



# THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

November/December 2012    Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California    VOL. 61 NO.5

## *Message from our President, Mary Giventer:*

We are coming to the end of a hectic but productive voter service season. Looking back, I am a little in awe of all that we have done. We registered voters at Senior Stride, the CSUS campus, the Turlock Farmer's Market, and at both the Turlock and Modesto libraries, distributing a lot of voter information at each of those events. We held forums for City Council candidates in Turlock, Oakdale and Riverbank. Most exciting, this year for the first time we held a forum for the congressional race. Our forum was the only event in the course of the election where Mr. Denham and Mr. Hernandez appeared together to answer questions. Marie Bairey did an outstanding job managing sometimes-contentious candidates and a frequently partisan crowd. Pros and Cons presentations were made to the Modesto Rotary Club and students at both CSUS and MJC. League positions were advocated at the Farmer's Market and at an Election Expo on the CSUS campus. Thank you so much to everyone who participated in any of these voter service activities. Especially thank you to Ellen Meyer and Marsha Waggoner for coordinating the events. It takes all of us to make this much of an impact on our community!

With the election almost behind us, we can start looking at the LWV California update study of our position on the referendum and initiative process. While eleven statewide ballot measures is not an all time high, it is a tremendous amount for voters to learn about as well as the hours of research required for League member who help with the education process. The November ballot has numerous examples of areas that cry out for reform. For example, Proposition 40 remained on the ballot even after proponents withdrew their support. Propositions 30 and 38 are in direct conflict, putting California schools that both measures argued there are "saving", at even greater risk. Proposition 32 is written to look like it affected both businesses and unions when in reality it would only affect unions. Proposition 31 contains so many different elements it is virtually impossible to determine all of its consequences. This does not even cover the special interests that put their own measures on the ballot (even when it is only one person's special interest, or the role of money in the whole initiative process, or the inflexibility that is built into the initiative process). While this experience is fresh in our minds, it is a great time to launch our study. **Stella Beratlis will be heading up our League's study group. Please call Stella if you would like to participate.**

After all the work we have done this fall, we deserve a party! We just happen to have one scheduled. I hope to see you all at the Holiday Fling!

*Mary Giventer, President*

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COUNTY OFFICERS**

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***Lunch and Learn***

Tom Van Groningen, Board President of Modesto Irrigation District (MID), spoke to Lunch and Learn on October 25th. He discussed the history of MID, the controversial plan to sell water to San Francisco, the advisory committee currently being established, electrical customers subsidizing farmers, Proposition 26 and efforts to conserve energy. MID was established in 1887 and joined with the city and county of San Francisco. Together they have the total right to the Tuolumne River water shed. San Francisco gets about half, MID one quarter and Turlock Irrigation District (TID) the other quarter. MID provides water to farmers and the city of Modesto with an average water usage of 42 million gallons a day during the dry seasons. In 1971, Don Pedro Reservoir was built; 2 million acre feet of water are stored there. This is the core of the conflict for the water sale to San Francisco. The proposal was to sell one percent of the total with the money raised to be used for infrastructure upgrades putting water to more beneficial use. With the upgrades, extra water would be stored rather than spilling it out. Water could also be redirected to other canals. Farmers and others were opposed to this plan and now “we are back to square one”. An advisory committee with seven members is currently being formed to address the issue of water system improvements. The meetings will be open to the public.

The electrical service from MID began in 1923. 20 years later, MID purchased the franchise from PG&E. Electrical accounts include 44% residential, 29% commercial such as stores and restaurants, 22% industrial with Gallo being the largest user, and 5% other, including farmers. The current controversy involves keeping farmers’ irrigation rates low by subsidizing them with money paid by electricity customers. Under

Proposition 26 this credit to the irrigation side may be considered a tax on the electrical side. The practice of subsidizing is currently being looked at in the courts.

During the question and answer period, the subject of alternative energy sources was raised. California is requiring 33% of energy to be green (solar or wind) by 2020. This is vital for our air quality but there is significant cost associated with getting power from solar and wind sources.

In closing, Mr. Van Groningen noted that he will be retiring next year, ending a 20-year career. There has never been a woman on the MID board and he strongly feels that a woman would add a valuable perspective to the board. The filing date will be July-August of next year if you would like to take on this challenge.

*Ruby Hennessey, Lunch and Learn*

## *Voter Service*

Voter Service continued to be very busy with forums for Riverbank, Oakdale and Turlock, and a Congressional Forum at CSUS. We registered voters at the CSUS campus and at the Modesto and Turlock Libraries. Pro and Con Presentations were made at MJC, CSUS, and the Modesto Rotary.

All events were well attended. Many thanks go to all the League volunteers and the AAUW members who assisted in making this fall Voter Service season a great success. Thanks also go to Susan Novak who was responsible for the Smart Voter website this fall, Vanessa Czopek who insured the Easy Voter was distributed to all libraries in Stanislaus County and to our President Mary Giventer who went beyond the call of duty assisting and leading in our Voter Service activities. We were also fortunate for the local print media to publish our activities in their publications and do follow-up articles.

*Ellen Meyer and Marsha Waggoner, Voter Service*

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

- Student Membership \$25  
 Individual Membership \$60  
 Household Membership \$90

Please contact me with more information.

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

Address \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

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

Email \_\_\_\_\_

— Please deliver my *Voter* by E-mail  US mail

MAIL TO

LWVSC

P.O. Box E

Modesto, CA 95352

## *Finance Drive*

Finance Drive nears completion!

Thank you to all of the members and friends of the League of Women Voters who have contributed to our finance drive. Without these contributions, we would be unable to continue the active program we have this year. If you have not yet returned the envelope this is a reminder that we need you. If you have lost the envelope call, 209-525-9343 and we will send you another.

*Ellen Dunbar, Finance Drive*

## *Local Action*

### LAFCO Agricultural Preservation Policy

In September, the Stanislaus Local Agency Formation Commission (LAFCO) approved a farmland preservation policy. This issue has been discussed for years with little concrete action by city, county or regional agencies. The Final Draft of the LAFCO policy states “upon application for a sphere of influence expansion or annexation to a city or special district ... that includes agricultural lands, a Plan for Agricultural Preservation must be provided with the application to LAFCO... The Plan shall specify the method or strategy proposed to minimize the loss of agricultural lands.” As historic watchdogs of land use issues, the League sent a statement to the Modesto Bee supporting LAFCO for taking the lead to develop a policy that sends a clear message regarding farmland preservation and implements procedures to assure our county’s most valued resource does not vanish. This is a long time in coming.

*Marie Bairey, Local Action*

***Welcome new member:***

***Sue Zwalen***

**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.**

**League of Women Voters of Stanislaus County  
P.O. Box E  
Modesto, CA 95352**

***CALENDAR OF EVENTS***

**[\(Check Website for Updates\)](#)**

<b>Monday, December 3</b>	<b>Holiday Fling – Home of Lynn Fenderson</b>
<b>Thursday, January 31, 2013</b>	<b>Lunch and Learn, 12:00 pm, Appetez Restaurant, Garrad Marsh, Modesto Mayor</b>
<b>Thursday, February 28, 2013</b>	<b>Lunch and Learn, 12:00 pm, Appetez Restaurant, Jean Okuye, President Merced County Farm Bureau (first woman president).</b>
<b>Thursday, March 28, 2013</b>	<b>Lunch and Learn 12:00 pm, Appetez Restaurant, Carlos Yamzon, Stanislaus Council of Governments</b>

***Our Voter editor, Patricia Beyer, is relocating out of state this month. Please contact Mary Giventer, President, if you are able to fill this position for the remainder of the 2012-13 year. A template will be provided!***