



The Sacramento Voter

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Unit Meetings

There are no unit meetings
scheduled for May.

Units are encouraged to get
together for their usual social
end of the year potlucks and
parties.

Please attend the Annual
Meeting on May 26th at the
Casa Garden Restaurant.
Watch your mail for the "Call
to the Annual Meeting" which
will have all the details.

COME TO THE ANNUAL MEETING

May 26, 2005

The League of Women Voters of Sacramento County will hold its Annual Meeting Thursday evening, May 26. This meeting is required by our bylaws and allows our membership to vote on the proposed budget for the next year, the proposed program, and the proposed Board of Directors slate. It's a very important meeting, plus it's a wonderful way to socialize and dine with your fellow League members.

TIME: Our meeting will begin at 6:00 for registration and a no-host wine bar. The Annual Meeting will begin at 6:30.

LOCATION: The meeting will be held at Casa Garden Restaurant - Adjacent to the Sacramento Children's Home, 2760 Sutterville Road - From Hwy 99 take 12th Avenue Exit.

MENU: Beef Brisket (our Casa host swears that it's wonderful), garlic mashed potatoes, green salad, vegetable, dessert, beverage or Vegetarian Option

COST: \$20.00 per person (includes tax and gratuity). Proceeds will benefit the Sacramento Children's Home.

Reservations and Checks must be received by May 19.

[Please note: Payment must be made with your reservation. Checks/cash will not be accepted at the door.]

Please mail check and menu selection to:

League of Women Voters
1507 21st Street, Suite 303
Sacramento, CA 95814
916-447-8683

Name: _____

Phone #: _____

Menu Selection: **Beef** _____
 Vegetarian _____

Amount Enclosed: _____

No Meal/Meeting Only _____ (No charge)

President's Column:

Hazel Bergtholdt

As one of three Co-Presidents, this is my first and last "President's Message". Serving on the Board this year was like living in an Agatha Christie novel. Every time we held another board meeting, it appeared another of our numbers had vanished, a casualty of encroaching job demands or personal issues.

Our board may have been lean but we accomplished a lot in a presidential election year with an unprecedented number of ballot measures.

We are going to celebrate our successes and discuss our challenges at the May 26, 6:00pm Annual Meeting at Casa Gardens.

For new members this is an excellent way to meet others in the League over dinner and find out what the League has to offer.

This year I sat on the fund raising committee for State of Community Luncheon and the Nominating Committee in search of new board members in addition to my duties as Voter Service Director.

I discovered there are all kinds of opportunities for our almost 300 members. This summer we will provide orientation for those new members, so please stay tuned. Additionally I am currently planning a celebration for the 85th Anniversary of women winning the right to vote. If you are interested in planning a party in late August to celebrate 85 years of suffrage please contact me.

I really want to thank those brave enough to step up to the board table last year. Especially those who also had the courage to know when it became too much. The contributions of Sandra Navarro, Mary Bell and Tom Swift were invaluable. I also want to take this time to thank Rita who really helped me through some of my hectic election schedule.

Finally, I want to thank those die hards on the board like my co-Presidents Carol Moon Goldberg and Suzanne Phinney, and the other board members Vivian Skintauy, and Rick Bettis, the few, the proud, the 2004-2005 LWVSCo Board. Stay tuned to the May 26 Annual meeting for details on all our amazing accomplishments.

The State League is hosting its annual meeting in Orange County this year from May 20 to May 22. If you are interested in being a delegate please contact me.

Fighting for California's Future

League of Women Voters of California

We believe California's budget should invest in California's future:

- We believe in a California that provides high-quality public services for all Californians, protects consumers, the environment, and our quality of life, builds the infrastructure we need to prosper, and that fosters opportunity, economic growth, and strong and vibrant communities.
- We believe that a responsible California budget would keep its commitment to meet the basic needs of our children, our seniors, our families, and our future. We believe there are budget choices beyond cuts.
- We believe in a balanced budget that invests in the future, rather than one that mortgages our future with more borrowing to fill a structural budget gap.

We support a balanced solution to the budget crisis:

- We support a balanced solution to the budget crisis, rather than a budget that seeks to solve the problem only through cuts and borrowing.
- We support raising revenues needed to prevent cuts, including closing tax loopholes, eliminating some of the tax cuts of the last decade, and updating our tax system to reflect our changing economy.

We oppose automatic mechanisms to cut vital and needed services:

- We oppose policies, in the legislature and on the ballot, which would hinder the ability of the State to meet the current and future needs of all Californians.
- We oppose proposals that would grant the Governor new powers to make unilateral cuts; formulas that would impose automatic across-the-board cuts; stricter spending caps; and other policy changes that seek to "starve the public sector" and which would damage healthcare, education, and other vital services that all Californians depend on.

* * * * *

3/28/05--The League of Women Voters of California has joined other organizations and individuals who are seeking a fair and sustainable solution to California's ongoing budget crisis in endorsing this statement.

Making the Tax System Reflect California's Economy

League of Women Voters of California

The League has often looked at tax expenditures as one good way to address the state's structural budget deficit. (Another article in this series reports on a bill to require regular evaluation of tax expenditures.)

However, there are many changes that would help our tax system more closely align with our 21st century economy and also help address the deficit. Thoughtful League members will want to consider the varied proposals for changes to our tax system that are being discussed around the state.

Our state's sales tax base has not reflected the changes in our economy to a more service-oriented one.

Because a sales tax is meant to capture a small amount of the money spent by citizens in order to help finance public expenditures, the sales tax is a logical place to look for added revenue. Lenny Goldberg of the California Tax Reform Association suggests that there are many untaxed "services" that are actually a temporary use of tangible commodities which should be taxed. These include admission to golf courses, gyms, concerts and sporting events. Even without taxing labor services per se, adding such taxes for use of a commodity to our tax structure would add more than \$800 million annually. Another consideration is that broadening the tax base would allow the possibility of lowering the sales tax rate.

Although progressive, our personal income tax base and rate structure has several weaknesses that should be considered. Having a top tax bracket that begins at the \$40,000 income level for an individual (\$80,000 for a couple) means that this tax system may not be as progressive as warranted. Additionally, high-income earners have received windfall savings due to federal income tax cuts-but federal spending cuts continue to lead to California budgetary losses. Reinstating the top tax brackets of 10 and 11 percent that the state had under Governor Pete Wilson in the early 1990s would greatly benefit California's treasury and more closely reflect the income distribution of today's families.

Corporate taxes provide a smaller percentage share of tax revenues than they did in the 1980s, even though the economy is growing. Addressing loopholes and incentives that may not be effective and making other reforms to the corporate tax structure could generate substantial revenue.

The local property tax is another area that must be addressed for the state as a whole to be solvent. An area of property tax law that may require changes is the complex "change of ownership" rules that define when investment property is reassessed. Currently, these laws allow for very similar commercial properties to pay disparate amounts in property taxes. This is not fair to newer owners or to the citizens of California. Another reform supported by League positions would be a constitutional amendment to require the periodic reassessment of nonresidential property at market value. The California Tax Reform Association has written extensively on this subject; to research it more thoroughly, visit their Web site, www.caltaxreform.org.

It is clear that substantial revenue could be generated through changes to some of California's tax policies. Such changes would also help alleviate the ongoing structural budget deficit. A review of the current tax system will certainly uncover many reforms that are appropriate, including some mentioned here. California needs the revenue that will provide a good education system, public services, and sound infrastructure. Our state's future depends on a tax structure that is sustainable-one that is fair, efficient and equitable.

Tax Expenditure Reform Bill

League of Women Voters of California

"Tax expenditures" is a term of art for tax credits, exemptions, deductions and other special tax breaks or incentives. They are called expenditures because they have the same effect as on-budget subsidies or rebates. Tax expenditures are forgone revenues that would otherwise be available to balance the state budget, an issue of particular importance in tight budget years. According to the Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO), tax expenditures result in state General Fund revenue reductions of more than \$30 billion each year.

League positions say tax expenditures should be in the interest of the general public and not just a specific group, provide benefits that significantly outweigh the increased burden to others, and contribute to tax equity. We have long advocated regular review and justification of existing tax breaks by the legislature.

Last year we supported a bill by Assembly member Mark Ridley-Thomas that would have required the Department of Finance to make an annual tax expenditure report. Continued on the next page.

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ture report to the legislature that included a description of current tax expenditures, their original intent, the number and type of taxpayers that benefit from each, and an estimate of the revenue loss to the state. The report was intended to give the legislature a basis for evaluating existing tax expenditures against other pressing state needs.

That bill passed the legislature but was vetoed by the Governor on the grounds that the Department of Finance did not have access to adequate information needed to provide the "dynamic analyses" of tax expenditures called for by the bill. A dynamic revenue analysis is a method of evaluation based on estimates of the probable behavioral responses to the tax expenditure by taxpayers, businesses, and others. (As one can imagine, the assumptions used in such a model can greatly influence the results.)

The bill has been changed to meet the Governor's objections and reintroduced as AB 168 (Ridley-Thomas), strongly supported by the LWVC. It now requires reports from the Franchise Tax Board and the Board of Equalization that would provide the necessary information. The reports would be limited to revenue losses from tax expenditures in excess of \$10 million.

Each year beginning in 2007, the Department of Finance would be required to submit a tax expenditure report in conjunction with the Governor's budget. The LAO would be required to review the reports and make recommendations to the legislature on tax expenditures that should be modified or repealed.

Tax breaks are not all bad. They can function as a carrot that may work to produce public benefits more efficiently than the stick of regulation or the creation of new government programs. Many, however, never produce predicted results for the public good and stay in place with no serious review.

The impact on the state General Fund of the major kinds of tax relief enacted since 1997-98 has risen from \$174 million in 1997-98 to nearly \$7 billion in 2005-06. Regular evaluation of tax expenditures would be a significant reform of the budget process. It is past time to begin.



A Call to Action--Support Legislative Redistricting

League of Women Voters of California

ACTION NEEDED: Contact Governor Schwarzenegger and legislative leaders about redistricting reform. Urge them to work together to consider and pass a LEGISLATIVE measure that will be placed on the next statewide ballot. Tell them that reform of the redistricting process should include:

- an independent, diverse citizens' commission to draw the lines for congressional, state senate, state assembly, and Board of Equalization districts
- an open process with information readily available to the public and opportunities for public comment at all stages
- fair criteria for drawing district lines
- no provision for "mid-decade redistricting"-i.e., for drawing new lines before the 2010 census.

BACKGROUND: Taking redistricting out of the hands of the legislature was one of the reforms called for by the Governor in his State of the State address last January. He challenged legislators to enact this and several other proposals, and he stated that he would "go to the people" through the initiative process if the legislature did not carry out his wishes.

Several proposals to have districts drawn by an independent panel have been introduced in the legislature, but they have not made any headway in the legislative process. In fact, none has even been scheduled for a hearing in policy committee.

The governor's proposal was introduced by Assembly Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy as **ACAX1 3** in a special legislative session. It has been amended to include a number of improvements suggested by Common Cause, the League, and others. The LWVC has informed the author that we will support his bill if it is further amended to delete a provision calling for mid-decade redistricting.

Two other bills that would give the task of drawing district lines to an independent redistricting commission, **SCA 3** (Lowenthal) and **ACAX1 5** (Canciamilla and Richman), are supported by the LWVC. Since all three bills would amend the state constitution, upon passage by the legislature they would go before the people for a vote.

Meanwhile, a number of initiatives have been proposed to change the redistricting process. One, by Ted Costa, is actively being promoted. Supporters have

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raised enough funds to ensure that enough signatures can be gathered to place it on the ballot. The League has not taken a position on this initiative, but we note that it includes a requirement for immediately drawing new district lines if voters pass the measure. Since an initiative cannot be amended once the process has begun, proponents could not alter their measure, even if they wished to do so.

THE MESSAGE: Californians want real redistricting reform. The only way a satisfactory measure can be crafted is through the legislative process, where proposals can be examined and improvements to them made.

Tell Governor Schwarzenegger and Assembly Member McCarthy that you appreciate their efforts and hope they will remove the mid-decade redistricting provision so that a compromise bill can be crafted. Ask them to work with the Democrats to produce a constitutional amendment that will be passed by the legislature and by the voters.

Urge Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez and Senate President pro Tempore Don Perata to go forward with hearings on the existing bills. Tell them legislators should get public input about good and bad features and discuss improvements so that negotiations with the governor and his party will be fruitful.

Also, contact your own senator and assembly member and ask them to support their leaders in the effort to find a legislative solution to this essential reform.

LWVC REDISTRICTING POSITION IN BRIEF: Support a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation in the state legislature and in the House of Representatives with maximum opportunity for public scrutiny. Support of a bipartisan commission as the preferred redistricting body.

The full position appears on the [LWVC Redistricting Web page](#).

FOR MORE INFORMATION: Go to the [LWVC Web page on Redistricting](#).

CONTACT INFORMATION:

Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger
State Capitol Building
Sacramento, CA 95814
916-445-2841; Fax 916-445-4633

Or contact a field office in Fresno, L.A., Riverside, San Diego, or San Francisco; see "Contact the Governor" at www.governor.ca.gov

Assembly Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001
916-319-2032; Fax 916-319-2132

Assembly Speaker Fabian Nunez
P.O. Box 942849
Sacramento, CA 94249-0001
916-319-2046; Fax 916-319-2146

Senate President pro Tem Don Perata
P.O. Box 942848
Sacramento, CA 94248-0001
916-445-6577 or 916-651-4009; Fax 916-327-1997

For your own senator and assembly member, visit <http://www.leginfo.ca.gov/yourleg.html>

Essay

Elise Schlissel

The following essay was written by high school student Elise Schlissel of Moraga. This essay helped make her a semi-finalist for the Presidential Scholars program. She will be attending Princeton University next fall. Clearly, Elise is a future leader. Wouldn't it be great if she were a League member?

"Are you a feminist?" my history teacher asked me during my sophomore year in high school. "Define feminist," I said quickly back to her, uncertain of what the correct answer was for me and not comfortable with being on the spot. I, like so many others, had often heard the negative connotations associated with feminism and didn't have a strong understanding of what the term actually meant. I'd also never really thought about whether that was really a category I fell into.

"Do you believe in social, economic, and political equality for women?," she asked. "Of course," I replied. That question was easy to answer as I seem to have been born with the idea of a need for equal treatment of all people already deep within me. "Then you're a feminist," she told me.

I accepted what my teacher said, but coming to truly understand the history of feminism and what being a feminist means today has been an ongoing process. Throughout high school, I have become increasingly interested in the history of struggles for women's rights in America. An avid feminist herself, my history teacher has a bumper sticker in her classroom with Susan B. Anthony's famous, "Failure is impossible"

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quote on it. As I've learned more and more about feminism and the variety of movements for women's rights in America I've come to discover and respect Ms. Anthony's mentality time and time again. The more I study women's history, the more I discover about where my interests and my heart lie-deep within this quest for equality that continues on today. I am fascinated by these movements because of both their philosophies and the personalities deeply dedicated to the movement's goals who were and continue to be willing to sacrifice anything and everything for their idea of equality.

I have pursued my interest in women's history and specifically movements towards equality at every opportunity. Sophomore year I participated in a book group in which we read the book *Who Cooked the Last Supper?* which details women's role in society dating from prehistoric times to the present. When presented with the opportunity to pick any topic in post-World War II United States history for a research paper my junior year, I chose to explore the second wave of American feminism and had the opportunity to read a few incredibly interesting books including Betty Friedan's autobiography, *Life So Far*. In the AP Government course I took over the summer at Junior Statesmen of America Summer School, I wrote another research paper which compared the movement for women's suffrage to the movement for the passage of the Equal Rights Amendment and analyzed the reasons for each movement's successes and failures.

Each time I begin to study another aspect of women's history I discover more and more evidence of the previously widespread discrimination against women. Each time I become further convinced of the need which has been present throughout history for women to stand up in defense of their fundamental rights. Perhaps due to my fundamental belief in the equality of all people, I've never understood the discrimination against women which seems to always have been inherent in American society. I still cannot understand the mentality of people who have cast women into inferior roles and denied them equality in education, the workplace, and society, due merely to their sex without giving them the opportunity to establish themselves as people independent of their gender. I still find the idea that women, one half of this nation's population, were arrested for attempting to exercise one of the supposedly basic rights of citizens of this nation, the right to vote, a disturbing fact which is at complete odds with this nation's founding principles. I still consider the thought that evidence of this discrimination

exists in modern society incredibly disappointing. But, I have also come to develop a great sense of respect for the men and women of history who have dedicated themselves to this cause. I look to these men and women as my heroes.

In my mind, feminists who have made a name for themselves by altering the course of history deserve some of the greatest respect accorded to historical figures as they have had the courage to challenge society's accepted norms and truly reach for their ideal of equality at great personal risk.

As I look to the nascent stages of the feminist movement, to the early days when women had first begun the long struggle for the right to vote, I am struck by the forward thinking of the founders of this movement and idolize them for their ability to recognize a need for change and act upon it. The birth of this movement provides a perfect example-when two women, Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott were in attendance at a World Anti-Slavery Convention in London in 1840 they recognized the injustice inherent in the convention's policy and society's norm. Female abolitionists at this meeting were expected to sit in a separate area from men and were not granted the same rights of participation. Despite the fact that many of these women were as, if not more, adamant than their husbands about the abolitionist cause and had traveled the same distances to defend this cause in which they believed so strongly, they were forbidden from participating in the standard sense. Stanton and Mott recognized the injustice and irony in this blatantly unequal treatment and saw clearly the need to take action; eight years later they held the historic Seneca Falls Convention in New York, the first convention which dealt with the issue of women's rights.

These two women, along with many of their contemporaries, were clearly trailblazers. As I consider what it is I want to do with my life, I look to these women who have displayed such foresight and vision, such motivation and dogged determination, such a clear commitment to their personal ideals and standards and recognize how important it is to leave your mark on the world. These were the women that changed our world forever. These were the women who saw a need for change and acted on it. These were the women who refused to sit on the sidelines or be forced into the background by men in particular or society in general. These are the women who are my heroes.

For example, I look to Alice Paul, the young and energetic feminist who joined the suffrage movement in the early twentieth century, for inspiration. Only in her
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mid-twenties when she entered the suffrage movement, Alice Paul displayed an amazing sense of determination throughout her life which is nothing short of inspiring. During Woodrow Wilson's presidency and the United States' involvement in the First World War, Alice Paul frequently picketed the President, standing outside of the White House holding signs like the one displayed in this picture. Despite the harassment that she faced from people who passed by and even the police, Alice Paul refused to stop. She knew what she was doing was right, and that was far more important to her than any external validation. As the months wore on, Paul proved time and time again that she could not be deterred from her goals. When she and some of her fellow picketers were arrested under the false pretense that they had "disrupted traffic," they peacefully entered prison. However, even imprisonment could not sway Alice Paul's belief in the justice of her fight. Even complete exhaustion could not force her to lose sight of her greater goal-winning the right to vote for women.

Severely mistreated in prison, Alice Paul made a bold statement against her unfair arrest and treatment by refusing to eat. She led the other imprisoned suffragists in a hunger strike until they were force-fed. She continued to refuse to eat even as the prison officials shoved tubes down her throat through which to force food. Rightly convinced that she was justified in her protest and firm in her beliefs, Paul established time and time again that she would not back down in her quest for equality.

I cannot help but be in awe of Alice Paul and other feminists like her-women who dedicated their lives to this cause, women who dedicated their entire being to the ideals of liberty and equality.

When I look at this picture, I realize that these women were asking the key question-the question that should be asked by every woman as she faces discrimination in her life, "How long must women wait for liberty?". In some ways we are still waiting, waiting for equal treatment under the law and equal standing in the eyes of society. And for this we must continue to fight. We must continue to work towards the goals of equal pay and equal representation in the workplace. We must continue to fight for an equal role in the eyes of society. We must remain dedicated to the ideal of equal treatment for women all around the world. But in other ways we, as women, have much to be proud of. We have reached goals which seemed unreachable only decades ago and have expanded far beyond the bound-

aries early feminists anticipated. We have entered into fields of work and education which women had been barred from for centuries. We have broken into the political arena and have started to make our voices heard. We have begun to be considered equal members of society.

Learning about feminism and women's history has been a key part of my development as an individual. Beyond solely educating me in regard to the need to fight injustice wherever it is present in the world, feminist movements throughout history have taught me an important lesson-"Failure is impossible"-not in the typical sense of the word, but in a perhaps more important sense.

The lives of so many feminists, whether or not they achieved their ultimate goal, have taught me that you have never failed if you have fought with all of your heart and soul for something which you believe deeply in. You have never failed if you have pushed the limits accepted by society with all of your strength. You have never failed if you continue to question the world around you and work to make it a world you are proud to live in.

LWVS Diversity Policy

LWVS affirms, in both its values and practices, its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to participation based on national origin, race, gender, creed/religion, age, sexual orientation or disability. (Adopted 2001)

The League recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision making. LWV subscribes to the belief that diversity and pluralism are fundamental to the values it upholds and that this inclusiveness enhances the organization's ability to respond more effectively to changing conditions and needs.

The League affirms its commitment to reflecting the diversity of America in its board, staff and programs.



League of Women Voters of Sacramento County
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Time Value

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Calendar

May

- * – Energy Update Study Kit/Leader's Guide mailed to local Leagues
- 20-22 – LWVC Convention in Garden Grove
- 26 - 6PM – LWVS Annual Meeting.

Ideas? Articles? Send them to
voteditor@lwvsacramento.org.

Thanks to the board and fellow LWV members for their help getting this newsletter out.

—Mark Dempsey, editor
—Jim Collins, assistant editor



League of Women Voters Sacramento Mission Statement

To encourage the informed and active participation of citizens in government and to influence public policy through education and advocacy.