

Valley Voter

League of Women Voters
Livermore-Amador Valley

February 2006

Join us for **GOOD FOOD,**
GREAT CONVERSATION, and

EVERYTHING YOU'VE WANTED TO KNOW ABOUT FUNDING INEQUITIES IN OUR LOCAL SCHOOL DISTRICTS

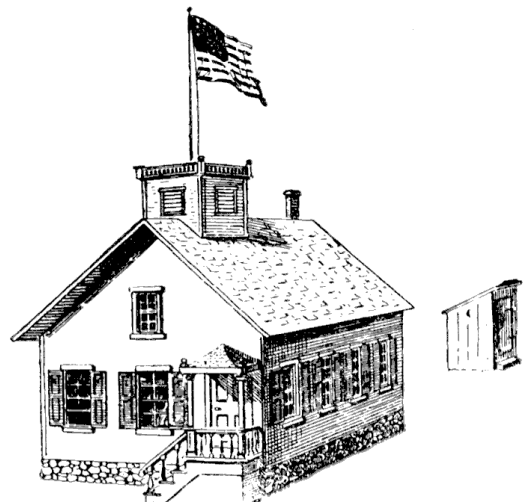
The Local Education Finance Committee is studying the Dublin, Livermore, and Pleasanton School Districts' finance budgets and the effects they have on local programs. Join us for an overall view of the budgets and discussion on how we can better understand the districts' significant differences in funding. We're eager to hear your ideas on this very important issue.

FRIDAY, FEBRUARY 24
United Christian Church
1886 College Avenue (at M St.),
Livermore

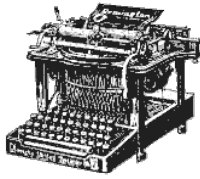
Doors open at 11:30 a.m., lunch at noon. Consensus meeting begins at 12:40 p.m. Menu includes Chicken Crepes, Fantasy Rice, Salad, and a Scrumptious Dessert. Linda Harding, Caterer. Cost: \$15.

To reserve lunch, please send a check made to
LWV-LAV BEFORE Feb. 20

TO: Chuck Hazen
720 Adams Avenue
Livermore CA 94550
Phone: 447-7823



President's Message



Thanks to Pat Mann's hard work, we will be submitting our "Meeting the Challenge" documentation to the League of Women Voters California in the near future. The primary requirement to meet the challenge is to increase membership by 5% over the previous year. We now have 79 members and have reached that goal.

Vivian Thorson and her committee have been working hard and meeting frequently to scope out our local study of Local Education Finance. Please read her article elsewhere in the *Voter* and plan to attend the unit meeting later this month.

The Nominating Committee got an early start this year, and I greatly appreciate Audrey Lovell's willingness to chair this very important committee. Our League can only continue to function if we have an active board. I encourage you to take the opportunity to be a member of the board when one of the members of the Nominating Committee calls you.

Please pay special attention to the announcement about Sunshine Week. Openness in government is essential. Take advantage of the opportunity on March 17 to learn more about the Brown Act and other legislation meant to ensure openness.

If you find when you read the interview with Assemblyman Guy Houston that you would like to learn more about the League's position on redistricting, you can go to www.ca.lwv.org and click on "Redistricting".

Next month you will be reading about the results of the Energy Study directed so ably by Julice Winter and her committee. We are especially glad that two of our new members took a very active part in the presentation of the study.

I look forward to seeing you at the many activities available through the League in the coming months.

Barbara Hempill

Attorney General Bill Lockyer Will Speak at Sunshine Week Forum

Attorney General Bill Lockyer will be the keynote speaker at a county-wide "Sunshine Week" forum on transparency in government and a citizen's right to know.

The forum will be held on **Friday, March 17** at the San Lorenzo Village Community Hall, 377 Paseo Grande, from 9 a.m. to 2 p.m. Elected and appointed officials will be invited, as well as city clerks and staff members who work with boards and commissions.

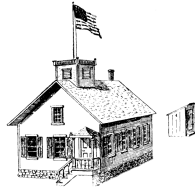
The LWV Alameda County Council (the seven Leagues in Alameda County) was one of only 14 Leagues in the U.S. to receive funding from the LWVUS Education Fund for presenting an event to focus on the Brown Act, the California Public Records Act, and the Freedom of Information Act. These laws were enacted to assure the public's access to information and processes within governmental offices and agencies.

The first session will provide an overview of "open government" laws, what citizens can reasonably expect of officials, and what are some of the problems. The second session will address how boards and commissions can conduct sensitive business and still meet the transparency requirements of the Brown Act and other "sunshine" laws.

Attorney General Lockyer will speak at the luncheon and answer questions. For more information and/or to RSVP, contact Nancy at lwvea@aol.com

Local Education Finance Study

Why is school funding in our three local districts so different? How did it get that way?



The Education Finance Committee will hold a unit meeting on the local finances of the Dublin, Livermore, and Pleasanton school districts on Friday, February 24, at the United Christian Church in Livermore.

We will explain the history behind differences in funding in the three districts, explain the budgets, and discuss the challenges that each district faces. Discussion and consensus questions will follow.

Come at 11:30 am for a social hour, followed by a catered lunch at noon. The unit meeting will start at 12:40 pm. Linda Harding, our caterer, will supply a delicious buffet of chicken crepes, rice pilaf, salad, and a special dessert. See page 1 for details on registration.

Please join us to explore this important issue.

Vivian Thorson

Reproductive Freedom Day

Speak out for reproductive freedom on Wednesday, March 29. The California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom, of which the League is a member, will be cosponsoring this program at the Sacramento Convention Center. Fees, which include lunch, are \$45 or \$25 for students. The meeting is from 9:00 – 4:30 pm. This is an opportunity to educate your legislators, caucus with women's health advocates from all over California, protect women's health rights, and learn about emerging issues. For a registration form, contact Barbara Hempill, 846-9739.

Nominating Committee

Our Nominating Committee, chaired by Audrey Lovell, has begun actively seeking members to fill offices that will become vacant in June. You are encouraged to enjoy the rewards of taking an active part in the operation of our League. The other members of the committee are Elva Cooper, Chuck Hazen, Dolores Bengtson, and Virginia McFann. When one of them calls, we hope you will say "Yes."

Barbara Hempill

EdSource Forum

School Accountability & Funding: Can California Get It Right? **Friday, March 17** at the Fremont Marriott. Check-in 8:00 am. Program 9:00 – 3:00 p.m. \$60 for LWV members (fee includes program, info packet, continental breakfast and lunch). Early bird special! Register by February 17 and pay only \$50. For more information and online registration, go to www.edsource.org or call (650) 917-9482. Barbara Hempill has a form if you don't have a computer, 846-9739.

Calendar

February 24, Local Unit Study on Education Finance, United Christian Church, 1886 College Ave., Livermore. Social at 11:30 am., lunch at 12, unit meeting 12:40 pm.

March 6, Board Meeting, 7 pm. Rathjens'.

March 17, Sunshine Week Forum, San Lorenzo Village Community Hall, 377 Paseo Grande, 9-2 pm.

March 17, EdSource Forum, Fremont Marriott Hotel, 9-3 pm.

March 29, Reproductive Freedom Day, Sacramento Convention Center.

February Board Briefs

- Heard a report from Chuck Hazen on the progress of the Nominating Committee.
- Received the Energy Study consensus, to be discussed next month.
- Discussed the Local Education Study consensus questions.
- Heard Elteen Stone and Julice Winter report on Bay Area League Day.
- Received results of Legislative Interview with Assemblyman Houston.
- Decided that there will be no By-Laws changes this year.
- Approved a donation of \$300 to Smart Voter.

Ann Rathjen



WHO'S WHO IN THE LEAGUE

- President, Barbara Hempill
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CA Bill Status Report: League-Supported Legislation

The Governor signed the following:

AB 1285 Children and Family issues – LA County will use funds to retain employees in state-supported child care centers where most children receive subsidized services.

SB 644 Reproductive Choices – Requires a pharmacist to fill lawful prescriptions unless certain circumstances hold.

SB 316 Voting Rights – Requires state agencies to include a notice in any document mailed by the agency offering voter registration.

The Governor vetoed the following:

SB 2 Health Care – Requires Managed Risk Medical Insurance Board to provide a “Healthy Families/MediCal Workplace Notice.”

SB 469 Initiative and Referendum Process – Requires an initiative, referendum or recall petition to contain a printed notice of whether it is being circulated by a paid circulator or a volunteer.

AB 168 State and Local Finances – Establishes the California Tax Expenditure Accountability Act.

SB 680 Transportation – Authorizes Santa Clara Valley Transit Authority to impose a \$5.00 annual vehicle registration fee to fund congestion management projects.

SB 105 Voting Rights – Addresses when a vote for a qualified candidate is counted.

AB 1168 Water – Requires Dept. of Health Services to identify potential contaminants and sources when reviewing an application for a desalination project.

Legislative Interview

Barbara Hempill, Vivian Thorson, and Pat Mann talked with Assemblyman Guy Houston February 4 for our annual state legislative interview. Excerpts of the interview follow.

California continues to face a gap between revenues and state expenditures. Would you choose to cut state spending, raise taxes, or generate revenue by floating state G.O. or Revenue Bond Issues?

I would not raise taxes, but I wouldn't cut them either. I would hold the line on spending and generate more revenue through bonds. We currently have an improving economy with \$5 billion more coming in from taxes than anticipated. With more income we could use the extra money to close gaps and reduce the debt. The Governor has recommended increasing education funding with some of this money. Adjustments should be limited to the increased cost of living. We have long-overdue infrastructure needs, so I'd want to look at General Obligation bonds for infrastructure. We could use revenue bonds to construct "hot" lanes where single-occupancy vehicles pay with a transponder to use the carpool lane.

If we increase spending and cut taxes, we may be setting ourselves up for an explosion should revenues decrease in the future. When I look around, I see real estate going down as well as car sales. That represents a loss of sales tax. In an election year legislators want to keep the electorate happy.

What should the legislature do to ensure that all Californians have access to health care?

I don't know. Everybody has access now by using the emergency rooms. Health care is tough. I don't see any winners. The state has tried to do more services for children. We as a society expect a Cadillac, and we can't have that.

Would you support a legislative effort to place a proposal on the ballot to vest authority for redistricting in an independent commission? What specific provisions would you like to see in such a proposal?

Yes, I'd support an initiative. I think the last one failed because the Governor wanted the districts to be changed before the next census. I think his idea of using judges would be OK after the next census. They need to have certain guidelines and emphasize certain areas. I think that too many people on a commission would be bad. I think redistricting would help our system greatly, and it could be done fairly. It would make the races for office more competitive, and it would encourage more moderates to participate and win. The closer the legislators get to the process, the worse it is. I think it's a high priority.

What are the major issues that you see the legislature must deal with in 2006? What are your personal priorities?

Transportation and a bond issue to pay for improvements such as I-580 traffic flow, bringing BART to Livermore, and improvements to highway 84 should be emphasized this year. The major issue for the legislature as a whole is the bonds. It took the disaster in New Orleans to show us that infrastructure is important. The state used to spend 10% to 11% on infrastructure, but it spends less than 1% now. Even Southern California realizes that levees in the Delta are important.

Take Action!

Want to become involved in LWV Legislative Action? You can do this from home, it takes little time, and it can make a big difference. For California issues, click on Action Alerts at www.ca.lwv.org/lwvonly (scroll down). For National Issues, click on www.lwv.org.

Pat Mann 447-3672



**League of Women Voters
Livermore-Amador Valley**
P.O. Box 702
Livermore, CA 94551-0702
(925) 443-VOTE

<http://www.geocities.com.lwvlav/newsletterindex.html>

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.

The League is open to all U.S. citizens, men and women, age 18 or older. Annual dues are \$55 for one person, \$80 for two people in one household. By becoming a member of the Livermore-Amador Valley League, one also becomes a member of the Bay Area, California, and National Leagues.

Please mail this form with your check, payable to the League of Women Voters of Livermore-Amador Valley, to LWV-LAV, P.O. Box 702, Livermore, CA 94551.

Name: _____ Telephone: _____

Address: _____

Email: _____