

The Voter

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MODESTO



October 2003

Vol. 55 No. 10

League Takes Stands on Constitutional Issues

The League of Women Voters of the United States believes in the individual liberties guaranteed by the Constitution of the United States. The League is convinced that individual rights now protected by the Constitution should not be weakened or abridged.

Recently, LWVUS has taken stands on two Constitutional issues. As you know, LWVC Convention 2003 passed resolutions stating our concerns that the Patriot Act and Homeland Security Act (2001) undermine rights and civil liberties. Leagues throughout the country have held informational forums in their communities inviting representatives from the U.S. justice system as well as civil libertarians to explain the acts and answer questions. In July, LWVUS President Kay Maxwell sent letters to U.S. Senators expressing concern

about possible extension of the Acts' sunset and/or expansion. On September 10, President Bush proposed expansion of the Patriot Act's law enforcement powers, and on September 11 Mrs. Maxwell issued a statement urging "Congress to protect our homeland through means that protect our civil liberties rather than chipping away at the basic values for which America stands."

Campaign finance reform has been a high priority for League for many years. Though passage of the Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (2002) was seen as a victory, implementation left much work to be done. On September 8 the U. S. Supreme Court held an extraordinary hearing to consider a first amendment

continued on p. 5

Calendar of Events

Tues., 10/7	Recall Election; Propostions 53 and 54
Wed., 10/8	BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m. LWV office
Fri., 10/17	LOCAL ACTION COMMITTEE 12:00 1608 F Street, Modesto
Mon., 10/20	Voter Registration, 3-8 p.m., Modesto Library
Tues., 10/28	LUNCH AND LEARN 12:00 Appetez George Osner speaks on Land Use Issues
Tues., 11/4	Election Day
Wed.. 11/12	BOARD MEETING 6:00 p.m. LWV Office

President's Message

The state League staff and volunteers can be seen as having at least two functions. The first is to conduct the business of the League - do the legwork and the paper work required of a large organization. Among these are lobbying, doing research and preparing documents (such as the California Voter, Pros and Cons, Easy Reader Guide) as well as overseeing the web site and Smart Voter.

The other function is to support and assist local Leagues. We enjoyed this service first hand at our September Board meeting. Management Training Advisor (MTA) Lois Chaney from Bakersfield joined us for the meeting. She was very complimentary of the way our Board conducts business. She also reminded us of the resources available to us from LWVC. Each board position has a state level counterpart in addition to the MTA who can be contacted when there are questions. These people have many years of League experience and a wealth of information to offer. The LWVC Training Workshop held in four locations in September was another way state League offers information and education to League members.

Because of her many contacts, Lois was able to share some of the exciting things that Leagues are doing in their communities. One of these is a gubernatorial forum co-sponsored by Los Angeles League and Chamber of Commerce October 2. NBC and its affiliates will carry this event. Recent televised national forums have been coordinated by the media. Congrats to LA for getting League back in the mix.

--Marie Bairey

IN THIS ISSUE

Board Highlights.....p. 7	Local Action News.....p. 7
Constitutional Issues.....p. 1	Lunch and Learn.....p. 5
League Forum Replays.....p. 6	President's Message.....p. 2
Librarian Speaks.....p. 3	Smart Voterp. 3

LWV of MODESTO

OFFICERS

President

Marie Bairey 523-0663

1st Vice President

Lynn Kelso 529-3273

2nd Vice President

Julie Saugstad 526-0795

Secretary

Mildred Kinser 523-4222

Treasurer

Betty Ann Vencill 577-1233

DIRECTORS

Voter Service

Linda Walden

Finance Drive

Debbie Kleinfelder

Voter Editor

Susan Cassidy

Public Relations

Susan Novak

State and National Action

Maria Arevalo

Membership

Patty Lundy

OFF-BOARD

Lunch and Learn

Bob Jackson

Webmaster

Stella Beratlis

Local Action

Committee (Myrtle Osner, chair)

Office Manager

Myrtle Osner



Mailing Address

PO Box E, Modesto, CA 95352

Office Address

723 13th Street, Modesto

Telephone

209-524-1698

www.lwvmodesto.org

Smart Voter: A Valuable Resource

Angela Keith and the Smart Voter committee are very busy getting Smart Voter operational for the November 4 election. Whereas in the past the County Elections Department has underwritten Smart Voter, the department is unable to do so because of state and county budget cuts. The League Board agreed that Smart Voter is an important resource to candidates and to voters that we do not want to lose in our county. The Board decided to move forward with Smart Voter using our own resources while continuing to seek financial support for the web site.

Candidates for all contested offices in the county have been invited to enter information about themselves and their stands on issues on the web site. For the first time, we have included issue related questions to be answered on line by candidates for Modesto Mayor, Modesto City Council and Modest City School Board of Education. We will continue to offer polling place information as well as access to voters' ballots specific to their address. The site also offers links to other interesting information related to the election.

Angela will need assistance making follow-up contacts to candidates. Contact her if you can help make a few telephone calls. (521-9388)



Visit the League on the Web

LWV of Modesto
LWV of California
LWV of the U. S.
Smart Voter

www.lwvmodesto.org
www.ca.lwv.org
www.lwv.org
www.smartvoter.org

Librarian Discusses Library Successes, Worries

You can feel the passion behind Vanessa Czopek's words when she speaks about our library system.

Her subject at the August Lunch and Learn covered library outreach services through the 13 library branches in our county. "Virtual Reference" has just come on line. But books are still the bedrock of all libraries; our last year had a circulation of two million. That doesn't count the wealth of other services: children's story hours, literacy classes, videos, computer access, special collections, and on and on.

More troubling to her and all of us is the USA Patriot Act (and its possible successor, Patriot Act II). Ms. Czopek spent most of her time detailing what its effects will be.

The Act gives "unchecked authority and sweeping unconstitutional powers" to domestic and international law enforcement. Just by claiming an investigation is related to terrorism, the FBI may get a search warrant to seize records of ANY person. No suspicion of criminal activity is required; no probable cause has to be shown.

Most frightening of all, the target person cannot be notified that they are under investigation. This has a chilling effect on citizens' right to read when government agents can spy on their reading habits. Our right to privacy is being invaded. OUR RIGHT TO PRIVACY IS ESSENTIAL TO THE EXERCISE OF FREE SPEECH AND FREE THOUGHT.

"All kinds of Americans are now waking up to the fact that the Patriot Act gives the government the right to put American citizens in prison indefinitely, without knowing the charges against them, without access to an attorney, without the right to confront their accusers, without trial." Closing this section of her talk, Vanessa Czopek quoted John F. Kennedy: "Let our patriotism be reflected in the creation of confidence rather than crusades of suspicion."

Vanessa also explained that internet filtering in public libraries is now a requirement for libraries to receive federal funds under the CHILDREN'S INTERNET PROTECTION ACT. The new law requires filtering software to block obscene or pornographic images in all computers (including those of the staff). Here's the rub: Filtering software companies refuse to disclose what sites they are blocking. Hate sites are NOT BLOCKED. But we do know that filtering blocks a significant amount of constitutionally protected speech.

Stanislaus County now filters computers in the children's department and children under 12 may not use the internet without a parent or guardian present.

continued on p. 5

October Lunch and Learn

Tuesday, October 28

12:00 at Appetez Restaurant

\$11.00 for Chef's entree

(Call restaurant one day in advance for special requests)



Guest Speaker:

George Osner

Land Use Issues and Village One

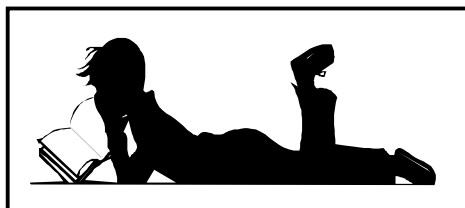
LIBRARIAN SPEAKS

continued from p.4

Stanislaus County was the first in the state to pass the one-eighth cent sales tax exclusively for libraries, and it brought our library system back from (almost) the grave. It was thus a model for much of the state. Our League worked hard for its passage and will probably need to do so again unless the state passes something that will avoid the five-year "sunset" provision, which will come up again in 2005 for renewal.

The League has a strong position supporting full funding for libraries of excellent quality.

--Myrtle Osner



CONSTITUTIONAL ISSUES

continued from p. 1

challenge: did Congress violate the Constitution by imposing tough new campaign-finance restrictions? LVWUS filed a "friend of the court" brief that asks the Court to uphold the legislation.

Both issues have significant political and Constitutional ramifications. Leagues at all levels will be monitoring these issues and voicing support for protection of Constitutional rights and liberties.

Yes!

I want to add my voice to yours by joining the
League of Women Voters of Modesto.

- ___ Student membership \$15
- ___ Individual Membership \$50
- ___ Household Membership \$75
- ___ Please contact me with more information

Name _____

Address _____

Phone (for the directory) _____ E-mail _____

Mail to: P.O. Box E, Modesto, CA 95352

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.

League Candidate Forums Replay on Local Access Cable TV

Modesto City Council (Original replay dates were in September--see below for more)

Modesto Board of Education Wednesday, October 1st @ 3 PM
Friday, October 3rd @ 7 PM

Modesto Mayor Saturday, October 4th @ 7 PM
Monday, October 6th @ 3 PM

After October 6, they will play in rotation with a 4th forum (not ours) as follows:

Fridays and Saturdays at 7 PM

Mondays and Wednesdays at 3 PM

Viewing: Access Modesto is available on Channel 7 or 8 on Comcast (Modesto & Oakdale)* and
Channel 19 on Charter Cable (rest of Stanislaus County)

**Comcast is in the middle of converting/upgrading subscriber systems. If you have been
upgraded, it's on channel 7; if you have not had the work done yet, it's channel 8.*

Finance Drive Update

Our League’s annual Finance Drive is underway. All of you, as well as members of the community, have received the donor appeal letter and many have already responded. The success of the finance drive is more critical this year than ever. In addition to the League’s general operating expenses, this year we may have to rely on local resources for the Smart Voter website. (See Smart Voter article.) Recall that our dues increase covers little more than our payments to LWVC and LWVUS.

Some of you may remember from the Annual Meeting when I suggested a way members can do a little extra for League. If you are an election-day poll worker and can spare the stipend you receive for that service, make an additional donation to the League’s Education Fund (tax deductible) for Smart Voter. Remember there are three elections where poll workers will be needed (October, November and March and a possible runoff). You will be giving vital assistance to the election procedures and to our League.

--Marie Bairey

News Briefs

LOCAL ACTION UPDATE

The Local Action Committee is developing statements in support of the Measures L, M and N (Measure M advisory votes) in the November 4 election.

We will oppose Measure K (City Council term limits).

We will not make a statement on Measure I (change in date for run-off elections), because the LWVC position favors instant run-off rather than separate elections.

BOARD HIGHLIGHTS

September 10, 2003

The Board welcomed guest Lois Chaney, LWVC Board Management Training Advisor.

Authorized the Local Action Committee to develop a statement opposing term limits for city council.

Despite funding problems, we will complete the Smart Voter web page for the Nov. 4 election, and will continue to seek funds for Smart Voter.

VOTER REGISTRATION SUCCESS

League volunteers registered 53 voters on September 22 at the Modesto Library!

League will be registering voters again for the November election, and volunteers are needed to staff the Voter Registration table at the Modesto Library from 3 to 8 p.m. on October 20. Call Linda Walden at 577-0570.