

# Channel **VOTER**

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA BARBARA, INC. • 328 A East Carrillo St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Serving South Santa Barbara County

Vol. 70, No. 10, October 2009



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## OCTOBER COMMUNITY FORUM - STATE GOVERNMENT REFORM

Wednesday, October 21, 2009, 12:00 to 2 p.m.

One of League's top priorities on the state level is reform of California's government. We have long advocated for improvements in budget and fiscal issues, the initiative process, campaign financing, and elections and voting rights. Now California is "not only broke but broken", and the League of Women Voters is in the thick of the discussion on what reforms are needed and how best to achieve them.

Our task now is to start educating ourselves and our communities on the issues and processes of Constitutional and budget reform. At the October Community Forum, we will hear from a panel of knowledgeable Sacramento watchers.

Speakers will include **Xandra Kayden**, a political scientist and Second Vice President of the League of Women Voters of California (LWVC), and **Tracy Westen**, CEO of the Respected Think Tank, Center for Government Studies..

### WHAT ARE THE ISSUES?

Last year, League actively supported Prop. 11 to reform **redistricting**. Now, we must work to ensure its smooth implementation. Next June, another proposition will be on the ballot: the California Fair Elections Act, a pilot project which is one step in our long-standing support of

*(Continued on page 3)*

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## OCTOBER DISCUSSION UNITS - HEALTH CARE LEGISLATION UPDATE

Our Unit presenters are glued to news of developments in health care legislation and commentary on it, intent on encouraging lively discussion among members.

Aspects of health care reform important to this engrossing national debate include single-payer health care insurance, currently uninsured individuals, pre-existing conditions, non-profit cooperatives, currently insured individuals, employer-based coverage, compromises by hospitals and pharmaceutical companies and the impact on Medicare and Medicaid, if any.

Members are strongly encouraged to prepare for the October Health Care Units by getting acquainted with our national league website, [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org), where a multitude of health care reform education and advocacy resources are listed on the home page.

You can click and find research papers, including recent LWVUS Health Care Education Task Force

topics, press releases advancing League's health care advocacy positions supporting a public option, and material counteracting disinformation in misleading health care ads distributed by a copycat organization. There are also Action Alerts with language, tools, and resources for contacting your members of Congress on the site.

League members are also encouraged to share health care reform information sources with others, especially interactive media opportunities to "speak up," which have exponentially increased feedback from grass roots individuals.

Although health care reform is currently garnering a lot of attention, and there are rapid developments, it has been too long in becoming a national priority. The LWV is committed to ensuring that we do not miss this opportunity to accomplish real health care reform.

**For days, times and locations of our four discussion unit meetings, see the calendar on the back page.**

# From the (Ed Fund) President's Desk...

The following is a letter to the editor of the Santa Barbara News Press written by Irene Stone, LWVSB Education Fund President, clarifying misstatements in the press.



Dear Editor:

It is important to correct two statements in a recent letter to the editor about the role of the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara Education Fund in assisting at the September 2 health care forum.

First, the League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization that does not support nor oppose political parties or candidates. The League does advocate on issues after its members have studied and adopted a position. An allied organization, the LWVSB Education Fund, a 501(c)(3) organization, is not only nonpartisan but also impartial on issues; its purpose is funding and supporting **educational** activities of the League. The LWVSB Education Fund assisted with the informational forum on HR3200 to facilitate civil discourse on a contentious topic.

Second, because we understood that only a limited number of the possibly 200 questions submitted could actually be

addressed at the forum (although it was stated that all would be answered in writing after the forum), our procedure was to group the questions received by topic so that as many different areas of concern as possible could be addressed. We did not censor.

We then gave the moderator the groups of questions on the topics most frequently asked about for his selection. We were asked to assist because of our long experience with organizing written questions from the audience at our candidate forums. Our sole goal was to help voters better understand the health care legislation pending in the U.S. House of Representatives.

To learn more about our activities, readers are asked to look for the upcoming Santa Barbara City Council and Mayoral candidate forums and the related "Touring with the Candidates" program on television. Other activities that the LWVSB Education Fund supports to aid voters in reaching their decisions include the [www.SmartVoter.org](http://www.SmartVoter.org) website with extensive election information and the "Pros and Cons" and the "Easy Voter" publications.

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## VOTER SERVICE

During this surprisingly busy election season, we have been working hard to bring the voters nonpartisan information on the candidates for Santa Barbara City Council and for Mayor.

Our candidate forums, held in late September, will be rebroadcast on Channel 21. Our popular *Touring with the Candidates* will be broadcast, and in addition, the individual segments will be on [smartvoter.org](http://smartvoter.org). Note that because there are so many candidates for Council, their "tours" will be split into two separate programs on Channel 21.

And as always, we give all candidates the opportunity to post their information on [SmartVoter.org](http://SmartVoter.org).

The League of Women Voters never supports or opposes candidates.

On [SmartVoter](http://SmartVoter.org), we also provide impartial information on the ballot measures. Voter Service activities are presented under the aegis of League's Education Fund.

For more information, see [SmartVoter http://www.smartvoter.org/ca/sba/](http://www.smartvoter.org/ca/sba/).

*Sandy Stites, Voter Service Director*

### Save the Date: Policy Goes to School Series "Crafting California's New School Finance"

Presented by UCSB's Gevirtz School, the League of Women Voters of SB  
and the California Teachers Association

**Wednesday, November 11, 2009, 8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m., Victoria Hall, 33 W. Victoria Street**

*The Channel Voter is published eight times a year, monthly except for January, June, July, and August, by the League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara, 328A E. Carrillo St., Santa Barbara, CA 93101.*

**campaign finance reform.**

There are proposals under consideration to accomplish **constitutional reform** by various means. Although the League strongly supports the concept that systematic efforts to revise the Constitution are needed, we have not taken a stand on the question of calling a Constitutional Convention or endorsed other methods such as a constitution revision commission.

One basic reform the League supports is the elimination of two-thirds vote requirements for passing a state **budget** or raising taxes at the state and local levels. Allowing the majority to make these decisions will break the paralyzing grip that now makes effective government decision-making almost impossible.

Another needed reform is a more efficient **tax structure** that is fair and based on ability to pay, reflects the structure of California's economy, and provides adequate revenues for the programs and services Californians want.

There is great concern about the need to reform the **initiative** process. Many initiatives have affected the budget and both state and local finances and thrown up roadblocks to effective governance.

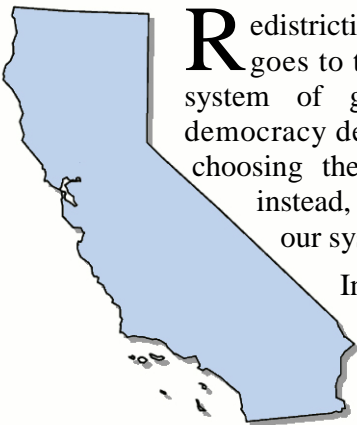
Janis Hirohama, President of LWVC, said after the budget passed, " If there is any hopeful aspect to this situation, it's that momentum is building for change. A number of individuals and groups are looking at the prospects for reform, and the League believes that Californians should get informed and participate in the discussion....We're at a turning point in California. We can't maintain the status quo of unreasonable budget manipulations, unsustainable cuts in services, and failure to invest in public facilities and programs. Without reform, we will only continue the constant, draining budget battles that erode public confidence in government, leave problems unsolved, and shatter the California dream. All of us—individuals and leaders—must rise to the challenge."

Join us on Oct. 21 to learn more about that challenge.

*Linda Phillips, President*

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## **REDISTRICTING REFORM**



**R**edistricting reform is an issue that goes to the heart of our democratic system of government. Representative democracy depends on the voters freely choosing their elected officials. When, instead, officials choose their voters, our system cannot work for long.

In California, we passed Proposition 11 to reform our redistricting process. The League has started working with its partners

to facilitate the best possible implementation of redistricting reform for California. We are looking at a variety of opportunities over the next three years and we need a wide array of talent and enthusiasm.

The state League had a strong presence, both as speakers and observers, at public meetings held around the state to solicit input about how to make the recruitment and

selection process for the Commission as open and broad as possible. We are developing materials that explain the Commission process and why citizens should care about it. We also are encouraging local Leagues to conduct community education and outreach, including forums.

### **Help Redistricting - Help the Census**

The U.S. Constitution mandates a census of the population every ten years. The census is vitally important for many reasons, but the constitutional purpose is to obtain an accurate count of the population so that district lines can be drawn for Congress and the state legislature. **An accurate census count is an important component of redistricting.** You can help! LWV of the United States has asked everyone to be involved in the census count to the extent they can and we've posted resources for our Leagues on our members-only site. If you'd like to get involved, contact local league president, Linda Phillips.

*League of Women Voters of California*

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## **THE LOCAL NEIGHBORHOOD PRESERVATION ORDINANCE**

In 2007 when a revised ordinance was passed to protect neighborhoods from oversized developments, the City Council wisely asked for a two-year review of the guidelines, to see if they were effective. A new Single Family Review Board was established to evaluate second story additions. The League has asked for figures showing how many houses have gone beyond 85% and 100% of the recommended size of a house for the size of the lot. That information will tell us whether or not size is being controlled, and whether the NPO Guidelines need to be strengthened or changes.

*Connie Hannah*

MEASURE B – LOOK FOR IT ON YOUR BALLOT AND VOTE YES!



Measure B is our chance to control building heights in Santa Barbara’s historic downtown district. The League has worked hard to collect the signatures to put this measure on the November ballot, and many of you have contributed generously to help advocate for it.

Watch for the TV and radio spots you have helped to fund.

Our September Forum was very well attended and helped many members understand the reasoning that went into the decision to support Measure B. It was filmed and will be shown on public access television.

Most of the 11,581 people who signed the petitions

Measure B Opponents’ Claims Are Red Herrings

- Opponents claim affordable housing will be harder to build. They are wrong. With Measure B, affordable housing will be EASIER to build and MORE affordable. The city allows only four stories. Four stories in 40 ft. or 45 ft. cost less to build than four stories in 60 ft.
• Opponents claim that lower building heights are less sustainable. They are wrong. Lower building heights will have NO effect on sprawl. The same number of units can be built in 40 ft. and 45 ft. tall buildings as in 60 ft. buildings.
• Opponents claim that existing taller buildings can’t be rebuilt if damaged in a disaster. They are wrong. Towers don’t count in height limits, and a building has to lose more than 75% of its market value, a very unlikely occurrence, before a permit to rebuild would require the new heights.

putting the Building Heights Amendment on the ballot were very disappointed with recent developments on Chapala Street and wanted to end such massive construction. Measure B limits building heights to 40 ft. in the El Pueblo Historic District, and to 45 ft. in other areas, primarily commercially zoned, where 60 ft. is the current maximum height. The amendment to the city charter will leave all other building heights – 45 ft. for hotel and multiple-family residential, and 30 ft. for single family residences – exactly the way they are now.

The opposition to Measure B has made many arguments that are misleading. What the initiative will do. To answer them, the steering committee for Measure B, which includes four League members, has prepared a short list of responses to their claims.

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Connie Hannah

Vote Yes on Measure B!

Connie Hannah, Sustainable Communities Chair



Marty Blum



Mary Louis Days



Gil Barry



Sheila Lodge

Measure B Community Forum

The local League sponsored a very well attended community forum, “Why the League Supports Measure B,” Wednesday, Sept. 16, at Louise Lowry Davis Center. Mayor Marty Blum, Historian Mary Louise Days, architect Gil Barry and former mayor Sheila Lodge all contributed to the program that detailed the history of local height limits and the reasoning behind the League’s support of the measure that will be on the November ballot. Measure B would reduce maximum height limits on new construction in El Pueblo Viejo and some other parts of Santa Barbara.

## PUBLIC OPTION ESSENTIAL TO HEALTH REFORM

### LEAGUE URGES CONGRESS AND PRESIDENT TO CONTINUE SUPPORT FOR PUBLIC OPTION

"The public option in health care reform may not be essential to bureaucrats or insurance companies, but it absolutely is essential to the almost 47 million uninsured Americans who live day to day without health care coverage," said Mary G. Wilson, League of Women Voters National President.

Calling on Congress and the President not to succumb to the bullying tactics being used by special interest groups, Wilson urged Congress and the President not to waver in their support of the public option included in H.R. 3200, America's Affordable Health Choices Act of 2009, recently passed by three House committees.

America is facing a health care crisis caused by a combination of skyrocketing costs and an insurance system that leaves millions of Americans without any coverage. "The current health care system is endangering our economy, our health, and our national security," Wilson said. "Last fall, voters elected a Congress and President that promised to reform our health care system. Voters made it clear that they want a change in our health care system, a change that puts the brakes on the excesses created by a system dominated by large insurance companies," she continued.

"It is universal coverage that will determine the humanity of our system and a public option will make that possible

for Americans who cannot obtain coverage through the traditional employer-sponsored plans," noted Wilson. "We believe that health care reform legislation must guarantee access to comprehensive and essential benefits to all U.S. residents."

"But the possibility of universal coverage is not the only advantage of the public option," warned Wilson. "We must control costs and the public option is the best chance to bring costs into line with reality. As a nation, we are spending \$1 out of every \$6 we earn on health care. Over the last three decades, increases in the amount we spend on health care have consistently risen faster than wages and inflation. Health care reform must provide effective cost controls, equitable distribution of services and allow for efficient and economical delivery of care. Offering everyone the choice of a government administered health insurance plan like Medicare that would compete with private health insurance plans is key to lowering costs."

"The public option is critical to health care reform," Wilson concluded. "Now is not the time for politicians to get cold feet just because a handful of special-interest-backed protesters spread lies and make noise at public forums. Congress and the President need to demonstrate real leadership and move forward with true health care reform."

## CLIMATE CHANGE A PRIORITY FOR NATIONAL LEAGUE ACTION

Global climate change is one of the most serious threats to the environment, health and economy of our nation. Recent scientific studies show that global warming is already causing environmental changes that will have significant global economic and social impacts.

The League believes that now is the time to act on global climate change. We can reduce global warming pollution by using existing technologies to make power plants and factories more efficient, make cars go farther on a gallon of gasoline, and shift to cleaner technologies. Cities, states and individuals are already adopting many of these solutions, which reduce our dependence on oil, reduce air pollution, and protect pristine places from oil drilling and mining. State and local initiatives are proving that answers exist. To reinforce and expand on those efforts, the League urges federal action that reduces global warming pollutants on a national and global scale.

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LWVUS URGES COPYCAT ORGANIZATION TO END MISLEADING HEALTH CARE

Washington, DC – In a hand-delivered letter, the League of Women Voters called on the “League of American Voters” (LAV) to “cease and desist” from using a name clearly designed to be confused with the League’s in order to disseminate misleading information and block health care reform.

“The League of American Voters health care ad makes misleading statements in an inflammatory way,” League of Women Voters President Mary G. Wilson stated in her letter to LAV Executive Director Bob Adams. “Not only does your ad distort the facts on health care reform, it does so using a name that is deceptively similar to the League of Women Voters,” Wilson said.

“We are not convinced that this startup group is a credible organization with authority to speak on behalf of American voters,” Wilson said. “It may have a legitimate-sounding name, but—until we know who is funding the ads—there is no reason to believe that it is anything other than another organization serving as a conduit for big-money attacks on health care reform.”

“This is typical of the kinds of things we are seeing from the opponents of health care reform. Intentionally putting out bad information to mislead, confuse and scare Americans,” Wilson charged.

“This copycat group appears to be entirely inaccessible to the public. We had to hand-deliver our letter because the

group’s website lists no email address or fax number,” said Wilson, pointing out that the group’s office address is shared with several lobbying groups who were unable to locate LAV management or staff.

“The League is releasing the text of this letter to set the record straight: The work of Mr. Adams’ organization should in no way be confused with the League of Women Voters,” Wilson added.

“The League of Women Voters of the United States has more than 150,000 members and supporters nationwide, and we are one of the most trusted, non-partisan organizations in the U.S. Our members and the public rely on us to share information responsibly and accurately, because that is what we have done for almost 90 years,” Wilson said.

“Make no mistake: The League of Women Voters believes quality, affordable health care should be available to all Americans,” Wilson stated.

“The League of American Voters would best serve Americans by telling the truth in its ads. Our democracy depends on honest and open debate among real people, not misinformation from mysterious, inaccessible organizations that get money from unknown sources to create national TV spots in order to block needed health care reform,” Wilson stated.

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ADDITIONAL ISSUES LEAGUE IS WATCH-

3CEDAW

CEDAW, the United Nations Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly in 1979. The treaty commits ratifying nations to take concrete action to improve the status of women and to reverse discrimination and end violence against women in their own countries and around the world. The United States has never ratified CEDAW, making it one of the few countries to fail to do so. The League believes that the United States should ratify CEDAW.

At the Great American Write-in, which our local League participated in this August, our letters thanked both of our Senators

3CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

The cost of political advertising has skyrocketed in the past two decades and has played a major role in driving The League strongly supports legislation to fix the public financing system for presidential candidates and to establish congressional public financing. Escalating campaign costs drive out potential candidates and require those running for office to spend too much time raising money – too often from special interests.

3ETHICS AND LOBBYING REFORM

The last Congress passed new ethics and lobbying laws. Now is the time to ensure that the ethics process works to fight corruption and to limit the undue influence of special interest lobbyists.

3CIVIL LIBERTIES

There are fundamental principles that guard our liberty—from independent judicial review of law enforcement actions to prohibitions on indiscriminate searches—that must be preserved. Basic civil liberties must be protected as the nation seeks to guard against terrorism and other threats to national security.

Interested in this issue? Join the League’s nationwide, members-only email discussion group, LWV-Liberty, which our own Linda Phillips co-moderates.

**ACT NOW!**  
**Stay informed on issues.**

The state League has rolled out a new tool to help members stay actively informed on specific issues. To receive emailed LWVC Action Alerts, go to [www.ca.lwv.org](http://www.ca.lwv.org) and click on "Act Now!" to participate directly in shaping issues important to strong communities.

**THE LEAGUE IS ON FACEBOOK**

Become a fan of LWVUS on Facebook by going to Facebook.com and typing in "League of Women Voters U.S." in the Search box. As a fan, you can learn a lot by reading comments of League members, from all over the country, about current events and what various Leagues are working on. Then type "League of Women Voters Santa Barbara" in Facebook's Search box, and become our League's fan too!

**UN Day 2009 ~ November 7, 2009**

***"Cool Solutions to Global Warming"***

UN Day is being presented by the United Nations Association, Santa Barbara and Tri-County Chapter, and a coalition of other non-profit organizations including LWVSB. The event is part of the SBCC Adult Ed Program scheduled for Saturday, November 7 from 8 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. at the Fe Bland Auditorium on Santa Barbara City College's West Campus. Admission is free.

**LEAGUE STORYBANK**

The national League has an inspiring, interesting Storybank online with numerous individual stories of League members' experiences, successes and triumphs. Our president, Dr. Linda Phillips, is the only LWVSB member who has posted her story so far, but all members are encouraged to consider contributing to the Storybank. Tips on writing your story are on the site as well. Personal stories of achievement and leadership are especially requested. You can find the Storybank through the "Search" spot on the home page of LWVUS at [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

**MEMBERSHIP FORM to join LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SANTA BARBARA**

- Here's my annual membership dues of \$60\*
- Second member in same household \$30
- Student \$30
- Please send me more information about League
- I can't join right now; here is my contribution of \$\_\_\_\_\_ to support the League.

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Make check payable to: League of Women Voters of Santa Barbara, 328 A E. Carrillo St, Santa Barbara, CA 93101

*\*Discounted dues are available for special circumstances. Contact Joanie Jones - 683-1937.*

## CALENDAR – OCTOBER 2009

- 6 **Tuesday** **Supper Unit:** 5:30 p.m., Madame Lu's Restaurant, 3524 State St. Co-chairs: Lesley Alexander & Bev King
- 7 **Wednesday** **Carpinteria Unit:** 10 a.m., Carpinteria Women's Club, 1059 Vallecito Rd. Chair: Barbara Godley
- 7 **Wednesday** **Evening Unit:** 7:30 p.m., Pat Shewczyk's home, 5044 Walnut Park Dr. Co-chairs: Sheila Kamhi and Pat Shewczyk
- 9 **Friday** **League Board Meeting:** 10 a.m., 328 E. Carrillo St.
- 14 **Wednesday** **Maravilla Unit:** 2 p.m., 5481 Calle Real. Chair: Marge Nefstead
- 21 **Wednesday** **Community Forum: State Government Reform**, 12 - 2 p.m. Speakers include **Xandra Kayden**, LWVC, and **Tracy Westen**, Center for Governmental Studies at Louise Lowry Davis Community Center - De La Vina & Victoria Streets. Brown bag lunch, coffee and cookies provided.

## LOOKING AHEAD TO NOVEMBER

- 3 **Tuesday** **Supper Unit:** 5:30 p.m., Madame Lu's Restaurant. Contact Lesley Alexander, or Bev King,
- 4 **Wednesday** **Carpinteria Unit:** 10 a.m., Carpinteria Women's Club, 1059 Vallecito Rd. Contact Barbara Godley, 969-9942.
- 4 **Wednesday** **Evening Unit:** 7:30 p.m., location TBA, Contact Pat Shewczyk,
- 11 **Wednesday** **Maravilla Unit:** 2 p.m., 5481 Calle Real. Contact Marge Nefstead,

967-0922 Cell 451-7830



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS  
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The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization of women and men, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. If you would like to join the local League, send in the form on pg. 7 or call the League office at 965-2422.

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