



**MONTHLY MEETINGS**

See calendar, back page

**SAVE THESE DATES:**

Friday, March 7

Ag Update: Economic  
Issues Discussion

LWVDV Boardroom\*

Saturday, March 22

Agriculture Update  
Consensus Meeting

LWVDV Boardroom\*

Saturday, April 26

LWVDV Annual Meeting  
Cedar Room, Lafayette  
Community Center

Saturday, May 3

LWVBA Convention  
Bay-Delta Model  
Sausalito

Saturday & Sunday

May 17-18

LWVC Leadership Council  
San Jose

(See page 5)

June 6-9

LWVUS Convention,  
Dallas

\* LWVDV Boardroom  
500 St. Mary's Rd.  
Lafayette, CA 94549

## **AGRICULTURE UPDATE Discussion Meeting #3**

**Friday, March 7**

**3-5 pm**

**LWVDV Boardroom, 500 St. Mary's Rd.,  
Lafayette**

This will be the final discussion group prior to the consensus meeting. The topic will be Economic Issues, including crop subsidies and whether new advances in agriculture will be enough to feed the world in future years.

## **AGRICULTURE UPDATE CONSENSUS MEETING!**

**Saturday, March 22**

**9:15 am – 3:15 pm**

**LWVDV Boardroom, 500 St. Mary's Rd., Lafayette**

Finally we get to say what we think about this challenging study topic! Come for part of the day or all day – we need your opinion!

Do your homework for the meeting and RSVP for lunch -- read more, starting on page 5.



## LEAGUE LEADER'S LETTER

*By Lee Lawrence, VP Action*

### **Program Planning: our Priorities for 2014-2015**

On Saturday, February 8, League of Women Voters of Diablo Valley members met in the board room to evaluate the League's current positions, recommend any updates, concurrences, or new studies, and to establish local priorities for the next two years. We were pleased to see a new member and a prospective member at our meeting!

We first addressed possible new positions in the light of suggestions from other leagues, including partisan primaries, fracking, human trafficking, economic inequality, and non-partisan redistricting. After discussion, we recommended "**economic inequality**" for study, as League positions do not currently support bills for raising the minimum wage or establishing a living wage and this issue is becoming central in many forums. We also decided on a second issue for study (the LWVUS will count this second suggestion at 50% weight of the first). As many other organizations would work on fracking and human trafficking, we selected **non-partisan redistricting/partisan primaries** as both of these processes contributed to increased polarization in legislatures. These topics are central League concerns.

We recommended **Climate Change** as a program priority for the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area as this would be an important topic on a regional level.

We then voted for 3 priorities for our local League: Economic Justice, Climate Change at the Local Level, and Education.

- **Economic Justice** includes looking at poverty, the social safety net, economic inequality, hunger, homelessness, meeting basic needs, equal opportunity, the wealth gap in Contra Costa, the minimum wage, a living wage, etc. Possible partners for this work include the Interfaith Council of Contra Costa County, CCISCO, affordable housing activists, the Social Justice Committee of the Mt. Diablo Unitarian Universalist Church, the Contra Costa-Solano Food Bank, Loaves and Fishes, and the Safety-Net network.
- **Climate Change at the Local Level** includes sustainability, resiliency, sea level rise, new oil storage and refining, the northern waterfront economic revitalization, local water issues and conservation, new fuel and energy sources. Possible partners include the Hazardous Materials Commission, Save Mt. Diablo, open space advocates, local chapters of environmental groups such as Sierra Club, and Citizen's Climate Lobby.

- **Education** includes the new Common Core Standards and Curriculum, the LWVC's Higher Education Study, pre-school and transitional kindergarten, parenting classes, after school programs, drop-out and truancy prevention, the school to prison pipeline including suspension and expulsion, etc. Possible partnerships include United Latino Voices, local PTAs, local school boards, retired teachers associations, child-abuse prevention groups, First Five groups and Assemblymembers Bonilla and Buchanan.

It looks like a rich and exciting set of priorities for the next two years. Many thanks to our Program Planning group.

**But wait, there's more! (including some big changes for LWVDV positions)**



The Board has approved the LWVUS and LWVBA program planning recommendations to be sent on to those boards in time for convention planning. The local program planning recommendations will be on the Board agenda in March, The Board's recommendations will be voted on at Annual Meeting.

An additional LWVDV program planning item on the March Board agenda is a **revision of the LWVDV positions** to group LWVDV and local unit positions by topic rather than by geography. As part of this process, the committee voted to recommend restudying some positions and dropping others. The full packet of revised LWVDV positions and the recommendations for changes will be e-mailed to members with this Voter. Please contact the office if you need a mailed copy. Again, the Board's recommendations will be voted on at Annual Meeting.

### **Leadership Council has lots to offer you! Yes, you!**

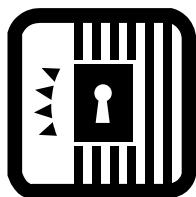
LWVC will hold Leadership Council on May 17 and 18 in San Jose. This will be an intensive weekend with innovative leadership training exercises which can be applied to any organization (but especially League!)

For more information, go to <https://www.facebook.com/events/196481643882466/>  
Want to go? Contact Leslie Stewart before registering. We may be able to carpool!

### **Update: §501(c)(3) Application**

LWVDV was asked to be a "sample League" for the 501(c)(3) application process. Treasurer Carole Woods prepared a budget showing how LWVDV spends its funds. Many thanks to Fred Sullivan for his extensive help with this project!

## LEAGUE IN ACTION

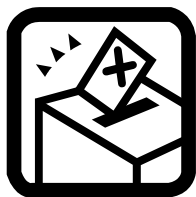


### Realignment:

The Community Corrections Partnership (CCP) -- created by AB109 to help state prisoners returning to the county level for rehabilitation -- and its Community Advisory Board have been meeting and planning for the 2014 Contra Costa County budget that supervisors will vote on in April.

LWVDV Action Chair Lee Lawrence has continued to advocate using the League of Women Voters of the United States resolution to "explore alternatives to incarceration," as incarceration seems very expensive (equivalent to an Ivy League tuition each year per prisoner) with poor results (67% recidivism rate).

We were one of the community groups that successfully opposed spending AB109 money to build more prison cells in Contra Costa, and there seems to be an increased acceptance and reliance on community based organizations and programs by the CCP's executive committee. Discussions are far more cooperative and less acrimonious than last year. The Board of Supervisors Public Protection Committee will focus on community based programs in their April meeting.



### Money in Politics:

The LWVDV continues to participate in our MoneyOut-PeopleIn coalition with other groups such as Common Cause, MoveOn, Mt. Diablo Peace Center, LWV Livermore/Amador Valley, and LWV-Berkeley-Albany-Emeryville. We spoke at the Livermore Library in January, emphasizing the League's support for **SB2 and SB27**. We also presented SB27 to the Contra Costa MoveOn group's annual meeting in February. **SB27** is an important disclosure bill that requires "dark money" non-profits to disclose their top ten donors. It just passed the Assembly, and returns to the Senate for one final vote before moving to the governor's desk. Assemblymembers Bonilla, Buchanan, and Frazier all voted for it. *Please send a thank-you letter to your Assemblymember!*

The League of Women Voters of California is sponsoring **SB2**. This bill will improve disclosure of contributions and spending in political campaigns in California, make it easier to "follow the money" in elections, and improve enforcement of the Political Reform Act. It improves slate mailer rules, and requires the kind of "Stand by Your Ad" disclosure in video and audio campaign advertisements for state elections that Californians have come to rely on from federal candidates. Finally, SB2 will increase fines within the Political Reform Act that have remained unchanged over decades. In addition, enhancements to some penalties will go to the fund for a new electronic disclosure system. SB2 passed the Senate last year, and awaits a vote in the Assembly. *Please send letters in support of SB2 to your Assemblymembers.*

# LWVUS AGRICULTURE POSITION UPDATE

## March 22 Member Meeting: Agricultural Update Consensus

All members are encouraged to prepare for and attend the **Consensus Meeting** on Saturday, March 22, at our boardroom (500 St Mary's Rd #14, Lafayette. [925-283-2235](tel:925-283-2235))

We will discuss and decide on our League's answers to the Consensus Questions. A document with the Consensus Questions and links to associated readings was emailed to members with the February Voter, and is being emailed again.

*(If you need a paper copy, call the office. Leave your name, phone, and home address.)*

Come to the sections that you are able to and interested in. Times are approximate:

- 9:15 am Coffee, Introductions, and League Announcements
- 9:30 to 11:30 Research and Development, Food Safety
- 11:30 Break
- 11:40 to 12:40 pm Food Labeling and Animal Management
- 12:40 to 1:15 Lunch Break (We will make "Consensus Salad". Call Ashley to sign up for something to bring)
- 1:15 to 3:15 pm Economic Health of the Agricultural Sector



## February 22 Discussion Summary: GMOs

To accompany the summary on Genetic Engineering provided by the LWVUS Agriculture Study Committee, Alison Stewart presented her findings from a review of the scientific literature on the subject of genetically engineered (GMO) plants. The major points of her presentation on Feb. 22 include:

- \* The GMO plants which have major market share in the US are commodity crops: those grown for animal feed, base ingredients, or textiles. The biggest are soybeans, corn, cotton, and canola, followed by squash, papaya, rice, and potato. Many others are under development.
- \* The genes introduced fall into a number of categories. The most common are herbicide tolerant (HT) genes (such as in Roundup-Ready crops), Bacillus thuringiensis (BT) genes (as in BT corn and cotton), and disease resistance (such as virus resistance in papaya). Other categories are the broader group of insect tolerant, stress resistant genes to cope with drought and salty water, and miscellaneous other genes that extend shelf life or nutritional value. One category largely unexplored would insert genes to make pharmaceuticals, which could be grown and isolated at a fraction of the cost needed to make them synthetically.
- \* The market share of GMO soy, corn, and cotton is quite high: HT varieties in 2013 had 93, 85, and 82 percent of the market, respectively. BT corn was 76 percent, and BT cotton was 75 percent. Much of the seed planted had both HT and BT traits. Currently, foods certified as "organic" cannot contain GMO material.

\* Some GMO crops which don't get a lot of press: frost-tolerant strawberries, flood-tolerant rice, a rice which decreases seasonal allergies to cedar pollen, high-lysine corn, virus-resistant plums, and wheat with a mint gene which repels aphids.



\* Citrus growers in Florida have been spearheading attempts to save the orange industry from citrus greening disease, a bacteria which causes total crop loss which will result in the death of the industry within a decade if left unchecked; genetic engineering is their best hope. The disease has been found in California and across the globe. The New York Times had an excellent article: <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/07/28/science/a-race-to-save-the-orange-by-altering-its-dna.html>

\* GMO seeds are not available to home growers, only farmers who sign license agreements. These can be very restrictive, though Monsanto in particular has agreed to be lenient in cases of accidental breach.

\* Third-party researchers who want to conduct studies on GMOs often have a hard time obtaining seed from the parent company. The developers (Monsanto, Sygenta, and Dow, among others) may refuse to provide seeds, or try to attach conditions on the release of any research findings. There is no federal position on this sort of interaction.

\* Based on an examination of the scientific literature, there is no indication that eating either Roundup-Ready or BT crops is harmful for humans or animals. The number of reputable studies is small, but several good feeding studies have been done and show no problems. There are two or three studies which have observed small cellular changes in certain tissues, but the studies need to be replicated by others to determine whether those changes were actually due to the GMO food rather than other factors (for example, soybean composition can vary hugely depending on its growing conditions, and it's been difficult to source GMO and normal soy from the same area). The researchers are also unsure what effect, if any, those cellular changes might have on overall health. While it is nearly impossible to prove that there is no danger, the research so far has failed to come up with any health risks associated with GMOs or the pesticide residues they may contain.

\* The emergence of "superweeds" has been largely due to poor growing practices rather than the GMOs themselves. Farmers have been using Roundup exclusively and growing the same crops in the same places too much, which would be an issue even without GMOs.



\* Only one version of the BT gene has shown any impact on butterfly larvae in fields; several others showed no significant effect, and none of the BT genes were as harmful as the chemical spray they replaced.

\* Whether Roundup-Ready (RR) crops have increased pesticide use or not is debatable. In terms of acres planted, pesticide use (largely Roundup or its major component, glyphosate) has increased dramatically since RR crops were introduced. In terms of yield, pesticide use has declined modestly. In the case of BT crops, pesticide use has declined sharply. Declines in pesticide applications are also due to the introduction of new, more targeted pesticides which need smaller amounts to be effective compared to the older ones (such as Roundup).

Alison's extensive notes are available upon request ([info@lwvdv.org](mailto:info@lwvdv.org)).

**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).

**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](http://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](#).

**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 page. If you already have renewed, thank you!

Georgene Egri  
Mary Flott

Melinda Hall  
Anita Johnson

Jeanne Melaugh  
Carol Murota

Barbara Owens  
Margaret Yeaman

---

**Thank you, Audrey Albright, for making sure we had an accurate roster submitted to LWVUS by the January 31 deadline!**

**Ask What You Can Do for Your League!**

League volunteers keep the League healthy. The Nominating Committee is looking for new Board members as well as off-Board helpers for the coming year.

Ann Flynn has set the example for you – she took on the position of Nominating Committee Chair when we didn't elect a chair at last year's annual meeting! If you can help with building and maintaining our League, please contact the office.

**Bay Area League Convention – Saturday, May 3**

The League of Women Voters of the Bay Area will hold its biennial convention on Saturday, May 3, 2014 from 10:00 AM to 12:00 PM at the Bay Model, 2100 Bridgeway in Sausalito. (Turn onto Marinship and follow signs.) We will adopt program and budget and elect the Board for the next two years.

Speaker will be Roberta Borgonovo, LWV California Program Co-Director, Water. Roberta has followed water issues for the League for several decades, most recently the proposals for the water transfer tunnels.





**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**

<b>Mar 7</b>	<b>Ag Update Study Discussion #3</b> 3 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>
<b>Mar 4</b>	<b>Action Committee</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 22</b>	<b>Ag Update Consensus</b> 9:15 am- (incl. lunch – see page 5) 3:15 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>
<b>Apr 8</b>	<b>Action Committee</b> 2-4 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>
<b>Apr 10</b>	<b>Board Meeting</b> 2-4 pm <a href="#">LWVDV Office</a>