

The Voter

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MODESTO



September 2004

Vol. 56 No. 8

Modesto City Water System to be Upgraded

A recent full page editorial in the Modesto Bee called attention to the fact that California is running out of water.

Two days later Peter Cowles, Modesto's Public Works Director, spoke to the League of Women Voters of big changes ahead for our water system.

For some years, all new development has been required to install water meters, and the development paid for them. But they haven't yet been read. In the near future, meters will be required by state law all over the city, though installing them in old neighborhoods remains a vexing and expensive problem. So we will have a big incentive to save water when that comes about, since everybody will be equal when everybody has a meter.

Along with this change, the MID and the City will be expanding the water treatment plant on the Tuolumne River

that already serves much of Modesto. Water pressure is falling on high-use water days and much of the infrastructure needs rebuilding. Plus, many wells are closed due to contamination (both

natural and man made). A water system must be built for peak use, not average, since water pressure immediately falls when the system hits over its peak delivery.

continued on p. 8

Calendar of Events

Wed., 9/8	BOARD MEETING 6:30 P.M. LWV office
Fri., 9/10	LOCAL ACTION COMMITTEE 12:00 LWV office, 720 13th Street, Modesto (note change of date)
Sat., 9/18	LWVC Central Valley Regional Workshop 9:30 am to 3:30 pm, Merced College (see August Voter for registration form)
Tues., 9/28	LUNCH AND LEARN Appetiz Restaurant 12:00 (see p. 9)
Wed., 10/6	BOARD MEETING 6:30 P.M. LWV office (note change of date)
Mon., 10/11	Candidate Forum <i>volunteers needed</i> 7-8:30 P.M. Tenth Street Place (see p. 9)
Thurs., 10/14	Candidate Forum <i>volunteers needed</i> 7-8:30 P.M. Tenth Street Place (see p. 9)

President's Message

Thank you to all for the strong response to our dues renewal drive. If you have not sent in your dues, please do not hesitate -- they are delinquent as of September 30th.

We would like to welcome Amy Christensen as our new membership director. Thank you, Amy, for your willingness to step in for Kate Weiner, whose firstborn is due election week. Thank you for all your hard work, Kate, and for your help in bringing Amy on board!

And thank you, Margie Lipsky, for bringing us Lunch and Learn speakers who represent very timely issues. Lunch and Learn this summer has focused on air and water. What has been proposed by the city of Modesto for local residents may soon become a reality state-wide: a water meter bill has passed the Senate and moved onto the Assembly. If passed, it will result in "considerable costs to urban water suppliers and ultimately to their customers, presumably offset, wholly or partially, by savings from water conservation." The recent news report that California might be experiencing a climate shift that may result in long-term consequences to our water supply adds to the concern for local water resources planning.

Last month we asked for help with researching SB999, which would have expanded and re-organized the San Joaquin Air Pollution Control District Board membership. We thank all who provided input, but we now know that the bill has been dropped by its author, Senator Machado.

We are rapidly approaching the November election and encourage all members to become actively involved in getting their friends, neighbors and acquaintances registered and to the polls. Remember: "democracy is not a spectator sport."

--Patty Lundy

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.

LWV of MODESTO

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LWV EDUCATION POSITION

The LWV Modesto Education Update Study Committee will meet in September to begin preparation for all-member meetings to be held in November. To help **you** prepare to join the discussion on this issue, we are printing the third in a series of articles on California school funding from EdSource: How California Ranks: The state's expenditures for K-12 education. The article appears on the following four pages.

More information on education issues in California is available at the EdSource website, www.edsource.org.

The new LWVM directory is being printed and can be picked up at any League meeting or from Myrtle Osner. Call 524-1698 and leave a message and she will hang it on her front door hook.

**I want to add my voice to yours by joining the
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LOCAL ACTION COMMITTEE

The Modesto Local Action Committee is working on the Measure M/Robertson Road ballot measure and the Yosemite Community College District bond measure, as well as following the Promenade development in north Modesto.

The committee usually meets at noon on the third Friday of the month at the LWV office, 723 13th Street. *The September meeting will be held on Sept. 10 (the second Friday).*

for content of this page and the following three, see
www.edsource.org/pdf/RankingsFinal03.pdf

Modesto water system *continued from p. 1*

The present treatment plant was built with the Modesto Irrigation System and the city as partners in the 1980's and the expansion is planned for around 2008. The "footprint" of the second plant is already in place. Complicating this picture is the differential rate structure started when the city bought the old Del Este water system. The previous Council refused to raise rates, which were intended to be raised gradually. So to pay for the system, residents are in for a big shock in their water bills. The two systems have differing rates, which need in fairness to be equalized. Further complications: Modesto City water system also serves the communities of Waterford, Hickman, Ceres, Grayson, Salida, and the Del Rio area, all part of the old Del Este system.

Plus, storm drains in the summer carry more water than they do in winter, unbelievable as it may seem, pretty much all due to overwatering those nice green lawns. A third complication is that Modesto wells are a Superfund site for cleanup due to a dry cleaning solvent plume infecting a number of wells. The city is involved in litigation over this problem.

According to Proposition 218, a protest hearing is required in order to raise rates. THIS IS NOT A VOTE. All customers will get a notice and must return their notice to be counted. League members will recall that every state proposition has had "unintended consequences" and this is one of those things. Raising water rates and equalizing them over the entire city seems a no-brainer, but you never know how the City Council will vote.

--Myrtle Osner

Board Highlights

August 11, 2004

- ✓ The Board accepted the resignation of Kate Weiner as Membership Chair and then welcomed Amy Christensen as her replacement.
- ✓ A motion passed to support Measure M, the inclusion of the Robertson Road sewer extension.
- ✓ It was moved that we participate in Smart Voter without the custom ballot lookup feature.
- ✓ The October Board meeting was changed from October 13 to October 6 in order that members may assist at a Riverbank candidates night on the 13th.
- ✓ A letter was sent to the Modesto Bee requesting that they publish the Top Five Risks to Voters (published in the July *Voter*)

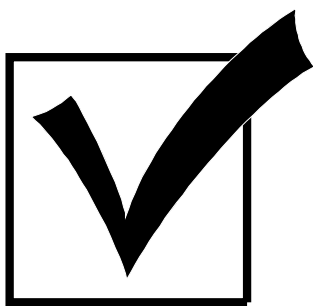
--Mildred Kinser

Join us for the September Lunch and Learn

Tuesday, September 28 12:00 pm

Appetiz Restaurant \$11

Contact restaurant for special dietary requests



Guest Speaker:

Lee Lundrigan

Stanislaus County Clerk Recorder and Deputy Registrar of Voters

Please join us for a demonstration of the county's newly approved voting equipment and a discussion of HAVA funds.

Fall Forum calendar approved

The Board has approved 4 forums for this November's election, to be held over two evenings.

On Monday, October 11th, from 7:00 - 8:30 P.M. League will host a double forum, featuring the run-off election for Chair 2 of the Stanislaus County Board of Supervisors and the race for 25th Assembly District. Each forum will be allotted 45 minutes.

The second evening of forums will be held Thursday, October 14th from 7:00 - 8:30 P.M. Using the same format, we will host candidates from both the 18th and 19th Congressional Districts, allotting 45 minutes to each race.

All forums will be held in the Board Chambers at Tenth Street Place.

Voter Service is also planning a registration drive the last Saturday morning before the voter registration deadline. It will be held Saturday morning, October 16th at the Modesto Farmer's Market. This will be in addition to our traditional last-day-to-register event at the Modesto Library on Monday, October 18th.

Thanks to those who have responded to our early call for volunteers, but as always, many volunteers are needed. Please contact Linda Walden at waldenjacobson@sbcglobal.net or call 577-0570 and leave a message.

--Linda Walden

The League of Women Voters®, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

League of Women Voters of Modesto

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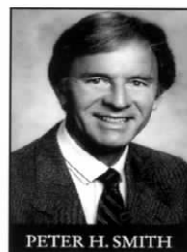
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