



THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF STANISLAUS COUNTY

April 2014

Serving the Citizens of Stanislaus County, California

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President's Message

I write this having just returned from the "Non-Profits Talking Taxes" workshop with Kim Klein today. It was a thought provoking and inspiring day. Kim was accompanied by Melissa Breach, the Executive Director of LWVC, and it was wonderful to have their experience and expertise available to us locally. We had stimulating round table discussions with the engaged leaders of non-profit groups in our area who attended.

I am still processing all I heard today, but three main points stand out: 1) We need to open discussions of what is the common good and how is the common good best paid for; 2) We need to listen carefully to the opinions of others, especially those who disagree with us, and delve deeper into why they hold those opinions; and 3) We need to recognize the strength of the non-profit community when we work together. I am not sure what will develop as we move forward, but Kim gave us the tools we need and, as League members, we are uniquely qualified to undertake this task. I want to sincerely thank LWVC for enabling us to hold this workshop in Stanislaus County.

Mary Giventer, Elected President

Nominating Committee Preparing Slate

The LWVSC Nominating Committee is meeting to prepare a slate to fill vacancies on the 2014-15 Board. Several current Board members have stated a willingness to continue in their current positions. Several other vacancies remain. If you are interested in serving on the Board or have questions about the positions, contact Amy Wolfe (amy@agsafe.org) or Marie Bairey (gbandmnb@sbcglobal.net).

We are also seeking interested non-Board members to serve on the Nominating Committee. According to our Bylaws, nominations from the floor, with the consent of the nominee, will be accepted at the Annual Meeting.

Call for Volunteers:

Earth Day, Saturday, April 19th

Volunteer to staff the League's booth at Earth Day in Graceda Park! It is a great way to get in some sunshine and enjoy this fun event, garner visibility for the Stanislaus County LWV, and promote some of the League's environmental positions.

Contact Karrie if you can help staff.

karriebullock@gmail.com

Voter Services: Ballot Measures and Propositions

On the League of Women Voters Education Fund website there are some excellent resources for the upcoming ballot measures: <http://cavotes.org/vote/ballot-measures> This link provides an overview of the League's position on Proposition 41 and Prop 42.

Ellen Meyer, Voter Services

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***Gang Violence: Not a Pretty Picture
Lunch and Learn, February 2014***

At February's Lunch and Learn, Assistant District Attorney/Gang Unit Prosecutor Tom Brennan painted a vivid and bleak picture of gang violence in our area. With videos, photos and stories behind recent gang-related trials, Mr. Brennan introduced us to the criminals, especially young offenders, and their victims. Although he makes efforts to prevent youthful offenders from committing violent crimes, once they "cross over," he takes a hard line to prosecute them. These include 14 – 16 year old murderers who have been tried as adults. He takes pride in the work he does to remove violent offenders from our streets. Mr. Brennan described the influence of prison-based gangs on local criminal activity, the Norteno/Sureno conflicts, kids willing to "do what it takes to be a gang member" and the gang history in some families. The scenarios suggest that some kids don't have a chance.

Mr. Brennan said prevention and intervention strategies, unfortunately, usually don't work – unless a young, low-level offender will commit to bettering himself. Because of peer pressure, the allure of gang life is often more attractive to young people than are opportunities offered by numerous intervention strategies including school. With 10,000 Norteno gang members in Stanislaus County, the gang message is everywhere - delivered through self-made CDs and videos and, of course, graffiti. Gang graffiti often leads to more violence when it is sprayed over by a rival gang, an act of disrespect.

Marie Bairey, Secretary

January Lunch and Learn with Clerk-Recorder Lee Lundrigan

Lee Lundrigan has been Stanislaus County's Clerk-Recorder for 12 years and is running for reelection in the June gubernatorial primary along with other county elected officials. She feels that the responsibility of elected officials is to serve. Recognizing that candidates' qualifications vary, she praised League for its role in elections, especially providing opportunities for voters to listen to and question candidates.

Ms. Lundrigan talked about the three distinct functions of her department. The Clerk responsibilities include Commissioner of Civil Marriage and elections, the latter taking 80% of her time. The increase of electronics in the election process presents challenges; her goals are to guarantee voters anonymous paper ballots regardless of electronic innovations and to protect voters' personal privacy. Currently in Stanislaus County, mail-in ballots are 70% of votes cast which requires specific procedures to validate signatures. The job of the Recorder is essentially to make information public. Once transactions are complete and recorded, they are public – a practice unique to America.

She also gave some historical explanations for current practices. Tuesday elections date back to 1845 when voters had to go to the county seat – a one-day horse ride away – and to avoid conflict with religious services; November is after harvest and before winter! Local elections are on a different schedule so as not to be buried by federal or state electoral hype or a tendency to pattern or party voting.

In response to questions about polling places, she explained the complexity of preparing multi- district ballots and the changing jurisdictions after each census. She cautioned against registering to vote with paid registrants who may want to "help" complete the form and the potential of handing over ID information to a "stranger". Take the form and mail it in! She opposes Instant Runoff because it requires a computer, not paper ballot, and the first place candidate may not win. All mail-in elections are considered by the Supervisors, but she feels it should ultimately be decided by voters. In conclusion, she encouraged families who receive duplicate sample ballots to "Go Green" by receiving all but one on-line – saving \$1 to \$2 each! Go to Clerk-Recorder website for more information.

Marie Bairey, Secretary

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW WITH SENATOR CANNELLA

Several members of the Merced and Stanislaus County Leagues jointly interviewed State Senator Anthony Cannella in his 12th District Modesto office on February 28, 2014. Mary Giventer, Ellen Dunbar and Hanna Renning represented the Stanislaus League. A full report was submitted to the California League on March 3. What follows are highlights of the questions and answers from the interview.

League of Women Voters California (LWVC), (MONEY IN POLITICS): “Will you help see that effective measures are passed in the Assembly/Senate to require disclosure of the sources of all contributions in California campaigns and to make campaign disclosure more transparent and user-friendly in general?”

Senator Cannella (SC): Yes. Senator Cannella supported SB 52 (Mark Leno) in 2013. He plans to support SB 27 (Correa) this session. (PLEASE NOTE: After the interview, on March 10, 2014, Senator Cannella’s Chief of Staff, Dillon Gibbons, spoke to Hanna Renning, a member of the interview panel, to explain that Senator Cannella’s support for SB27 was now uncertain. The senator still supports the legislation as originally written, but not in its amended form, after the State Assembly voted to make it an “urgency bill.” Senator Cannella thinks that those affected should have more time to make adjustments.)

LWVC : (EDUCATION) “The LCFF (Local Control Funding Formula) is rolling out over the next few years. Implementation strategies are being drafted and there will inevitably be some adjustments. What do you see as the ongoing role of the legislature? Are there programs you feel should remain categorical? Are there areas you deem as off limits for spending supplemental and concentration funds?”

SC: Senator Cannella is a big proponent of the LCFF. In his opinion it is needed to eventually equalize the discrepancies between “rich” and “poor” schools districts and give all students access to a good education. He considers it the most advanced reform in this area since Proposition 98. While the LCFF is a state formula to fund school budgets, it will give control of how to spend the grants to local school boards, with the input and support of a community committee. The great challenge will be how to involve the parents of English learners.

Senator Cannella does see the need for some categoricals, such as special education and (perhaps) transportation. He also indicated that he would advocate for some agricultural program funding.

LWVC: California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA, LWVC Question) “Do you think specific projects should be exempted from parts or all of the California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) process, or have special rules set for them? If so, how would you determine which projects should receive such treatment?”

SC: Senator Cannella likes the CEQA process and thinks that no aspect should be exempted. However, legislation should be formulated to prevent lawsuits from being filed at every step of the CEQA review of a project so that things could move along better. Lawsuits should address issues, not be used as delaying devices. There should be some flexibility, with special rules for some large-scale public projects (so long as these do not favor the big guys). An example is the CEQA/Salinas River Cannella-sponsored bill SB 1398 which would streamline the CEQA process to allow Salinas River cleanup for flood protection.

LWCV: (GROUNDWATER, Local League Question) “What is the role of the state in setting policy for managing groundwater? What are the roles of counties and irrigation districts?”

SC: “We have to change, before groundwater is depleted”. National and state policies do not address recharging of aquifers. Senator Cannella favors a statewide water policy, which he says has not really existed for fifty years. He would like a better definition of the state’s role in enforcing this policy.

(Interview continued Next Page)

Cannella-sponsored bill SB927 (Water Bond), which focuses on storage, delta conveyance, and safe drinking water for disadvantaged communities, is presently moving through the legislative process. It is slated for the November 2014 ballot.

Final comment: We must deal with the water issue now. We feed the world, and world peace depends on food being available to all.

LWVC (MAJOR ISSUES AND PRIORITIES) “What other major issues do you think the legislature must deal with in 2014? What are your personal priorities?”

SC: UC Merced Medical School should be in place as soon as possible to prevent a shortage of physicians needed to treat the increased numbers of patients resulting from the Affordable Care Act.

-Transparency: All public agencies should operate under Tax ID numbers for accountability in spending. This would prevent situations like that of the Parks Service from developing.

-SB 920 (200 Year Flood Protection) is jointly authored with Senator Galgiani. This bill will allow counties to make a finding of “adequate progress” if the agency is in the planning stages of meeting 200 year flood protection.

Reported by Hanna Renning, State & National Action

CALENDAR OF EVENTS (Check Website for Updates)	
Thursday, March 27th 12:00pm	Lunch & Learn: Dr. Charles Allen “American Health Care System: Physicians advocate for the single payer” Jacobs Fine Dining, 2501 McHenry Ave, Modesto. Cost is \$13
Thursday, March 27th 6:00pm	AAUW and LWV will honor local women leaders. Attorney Solange Altman will be keynote speaker. CSUS Mary Stuart Rogers Gateway Building 130C. RSVP 634-3592 or 632-4692.
Saturday, April 19th 10:00am-4:00pm	Earth Day: Graceda Park, Modesto. LWVSC will have booth in park.
Wednesday, April 9 6:30pm	Board meeting Marie Bairey’s house. Call for directions 523-0663
Thursday, April 24th 12:00pm	Lunch & Learn: Ginger Johnson, Assistant Superintendent Modesto City Schools, “Status of Core Curriculum” Jacobs Fine Dining, 2501 McHenry Ave., Modesto. Cost is \$13

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.