

LWVC Legislative Recap 2017-2018

I. Government

Campaign finance reform was a significant theme this cycle. The League helped lead the fight for transparency and to protect representative democracy against special interests. Three bills are of particular note.

- In 2017 we **advocated** for the successful passage of the California **DISCLOSE Act, AB 249** (Mullin and Levine). Seven years in the making, the new law requires transparency on funding behind ballot measure and candidate advertising. And League members across the state helped make it happen with a huge **outpouring of lobbying**.
- Hot on the heels of the *DISCLOSE Act* was passage of the **Social Media DISCLOSE Act, AB 2188** (Mullin). This bill requires social media platforms, like Twitter and Facebook, to include a link to the top three funders behind “promoted” or “sponsored” ads; create a public database showing the political ads backed by committees; and provide a “View Ads” link on committee pages to allow easy viewing of purchased ads.
- The League was a major player in the defeat of **AB 84** (Mullin), a last minute gut and amend bill that would have increased money in California politics, protected incumbents, and consolidated power in legislative leadership. Our success in killing AB 84 was driven by **your grassroots activism**, intensive advocacy with the **Fair Political Practices Commission** and the **Senate Elections Committee**, and good old-fashioned shoe leather legislative lobbying.

Vote-by-Mail (VBM) is currently used by almost 60 percent of California voters and is growing in popularity. While the voting method is convenient, the League advocates to ensure that VBM is administered fairly and equitably so that all eligible votes are counted.

- Starting with this November’s election, **SB 759** (McGuire) will require elections officials to alert voters if there is a mismatch between the signature on their VBM envelope and the signature on file at the elections office, and to provide voters an opportunity to cure any issues. The bill represents a crucial advance, given the fact that **experts believe over**

45,000 ballots were thrown out in November 2016 due to a signature mismatch, and that the problem has disproportionately **disadvantaged underrepresented populations**.

- Concerns about equity, voter confusion, and consistency across the state also informed our work to pass **AB 216** (Gonzalez Fletcher and Low). The bill requires that, starting in 2019, all vote-by-mail return envelopes must be provided to voters with the postage prepaid.

Bail Reform, to eliminate the need for money in order to secure pre-trial release, was a **priority for us when it was introduced in 2017**. Many of you joined in our **Action Alert to urge the passage of SB 10** (Hertzberg). Unfortunately, the bill was amended at the very end of the 2018 session to include a troubling presumption of preventative detention in exchange for the eradication of the commercial bail industry. Furthermore, it employs bias-prone risk assessment tools and relies on judicial discretion without any institutional protections against racial bias in decision-making. We plan to look for opportunities to work with coalition partners and support amendments to the legislation.

II. Natural Resources

The Climate Change fight, led by our **Climate Change Task Force** and coalition partners, gained major ground this session.

- In 2017, facing the looming 2020 expiration of cap and trade, advocates won a ten year extension through a 2/3 bipartisan vote on **AB 398** (E. Garcia). Thanks to our Task Force and the broad coalition, Californians will enjoy improvements to air quality with the passage of AB 398 and its companion bill **AB 617** (Gomez).
- The passage of SB 100 (De León) was a victory, setting a goal to produce California’s electricity using 100% zero carbon sources by 2045. Strong **Task Force lobbying**, its collaboration with a large coalition, personal lobbying of targeted legislators (all of whom voted yes), and **League grassroots action** all contributed to this historic environmental advance. **Governor Brown’s signing statement**, while heralding

the achievement, notes the work left to be done to “meet the existential threat of climate change” and the “miles to go before we achieve zero-carbon emissions.”

The League’s **Water Committee** has been **monitoring the work of California’s Water Commission** and advocating on legislation. We can report both successes and disappointments in California’s ever-present water wars.

- **SB 252** (Dodd) requires applicants for new well permits in critically over-drafted groundwater basins to provide basic information to their neighbors, an important advance for which our Water Committee **pushed hard**.
- **League urging** also helped ensure passage of **SB 998** (Dodd), a bill providing protections for residential water customers at risk of service cut-off, and making service restoration easier.
- **AB 1668** (Friedman), a vital step forward in water management planning; requires the State Water Resources Control Board to set water use efficiency standards for commercial, industrial, and institutional water use. A related measure, **SB 606** (Hertzberg) requires urban retail water suppliers to meet conservation objectives. The League advocacy letter can be found **here**.
- The **League also lobbied** for **AB 2975** (Friedman), which protects California wild and scenic rivers from delisting by the federal government.
- **SB 623** (Monning) would have created a Safe and Affordable Drinking Water Fund to implement the Human Right to Water Act, establishing a revenue stream to help small water districts, many of them in rural areas in the southern Central Valley, develop modern water treatment facilities and ensure ongoing maintenance and operations funding. **Coalition efforts failed**, despite support from a wide variety of interests and the Governor. Work to create this fund is likely to begin again in the next legislative session.
- **AB 1000** (Friedman) was a **hard fought effort** to restrict transfers of water by the controversial Cadiz Project. Unfortunately it failed, and transfers from a groundwater basin underlying the Mojave Desert for sale to Southern California cities can now proceed.

Hazardous Materials has seen action in a number of areas, but the most significant success this cycle, made even more resonant due to the opioid epidemic, is **SB 212** (Jackson and Ting). The bill requires manufacturers of sharps and pharmaceutical drugs to create a statewide take-back system and give Californians access to safe, convenient disposal methods. This is a critical public health issue on which the League has worked, **in coalition with other organizations**, for decades.

III. Social Policy

Criminal justice reforms, to address blatant racial inequities in the treatment of similarly situated Black and White Californians, were a focus of League advocacy this cycle. We believe that it is crucially important to confront the fact people of color are far more likely to be stopped, searched, arrested, prosecuted, convicted, and incarcerated than are whites in our state. Furthermore, we work to move California away from incarcerating children and toward a focus on rehabilitation.

- **SB 180** (Mitchell and Lara) repeals a three-year sentence enhancement for prior drug convictions, with the exception of convictions involving a minor.
- **SB 439** (Mitchell and Lara) ensures that children under 12 can no longer be prosecuted for crimes other than certain violent felonies, including murder and sexual assault.
- **SB 1391** (Lara and Mitchell) eliminates the ability to try a defendant under the age of 16 as an adult, which would lead to prison if convicted. Juvenile offenders convicted under the new law would be held in locked juvenile facilities instead of adult prisons.
- **SB 1421** (Skinner), a bill that actually falls under the League’s position on open government, increases transparency related to officer killings of civilians by expanding access to personnel and video records. It opens public access to internal investigations of police shootings and other incidents where an officer killed or seriously injured someone, as well to sustained findings of sexual assault and lying on the job.
- **AB 931** (Weber and McCarty), is another bill that **we advocated for** pursuant to the League’s Government positions. It would have raised the state standard for using lethal force from “reasonable” (when a



reasonable officer in similar circumstances would have acted the same way) to “necessary,” (when there are no alternatives for police to consider in that situation). While the bill failed to pass in this session, the League hopes to support similar legislation expected to be introduced next year.

Protecting the rights of immigrant families from an anticipated mass deportation policy under the new federal administration was another area of successful League advocacy this cycle. Most notably we **supported** the passage of **SB 54** (De León), the California Values Act, a bill prohibiting local authorities from inquiring about immigration status during routine activities. **League members across California stood up** and were counted in this victory.

Alleviating California’s housing crisis was the purpose of the League’s support of **SB 828** (Wiener). The bill requires local governments zone to accommodate existing and projected local housing needs, and it prevents previous

underproduction or stable population from being used to justify a determination or a reduction in the jurisdiction’s share of the regional housing need.

Quality, affordable childcare and education was the subject of a number of bills supported by the League this cycle. One notable disappointment was the **Governor’s veto** of **AB 60** (Santiago), a bill allowing families receiving state subsidized early care and education services to remain eligible for services for a full twelve months before requiring recertification. **We argued that AB 60** would provide much needed continuity of care and education for children and a degree of financial stability for their low-income families. While agreeing with the need, Governor Brown noted that the “bill impacts an entitlement program and the changes contemplated in this bill have the potential to cost the state \$50 million a year and is more properly considered as part of the budget process.”