



# The VOTER

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®  
OF SONOMA COUNTY**

**Volume 14, No 8**

**October 2009**

## **Our Children and the State Budget**

**Saturday, October 24  
10:30 AM until Noon  
Santa Rosa Central Library  
Third and E Street  
Santa Rosa**

A Panel on the Effect of the California Budget on the Education, Health, Housing, and Well-being of Sonoma County Children.

Panelists will represent local schools, county agencies, and non-profit organizations.

There will be time for questions at the end of the presentations.



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



I encourage you to learn about what the League is doing at the National and State levels as well as the local level. If you have access to the Internet, there are two important websites where you can learn more about the League and where you can sign up for email updates to give you the latest in League action and policy:

California (LWVC): [www.ca.lwv.org](http://www.ca.lwv.org)

United States (LWVUS): [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org)

Many of you know that I send out a monthly email to remind you of the League events that were publicized in the monthly VOTER. If you don't use email and want a telephone reminder, please call me at 537-1207 and I will put you on our telephone contact list.

For financial reasons, the League of Women Voters of California no longer publishes a VOTER. All LWVC news is distributed over the Internet and by email. Therefore, in this newsletter we will summarize important information from the website and sometimes reprint an article.

You will continue to get a VOTER from the League of Women Voters of the United States every other month.

If you have suggestions for articles for our local VOTER, please let me know. We want you all to be well informed.

*Chilele Gummer, President*

## LWVC UPDATE

The League of Women Voters of California is closely watching the growing support for constitutional reform. Based on existing positions, the League can support many specific reforms that might be included. Among these positions are support for:

- An indirect initiative procedure
- A simple majority vote by the public or the governing body to adopt, repeal

or change a revenue or finance measure

- Some public financing to political parties, candidates, and ballot measures and some public financing to candidates for state office through an "income tax check-off" system and direct government appropriations
- Elimination or extension of term limits (under an LWVUS position)

*Chilele Gummer, President LWVUS*

## PETALUMA UNIT

On Thursday, September 17, the Petaluma Unit met in the Basin Street Properties community room at 109 C Street at the corner of 1st Street. Guests at the meeting were Marjorie Helm and Abraham Solar, coordinators of el Dia de los Muertos that began nine years ago in Petaluma.

This year the event will begin on Sunday, October 11, at the Petaluma Arts Center and continue to November 2. Over 70 locations in Petaluma will display altars and art in honor of el Dia de los Muertos. Partners in the event are Santa Rosa Junior College, Hospice and the Public Library.

El Dia de los Muertos is a time to remember and honor those who have died. The Hispanic community celebrates and uses humor or irony to show respect for the dead. The event is also a bridge between the Hispanic and non-Hispanic communities and an excellent way to mingle and learn to communicate across cultures. Solar explained that the easiest way to bridge the diversity issue is to first get to know each other and include/invite people to participate. To assign a task and say "do this" will not accomplish the goal of inclusion. To learn more about el Dia de los Muertos, please check the following web site [www.PetalumaArtsCouncil.org](http://www.PetalumaArtsCouncil.org).

The Petaluma Unit next meets on Thursday, October 15, from 3:30 pm to 5:00 pm in the Basin Street community room at 109 C Street at the corner of 1st Street. No topic has been set yet, but something interesting always turns up.

*Rosalie Gilmore*

## THANK YOU - THANK YOU

We are grateful to the following people for their generous donations to the League. As you may know our dues do not cover all the expenses of running the local League. From each single member's dues of \$60 (or \$40 for limited income), \$29.20 goes to National League, \$22.00 goes to State League, and \$1.00 goes to Bay Area League. This leaves \$7.80 per member (or a \$12.20 loss per limited income member) for all our local volunteer projects. To continue our work and be able to offer membership to all who wish to join, we must rely on your financial gifts to balance our budget.

### EDUCATION FUND

Sandy Benson  
 Ellen Brosbe  
 George & Lymonda Castleberry  
 Corol Ann Cary  
 Bob & Phyllis Clement  
 Jack & Marsha Dupre  
 Susan Gorin  
 Dorothea Lyman  
 Anita Lytle  
 Edith Mendez  
 Catherine Quibell  
 Janet Randall  
 Nancy & Willard Richards  
 Daphne Smith  
 Patricia Spicer  
 Phyllis Stanley  
 Irene & Roger Stewart

### OPERATING FUND

Carol Adams  
 Anne-Therese Ageson  
 Larz & Glenice Anderson  
 Sandy Benson  
 Ellen Brosbe  
 Lymona & George Castleberry  
 Myrtle Cox  
 Joan Dickerson  
 Jack & Marsha Dupré  
 Stanley Gold  
 Susan Gorin  
 Greta Goulden  
 Elisabeth & Bob Hawthorne  
 Amy Howder-Thompson  
 Lynda Hungerford  
 Elizabeth Keefauver  
 Louisa Leavitt  
 Ardath Lee

Nancy Lewis  
 Anita Lytle  
 Hilda Mansfield  
 Margaret Millner  
 Maurine Olson  
 Gretchen Paradis  
 Alice Richardson  
 Sukie & Natalie  
 Robb-Wilder  
 Debra Schneider  
 Jean Schulz  
 Ethel & Stu Schy  
 Daphne Smith  
 Muriel Smith  
 Irene Stewart  
 Judith Temko  
 Priscilla & Joe Vivio  
 Carleen Watts

### COMMUNITY EVENT

Planned Parenthood forum "Are Our Reproductive Rights Under Attack"?  
 Thursday, November 6, 5:30-7:30 PM,  
 Sonoma Mountain Village Event Center,  
 1100 Valley House Drive, Rohnert Park.  
 Admission is free. For more information call  
 or email Sue Bunker at 795-3550, Ext119  
 or sue@codding.com.

### *I love the League because. . .*

it is highly respected. It is supportive of work done under LWV. The LWVSC is a warm, friendly group of people. The League is a powerful organization that makes a difference in a lot of areas. It is a vehicle for change. It is truly democratic. It is open to ideas and suggestions.

*Ann Berens*

**The League of Women Voters  
of Sonoma County**

555 Fifth St., Suite 300 O  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401  
707-546-5943

[league@lwvsonoma.org](mailto:league@lwvsonoma.org)  
<http://www.lwvsonoma.org/>

See CONTACT US page to email Directors

Directors on the Executive Committee

Chlele Gummer, President  
Alice Richardson, VP Administration  
Lynda Hungerford, VOTER Editor  
Willard Richards, Secretary  
Ethel Schy, Membership

Directors

Elisabeth Hawthorne, Program Co-Chair  
Susannah Likins, Treasurer  
Anita Lytle, Voter Service Co-chair  
Gloria Norton, at large  
Nancy Richards, Program Co-chair  
Muriel Smith, Voter Service Co-chair

## BOARD BRIEFS

At its September 3, 2009 meeting, the Board discussed advertising events of other organizations in our emails to the membership and in The VOTER. The League asks other organizations to advertise our events—should we reciprocate? It was decided to continue to send out emails to the LWVSC membership sparingly—once or twice a month. The purpose of each email should be to announce a League event or to describe important League business. The question of whether or not to include information about events sponsored by other organizations in these emails was tabled.

The Board endorsed having articles in The VOTER that would list events of interest to the community and would provide a contact for more information. These events would not be listed in the calendar on the back page of The VOTER.

The Board decided to support at the \$35 level the Bill McKibben lecture on climate change to be given October 2 in the Jackson Theater of the Sonoma Country Day School.

Treasurer Susannah Likins reported that \$900 of tickets have been sold for the theater party fundraiser so far. \$500 of this will go to the 6th Street Playhouse. The date was incorrect in the calendar of the September issue of The VOTER, but was correct in the article.

Program Co-Chair Nancy Richards handed out a flier for the September 14 general meeting and discussed options for October and November.

Membership Chair Ethel Schy discussed the possibility of an event in the open space of the Upton Building on Saturday, November 7 for new and prospective members.

Voters Service Chair Anita Lytle reported that Voters Service is in a lull now. There are only four ballots in the county for the election this November. It was recommended we hold a candidate's forum for the Cotati recall election in November.

It is planned to send the membership roster to the printers in late September.

*Willard Richards, Secretary*

## BOOK GROUP

League members and the public are invited to join the book group at 10:30 AM, Thursday, October 15, to select the books for 2010. The group regularly meets on the third Thursday of the month in the conference room immediately opposite the elevator on the third floor of 555 Fifth Street, Santa Rosa.

The book for November 19, 2009 is Jay Winik's *New York Times* Best Seller *April 1865: The Month that Saved America*.

If you have questions about the group, please call or send me a message.

*Lynda Hungerford*

[lh@sonic.net](mailto:lh@sonic.net)

539-5770

## VOTER SERVICE

One of the responsibilities of Sonoma County's Registrar of Voters Department is to ensure that voter registration forms are available throughout the county. Each year the county contracts with the League to keep voter registration boxes filled. Distributing these forms supports the League's mission by encouraging voter registration and voting. In addition, it contributes a significant amount to our budget.

But who does this work? We have an active and dedicated group of members who keep libraries, city offices, post offices, high schools, and some businesses stocked, especially before elections.

These unsung heroes and heroines are to be honored and thanked for their service: Jane Ernsberger, Donna Roper, Susan Clark, Jim and Kay Kline, Elaine Book, Pat Anton, Diane Graner, Les Bennett, Nancy Wildins, Lynda Hungerford, Janie Hawker, Rosalind Morino, Corol Ann Cary, Lynn Camhi, Marian Jones, Carol Adams, and Eliza Meyn. Joining us this year are Gretchen Paradis, Dana Vivier and Andrea English.

Many thanks to all of you for a job well done.

Voter Service committee welcomes you to join us in our activities. We welcome your ideas, energy and support. Members are needed now and especially as we prepare for events before the primary elections next June.

Join us! We meet the second Thursday of the month at 10:00 AM. Questions? Please contact me at [alytle@sonic.net](mailto:alytle@sonic.net) or 544-1633 or Muriel Smith at [murielinca@sbcglobal.net](mailto:murielinca@sbcglobal.net) or 576-7791.

*Anita Lytle, Voter Service*

**Annual Christmas Party  
and Silent Auction  
Sunday, December 6, 2009  
Save the Date!**

## FAIR ELECTIONS ACT IS FIRST STEP FROM ABYSS



[A letter from LWVC President Janis Hirohama to the **Sacramento Bee** and published Saturday, August 22, 2009]

Recent polls tell us that the Legislature's and governor's approval ratings are at record lows, but we don't need surveys to tell us that California has increasingly become a state that fails to represent the will of our people. We see it every day in our crumbling infrastructure, our failing schools and our packed emergency rooms.

And now Sacramento has passed a budget that will put the California Dream further out of reach for a large swath of Californians.

With the nation facing its deepest recession in decades, it was inevitable that our state would be forced to make painful choices to balance the budget. But the budget passed by the Legislature and signed by the governor is nothing short of disastrous, with average Californians left to shoulder most of the burden.

We've been handed a budget of cuts, borrowing and accounting gimmicks. This latest budget will decimate our safety net by making massive cuts to vitally important health and human services programs, and our public schools and colleges – the building blocks of California's golden age of prosperity – will be gutted. We've mortgaged our future.

An antiquated requirement for a two-thirds supermajority vote in the Legislature to pass a budget is partially responsible for bringing California to this point. This requirement – which only two other states have – allows a small minority of lawmakers to dictate the terms of the debate. It leads to budget gridlock. And it gives special interests the ability to co-opt the public interest by influencing just a small fraction of legislators.

But this broken budget process is merely a symptom of a broader problem. We need change in Sacramento.

The League of Women Voters, one of the state's oldest government reform organizations, has long advocated eliminating the outdated two-thirds vote requirement. And we will continue to champion sensible reforms such as the California Fair Elections Act, which will appear on the June

2010 ballot to reduce the influence of the special interests that use money to buy power in Sacramento.

Our current campaign finance system forces even the most well-intentioned elected officials to spend far too much of their time raising money from wealthy private donors and corporate interests, to the detriment of good public policy. At the conclusion of the legislative session this August – the very same time the fate of hundreds of bills will be decided in Sacramento – the money-raising frenzy will again kick into high gear.

If anything positive can come from this most recent budget fiasco, it's the growing awareness by Californians of the need for structural reform in the way our government operates.

Californians know the current campaign finance system doesn't have enough safeguards against the outsize influence of special interests, and the dysfunctional budget just passed in Sacramento gives us all the more reason to do something about it. We must start by passing the California Fair Elections Act in June 2010.

The California Fair Elections Act is based on the simple notion that elected officials should be accountable to the voters, not donors. Authored by Sen. Loni Hancock, D-Oakland, and signed by Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger, the initiative would establish a voluntary pilot project that allows candidates running for California secretary of state in 2014 and 2018 to qualify for public financing if they agree to strict spending prohibitions and can show they have a broad base of support by raising a large number of \$5 contributions.

The program would be funded primarily by fees on lobbyists, lobbying firms and lobbyist employers, with no taxpayer dollars going to candidates.

The California Fair Elections Act represents the kind of change our state needs and voters want. It is an important first step toward breaking the toxic tie between campaign cash and public policy.

Ultimately, by implementing a fair elections system we can help ensure that California gets a government made up of public-spirited lawmakers who are looking out for the interests of their constituents rather than the interests of their donors – in short, the government that California deserves.

## NEW MEMBER PROFILE

A new member to the Sonoma County League, LOLLY CHRISTIANSEN, was born in Seattle, Washington. As a child, she lived briefly in Boulder City, Nevada before moving to Southern California. Lolly worked for a cargo airline company where she met her husband, an airline pilot.

In 1949 the family moved to San Mateo, where they lived for over 50 years. During that time, Lolly kept busy with involvement in her children's schools and helping at the polls on election days. She also volunteered for over 20 years with the American Field Service, holding positions as chapter president and treasurer. She then went on to work for the travel department, making sure that students connected to their families inbound and to their proper flights outbound.

As a long-time member of the San Mateo League, she volunteered for League activities including helping at forums, mailing newsletters and literature, manning the phones in the office, and being on call for whatever was needed.

Lolly, now a widow, has two daughters and a son. Both daughters live in Sonoma County, and Lolly moved to Santa Rosa several years ago to be closer to them. She also has a dog that keeps her busy.

Welcome back, Lolly.

*Muriel Smith, Membership Committee*

## OPEN HOUSE, HOLD THE DATE

When: Saturday, November 7, 2009

Time: 2:00 to 4:00 PM

Where: League Office, 555 5<sup>th</sup> Street  
Suite 300

Who: Recent and Long Time Members, also Prospective Members, Neighbors and Friends

What: All about LWVSC and you—your interests and our activities while meeting the Board and each other in our new location.

Light refreshments will be served.

Please contact me for more information.

*Ethel Schy, Membership Chair*  
579-1488, [ethels@sonic.net](mailto:ethels@sonic.net)

### DIRECTORY UPDATE

#### NEW NATIONAL MEMBERS

Sara Schomp  
Sebastopol

Gale deLong  
Santa Rosa

#### CHANGES

Amy Howder-Thompson  
Santa Rosa 95403

Gretchen Paradis  
Petaluma

Eve Roberson  
New telephone number

Contact information has been deleted from this Internet version of The VOTER to preserve privacy.



There's something special in your own backyard.

Be a part of it!  
Become a member.  
Become a volunteer.  
For Membership call Renee @579-4452, #273  
To Volunteer call Kristi @579-4452, #271

or visit [www.SchulzMuseum.org](http://www.SchulzMuseum.org)  
click on "Membership or Volunteers."



HURRY TO THE MUSEUM AND REMEMBER WHY YOU LOVE PEANUTS!



### The League of Women Voters® of Sonoma County Membership Form

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_

Zip \_\_\_\_\_ Telephone \_\_\_\_\_

Fax \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

I am interested in the following areas:

Program \_\_\_\_\_ Membership \_\_\_\_\_

Speakers Bureau \_\_\_\_\_ Social Policy \_\_\_\_\_

Natural Resources \_\_\_\_\_ Voters Service \_\_\_\_\_

Newsletter \_\_\_\_\_ Fundraising \_\_\_\_\_

Cable TV \_\_\_\_\_ Smart Voter \_\_\_\_\_

Community Outreach \_\_\_\_\_ Website \_\_\_\_\_

Yes, I want to join the League of Women Voters. Enclosed is my check for dues. (\$60.00 for individual annual membership, \$90.00 for household, and \$40.00 for limited income. The membership year is July 1 to June 30.) Please mail check to LWV Sonoma County, 555 Fifth St., Suite 300 O, Santa Rosa, CA 95401. Thank you.

The League of Women Voters  
of Sonoma County  
555 Fifth Street, Suite 300 O  
Santa Rosa, CA 95401

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The VOTER, a publication of The League of Women Voters® of Sonoma County, is published monthly except during the summer, i.e. ten regular issues per year. The deadline is the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month preceding the issue month.

## OCTOBER 2009 CALENDAR

*Unless otherwise noted, meetings are open to the public.*

*The third floor conference room is opposite the elevator*

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Place</b>	<b>Description</b>
Thursday, Oct. 1	10 AM to noon	League Office, 555 Fifth St, Third Floor Conference Room	Board Meeting. League members are welcome. Others by invitation.
Thursday, Oct. 8	10:00 AM	League Office, 555 Fifth St, Third Floor Conference Room	Voter Service Meeting, page 5
Friday, Oct 9	10 AM to noon	League Office, 555 Fifth St, Third Floor Conference Room	Juvenile Justice Interest Group Meeting
Thursday, Oct. 15	10:30 AM to noon	League Office, 555 Fifth St, Third Floor Conference Room	Book Group (Select books for 2010), page 4
Thursday Oct. 15	1 to 3 PM	League Office, 555 Fifth St, Third Floor Conference Room	Membership Committee Meeting
Thursday, Oct. 15	3:30 to 5:30 PM	Basin City Community Room, 109 C Street, Petaluma	Petaluma Unit Meeting, page 2
Thursday, Oct. 22	10:00 AM	League Office, 555 Fifth St, Third Floor Conference Room	Action/Advocacy Meeting
<b>Saturday, Oct. 24</b>	<b>10:15 am to noon</b>	<b>Santa Rosa Central Library, Third and E Street, Santa Rosa</b>	<b>Public Forum: Our Children and the State Budget, page 1</b>
<b>Saturday, Nov. 7</b>	<b>2 to 4 PM</b>	<b>League Office, 555 Fifth St, Third Floor Conference Room</b>	<b>Membership Open House</b>

Check out the League website: [www.lwvsonoma.org](http://www.lwvsonoma.org) for current dates and times for meetings and for back issues of The VOTER.