



## LWVUS PRIVATIZATION STUDY

Wednesday, March 7, 2012, 2 p.m.

[LWVDV Office](#), 500 St. Mary's Road, #14, Lafayette, CA



We started our national Privatization Study in February, co-chaired by Sally Germain and Jan Howe. Join us on Wednesday, March 7, as we address the issues:

- When, if ever, is privatization appropriate?
- Are there some government functions that should never be privatized?
- Are there others where privatization is most advantageous?
- What are the societal/community impacts of privatization?

Additional meetings are planned for Wednesdays and possibly Saturdays in March and April. Answers to consensus questions due by May 1.

Answers to the Consensus Questions (available at [www.lwv.org/member-resources/privatization](http://www.lwv.org/member-resources/privatization)) are due at the end of April. This is a great way to participate in core League functions and to help shape League policy positions at the national level.



## LWVC Initiative & Referendum Update Study

Wednesday, March 14, 2012, 1:30 p.m.

[LWVDV Office](#), 500 St. Mary's Road, #14, Lafayette, CA

On Wednesday, March 14th, at 1:30 our state Initiative and Referendum (I-R) Update Study group will meet to:

- Consider the I-R process
- The ways other states and nations approach these democratic functions
- Our current League positions
- Possible alternatives and improvements to different stages of the process

We are very happy that League member Cynthia Landy has agreed to chair this study, which will continue throughout 2012. It's an excellent way to address a process with a major impact on California budget and governance, and one that addresses core questions of democracy.

Explore the [www.lwvc.org](http://www.lwvc.org) website for further information, and join us!



## THE PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

By Lee Lawrence, President, LWV of Diablo Valley

The LWV of Diablo Valley has been making an impact! In February at the Board of Supervisors hearing, we endorsed the Contra Costa County Community Clean Water Initiative, a means of addressing toxic storm run-off in our communities created by 19 local cities and towns with the Contra Costa Water Program. Our endorsement received notice in local online blogs, and we have been invited to write an op-ed on the subject.

And in attending the LWV of California's Regional Workshops in San Jose, our Action Committee's plan for a series of programs focused on "Mending the Social Safety Net" was influential in shaping the agenda of a planned statewide Budget Committee. Our state budget problems should not be resolved on the backs of the poor. We also suggested the newly formed Budget Committee focus on the legislature's Budget Subcommittees, as our state Senator Mark deSaulnier said these subcommittees were key in establishing priorities and dollar commitments, and that the larger Budget Committee hardly ever reversed the subcommittee decisions. This suggestion was also accepted. To participate in creating our Safety Net events, contact Gwen Watson and Mary Fenelon. To get an overview of the state budget after the latest cuts, participate in Next10's participatory "[budget challenge](http://www.next10.org)" at [www.next10.org](http://www.next10.org)

The LWV-California's regional workshop also provided very important information on redistricting, the upcoming open primary, online registration, voter ID in California, and privatization, which we will be incorporating in upcoming events and *Voters*.

Our League voice continues to be a powerful advocate at local and state levels; participating in League activities is one of the most effective ways of having an impact.

This spring will be a great way to get to know how the League works by participating in our orientation sessions, voter registration, Pros and Cons on ballot measures, Adopt-a-Poll, our candidate debates, and in our studies on privatization and California's initiative and referendum process. Please join us in impacting our world!

## WORK THE POLLS



We urgently need help on June 5, Election Day! Our League office is an election site, and we supply clerks and an inspector who donate their stipends to the League. On Election Day, clerks may sign up for half a day or the whole day; inspectors must be on hand all day long. Sometime in April or May clerks must attend a two to three hour long training session, while inspectors are required to complete a similar course either in person or on-line.

If you would like to be involved in this very important process, please [contact us](#).

## LWVDV ENDORSES THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY COMMUNITY CLEAN WATER INITIATIVE



The federal Clean Water Act initially focused on single source polluters of our streams and waterways, such as sewage discharge, factory emissions, and dumping. Significant progress has been made in cleaning our waters. The next stage is for local communities to respond to a growing and difficult problem, the pollution of storm water runoff. Water from our roofs and gardens, including chemicals, pesticides, fertilizer residue, oil, and gas from our pavement and roadways also enter our rivers and bays, and federal and state mandates require us to address these issues.

The League strongly believes in the protection of stream flows for fish and wildlife habitat and the protection of the natural environment in water origin and water use. This Clean Water initiative accomplishes these goals. Our board voted to endorse the Contra Costa County Community Clean Water Initiative, which is consistent with our League positions. The County worked in concert with the 19 incorporated cities to develop a regional response to the problem, a parcel tax increase to provide funds for each community to implement the solutions most appropriate to each city or town. The existing stormwater fee parcel tax has been in place since 1993 and has not covered the costs of the county clean water program for several years.

Our League positions include safeguards for all tax increases, and the initiative is in compliance with them:

1. An independent Citizens Oversight Committee allows for citizen participation in the oversight of the funds collected and spent.
2. By state law, the funds cannot be used for any other purpose than the Clean Water Program, and all funds stay in and are expended in the jurisdiction where they are generated (i.e. all funds paid by Pittsburg stay in Pittsburg and are expended in Pittsburg).
3. The measure contains a sunset clause in 10 years and is indexed for inflation to provide for cost increases. Only property owners who will be paying the fee are allowed to vote.

League positions support government having sufficient revenue to perform its functions.

Vote by Mail ballots were sent to every property owner in the affected areas in the last week in February. A contractor will administer the election in compliance with Prop 218. The Elections Department cannot administer this type of property owner election since the Elections Department only tracks registered voters and not property owners.

This measure was sent to property owners for their vote after a public hearing by the County Board of Supervisors. **If this measure does not pass, Contra Costa County as well as individual cities in the county may face significant fines for non-performance of clean water standards.** These fines may be in excess of the parcel tax increase. The average residential property owner in the County will pay less than \$2 per month for the parcel tax increase.

**For these reasons, the League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley urges all property owners to vote "Yes" vote on the County Clean Water Initiative.** Please return your ballots before April 6 to be counted.

## PROS AND CONS



Two ballot measures qualified for the June ballot before the new law passed that moved initiatives and referendum to the November ballot. Prop 28 addresses term limits for the legislature, and Prop 29 imposes additional cigarette tax for cancer research. **The LWV of Clifornia endorses Prop 28 and is neutral on Prop 29.** Let the League office know if you would like to participate in Pros and Cons this spring. Call us at (925) 283-2235.

## MENDING THE CONTRA COSTA COUNTY SOCIAL SAFETY NET

The LWVDV Action Committee is planning a series of events in support of our local priority of examining the social safety net in Contra Costa in a time of economic downturn and budget cuts.

We have formed a Social Safety Net subcommittee, chaired by Gwen Watson and Mary Fenelon and including Jan Howe, Ann Flynn, and Lee Lawrence. The event planning subcommittee first urges our members to look at the upcoming California Budget. We recommend taking the Budget Challenge at the Next10 website [www.Next10.org](http://www.Next10.org), and/or attending one of their participatory events.

We are planning the following series of events:

- Panel on homelessness and affordable housing in **April**  
*Team leaders: Gwen Watson and Mary Fenelon*
- Panel on children and families in **May**  
*Team leader: Ann Flynn*
- Panel on Seniors in **June or September**  
*Team leader: Jan Howe*
- Panel on juvenile justice, criminal justice devolution in **October or November**  
*Team leader: Lee Lawrence*
- Disability and mental illness issues will be dealt with in each panel.

We welcome all interested League members to participate in planning; our next steps will be considering potential panelists, co-sponsors, and appropriate sites in Central and Eastern Contra Costa Counties. We also hope to engage our elected officials. **Please join us Tuesday, March 6, at 2 p.m. at the League Office**, 500 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette, or call (925) 283 2235 to let us know of your interest.

## ORIENTATION AND VOTER REGISTRATION MEETING



In late March or early April we would like to hold a meeting for new and returning members to learn the League Basics, which will help you to function effectively as members.

We will also review the California voter registration form and its various pitfalls so that as League members you are prepared for our May 21 Last Chance Voter Registration and any other voter registration opportunities (such as tabling, etc.).

Please call and leave a message at the League office at (925) 283-2235 if you are interested, and we will arrange times (and places) of convenience for most interested members.

## **BAY AREA LEAGUE DAY: Housing and the Bay Area's Future**

By Mary Fenelon, LWVDV Item Co-chair for Affordable Housing and Director at Large

From discouraging statistics to ideas for improving the affordable housing landscape, plus success stories of advocacy efforts and on-the-ground developments, the Bay Area League Day "Housing and the Bay Area's Future" seminar in Oakland on October 4 was time well spent.

Keynote speaker David Rosen's "Out of the Wreckage: A New Housing Policy" provided some discouraging California statistics:

- There have been 4 million foreclosures, with 5 million to go and a drop in asset valuation of 31%.
- There are officially 11.99% (2 million) unemployed, but effectively the numbers are 22% (3.9 million).
- California is roughly \$25 billion in debt.
- California population will grow from the current 39 million to 50 million by 2050, resulting in 7 million new households and 11 million new workers.
- The demise of the Redevelopment Agencies threatens housing development funds, when even in the best years, on average only 5,400 affordable units were built.
- The tax structure is heavily weighted by far to subsidizing housing for the \$100,000/\$200,000 annual wage earner.

But Rosen also provided some suggested actions:

- Do mortgage modification now.
- Acquire market rate rentals for long term availability.
- Reform RDA/CA.
- Expand Housing Authority partnerships with Housing and Urban Development (HUD), Department of Transportation (DOT) and the Environmental Protection (EPA).
- Develop employer-assisted housing programs, i.e., within a cafeteria benefits programs or by developing housing on corporate, university and hospital campuses.

Representatives from the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) and the San Mateo County Department of Housing addressed policy issues from regional and county perspectives, including land use strategy with housing and transportation and how counties can make the multitude of programs work through deft planning. Public Advocates, a nonprofit law firm and advocacy group, leverages collaboration with grassroots groups to address systemic housing, education, and transit issues through strategic partnerships, policy and media advocacy and litigation.

Jack Nagle of Goldfarb & Lipman said the demise of Redevelopment Agencies meant a loss of nearly \$1 billion (2009/10 figures) for affordable housing in addition to the leverage it gave to obtain flexible gap funding from other public/private sources. NOTE: SB 654 (Steinberg) would provide \$1.4 billion in unencumbered housing fund balances that could continue local affordable housing activities in the short term. It passed the Senate on January 31 but may not pass in the Assembly. The LWV of CA supports SB 654.

*Continued on the next page*

*Bay Area League Day, continued from the previous page*

Leaders from Eden Housing, Affordable Housing Associates, EAH Housing, and EveryOne Home discussed some of their projects, how they situate, finance, and manage them and the positive impact on the communities they serve.

Tim Iglesias, a professor at USF, provided excellent advice on how to get projects approved by planning ahead and preparing for the inevitable political and community roadblocks before they become an issue.

This outstanding program provided solid information for all who are involved in providing stable housing for those most in need. It was also heartening to know that in this time of such political negativity on public support for the poor, there are many dedicated to making a difference.

## **REDISTRICTING NEWS FROM THE LWV OF CALIFORNIA**

A referendum on the state Senate district maps drawn by the Citizens Redistricting Commission has qualified for the November ballot. A “Yes” vote will mean support for the new maps drawn by the Citizen's Redistricting Commission, whose formation was supported by the League of Women Voters of California. The state Supreme Court has approved these maps for use this year, before the referendum vote in November.

A legal challenge in federal district court to the congressional maps has been dismissed with finality.

The Citizens Redistricting Commission was informed on January 17 that the U.S. Attorney General does not object to the district maps for the four California counties covered by Section 5 of the Voting Rights Act.



### **JOIN OUR OBSERVER CORPS**

The best way for us to stay in touch with what is happening in the 24 communities in central and eastern Contra Costa County is to participate in our Observer Corps. League members attend local meetings of their city/town council or their school board, to be the eyes and ears of the League at least once every quarter. Between visits, Observers monitor the agendas (available online five days before each meeting) for possible League issues and for compliance with the Brown Act and report to the LWV of Diablo Valley board when appropriate.

Please join us—call the office at (925) 283-2235 to let us know of your interest. It's a great way to keep the pulse of your community, and to help our League have maximum visibility and impact in our communities. We will train you so you will know how to do this, and we hope to have two members per community so you have a buddy and someone to cover for you if you get swamped. It's easy, it's fun, and you get a special League Observer Corps button!

**DONATE**

To support our newsletter and other activities, please donate online by clicking on this button or visiting our website at [www.lwvdv.org](http://www.lwvdv.org).

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Acting Editor: Jeanne Melaugh  
Acting Associate Editor: Lee Lawrence

Email delivery is free, but delivery by U.S. mail is \$10/year.  
Current/past issues are posted on our [website](#).

## MEMBERSHIP RENEWALS AND DIRECTORY UPDATES

If your name appears below, then it is time to renew your membership. Please use the form on the back cover, and send it with your dues to the League Office. If you already have renewed, thank you!

Georgene Egri	Mary Flott	Melinda Hall	Kathy Hicks	Anita Johnson
Jeanne Melaugh	Carol Murota	Barbara Owens	Marian Straehley	Margaret Yeaman

## SAVE THE DATES



- May 5:** Bay Area LWV Convention at Lafayette Public Library 10 a.m. to noon.  
Speaker: Will Travis, former BCDC director, currently One Bay Area Senior Policy Advisor working with the Joint Policy Committee on formulating a regional climate change strategy  
Host: LWV of Diablo Valley
- May 12:** **2012 Conference on California and National Health Care**  
Harberson Hall, Pasadena City College  
[1570 E. Colorado Blvd., Pasadena, CA](#)
- May 18-20:** League of Women Voters of California Council Meeting  
[Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza, 300 J Street, Sacramento CA 95814](#)
- May 21:** Last Chance Voter Registration 5:00 p.m. - 10:00 p.m.  
League members will register voters at local Safeways, etc.
- June 5:** Primary Election in California  
Adopt a Poll at League Office, 500 St. Mary's Road, Lafayette. Volunteer!
- June 9-10:** LWV of the United States Convention, Washington DC
- June 16:** Annual Meeting of the League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley



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**ADDRESS SERVICE  
 REQUESTED**

**The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan political organization that encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.**

**Membership: Join Us or Renew!**

Membership is not based on ability to pay. To pay alternate dues or to request a scholarship, please contact Carole Woods at the League office:  
 (925) 283-2235.

\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$65 Individual Membership. Indicate NEW \_\_\_ or RENEWAL \_\_\_  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$95 Family Membership (2). Indicate NEW \_\_\_ or RENEWAL \_\_\_  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$35 Associate Membership. Indicate NEW \_\_\_ or RENEWAL \_\_\_  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ GIFT MEMBERSHIP (circle appropriate category above)

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\$ \_\_\_\_\_ \$10 included to receive printed copies of the *Voter* by US Mail  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Additional Donation to LWVDV (not tax deductible).  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ **TOTAL** of ALL above enclosed to LWVDV (not tax deductible).  
 \$ \_\_\_\_\_ TAX DEDUCTIBLE DONATION to LWVC.  
 Please make separate check payable to LWVC - Education Fund.

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Please print, complete, and mail this form along with your check to:  
 LWVDV, 500 St. Mary's Road #14, Lafayette, CA 94549

**CALENDAR**

<b>Mar. 6</b>	<b>Action Committee</b> 2 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>
<b>Mar. 7</b>	<b>Privatization Study</b> 2 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>
<b>Mar. 13</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b> 2 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>
<b>Mar. 14</b>	<b>I.R. Study Meeting</b> 1:30 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>