



THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

November/December 2008

Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

VOL. 59 NO. 5

A Message for the Next President

As we rapidly approach November 4th, I ponder what the new President will do to sort out all these issues concerning us. *The National Voter* this month did what I think to be an excellent job in their "Letter to the New President". My article will be a summation of the National League's ideas for solutions in four main areas: climate change, healthcare, immigration, and the growing inequity between the socioeconomic strata.

In the area of **climate change** we have experienced severe heat, worsening hurricanes, and summer ice caps melting. 1998-2007 was the hottest decade ever and 2007 was the hottest year since record-keeping began. We know that the primary cause of this change is human activity in the form of GHG's, greenhouse gases. Those gases are created by carbon dioxide, which increases the greenhouse effect by trapping the heat in, deforestation, agricultural breakdown of dung emitting increased levels of methane and nitrous oxide, and industrial processing, e.g. coal and oil burning emissions. These GHGs affect health and safety especially in elderly and the poor, who can't cope with extremes. Secondly, the increased heat incubates germs and causes increasing infections. We already have antibiotic-resistant organisms; now more will develop due to the increase in heat on the planet. Security-wise, we will see mass movements of refugees from the extremes of weather and increasing conflicts over water. Money-wise, we will see increases in emergency room visits, where primarily the elderly and the poor go for healthcare. You and I will bear that burden. We will see food and crop losses and increased need for aid in storm and hurricane cleanup. LWV's action plan for climate change solutions includes a decrease in emissions by 20% by 2020, coupled with support of an International Kyoto type agreement. We also need to see federal support for state climate-control regulations. We could use the proceeds from emission allowances to develop new technology, e.g. American cars with emission standards like the Japanese cars.

Healthcare is the next solution focused issue on which LWV has input for our next President. We have 47 million without healthcare coverage. Basic healthcare should include plans that cover not only prevention of disease but also promotion of health, with emphasis on education, primary care, prenatal care and reproductive health, long term care and mental health. Currently, we spend one of every six dollars on healthcare. If we continue to spend at this rate without curbing the healthcare costs, by 2016 we will spend \$4.2 trillion per year. That is 20% of our GNP. Women and children are traditionally the worst served, and that continues. As an industrialized society, we are near the bottom of the list in our infant mortality rate, and our prenatal care record is also abysmal. Most can't afford regular doctor visits and rely on the emergency departments at hospitals for care when in crisis. If we could save the 75% of every healthcare dollar that we spend on chronic illness on prevention of those illnesses, think of the savings! By 2050 chronic diseases alone will cost us six trillion dollars, dollars that could be used more productively. We spend twice as much as other countries at our level of development that belong to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, and they are typically healthier than we are. In the last eight years, medical coverage in the form of the Health Savings Account has helped primarily the wealthy who care pay high out-of-pocket deductibles for their care. Since 1997 the SCHIP, State Children's Health Insurance Program, has provided for six million low income children who are not eligible for Medicaid (called Medical in California.) The extension and expansion of this most helpful coverage, which now reduces the percentage of low income children without healthcare by one third, was vetoed by our current President and extended in its current form for only a short term by Congress.

We need nation-wide affordable accessible healthcare for all with cost containment; dollars need to go to care, not to insurance company coffers. This will reduce costs insured Americans now pay for the uninsured as well as their own costs, no matter how healthy they are. To reduce costs, we need to increase focus on prevention and expand insurance to the uninsured.

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720 13th Street, Modesto
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President's Message

Dear Members,

By the time this *Voter* is received in the mail this election period will be on its last days or over.

This 2008 Election year our League served our county with forums, presentations at Modesto Junior College and retirement communities, and voter registration events. Pros and Cons, Easy Voter, Join League and our new Facts for Voters publications were offered at these events and in all the county libraries. A study and a consensus of County Measure S resulted in our League supporting this measure. Our Smart Voter website has been used by many candidates with the help of our intern Sarah Jamieson. A "Why I Voted" Poster program, with our League logo on it was developed for the MJC campus with Modesto Junior College Civic Engagement Project. Members of the community went to SmartVoter and to our Website to get election information. We definitely have served our community well this year!

An extra special thanks goes to all members who led, assisted, and attended our events. Why extra special?

This 2008 election period started even before 2008. The planning for the February, June, and November voting periods started while we were finishing out Voter Service events of fall 2007!

Many nights our local election events competed for viewers of the Presidential Debates. Yet, all of these events had members working and attending and had large turnouts from the community. Thank goodness for reruns and TIVO!

Our League gained 3 student memberships this year due to our work with young voters.

Our voter registration numbers have increased. As of October 20, we have registered over 300 people in our county!

And lastly, we served our community while the most exhilarating, unique, intense, and long national presidential campaign was running. It took a lot of time and energy to stay current with the twists and turns of the presidential race and the events that have occurred in our United States. I for one am exhausted and looking forward to a movie marathon weekend to help wind down from it all!

Best wishes to all of you for a wonderful, peaceful holiday season and I look forward to seeing you at our Holiday Fling!

-Ellen Meyer, President

DIVERSITY POLICY:

League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County 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.

Voter Services

Voter Registration

Our voter registration drive ended on October 20. League members were at the following Stanislaus County Libraries:

Modesto, 1500 I St from 10 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.
Patterson, 46 North Salado from 2 to 5 p.m.
Salida, 4835 Sisk Rd from 11a.m. to 5 p.m.
Turlock, 550 Minaret Avenue from 12 N to 5 pm.

Many thanks to all the League members who helped with registration at the libraries, the Art and Wine Festival, and the Modesto Home Show.

Forums

Candidate forums were held in Turlock, Riverbank, and Oakdale. All were well attended by voters with excellent questions. Amy Christenson Wolfe represented the League as moderator at Riverbank and Oakdale. Julie Saugstad moderated the forum in Turlock. The League was well represented at each forum. President Ellen Meyer was there to greet candidates and the community.

Pros and Cons of the ballot propositions/initiatives

The pros and cons of the ballot initiative were presented to an enthusiastic audience at MJC on October 15. Presenters were Patty Beyer, Amy Wolfe, and Ellen Dunbar.

Ellen Dunbar, Voter Services Director

Board Highlights

October 8, 2008

- Jim Beyer reviewed 2006-2007 League financial records and found them to be in good order.
- MJC Civic Engagement Project Constitution Day and League sponsored candidate forums in Riverbank, Oakdale and Turlock were well attended and well received. Thanks to volunteers who made these events possible.
- Finance Drive at 81% of goal.
- Latest issue of the *National Voter* identified climate change, health care, immigration and imbalance of wealth as four major issues for the next president and cited suggested actions.

Marie Bairey, Secretary

The Value Of League Membership

The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Thank you for continuing your membership in our local League. We welcome three new members this month.

Those members not renewing by September 30th have been put on inactive status.

Colleen Norby, Membership Director

Finance Drive Off to a Terrific Start!

This year's Finance Drive has gotten off to a terrific start. I would like to extend my sincerest thanks to those donors and members who have made their gifts. As of October 8th we have received \$4,595 to the General Fund, which is 102 percent of this year's goal. In addition, we have received \$1,900 to the Education fund, which is 54 percent of this year's goal. In total, the Finance Drive has thus far generated \$6,495!

For those of you who have not yet made your gift, it is not too late. Look through the stack of mail you have set aside to find the gift envelope. If it has magically disappeared, do not fret! Simply send your gift made payable to the League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County – with the designation to the General Fund or Education Fund in the memo line to:

League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County
PO Box E
Modesto, CA 95352

Again, thank you to those who have donated, and I encourage others to give at a level that is comfortable for you. All money generated goes to support the education and advocacy efforts of your local League!

Amy Christensen Wolfe, Finance Drive Director

Welcome Our Newest Members

Charlene "Sue" Davis, Modesto
Michele McNeil, Turlock
Sarah Jamieson

*We look forward to seeing you
at our events*

I WANT TO ADD MY VOICE TO YOURS BY JOINING 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

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Immigration is the next item for our new President's ears. In 2006, there were 12 million unauthorized immigrants in the United States. Detaining and prosecuting of them would cost \$94 billion. Nearly four percent of the total population is in the country illegally. Of these, twenty-five to forty percent come in legally and outstay visas trying to keep the family units intact. So the current policies aren't working. Of the five million immigrant children, three million have parents who are illegal residents. Millions toil in the underground society with poor wages, dangerous and abusive working conditions, and they won't report crimes for fear of being identified and deported. LWV supports creation of a system for legal entry and a path to legal status, including citizenship for those who pay taxes, learn English, study civics, and meet other relevant criteria. We should strengthen enforcement by fining employers who hire illegal immigrants, and increase tracking of immigrants once they are in America. Immigration reform should support measures to improve the economies of the countries where the illegal immigrants come from, encouraging them to stay in their home countries. One and a half million immigrants bolster our economy by buying goods. Less than 3 percent of unauthorized immigrants are on food stamps and many pay social security and incomes taxes now. Legalizing many will increase taxes paid to both the states and the nation, and will boost our economy.

Lastly, dear new President, LWV would like to see you redefine our **tax system**. It is an unfair system where the wealthy get many shelters for their investments but the middle and lower classes struggle to live and pay taxes. Poverty is on the rise. In 2006, 36.5 million Americans were living in poverty, defined as an income of less than \$20,500 for a family of four. This is an increase from 31.6 million in 2001. The most affected are Hispanics at 21 percent, blacks at 24 percent and children at 17 percent. The gap is widening. Twenty percent of the earners at the top earned 51 percent of the Nation's total household incomes. This is fraying our social order! The first steps toward fairness should be to repeal the Bush tax break for the wealthy and to preserve the estate tax system for the largest inherited estates. Tax benefits for working families should be expanded, including the Earned Income Tax Credit, and adequate federal funding must be ensured to provide mandatory old age, survivors, disability and health insurance.

Sue Chaffee, State and National Director



PROS AND CONS PRESENTATION-A HUGE SUCCESS!

This month our League and The Modesto Civic Engagement Project at Modesto Junior College presented a Pros and Cons presentation on the November 2008 ballot measures. Over 100 students and members of the community attended. Patty Beyer, Amy Christensen-Wolfe and Ellen Dunbar presented the measures well and allowed time for questions and answers. MJC intern Sarah Jamieson and student League member Malorie Michaels assisted with set-up for the event and ensured that League materials were passed out to the audience.

Due to time limitations and the large number of propositions, our presenters covered the "hot topic" measures. Propositions that were covered were our local Measure S- Transportation Tax, Proposition 2 - Standards for Confining Farm Animals, Proposition 4 - Waiting Period and Parental Notification Before Termination of a Minor's Pregnancy, Proposition 5- Nonviolent Drug Offenses, Sentencing, Parole and Rehabilitation, Proposition 6- Police and Law Enforcement Funding, Criminal Penalties and Laws, Proposition 8 - Eliminates Right of Same-Sex Couples to Marry and Proposition 11- Redistricting.

Our Pros and Cons event has now become a tradition at MJC, and we are very fortunate to have this partnership with the Civic Engagement Project. We are also very fortunate to have Patty, Amy, and Ellen to make this event possible. Their time studying the measures and making the power point presentation made this event a huge success.

Ellen Meyer, President

Local Action

The Local Action committee is waiting for the Environmental Impact Report and the Development Agreement before making a decision on the Archway Common Affordable Housing and Re-Development Project that has been proposed by EAH. Although the property is currently located in the county, it would be annexed as part of a larger county island into the City of Modesto.

We welcome new members to our committee. Meetings are held as needed and usually occur on the second Tuesday of each month at the League office. Please call or email Patty Beyer to verify the time of each meeting.

Patty Beyer, Local Action Director

Kids Can't Wait!

The credit advisors are counseling to wait. But some things can't wait. Kids can't wait. They grow up no matter what the economy is doing. Luckily there are some things we can do for our children that don't cost much. One of them is reading aloud, the single most effective way to prepare them for success in school. You can borrow books from your library at no cost. Or from friends. Exchange books with families whose children are at a different stage. Look for low cost, high quality paperbacks. Oh, wait! I can help with that!

The Friends of the Modesto Library's **Book Fair Safari** is November 13-15, 2008 at the Modesto Library, 1500 I Street. New books for children and teens from Scholastic and over 100 other publishers will give you plenty of selections for your family's holiday, birthday, or any-day gifts. And your purchases help fund the Friend's efforts for the library.

If you'd like to help some of the other local not-for-profit agencies like Children's Crisis Center, Family Literacy Program (Stanislaus Literacy Center), Haven Women's Center, Hutton House, Parent Resource Center, Redwood Family Center, Reach Out and Read, Sierra Vista Children & Families Services, and Toys for Tots get more books into the homes of more children, the Friends of the Modesto Library are giving these youth and family-serving agencies space for Wish Lists. These are books they ask the community to buy for them in support of their programs.

Read to your children, no matter what the age. Go to the library. Give books as gifts. Tell your neighbors. Help spread the word: **Kids Can't Wait!**

Anne Britton, Friends of the Modesto Library Book Fair Chairman

booksale@modestolibraryfriends.org
209-996-1531

"Libraries will get you through times of no money better than money will get you through times of no libraries." Anne Herbert. Quoted in The Next Whole Earth Catalog: Access To Tools , ed. Stewart Brand (1980)



A Letter from our Intern

My name is Sarah Jamieson, and I am the Modesto Junior College intern for the League of Women Voters this semester. I am a returning student who has just changed my major to Political Science, and I thought this internship would be a great way to get my feet wet in my new major. It has been two months, almost to the day, since I began my internship, and I have found the time not only rewarding but inspiring as well.

I have spent most of my time with the League in Voter Services and on the Smartvoter Website. I have really enjoyed both. With Voter Services I was able to help at not only the Turlock, but also the Oakdale community forums which were very interesting. I had never been to a forum before, and was so enthralled by the process. It is such a wonderful service that the League puts on for communities. I also have had the opportunity to work with Modesto Junior College and the League on Constitution Day and Pros and Cons on the college campus. Both events were phenomenal and we have registered dozens of students to vote and given them the tools to make informed decisions. That is the side of politics that gets me the most excited and it has been so wonderful to have a hands on role in helping at those events. The Smart Voter Website has also kept me very busy the past two months. I have been sending invitation letters, instructions, and thank you letters to the candidates currently running for office in Stanislaus County. Once the letters all went out, I began updating the website with candidate information. Smartvoter.org is such a valuable resource for our community, and I enjoy working on it.

As you can see, it has been a busy few months with the League, and it is only getting more exciting as Election Day grows near. I am privileged and honored to be a part of the process here locally, and I am very excited about the next portion of the internship.

Sarah Jamieson

Save the Date!
Holiday Fling
December 1, 2008
6:30 p.m.
Speaker: Daryl Moore, on
"Design and the Creative Process
in the Advancement of Our Global Society

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
P.O. Box E
Modesto, CA 95352
RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

Non-Profit
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Permit No. 69

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

{Check Website for Updates}

Tuesday, November 4

Election Day - VOTE!

Tuesday, November 11

11:00 a.m. Local Action Committee
League Office 720 13th Street, Modesto

Wednesday, November 12

6:00 p.m. Board Meeting
League Office 720 13th Street, Modesto

November 13-15

Book Fair Safari
Modesto Library 1500 I St (See page 5 for details)

Monday, December 1

6:30 p.m. Holiday Fling
Speaker Daryl Moore: Design in the Creative Process
Invitation to follow

Tuesday, January 27

12:00 Noon Lunch and Learn Appetez Restaurant
Roseburg Square, Modesto
Speaker: Anthony Cannella, Mayor of Ceres
\$11.00 For vegetarian entree, call one day ahead