



THE LEAGUE
OF WOMEN VOTERS®

Volume 78 No. 2
February 2014

Newsletter of the League of Women Voters of San Joaquin County

THE VOTER

Ag Update Study Launched with GMO Meeting

Fifty League members and members of the community assembled at the Cabral Ag Center on January 11 to hear two perspectives on genetically modified organisms (GMOs). This was the first meeting in LWVUSJC's three-meeting series on issues related to the LWVUS Agricultural Update Study.



Dr. Kent J. Bradford

Dr. Kent J. Bradford is Professor of Plant Sciences and Director of the Seed Biotechnology Center at UC Davis. He spoke in support of crop biotechnology, placing GMOs on a continuum of plant and animal breeding going back thousands of years.



Charity Kenyon

Traditional breeding, he noted, relies on merging male and female genes and selecting desirable traits. Wild species have been used for hundreds of years to create hybrid crops with traits like disease resistance. Most of the tomatoes we eat today are the result of this kind of breeding.

Species are also combined by grafting. For example English walnuts, which have a flavor we prefer, are grafted onto black walnut roots for disease resistance in California. With the discovery of DNA, it became possible to essentially "graft" at the cell level to create desirable traits.

Why use biotech in crop improvement? Dr. Bradford said that we can use genes for production, yield, quality, or novel characteristics. We may be able to make the environmental footprint of agriculture smaller, or at least not increase it, while population grows. We can also breed for herbicide tolerance or insect resistance.

Speaking against GMOs was Charity Kenyon, a retired attorney and former LWVC leader, who works with Slow Foods Sacramento, Slow Food California, and Slow Food International on GMO labeling and policy issues.

Ms. Kenyon said that GMOs are not the way to feed the world, as is often asserted. Research has demonstrated that high on-farm biodiversity is tied to greater income stability, greater resilience in the face of environmental disasters, and greater food security. Hunger problems, she said, are the result of mal-distribution, not of underproduction of food.



She is concerned that corporate control of seeds strips farmers and consumers of their rights. She said there is no way to protect farmers of conventional non-GMO or organic crops from contamination by GMO pollen.

Weeds and insects, she said, have become resistant to genetic modifications, requiring stronger herbicides and pesticides. The impact of GMOs on soil health, including beneficial soil micro-organisms, is not as clear as it should be.

According to Ms. Kenyon, scientists on both sides of the debate agree that more research on human health effects of GMOs is needed. Regarding food labeling, Ms. Kenyon said, "No matter what you conclude about the economic, environmental, social, or human health costs of GMOs, there is no scientific or any other basis for denying consumers the right to vote with their forks."

For a more detailed version of this article, including the very informative question and answer session, go to the Hot Topics section of our website, <http://sjc.ca.lwvnet.org/HotTopics.html> and click on GMOs. You will also find there Dr. Bradford's PowerPoint presentation and Ms. Kenyon's presentation notes, as well as Bea Lingenfelter's summary of GMO pros and cons, Margo Praus's summary of Nanotechnology, and a variety of papers from LWVUS on GMO-related matters.

Looking for Asparagus Festival Volunteers

April 25, 26, and 27, LWVSJC will again work at the Asparagus Festival staffing one of the ID bracelet booths. The assignment is very simple and actually fun to do and be part of this traditional festival in Stockton. Bea Lingenfelter will be contacting members early in April to gather volunteers to help in this League fundraiser. Yes, we do get paid for the hours we work. The amount varies depending on how much the Festival raises - these funds are distributed among all the non-profits which help with the many volunteer needs at the Festival. Please consider helping this year for one of the 4 hour shifts. It's a great way to help the League and get into the Festival for free.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Spring 2014 (*Incoming Message*)

2013 was ushered out with our annual Christmas party. The "halls" were filled with the best ever membership attendance. The festivities began as members introduced themselves and expressed what they like about the LWV. I recall many comments were similar. "What a privilege it is to be in the company of dedicated, intelligent, and informed men and women." A catered dinner was followed by our traditional "what elephant exchange," which always proves to be more fun than intelligent.

And now, on the serious side, and in keeping with our mission to study and discuss and arrive at consensus, we have just begun a LWV National Study on various agricultural issues. Please read the next pages so you can save the study and consensus dates. Jane Wagner-Tyack and her energetic committee have organized a stimulating spring. The members of that committee are: Cate White, Bea Lingenfelter, Margo Praus, Katrina Jaggears, Susan Mora Loyko, Colleen Foster, Linda Soliven, Stina Va, Donna Brown, Analiese Richard, and Daphne Shaw.

The Annual Meeting is May 28th at the Stockton Hilton. You will be receiving an Annual Meeting Kit in the mail with details. For now, save the date as we need a quorum of members to attend in order to pass the budget and elect the Officers and Board of Directors. There will also be a speaker.

Voter Service will be working on candidate forums for the June elections. All members are invited to the Board meetings, which are on the first Thursday of the month at 5921 Widgeon Court, at 5:30 p.m. RSVP fmatooch@sbcglobal.net

I look forward to seeing you all this spring.
My sincere thanks to Diane Park for mentoring me as your new President.

Dee Matteucci

Spring - Fall 2013 (*Outgoing Message*)

Our League had a busy agenda in 2013, culminating in a September Kickoff Event at the Delicato Winery, featuring GMO Ballot Initiative author Pamm Larry.

Then, in October, we sponsored a large public forum where community leaders discussed the pros and cons of Stockton's Measure A/B. The League later endorsed the Measure, which was crafted to increase Stockton police presence and help the city exit from recent bankruptcy with a 3/4 cent sales tax.

We are gearing up for a full year ahead, with an emphasis on Voter Service. Our incoming president is Frances (Dee) Matteucci. Dee has been a member of the League for over 30 years and brings a wealth of knowledge and leadership experience to our League. Her message below will introduce some of the activities we have planned.

A big Thank-You to all of our members and supporters. It is only with your donation of time and funds that the League is able to act in the public interest and to present forums on the civic policy issues of our day.

Diane Park

SPOTLIGHT

Daphne Shaw

This issue of *The Voter* honors a long-time member. It will be rewarding to get to know her in this edition.

Daphne Shaw is a Public Health Microbiologist and has worked in Berkeley, Alameda (California Department of Public Health) and Stockton (Stockton Pathology and St. Joseph Medical Center). She retired in 2013.

Besides having a full-time career and family, she has been a tireless volunteer for all aspects of mental health for California and San Joaquin County, serving on mental health county boards, advisory boards, the California Coalition for Mental Health, and numerous state appointments to California councils. Willie Brown appointed her to the California Council on Mental Health, for which she now serves on the board of directors.

In 2009, Daphne was a recipient of the Susan B. Anthony Women of Achievement Award.

The LWVSJC has kept her busy with candidate forums, the California Prison Health Facility forum, and local programs on mental health. Currently, she is a member of the Ag Update Study committee. She has served two terms on our board of directors and provided volunteer hours for the Asparagus Festival.

By the way, Daphne is an accomplished horsewoman. And she is never without her dogs.

Big congratulations to Daphne, and thank you!

Civic Literacy Effort

The League has joined a group of interested Stocktonians who are developing plans to raise the civic literacy of our community. The effort is the brainchild of *Record* columnist Mike Fitzgerald. In addition to the League and Fitzgerald, the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce, the Building Industry Association, Stockton Unified School District, the Good Government Group and former astronaut Jose Hernandez form the core of the planning group. The group has a 4-pronged target:

- elementary school children
- high school students who will soon be old enough to vote
- adults who need more information to be informed about civic activities
- potential candidates for public office or boards, who would be encouraged to participate in formal civics classes sponsored by the University of the Pacific and the Good Government Group

Donna Brown is representing LWVSJC in this effort. For more information call Donna at 951-2311 or email her at dmbrown737@comcast.net



**LWVSJC Board of Directors
2013-2014**

Officers

Dee Matteucci, President,
January-June 2014
Diane Park, President,
July-December 2013
1st Vice President,
Bea Lingenfelter
2nd Vice President,
Kathy Casenave
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Voter

Editor/Layout, Ryan Camero

Agriculture Update Study Progress Report

When this issue of *The Voter* reaches you, LWVSJC will have completed two of three meetings in a series focusing on agriculture that will prepare us for a consensus meeting aimed at updating the LWVUS Agriculture position. **It is League positions at local, state, and national levels that allow us to educate and advocate on a wide variety of issues.**

Our meeting in January (see article in this issue) focused on genetically modified organisms (GMOs) and was well-attended by League members and people from the wider community. The topics scheduled for the meeting on February 22 were Government Agricultural Programs, Regulations, and Animal Management. The scheduled speakers were Ora Van Steyn, District Conservationist with the Stockton Field Office of the USDA's Natural Resources Conservation Service and Paul Sousa, Director of Environmental Services for United Western Dairymen.

On March 15, from 9:30 to noon, we will look at Financing and Economic Health of Agriculture. We will also be discussing the recently-passed Farm Bill. Speakers for that program will be:

- Assembly Member **Susan Talamantes Eggman**, Chair of the Assembly Agriculture Committee
- **Bruce Frey**, 5th generation family farmer and former Chair of the Farm Bureau
- **Bill Reynolds**, VP at the Bank of Stockton and works in the Business and Agricultural Lending section of the Bank. He will talk about Credit Availability and Risk Management and how it affects farmers/agriculture
- Congressman **Jerry McNerney**

The final Agricultural Update Study meeting will be the consensus discussion meeting on March 29. Community members are welcome at that meeting, but only LWVSJC members will be able to vote on consensus questions.

The Ag Update study meetings are held at the Cabral Ag Center, Assembly Room 3, at 2101 E. Earhart Ave, Stockton. Forums are free and open to the public.

SAVE THE DATE!

The LWVSJC Annual Meeting and Dinner will be held at the **Stockton Hilton Hotel, 5:30 pm, Wednesday, May 28, 2014.**

Our Guest Speaker is Stockton Chief of Police Eric Jones. Members will receive an Annual Report and Annual Meeting Kit a few weeks before the meeting. Also watch for an email announcement with reservation information and dinner options.

Donors and New or Renewing Members:

A membership form is available on our website: sjc.ca.lwvnet.org

To make a tax-deductible donation to our League Education Fund, please make your check payable to LWVSJC Ed Fund, and mail to P.O. Box 4548, Stockton, CA 95204. You may use your credit card or PayPal account by visiting our website: sjc.ca.lwvnet.org

The LWVUS Agriculture Update has generated considerable controversy, particularly in California. The scope of the study is very wide, and most study materials did not become available until this past fall. The consensus questions were not released until December, leaving Leagues that wanted to participate very little time to prepare. The LWVUS Board has already extended the deadline for submitting consensus question responses, and at the beginning of February the national board denied a written request to extend the deadline further. Said LWVUS,

The decision to maintain the current consensus deadline of April 18, 2014, was taken in the context of the work we have before us, as an organization. This is a federal election year and a national convention year. State and local program is a critical component of every League calendar. An extension of the consensus deadline impinges on the ability of state and local Leagues to plan for the next two years and the ability of the delegates to Convention 2014 to debate and adopt new governmental issues for concerted study in the next biennium.

There is no doubt that the Agriculture Update is more complex than any of us anticipated, but the best chance to reach consensus on all or part of this study is to do the best we can and stick to a schedule that will complete this study before our next convention.

Of particular concern to those of us in San Joaquin County was the fact that the LWVUS study committee dropped "aquifer depletion" as a topic for study and consensus. The consensus questions do not directly address water issues at all -- a puzzling omission from the perspective of a state facing both drought and severe groundwater overdraft in growing regions that are of both national and international importance.

A likely explanation is that the topic of water proved to be too ambitious, given all the other topics the study undertook to address.

Find resource materials on the various Agricultural Study topics, along with information about study meetings, on our website, <http://sjc.ca.lwvnet.org/>. Study materials are posted under Hot Topics.

CALENDAR

March 15, 9:30 to noon - Agriculture Update Study meeting on **Financing and Economic Health of Agriculture**, Cabral Ag Center, Assembly Room 3, 2101 E. Earhart Ave, Stockton

March 29 (time TBA) - Agriculture Update Study **Consensus Meeting**, Cabral Ag Center, Assembly Room 3, 2101 E. Earhart Ave, Stockton

April 25, 26, and 27 - **Asparagus Festival** fundraising volunteer opportunity

May 28 - **Annual Meeting**, Stockton Hilton

The LWVSJC Board of Directors meets on the first Thursday of the month at 5921 Widgeon Court, at 5:30 p.m. All members are welcome. RSVP fmatooch@sbcglobal.net

Watch your email for announcements about Voter Services activities this Spring.

Nominating Committee seeking names

Please help identify those League members who have time to take on some leadership responsibilities. If you or a League member you know is interested in serving on the board of directors, please contact a member of the Nominating Committee: Chair Susan Mora Loyko, or members Katrina Jaggears, Daphne Shaw, Bill Loyko, and Diane Park. You can reach the chair at (209) 479-1944 or smloyko@gmail.com

The Helen Pearson Award Committee is also seeking names of members who have been especially dedicated to service to the League. Chair of the Helen Pearson Award committee is Vickie Markarian, (209) 823-1486, hyeorty@comcast.net. Committee members are Dee Matteucci, Lauren Ah Tye, Bea Lingenfelter, and Kathy Schick.



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In February, the City of Stockton installed this beautiful bench across from City Hall.



*In Memory of
Sylvia R. Kothe
Lifelong Advocate
for
Government Accountability
1935 - 2012*

The bench and plaque were donated by Concerned Citizens Coalition of Stockton. They, along with the League, were participants in the initiative and lawsuit that successfully challenged the city's decision to turn Stockton's municipal water over to a private company.

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.