

Legislative Interview 2021 with Congressman Eric Swalwell

On Monday, March 22, 2021, Congressman Eric Swalwell (CA-15) met for his biennial legislative interview with representatives from the League of Women Voters of the Eden Area (Jewell Spalding, Penny Peck and Mary Lou Eggiman), League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark, Union City (Syeda Reshma Inamdar), and the League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley (Bill Speir and Suzan Requa). We appreciated Congressman Swalwell's time and participation in this important civic communication, where League members can hear about his plans for this year, and he can hear about the League's policies and goals.

1. *Do you believe that HR 1 will be approved in the Senate? Please explain why/why not?*

Swalwell: That Congress survived a "coup" attempt on January 6th, clearly establishes the need to *enfranchise* millions of potential voters.

Unfortunately, some Republican State legislative houses are passing laws to prevent voter participation, so we need HR 1 and HR4 (the John Lewis legislation) which allow pre-clearance, which is the practice to get court approval before limits are imposed on voting, such as closing a voting site, moving the location of a polling place, and more. To get this passed, the Senate will need to reform the filibuster.

Swalwell was aware that passing HR1 would be a high priority for the League.

2. *What do you consider to be the most important parts of the Voting Rights Act that need to be restored?*

Swalwell: It is essential that we restore the Voting Rights Act (HR 4). To do so, the Senate will need to break the filibuster. Over 65% of all voters want HR 1 and HR 4 to pass, but Republican Senators are trying to stop these two bills, which is why the filibuster must be reformed. These bills are designed to assist minority voters. If there was any reason to break the filibuster, these two bills are it.

3. *Climate crisis and environmental justice are top priorities for the Biden administration. What legislation will you sponsor to support these measures?*

Swalwell: I support the Green New Deal. There are two key proposals that will address the climate crisis – a smarter grid and getting cars off the road. Expanding mass transit such as the Valley Link can really help this issue. [For more on Valley Link, go to: [HOME | Valley Link Rail](#)]. This rail extension would take 30,000 cars off the road.

4. *The LWV supports measures to implement Diversity, Equity and Inclusion in all aspects of our society. The League supports criminal justice reform on a national level. What do you look for in proposed legislation that helps reduce racial inequality in the administration of criminal justice?*

Swalwell: With two brothers who are police officers, I am often asked about this issue. I believe the police need to look like the community they serve (reflecting the diversity of a community), and that de-escalation techniques are very important in reducing shootings of minorities by police. Programs such as DSAL the Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League ([ACDSAL - Alameda County Deputy Sheriffs' Activities League](#)) can really help law enforcement bond with a community.

There also is the need for education and childcare including afterschool activities to help children stay out of trouble and out of the criminal justice system. When I was a prosecutor I encountered many youth who were there because of the lack of educational opportunities and afterschool programs, which is why they got into trouble.

5. *Can misinformation and disinformation in social media be legislated or does that interfere with free expression?*

Swalwell: This is a critical issue dividing our country. A small amount of social media accounts are the cause of a vast amount of the misinformation and it spreads like wildfire. It is vital that we all help in correcting the lie that Trump won the recent election.

Social media platforms can patrol the services that spread misinformation such as false information about vaccines. It is not censorship to take down false information. Legislation allows the FBI to remove false information posted by our Russian adversaries that spread false information to interfere with our elections, such as misinforming people where you can send your ballot.

Private platforms including Twitter can remove false information quickly. It is a challenge because what is the "public forum." We don't want to live in a censorship-focused society, but we also do not want false information to spread since it can be so destructive.

Congressman Swalwell also recommended the film "The Social Dilemma," [The Social Dilemma \(2020\) - IMDb](#), which attempts to address these issues.

6. *What are your top three priorities? If you have proposed legislation for this session what are the bill numbers?*

Swalwell: After feeling like “Trump’s probation officer” for the past few years, including serving as one of the Impeachment Managers in the former President’s second impeachment trial, I would like to concentrate on legislation, including:

- a. gun violence prevention and background checks,
- b. transportation, including Valley Link (see above), and
- c. precision medicine, which involves genetic sequencing to get people targeted therapies, better pharmacology, and faster diagnosing of diseases.

The interview was concluded with a brief discussion on gun violence, including how to get reforms through the Senate because 90% of Americans want background checks. Also discussed was the need for internet access to all areas (rural, suburban, and urban) which absence was highlighted with the need for students to access the internet and funding for school re-openings. Because this is where the federal government can play a role, his plan is to look into more ways to improve internet access for all as part of the potential infrastructure bill.

Also discussed was the U.S. Post Office as a priority for reforms and our personal experiences with vaccine availability, which he was on his way afterwards to also discuss at Camp Parks in Dublin with respect to the military servicemen.

We expressed our appreciation on how much time Representative Swalwell dedicated to our discussion and friendly interchange of ideas. Representative Swalwell-offered to follow up on any questions by email and we sincerely thanked him for his time.

Jewell Spalding and Penny Peck, LWVEA