



LWVC ACTION ALERT: KEEP CEQA STRONG!

The League was one of the original supporters of the California Environmental Quality Act, which became law in 1970, and we have continued to advocate for keeping it strong. CEQA is an “environmental bill of rights” for all Californians. It is designed to ensure that people in every California community can understand how land use decisions will impact their communities and health, and can hold public agencies accountable to local and state environmental and land use laws.

Efforts are underway to weaken some of the provisions of CEQA. To learn more and take action, ***see the information on page 3*** of this Voter.

ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, August 6, 2013, 2 p.m

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

.LWVDV BOARD MEETING

Thursday, August 8, 2013, 2 p.m.

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

ACTION COMMITTEE MEETING

Tuesday, September 3, 2013, 2 p.m.

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

LEAGUE LEADERS' LETTER

By Leslie Stewart, VP Admin & Lee Lawrence, VP Action

Highlights of the LWVDV Board retreat on July 13 included:

- A great introduction to LWV structure and resources from Bonnie Hamlin of LWV Oakland, our LWVC Management Training Advisor
- Priority setting by the entire Board and our off-board guests (see below)
- A lively discussion of membership ideas over our brown-bag lunch (more below)
- Lots of imaginative and innovative approaches to making our priorities into realities.

Our priorities for 2013-14 are exciting and we hope you'll get involved in the excitement.

- **Membership:** We're going to redraft our renewal acknowledgement letter, work on the interest survey for new and returning members, continue to involve members of our coalition partners in LWV activities and get sign-in sheets at coalition events co-sponsored by LWV. This next year we're getting into social media with a Facebook page for LWVDV and an account on Twitter!
- **Program:** Money in Politics, Water, Education, Voting Rights, Prisoner Release/Realignment – Look for activities around all of these issues next year, many as partnerships with other organizations. How would you like to help plan one of these events, maybe with another organization you belong to?
- **Voters Service:** Voter registration, especially for First Time Voters, was a hot topic here, with suggestions for outreach and partners – we'll plan to partner with AAUW for a second year to register foster kids, and maybe have some registration tables at farmers markets and flea markets! We also talked about more effectively coordinating Smart Voter with other candidate contacts.



One thing we really didn't get to discuss thoroughly was plans for observing the 60th anniversary of LWVDV. Our LWV was founded in 1953 – how many of us know what Diablo Valley was like then? How do we do a commemoration of how far we've come in 60 years? Any ideas?

We'd like to do a special thank-you to the two off-board members who attended, both of whom raised their hands to do something extra for us this coming year. **Ashley Coates** will expand her role with Smart Voter to become an off-board Voter Service Coordinator – we could use a co-chair for Ashley so that someone can attend board meetings and help as Voter Service hots up in the spring. (Ashley says that a light November election season is a perfect time to learn the ropes!)

And **Audrey Albrecht** has offered to take over maintaining the membership roster as Peggy Huston steps down. This is a vital piece of keeping LWVDV functioning and it will be invaluable to have Audrey doing this job. It would be great to have another volunteer who can learn the ropes along with Audrey and back her up, because this is such an essential role that it's good to have more than one person who knows how to do it.

Also still waiting for further discussion is our observer corps. You'll hear more about this soon, but start thinking about watching the drama that your city council can provide!

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We have heard that industry and developer interests are renewing their efforts to push their anti-CEQA agenda by targeting business-friendly Assembly Members while they are in their districts for summer recess. They hope to build momentum now so that CEQA can be significantly weakened through last-minute backroom dealings once the Legislature reconvenes in August.

Two of our local Assemblymembers are priority targets for action on CEQA: Susan Bonilla and Jim Frazier. Here’s what you can do as an individual (LWVDV is already contacting them in the name of the League of Women Voters):

- **Call your Assembly Member.** You can find **contact information** at <http://assembly.ca.gov/assemblymembers>. (Often calls to district offices are received more readily.)
- Give your name and say you are calling as a constituent.
- Ask for support for keeping CEQA strong, and opposition to any attempts to weaken CEQA. Although the League will make the official contact, you can say you are a League member and you agree with the League’s position of strong support for CEQA.



Some Talking Points for CEQA:

- We stand behind CEQA and the protections it provides for our environment, as well as for community participation in the development approval process.
- This law has served our state well for more than 40 years and has helped to make our state what it is today, a place where millions of people want to live, raise their families, and vacation.
- California’s environmental laws protect public health by requiring that major land use projects take all feasible steps to keep our air and water clean and our environment safe.
- CEQA ensures that new projects limit threats to public health to the extent possible by mitigating any new air and water pollution the project will generate.
- CEQA is a living document and has been updated to fit concerns of the time. We oppose broad changes that would dismantle the significant benefits this law has brought to Californians.
- Adding industry loopholes to exempt development projects and major polluting industries from real environmental review does not serve the best interests of a healthy California.
- By design, the California Environmental Quality Act allows concerned groups to hold industry accountable when public agencies fail to conduct a thorough environmental review. That’s not abuse of the law, it’s using it as it was intended.

LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEW: BUCHANAN



Every year, the League of Women Voters of California sends questions to all the Leagues in California to ask their state senators and assembly members. This year, we interviewed state Senator Mark DeSaulnier and Assemblymembers Susan Bonilla, (reported in the June VOTER) and Joan Buchanan. Here is our report of our interview with Assemblymember Joan Buchanan, District 16: Walnut Creek, Orinda, Lafayette, Moraga, Danville, San Ramon, Livermore. LWVDV interviewers were Lee Lawrence and Joan Lautenberger.

QUESTION 1: Lee Lawrence asked: **California's budget** has both an ongoing structural imbalance, with insufficient revenue for the programs we would like to support, and an ongoing problem with the actual process of passing a budget. Even though we just passed Proposition 30, we recognize that this is just a first step towards financial stability for California.

- a. What measures would you support to continue the progress that Proposition 30 represents?
- b. What measures would you support to change the budget process?

Buchanan: (Note: Buchanan spent most of the fall campaigning for Prop 30, rather than campaigning for herself.) Needless to say, I'm very happy about the passage of Prop.30, but I see it as just a beginning. It has saved the schools from some disastrous cuts, but we need to do more. Currently our state spending on education is just above Mississippi but below Louisiana. If this continues we will not have an educated workforce, which is vital for competing internationally, and nationally. Our 2/3rds majority may give us a chance to make some structural changes that will persist in the future. It will be a relief not to have to make \$1 billion in tax concessions to corporations just to get 3 or 4 Republican votes to pass a budget.

There is also concern about Brown's Local Control Funding Formula for school funding that sends significant money to low-income, non-English-speaking students and foster children while not replenishing the cuts made to more affluent, high achieving districts. The base given to all schools would be close to \$7,000 per pupil, with \$11,000 per pupil going to children in underachieving schools. Other budget remedies I would consider are a 50% or 55% majority to raise taxes, and school bonds.

QUESTION 2: Election Reform Money in Politics. Lee Lawrence asked:

There was an unprecedented amount of money spent in this election in California. What measures would you support to address the problem of money in politics? What improvements are needed to disclosure rules in California?

Buchanan: Disclosure is really the key, and we need to have a system that makes this timely and transparent. SB 52 is a bill I supported last year, and will support again this year, among others.

QUESTION 3: California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA). Joan Lautenberger asked:

During the last legislative session, efforts were made to change the California Environmental Quality Act. In particular, an end of session attempt at a significant rewrite of CEQA was attempted but was not successful. What is your view of CEQA? What changes do you think it needs, if any?

Buchanan: CEQA has done a very good job for protecting the environment, but I think it needs more work to make it useful and workable for businesses and developers. I think this can be done without weakening environmental protections, but simply opening it up means there will be pressure to do so. Senator Rubio's departure to Chevron should be a help. His proposed "reforms" would have significantly weakened the bill. I think in general our state needs to make processes for administrating this kind of bill much more accessible, effective, and less frustrating for businesses attempting to work with us. Technology should provide a means to do this. [Buchanan is currently on the Committee on Accountability and Administrative Review and the Committee on Utilities and Commerce.]

QUESTION 4: omitted

QUESTION 5: What other major issues do you think the Legislature must deal with in 2013? What are your personal priorities?

Buchanan: I'm surprised you have not yet asked me about water! I think this will be a very important issue this year. I currently oppose Governor Brown's plan for tunnels around the Delta. I think we need to emphasize conservation and water storage particularly during wet years, and to explore means of compromise for all interests, including the farmers and the South, and the environmental concerns of the Delta. Governor Brown's \$9 billion water bond is a general fund bond, so all tax payers would be contributing to water-corporation subsidies, instead of a revenue bond in which water users would be directly taxed to pay for the work. The water-based corporations are advocating a 50 year fixed price on the water. As an alternative, I suggest Southern California explore an expanded desalinization program, and that the state stop subsidizing water-intense plants such as rice and cotton in arid areas. [Buchanan hopes her constituents will work against the water bond as currently proposed.]

Education is always a chief concern to me. We need to explore areas of possible compromise, especially in allocating funds among districts. Currently 50% of all births in the state are MediCal births. Half our future students are essentially born into poverty. 57% of students in CA elementary schools qualify for the free lunch program. A quarter of our students are English learners. We need universal preschool to ensure kids get language skills so that when they hit kindergarten they will not already be years behind. Research demonstrates that educational leadership is a key factor in creating effective schools where children are achieving. Offering teachers and administrators more training in leadership could be a top priority.

Our interview with Assembly Member Jim Frazier has not yet occurred – we will report on it in a future VOTER.



CORRECTION: Please correct your Leadership Guide (sent with the June Voter) and your Membership Directory to show Lee Lawrence as Vice President for Action and include her in the list of LWVDV Board Officers.

LWVDV Dues and *The Voter*

By Carole Woods, LWVDV Treasurer



The LWVDV board has often discussed the dues. There's always a balancing act between meeting our obligations and raising the dues, which might discourage some from renewing membership. Like most national organizations, LWVDV doesn't get to keep most of the dues. We are assessed a Per Member Payment from LWV-US (\$31.00), LWV-CA (\$23.00), and LWV-Bay Area (\$1.00); so, out of a \$65 membership, LWVDV keeps \$10.00. These upper levels of LWV do important work and the PMP helps support that work, but you can see that \$10 per member doesn't go very far toward our office and program expenses.

The major part of LWVDV operating income comes from donations, our Contra Costa County contract for distribution of voter registration forms, and the sublease to the Lafayette Moraga Youth Activities.

Not so very long ago, LWVDV printed and sent out *The Voter* out ten times per year to each member. Some leagues have dues of \$80.00 to cover the cost of the newsletter, others have an endowment and can afford to supplement the cost of the newsletter.

The Voter costs about \$1.00 per member/per issue to print and mail, and LWVDV can't afford it. We actually were losing money on membership and having to take money out of the emergency fund. That is why we have gone to an emailed *Voter* or a \$10 additional amount to cover the cost of the printed and mailed *Voter*. It seems a better alternative to raising dues.

LWVUS Agriculture Update Study Needs YOU:

Are you concerned about your food supply? We are receiving information about the LWVUS Agriculture Update Study and that means that it's time for our local study committee to start meeting and educating members.

The Agriculture Update will focus narrowly on: 1) current technology issues in agriculture including genetically modified organisms (GMOs), herbicides, pesticides, agriculture water pollution, aquifer depletion, antibiotics in livestock, and accurate food labeling; and 2) current agriculture finance issues including consolidation in agriculture industries, crop subsidies and the federal agricultural regulatory process.

For starters, the LWVUS Study Committee has some suggested "summer reading": three specific background documents that provide a broad and relatively neutral overview of the complex set of issues addressed by U.S. agricultural policy and three websites that provide similar types of information, but from the website sponsor's point of view. Each of the documents and websites is presenting information that is consistent with the mission of the authors and/or sponsoring organization, so League members must be willing to read widely to get a balanced understanding of the agricultural policy challenges facing the U.S. in particular and the world in general. The links can be found at <http://www.lwv.org/content/agriculture-update-suggested-summer-readings>.

If you are interested in working on this study, please contact Lee Lawrence or Leslie Stewart about participating on the committee.

DONATE

To support our newsletter and other activities, please donate online by clicking on this button or visiting our website at www.lwvdv.org.

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!

Joan Conley
Elaine McClellan
Mary Fenelon

Eunice Kilkenny
Paul Kilkenny
Larry Fielder

Lisa Borba
Sharon Burke
Jean Kitchens

Dolores Morgan
Chris Coons
Anna Lee

Mary Fenelon leaves Board, but not Affordable Housing

By Lee Lawrence, VP for Action

In addition to being our item chair for Affordable Housing, Mary Fenelon has served on the League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley board for the past two years. We have appreciated her excellent administrative skills, her sense of humor, and her common sense and good judgment, as well as her knowledge of the community. Last year she served as VP for Action, chairing monthly meetings. She spoke to the Moraga Planning Commission to state the League's position regarding the sprawling Bollinger Canyon Development. She has also attended meetings in Walnut Creek and Lafayette about affordable housing. Mary will be moving from Lafayette to Walnut Creek this summer, and will be continuing as our item chair for Affordable Housing. She has national experience in this area, and we know she will provide continuing leadership for the League on housing issues. Thank you, Mary, for your service to the League!

National Voter Registration Day is September 24th!

This is a great time to get out and register voters as part of a nationwide effort (with nationwide publicity). We are particularly focused on San Ramon and Antioch – these two communities are having November elections in an “off-year” and many people may not know it’s time to register if they want to vote for a mayor or decide on a tax measure. Mark your calendar, and be sure to let Ashley Coates know if you want to help with voter service activities this fall! You can reach her through the LWVDV office .

The League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley Voter

Published monthly except
June and December

LWV of Diablo Valley
500 St. Mary's Road, #14, Lafayette, CA 94549
925-283-2235 www.lwvdv.org

Editor: Leslie Stewart

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



LWVDV VOTER
 Published ten times per year
League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley
 500 St. Mary's Road, #14
 Lafayette, CA 94549

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 ___
 (For a student or non-citizen non-voting member)

\$ _____ GIFT MEMBERSHIP (circle appropriate category above)

Gift Membership from: _____
 (Please write recipient's information below.)

\$ _____ \$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.

Name(s) _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____ Email _____

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

CALENDAR

Aug. 6 2 pm	Action Committee LWVDV Office
Aug. 8 2 pm	Board Meeting LWVDV Office
Sept. 3 2 pm	Action Committee LWVDV Office