



Santa Cruz VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®
OF SANTA CRUZ COUNTY

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In this Issue

<i>President's Message</i> -----	1
<i>Voter Registration Opportunity</i> -----	1
<i>Dues are Due</i> -----	2
<i>Voter Service Report</i> -----	2
<i>Taking Back Democracy</i> -----	3
<i>Annual Meeting Report</i> ---	6

Calendar

Tuesday, July 12, 2016
 10 a.m. - noon
 LWVSCC Board Meeting
 Santa Cruz County Bank
 720 Front Street, Santa Cruz 95060

Summer Voter Registration Opportunity!

National Nights Out on August 2 are community events sponsored by law enforcement to foster positive relationships with communities. There will be many venues across the county in Scotts Valley, Capitola, Aptos, and Watsonville with fun family activities. The League plans to have voter registration tables at these local events. If you would like to help register at one of these community events, please contact one of our Voter Service co-chairs: Dottie Fry at 831-688-9234 (email: fryfrydl@comcast.net) or Sue Becker at 831-462-4160 (email: suebecker108@sbcglobal.net).

President's Message



I look forward to another exciting year working with members of our League of Women Voters and doing community outreach. The programs we have co-sponsored with other nonpartisan groups this year have been very successful, and the speakers both informative and engrossing. If you are able to participate, please do so.

Otherwise, get value from your League membership by reading our excellent VOTER, checking out our local and national websites, and viewing the videos that are posted. As Earnest Hemingway wrote, "Living is getting your money's worth", which applies to your membership in the League of Women Voters. If you have not already done so, renew your membership right away and support our causes

—Barbara Lewis, President LWVSCC

Editor's note: Many of our recent programs have been recorded on video and are available for viewing online. Links to the videos can be found at lwvsc.org/videos. Articles reporting on the programs can be found in our VOTER archives online at lwvsc.org/voter.

Dues are Due

This is sure to be an exciting election cycle with many interesting choices that will affect our community. With your support, the League will continue to be active in registering and educating voters for the November elections. Throughout the year, LWVSCC presents programs to inform members and the community about local, state, and national issues.

Your dues and participation are vital to helping our League thrive. Membership renewal forms for 2016/17 fiscal year were sent in May. Thanks to those who have returned them.

If you haven't done so already, it's not too late. Be sure to send in your form and dues payment by August to be included in the roster.

Can't find your renewal form? Send in your dues check, payable to LWVSCC (League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County) to LWVSCC, P.O. Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010. Dues are the same as last year: \$65 for individual members, \$100 for two members in a household. Be sure to include your contact information.

Want to make an additional tax-deductible donation to our Education Fund? Send a separate check payable to LWV Education Fund.

Want to get the edge on your voting choices in November? Check out the League's new voter info website!



Year-end Voter Service Report June 2016

In keeping with the League's main mission of educating voters, our voter service team had a productive year that involved many of our members. Thank you to our faithful team of volunteers who helped with voter registration and with two candidate forums.

Last fall our voter service team and the county elections office collaborated on voter registration at local colleges and libraries. Seven League members did voter registration at Cabrillo College and UCSC: Paul Fleischman, Karen Smith, Laura Grossman, Kathy Donovan, Dottie Speidel, Sue Becker, and Dottie Fry. Four on our team registered voters at four different libraries on National Voter Registration Day in September, 2015: Morgan Rankin, Joan Hebert, Sue Becker and Dottie Fry.

In November 2015 our League and the county elections office participated in a successful voter outreach effort at a forum sponsored by the Immigration Action Group. This local group provides support and information for immigrants on immigration policies, legal aid, and pathways to citizenship. The voter service team was able to provide important registration and election information.

In May 2016, five of us participated in senior outreach to those in retirement homes and care facilities: Eve Roberson, Denise Lucy, Morgan Rankin, Sue Becker and Dottie Fry.

In preparation for the June 7 Primary, the League provided a moderator, time keeper and two question sorters for two candidate forums. The first, on April 26, 2016, sponsored by the Valley Women's club, was a forum for those candidates running for Supervisor in the Fifth district. Pros and Cons on the Cabrillo College bond, Measure Q, were presented, as well as information on the county library bond, Measure S. Moderator Stephanie Harlan kept it all going smoothly, with the help of Dee Takemoto, time keeper, and question sorters Sue Becker and Dottie Fry. On May 24 Dinah Sapia moderated a forum for candidates running in the 20th Congressional District, sponsored by the Women's International League for Peace and Freedom. Again, Dee Takemoto kept the time while Sue and Dottie sorted the many questions that came from a packed house.

The voter service team is proud to have provided information for voters to make informed decisions in the June Primary election.

—Sue Becker and Dottie Fry, Voter Service co-chairs

Taking Back Democracy

Ending the influence of dark money in politics

In May Helen Hutchison, president of the LWV of California (LWVC) and Helen Grieco, Northern California Common Cause organizer, spoke to the League about the influence and challenges of money in politics. Both the League and Common Cause advocate for issues consistent with their goals and positions, and neither organization endorses candidates.

The Supreme Court's January 2010 split-decision in the Citizens United case re-shaped our political landscape, declaring that the right of a corporation to express itself by making campaign expenditures trumps any concerns about preventing corruption. In making this decision, the court counted on the Federal Election Commission to safeguard the public from misuse of funds and corruption. A subsequent lower court ruling based on Citizens United found limits on contributions to Political Action Committees (PACs) to be unconstitutional, paving the way for the emergence of the billionaire-fueled super PACs.

Helen Hutchison framed the discussion by explaining that the League studies issues from all sides, then develops policy positions based on member consensus. The positions become our basis for action. The national League position on money in politics was first adopted after the Watergate scandal in 1974, then was updated in 1982 and again this year. LWVC's position on Campaign Financing was adopted in 1973 and updated in 1976.

The [National League position](#) supports public financing of elections, reasonable spending limits, enhanced enforcement of campaign finance laws, abolishing super PACs, and restrictions on direct donations and bundling by lobbyists. In order to protect the democratic process until public financing of elections is enacted, the League calls for limiting spending among the different entities seeking to influence elections.

The California League's [position on Campaign Financing](#) supports full disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures for

candidates and advocates of ballot measures, with effective monitoring and enforcement. It also supports measures which will broaden the base of campaign financing, including some public financing. Both state and national League positions emphasize the need to enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office. Hutchison said, "We want to make sure that candidates have the ability to run a good campaign and that as many different candidates can participate as possible." In the current climate where getting elected means big spending on campaigns, when people consider running for local offices, they don't feel like they can run if they are not in touch with big money. This limits the diversity of the candidate pool.



Helen Hutchison

Nationally, the League's focus is on the Federal Elections Commission (FEC), the organization in charge of enforcing laws about money in politics. With three Republican and three Democratic commissioners, votes split on party lines. Since a majority is needed to carry a vote, decision making is completely gridlocked, and the FEC has become dysfunctional, unable to act on even the most blatant complaints.

National League advocates for US Senate Bill 2611, the Federal Election Administration Act of 2016, sponsored by Senator Tom Udall, who introduced it into the Senate in March. S 2611 replaces the FEC with a new Federal Election Administration to be run by five commissioners, two from each party, with the fifth, as chair, a non-partisan appointee selected by a non-partisan panel of judges, former law enforcement officials, and people with election law experience. Decisions would be made by a majority vote of three or more. Getting the bill passed won't be easy. National may ask some local Leagues to advocate for it.

In California, the current focus is on modernizing Cal-Access, the online filing system that politicians and campaigns use when filing their campaign finance information. Created sixteen years ago, the system is now so out-of-date that when it crashes, which it does with some regularity (especially on the day of a filing deadline), there's only one person in the nation that can fix it.

California Senate Bill 1349, the Cal-Access Reform Bill, would allocate \$13 million to replace the outdated system. Improvements would make the system more flexible and give it the ability to update the data input forms to collect data in a usable format. Modernization would allow integration of city, county, and state-level data and tracking of aggregate contributions so voters can see who the top contributors are. "This is really basic." Hutchison emphasized, "You need to have the data in order to do the enforcement correctly and to do the disclosure correctly."

Supported by California's Fair Political Practices Commission and Secretary of State Alex Padilla, the Call Access Reform Bill has a chance if we can overcome the Governor's reluctance to spend the money. Once Cal-Access is in shape, we can move forward with other kinds of reforms.

Another piece of legislation in process, California SB 1107, would remove California's ban on public financing of elections. Currently, a 1988 voter initiative bans California municipalities (with the exception of charter cities) from publicly-financing elections. If passed

in California's legislature by a 2/3 vote, SB 1107 would permit local governments to experiment with innovative methods of public campaign financing.

LWVC does not yet have a position on Proposition 49, the ballot measure intended to overturn the Supreme Court's ruling on Citizens United. In essence, the proposition says that anybody elected from California should do everything in their constitutional power to help overturn the Citizens United ruling. Hutchison said, from the League point of view, "We feel emphatically that Citizens United needs to be reversed. It's not clear to us that this ballot measure is the way to do it. We think there are other ways."

The [LWVC bill status report](#) lists bills on which the LWVC has taken a position and recommends action and reports on their current status. -The report can be accessed at lwvc.org/take-action/legislation



Helen Grieco

Helen Grieco believes the personal is political: our personal lives inform our politics. After 25 years of working in the women's movement, she realized that unless we changed the system, big money interests were always going to get their way. The Citizens United decision spurred her to join Common Cause to work on getting the money out of politics. "Democracy should work for everyone," Grieco said, "and it does that better when the voices of all communities are being heard by our government."

A significant step to exposing the role of big money in influencing politics came when a whistleblower exposed the inner working of the American Legislative Exchange Council (known as ALEC). ALEC, a non-profit organization founded in 1973, provides a forum where state legislators and corporations can collaborate to develop model legislation that can be introduced to state legislatures. Corporations can join for \$25,000, legislators for \$100. ALEC brings together state legislators and corporations at conferences where state legislative agendas are set. ALEC promotes conservative legislation such as reducing regulation and individual and corporate taxation, combating illegal immigration, loosening environmental regulations, tightening voter identification rules, weakening labor unions, and opposing gun control.

“When this was cracked open,” Grieco says, “it was mind boggling because so much of the face of American democracy was being maneuvered by ALEC.” After its inner workings were exposed in 2011 and revealed ALEC to be, essentially, a lobbying group, many corporations and legislators dropped their membership, so Grieco feels that we are “somewhat winning on that front.”

Grieco stressed that the key to overturning Citizen’s United is to disclose where the money comes from and put caps on how much can be given. A constitutional convention has been suggested, but Grieco considers that to be a 20-year strategy, unless the current political environment changes quickly. Overturning Citizens United in the Supreme Court is a possibility, but is one we are powerless to change at this point. Public financing of elections is another possibility, “If we could get rid of the money in the system, that would probably be the end-all and be-all.”

Grieco mentioned the California Disclose Act, Assembly Bill 2523, now on

its third try to get passed in the California Legislature, AB 2523 will demand that political advertising clearly disclose the top three donors in the ad and establish a \$4200 cap on campaign finance contributions for local jurisdictions in California that have not already set limits. Another proposed California law, SB 450, would allow counties to adopt the innovative Colorado model of elections and establish a vote-by-mail system (for more on this bill, see our [October 2015 VOTER](#), page 3 at lwvsc.org/voter)



Sue Becker, Helen Hutchison, Helen Grieco. Sue organized this event (and brought the flowers).

Grieco’s current focus is helping young people understand politics and how their lives have been crippled by the effects of dark money, “Their generation is in a crisis. The economic downfall has tanked many of us.” She encourages the next generation to get out there and start fighting, and the current generation to inspire them to keep informed and stay engaged and empowered.

—Pam Newbury, *VOTER* Editor

View a [video of this talk](http://lwvsc.org/videos) at lwvsc.org/videos

Recommended sites for staying informed about money in politics:

Maplight at maplight.org

Votersedge at votersedge.org

The Sunlight Foundation at sunlightfoundation.com

National Institute for Money in State Politics at followthemoney.org

Center for Responsive Politics at www.opensecrets.org

The Federal Election Commission (FEC) at www.fec.gov

California Secretary of State, Cal Access, at cal-access.ss.ca.gov

Membership in the League of Women Voters is open to men and women of voting age who are U.S. citizens. Others are welcome to join the League as associate members.

Send your check payable to League of Women Voters of Santa Cruz County or LWVSCC with this form to LWVSCC, Box 1745, Capitola, CA 95010-1745.

___ \$65 Individual annual membership
___ \$100.00 Two members in a household
___ \$30.00 Student membership
___ Contribution \$ _____

Checks made out to LWVSCC are not tax deductible.

To make a tax-deductible donation, write a separate check to LWV Education Fund.

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ ZIP _____

Telephone: _____

Email _____

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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan 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.

Annual Meeting Report

At our League's annual meeting in June, the proposed budget and bylaws amendment (as detailed in the [Annual Meeting Kit](#), which can be viewed online by clicking on the "past" link on the calendar menu at lwvsc.org and scrolling down to the June meeting entry) were approved by the membership, as was the board's recommendation to retain all existing local positions. Officers elected for the 2016/17 year are Barbara Lewis, president; Dottie Fry and Sue Becker, first and second vice presidents and voter service co-chairs; Nancy Litvak, secretary; Jan Karwin, treasurer. Directors elected are Pam Newbury, VOTER editor, Peggy Marketello, membership chair, Jan Beautz, program chair, and Judi Orbach, director-at-large. Laura Grossman will continue as our off-board roster manager, and Joyce Anderson as TV PSA coordinator.

Members voted to approve the board's recommendations for our 2016/17 programs, including three topics for League meetings: status of juvenile justice as a result of prison realignment; update on library system plans; drug and alcohol anti-stigma campaign. Also approved were two mini-studies, one to consider updating our positions on transportation funding and another to consider the effects of climate change and adapting to sea level rise. If you would like to participate in either of those studies, please let us know (email league@lwvsc.org or phone 831-325-4140).

Note: Look for our report on the Women in Politics program presented at the meeting by Capitola Vice Mayor Stephanie Harlan and Santa Cruz Mayor Cynthia Mathews in our upcoming August VOTER newsletter. A [video of their talk](#) is now available to be viewed online by clicking the link at lwvsc.org/videos.