



THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF MARIN COUNTY

VOLUME 28 ISSUE 4

DECEMBER/JANUARY 2009-10

CALENDAR

DECEMBER

Monday, 7 9:30 Action Meeting
Conference Room
F-138

Tuesday, 8 9:30 Transportation/
LandUse/Housing

Wed., 9 9:30 Board Meeting

Tuesday, 15 10:00 Media Outreach

Thurs., 17 9:30 Education
Committee

JANUARY

Monday, 4 9:30 Action Meeting
Conference Room
F-138
LWVUS Program
Planning plus
reports

Tuesday, 12 9:30 Transportation/
LandUse/Housing

Wed., 13 9:30 Board Meeting

Tuesday, 19 10:00 Media Outreach

Thurs., 21 9:30 Education
Committee

Monday, 25 11:45 International
Relations, Kick Off
2010

Saturday, 30 Bay Area League
Day (see VOTER
insert)

All meetings are held in the
League office (4340 Redwood
Hwy, F108, San Rafael) unless
otherwise noted.

MEDIA PRODUCTION OPPORTUNITY

Our media outreach programs involve creation and distribution of audio (podcasts) and video (cablecast and Internet streaming) programs. Our Media Outreach Committee taps into the wealth of knowledge of League members who have been following a wide variety of issues over the years. These members script the stories we want to tell.

This year the top priority features we will be scripting for production are the Marin General Hospital Transition and the water supply issues surrounding the proposal to use desalination as a source of potable water.

The biggest expense in producing these programs, and also debates at election time, is the paid staff time that it takes. If the League had a volunteer crew available to support the media production, it would open up huge opportunities.

The LWVMC has joined the Community Media Center of Marin (on the web at cmcm.tv) as a member. There are openings under this membership for CMCM training in the use of camera equipment, post-production editing and studio production. In exchange for supporting our production efforts, the League will bear the CMCM training fees.

If you have an interest in developing your video production or post-production skills, this is a good way to jump in. Contact Scott McKown (samckown@mac.com) if you are interested or know of anyone else who would like to help us.

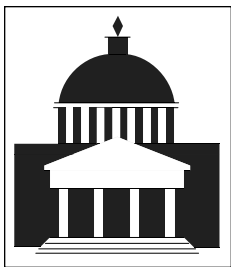
Scott McKown, Media Outreach

LWVUS PROGRAM PLANNING

“Program is the League’s reason for being, the basis for both education and action efforts. League program consists of those governmental issues that League members choose for concerted study and action. It includes both adopted positions upon which action is taken and issues for study...” (LWVUS, *In League*)

**At Action Meeting
Monday, January 4
9:30 - 10:30 am**

Get back in the swing of things after the holidays. Come and help us review LWVUS program and action taken in the past two years and determine if we should keep, add, delete program areas. You will be impressed at the scope of LWVUS program!



ACTION COMMITTEE

Donna Bjorn led a free-wheeling discussion of the health care policy issues behind health care reform. Included were a list of helpful web-sites and an outline of the topics.

The vision is coverage for all, cost containment, and prevention/wellness services. The problems are cost, both for individuals and the system, access, and outcomes. Members were encouraged to contact their congressional representatives and the president and executive departments with their preferences and opinions. Written materials were emailed to members through the League's Announce list.

Roberta Keiler announced a gorgeous quilt show in the League office. Don't miss taking a look.

League president Margy Eller announced that we need a new Health and Welfare Committee chair and a Natural Resources Committee chair. Please contact Margy if you have an interest.

February 14, 2010, is the 90th anniversary of the League.

Education/Libraries: Nancy van Ravenswaay announced that the League's Education Foundation has made scholarship donations of \$5,250 each to the Marin Education Fund and the College of Marin Foundation in Dorothy Belcher's memory.

Marcia Hagen reported that the County Library conducted a survey to determine whether a parcel tax election in 2010 would be likely to pass and for what amount. The survey result was positive, and the details will be reported following a meeting of the Board of Supervisors. The state takeaway as well as the loss of parcel taxes have left the county libraries short of operating funds.

Campaign Reform: In Elissa Giambastiani's absence, Suki Sennett reported on negative campaigning in the San Rafael City Council race.

Transportation, Land Use and Housing: Sue Beittel reported on transportation issues and climate

change. Judy Binsacca suggested League members read the Voter for her report, and Patsy White was pleased that the Habitat for Humanity office opened in Novato and is rehabbing a house there.

Voter Service: As Anne Layzer took a well-deserved vacation week, Margy reported on the League's live and taped events.

Health Care: Margaret Jones discussed the difficulties involved in transferring Marin General Hospital from Sutter to the Marin Healthcare District management. Progress is being made, and the MHCD can do more community work than Sutter.

Marcia Hagen, Action

THANK YOU TO OUR GENEROUS CONTRIBUTORS

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS to LWVMC

Claudia Kennedy
Helen Rutledge

MEMBER CONTRIBUTIONS to LWVMC EF

Roberta Michels

FOR QUICK REFERENCE:

We need a current dictionary and thesaurus for the office.

Do you have one sitting on the shelf gathering dust? Consider donating to the League!

Sandy Smith, Office

The Voter
published monthly except January, July & August by:
League of Women Voters of Marin County
4340 Redwood Hwy., F-108
San Rafael, CA 94903
Free to members:
non-member \$10 per/year



**SPOTLIGHT ON
NEW MEMBER:
DENNIS
SCREMIN**

A 35-year resident of Marin County, Dennis has focused on psychotherapy, specializing in work with adults and adolescents

recovering from trauma, addiction and life transitions. His background includes directing several county programs: West Marin Health & Human Services, Community Mental Health Outpatient Services and the Mental Health Team for Juvenile Probation.

Though still busy with an active private practice, Dennis has been involved in local politics, serving as former Sausalito Mayor and Councilmember as well as the current Chair of the Marin County Open Space Commission. Dennis is particularly interested in the League's efforts towards campaign reforms, both in financial and fair and ethical campaign practices. "My experience with the League in promoting clean campaigns has been superb, and I look forward to advancing those and other goals of the League of Women Voters," he stated.

**ART IN THE OFFICE
Hiro Kodama: January & February**



For Hiro Kodama, a farmer's daughter and a Buddhist, what better place is there to be but in a world making art about nature. Using watermedia, oil, pastel and charcoal, she uses her skills to share how she sees and feels about nature--where there are no illusions, only truth and reality. To her, art is what cannot be expressed in words.

WELCOME TO OUR NEW MEMBERS

Peter Abramowitsch
37 Mountain View Ave.
Fairfax, CA 94930

Georgia Schall
210 Club Dr.
Novato, CA 94945
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Rhoda Draws
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San Rafael, CA 94912
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Stanley Krippner
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San Rafael, CA 94901
415-394-5979

Corrections to roster:

Diana Braa
dwbraa@comcast.net

Gladys Sanguinetti
155 Pebble Beach Dr.
Novato, CA 94949
normans@sbcglobal.net

HELP WANTED!

We have openings for committee chairs on two important topics: Health Care and Natural Resources. For Health Care the focus would be to review local issues and concerns and follow national developments. For Natural Resources the focus would be to review local environmental issues and concerns: water, air, climate, sanitation and other related topics. For both committees the following would be needed:

- Host monthly or occasional committee meetings
- Develop contacts for occasional speakers with knowledge and expertise on current issues
- Write reports or commentary for the League website and monthly Voter
- Aid in revisions to program and future related studies.

If you are interested in being any part of the revitalization of these committees, please contact Margy Eller 383-7307 or ellermj@comcast.net



ONE YEAR AFTER MEASURE Q, SMART TRAIN IS ON TRACK

Editor's note: The LWV Marin County and LWV Sonoma County supported Measure Q and worked hard to see it pass. Here is an update on the SMART project prepared by Chris Coursey, SMART Community Outreach and Education Manager.

On Nov. 5, 2008, supporters of the SMART passenger train and pathway project cleaned up the remnants of the previous night's victory party celebrating the passage of Measure Q, and started the hard work of building new transportation alternatives for the North Bay.

Passing a one-quarter percent sales tax to build, operate and maintain SMART was a huge hurdle in the path of the project. After narrowly failing to gain the required two-thirds supermajority in 2006, a slightly modified project won the support of nearly 70 percent of Marin and Sonoma County voters in 2008.

That started the clock ticking on a timeline to have trains running between Cloverdale and Larkspur by the fall of 2014.

Last December, General Manager Lillian Hames told the SMART Board of Directors that 2009 would be a critical year, with a flurry of activity necessary to create a foundation on which the next five years of work will be built. Since then, key staff has been hired, key decisions have been made and key services have been procured to move the project forward.

As we near the beginning of Year 2, SMART has launched several important initiatives:

- ◆Real Estate acquisition. While SMART already owns a 70-mile rail corridor and ancillary properties, several parcels still need to be acquired for station sites, a maintenance facility and other small real estate needs. Thirteen consulting companies have been awarded contracts to help SMART with work ranging from appraisal to environmental review. More than half of these firms are from Marin and Sonoma Counties.

- ◆Vehicle and Systems specifications and design. While the SMART Board has made an important decision about the type of vehicles we will use, we still have a lot of work to do to make sure SMART's rail cars are fast, efficient, safe and comfortable for our passengers. SMART has contracted with LTK Engineering Services, one of the world's leading rail vehicle consultants, to help us write specifications for the rail cars and systems - the signals, dispatch center, communications, etc. that are critical to creating a safe, efficient rail project. The specifications process will continue into the second half of next year, at which time we will put SMART's rail vehicles out to bid to manufacturers.

- ◆Track and Pathway design. Seventy miles of railroad and an equal length of multi-use pathway must be designed and engineered in minute detail to ensure a safe and comfortable experience for SMART users. Two firms - HDR Engineering, Inc. and PGH Wong Engineering, Inc. - will lead this effort. They have teamed with a wide variety of smaller firms, including several certified disadvantaged business enterprises and almost a dozen firms based in Marin and Sonoma Counties.

- ◆Stations design. Thirteen teams of architects, engineers, planners, artists and other specialists have submitted proposals to design SMART's 14 stations from Larkspur to Cloverdale. A design team should be under contract by the end of this year.

♦Major Bridge design. Three major bridges exist along the SMART alignment - the span across the wetlands and waterway at Gallinas Creek in San Rafael, the movable bridge across the Petaluma River and the historic steel bridge across the Russian River at Healdsburg. Six teams have submitted proposals to conduct design and engineering services for the rehabilitation or replacement of those spans. A single team should be under contract by the end of this year.

♦Maintenance and Operations Facility design. SMART will have a central facility where railcars will be maintained and operation and dispatch of the rail line will be headquartered. The location of this building is still under consideration. A Request for Proposals for design and engineering services has been issued.

♦Design and engineering work on all elements of the SMART project will continue throughout 2010. The public will be an important part of this process, with workshops to be scheduled to gather ideas on issues ranging from train interiors and amenities to station design and furnishings. SMART also will work closely with local jurisdictions to ensure that the train and pathway project meshes with community needs and values.

Construction of elements of the project is expected to begin in 2011.

As has been widely publicized, SMART has identified financial challenges facing this \$590 million project. The deep economic slump of the past year has resulted in decreased sales tax collections and significant negative changes in the bond markets. Those two developments, combined with a slight increase in estimated project construction costs, leave SMART with a projected \$155 million gap in construction funding.

SMART is examining ways to bridge that gap, with ideas ranging from additional federal funding to public-private partnership agreements. In the meantime, the potential funding gap is not affecting the work - outlined above - that SMART must do prior to construction. All design and engineering activities will continue as planned, funded on a "pay as you go" basis by Measure Q sales tax receipts, which SMART began receiving earlier this year.

The SMART project is moving forward, as-planned and on-schedule, toward a projected start of passenger train service in the North Bay in the fall of 2014. The citizens of Marin and Sonoma Counties can keep up with the progress of their train and pathway at www.sonomamarintrain.org, where they can get information about Board of Directors and Committee meetings, public workshops, consultant contracts and the technical details of the project. They can also sign up for e-mail updates on the continuing progress of the project.

Reprint of press release dated 10/22/009



NEWS FROM LWVUS

Health Care: Fighting for the Public Option

The League followed Congressional action on health care closely this month, restating our support for the public option and asking voters to urge their Senators and Representatives to support strong health care reform legislation. This battle will only heat up in November, and the public option hangs in the balance - so keep up the momentum by taking action today. Then let your friends know how they can take action too by sharing this message.

League to Observe United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen

The League recently secured its official Observer status for the United Nations Framework Climate Change Conference (UNFCCC) in Copenhagen this December. Eight League members who are active on climate change issues were selected to serve as delegates to the conference. We are excited to have a delegation on the ground keeping us informed!



Donna Cameron and Joe Walsh staff LWV booth

THE LEAGUE AT THE SENIOR FAIRE

In October the LWVMC had a booth at the Senior Faire. This year we added a raffle of a small afghan made by a League member. So besides passing out our literature, we had people stopping by to sign up. It gave booth staffers an added opportunity to talk with people about the League and what we do in the community. Thank you to Joan Cappuro, Patsy White, Sondra Wuthnow, Helen Rutledge, Donna Cameron, and Joe Walsh for so enthusiastically staffing the booth. We'll be back next year.

MARIN HEALTH CARE FORUM: First in a Series

Susan Adams, County Supervisor, District 1, and Larry Meredith, director of Marin Health and Human Services, are co-sponsoring a series of forums on health care in Marin.

The first forum was held on November 12th with the next two scheduled for early in 2010. This forum included discussion of successful health care models in the Bay Area. Speakers for the event included Kevin Grumbach, a leading single-payer advocate. Sara Rogers brought us up to date on SB 810, the universal, single-payer plan for California. Healthy San Francisco is a model put in place in San Francisco, and Mitch Katz presented the components of that program. The program was recorded for the G channel and can be viewed by going to <http://www.co.marin.ca.us/G-Channel/Default.aspx>

Donna Bjorn

HEALTH CARE IN TRANSITION: NATIONALLY AND LOCALLY

For months Californians have been watching from a great distance the ongoing struggles in Washington, D.C. over health care reform. Health care is especially hard to reform because it is so complex and also represents about one sixth of our national economy. In many ways any significant health care change made by Congress will eventually affect almost every individual and family in the country in some very personal and financial ways. Most people prefer what is familiar, especially if the change proposed seems designed primarily to improve the lives of others. The pace of rational reform seems painfully slow.

Imagine having the responsibility for managing the transition of a hospital, with a thousand employees, from one management group (Sutter) to another (the Marin Healthcare District) during times when there are so many unknowns, and so many bitter arguments, about the laws that will govern our health care system in the future. Congress, and all of us, is also dealing with the worst recession since the 1930s and the largest national debt we have ever carried. These times are not ideal to reach agreement on how to reform health care.

All American hospitals, however, are in some kind of transition every day. Our complicated, irrational health care delivery system changes constantly, with new technology, new basic economics, new payment systems, new regulations, new personnel, new diseases, new contracts, new medical strategies, new computer systems, new safety regulations, new drugs, new television advertising campaigns for pharmaceuticals, and new insurance programs. Change happens constantly, and sometimes change can be for the better.

Margaret Jones

Save the Date!

Come celebrate our 90th Birthday!
Reception on Thursday, Feb 11
5 to 7pm

Cape Marin Clubhouse
Laderman Lane at Barry Way in Greenbrae

Check our website and the February
VOTER for details

President's Message:

End of Year Musings

As we wind up this year's local election cycle, I realize that the momentary sigh of relief for our work will be brief. There is a lot more going on - now and in our future. For that, we have not only our local members to thank but our extended family - the Bay Area League, State League and National League. We never have to feel that we are doing our work in a vacuum. We have lots of help and ideas coming to us from lots of levels. In the last couple of weeks I've gotten communications about the Bay Area League Day coming up in January, a request from LWVC to host a fundraiser event for Smartvoter.org, a template for a letter to elected officials on health care from LWVUS and many possible meetings to attend.

A recent guest to our Action meeting said she was surprised at the breadth of interests in the League. If it is about public policy, the environment, health care issues, county housing, education, media outreach, campaign reform and elections (of course) and more - yes, we're interested! The cumulative knowledge about these topics is amazing. And our outreach of members involved in committees and other worthy organizations around the county is very impressive. We've worked hard to burnish our reputation here in the county, as well as around the state and nationally.

The 90th Anniversary of the forming of the League of Women Voters is coming up on February 14, 2010. We have lots to celebrate and, of course, lots more work to do. It isn't always easy, but it is always interesting. As Anne Layzer said, being a member of the League is like never leaving college. So, enjoy your holiday "break". We look forward to another active year right around the corner. See you then!

Margy

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BOARD BRIEFS

Accepted the resignation of Janice Wright as chair of the Health Committee.

Approved by electronic means, the letter sent to the *Independent Journal* in response to a negative campaign mailer sent in San Rafael.

Approved by electronic means the Marin Voice article that ran in the IJ regarding voting in local elections.

Approved the submission of the revised bylaws to the membership to be voted on at the Annual

Meeting. The proposed bylaws have been revised following the California LWV model in consultation with LWVC.

Chose two topics for the Media Outreach Committee to explore: the Marin General Hospital transfer to the Marin Healthcare District and Marin's water supply.

Set February 11, 2010, for a SmartVoter reception and birthday celebration for the League of Woman Voters 90th birthday.

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

MISSION STATEMENT

Directors:
Judy Binsacca
Donna Bjorn
Joan Brownstein
John Ellis
Elissa Giambastiani
Marcia Hagen
Barbara Husak
Anne Layzer
Glenda Lockhart
Scott McKown
Don McEnhill
Julie Monson
Nancy van Ravenswaay

Officers:
Margy Eller, President
Sandy Smith, 1st Vice President
Suki Semmet, 2nd Vice President
Perry Newman, Secretary
Martha Fleischmann, Treasurer

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“Peace is our gift to each other.”

Elie Wiesel

**“It isn’t enough to talk about peace;
one must believe in it.
And it isn’t enough to believe in it;
one must work at it”**

Eleanor Roosevelt