapd.com) or [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

From LWVUS Website

*Sue Chaffee, State and National Director*

## State And National

### National Popular Vote Compact Study (NEW)

Delegates at the LWVUS Convention in Portland last month adopted a fast-track study of the National Popular Vote Compact. Carolie Mullan (TX), former chair of the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee, has been appointed to the 2008-2010 LWVUS Board to chair this study. During calendar planning, local Leagues are urged to save a date in January or February 2009 for a consensus meeting.

### LWVUS Welcomes FOUR New Local Leagues!

(At its pre-Convention Board meeting, the LWVUS recognized four new local Leagues: the LWV of Placer County (CA), the LWV of Muscatine County (IA), the LWV of Greater Haverhill (MA) and the LWV of Blount County (TN). We welcome them to the League family and extend special thanks to the state Leagues of California, Iowa, Massachusetts, and Tennessee for mentoring them through this process.

From LWVUS Website

*Sue Chaffee, State and National Director*

# VOTER SERVICE

In anticipation of an active and exciting Fall Presidential election season, we met in June to begin planning voter service activities. We are going to need your help and if you don't call us, we'll call you! Here's what's planned so far:

## VOTER REGISTRATION:

We will have a League Voter Registration table at the Art & Wine Festival in downtown Modesto on Saturday, August 16<sup>th</sup>. Marsha Waggoner is organizing this registration drive.

We plan to register voters at several Stanislaus County public libraries leading up to the last day to register to vote. We will check with the libraries to pick days and times when they get the most use.

The last day to register to vote is Monday, October 20<sup>th</sup>. Linda Walden will be coordinating volunteers for the Modesto Library table while Susan Novak will coordinate volunteers for the other libraries.

## FORUMS

We have scheduled a forum for the Riverbank City Council race on Tuesday, September 23<sup>rd</sup>. Ellen Dunbar is coordinating this with the Riverbank City Clerk. We will need a League volunteer to moderate and question sort and we will need timers.

We are planning a forum for the Turlock City Council race. Marsha Waggoner will be organizing this forum with help from the Turlock City Clerk. No date is set as of this writing.

## PROS & CONS

New members may ask, "What are these?" Each election season, the state League studies the state ballot measures and prepares both the pros and the cons of each issue. These are published in printed form and are available on the website. Local Leagues are encouraged to present these findings at public gatherings where they can answer questions voters may have about the measures. We are fortunate to have several League members who are excellent at giving these presentations. In addition, Patty Beyer has created a template for a power point presentation that can be used each election season.

Our main presentation is being planned in partnership with Steve Miller at MJC. Amy Wolfe and Patty Beyer will be the chief presenters. Since we expect at least 10 ballot measures, they would be more than willing to have other articulate League members join them on stage.

Contact Patty if you are interested in learning about this important League voter service activity.

## HELP

Yes, we need your help. E-mail or phone Ellen Dunbar, Marsha Wagonner, or Susan Novak.

This is an exciting time to be involved in League. Make the most of it.

*Susan, Ellen, Marsha*

## League Online, a Guide to Local, State, and National Websites

For those who like to use the Internet to gather information, the League of Women Voters offers three separate Web sites to explore: local, state, and national League.

Our local League's web site, which can be found at <http://www.lwvstanislaus.org>, was recently updated to reflect a visual identity that is consistent with the Web site of the League of Women Voters of the United States (LWVUS). Please take a moment to visit and enjoy the new look. While you're there, check out the calendar of events, read the VOTER online, and view meeting minutes and agendas along with other content.

The Web site of the LWVUS, <http://www.lwv.org>, offers a variety of resources, one of which is a special Members section available to League members. To get to the Members section, you will need to sign on with your email address and password. New users should go to <http://www.lwv.org>, then click **Login > Register** to set up access to the Members section.

The League of Women Voters of California (LWVC) also has a Web site at <http://www.lwvc.org>. Like the LWVUS Web site, it also offers League members access to a Members-Only section. If you would like to know how to access this section, please send an email to [wm@lwvstanislaus.org](mailto:wm@lwvstanislaus.org) and we will respond with instructions. (Alternatively, you can send an email message to State League Office at [lwvc@lwvc.org](mailto:lwvc@lwvc.org) with your name and the name of our League and ask how to access the "Members Only" Web site.) Happy surfing!

*Stella Beratlis, Webmaster*

**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.**

**Tear off and send to:  
League of Women Voters of  
Stanislaus County  
LWV Modesto  
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<b>CALENDAR OF EVENTS</b>	
<b>Tuesday, August 12</b>	<b>11:00 am Local Action Committee League Office 720 13th Street, Modesto</b>
<b>Tuesday, August 12</b>	<b>7:00 p.m. Modesto Districting Informational Meeting</b>
<b>Wednesday, August 13</b>	<b>6:00 p.m. Board Meeting League Office 720 13th Street, Modesto</b>
<b>Wednesday August 20</b>	<b>7:00 p.m. Transportation Tax Consensus Meeting</b>
<b>Tuesday, August 26</b>	<b>12:00 Noon Lunch and Learn Appetez Restaurant Roseburg Square, Modesto Speaker: To Be Announced \$11.00 For vegetarian entree, call one day ahead</b>