

Voter

**The League of Women Voters
Of Fremont, Newark and
Union City**



Memorial Day—May 29



The League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark and Union City presents

THE STATE BALLOT PROPOSITIONS

PROS AND CONS

May 4, 2009

Fremont Main Library

7:00 PM

Fukaya Room

Starring our own Alex Starr and Andrea Schacter

Followed by Questions and Answers.

The public is invited



PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Dear Fellow Leaguers:

As the fiscal year comes to an end, we take a moment to pause and reflect on the past year. We have accomplished much - as we have consistently been doing each year since our inception over 50 years ago. We have continued our excellent voters service work during a historical election, we held several informative public programs on timely topics including production of our monthly cable program and of course, continued the publication of our award winning newsletter, the Voter. Our League's Action committee has also continued its timely advocacy for important issues such as affordable housing. We have had to address some challenges – too much to do – not enough time. We slowly but surely have been working to ensure our League's sustainability including working on a fund development plan and next will be membership expansion.



At this time, I would like to thank all the Board and off Board members and chairs and volunteers who make our League work. Without your efforts, dedication and commitment, we would not be able to fulfill our mission. A special thanks to Vesta Wilson our long term Voter Editor who has, like the League, along with careful editing and feedback by Miriam Keller, consistently produced an informative and readable newsletter. Vesta will be retiring as editor and will be off on other journeys but we hope from time to time that she will give us the benefit of her creativity and wit.

Another special thank you to Jane Meuller and her team for the wonderful job of decorating and organizing our League office. If you get a moment please do visit the office - call in advance to ensure that it will be open as our timing varies.

It has been a learning journey serving as our League's President. I too will be heading out towards another horizon but plan to stay active in our League. I look forward to the challenge of doing my part to help keep the League an outstanding civic institution and a vital part of our community.

—Syeda R Yunus, President

The League of Women Voters is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement. Join LWV and be directly involved in shaping the issues that keep our community fair, vibrant and strong.

At the April 16, 2009 Board Meeting, the Board:

- Heard an update on the Annual Meeting
- Were visited by Nikki Harris, our Management Training Advisor from LWV of California who gave us a summary of the changes at the State League level, the new focus and strategy for LWVC and also a briefing on a membership recruitment initiative to help our league grow.
- Had a very short Board meeting which ended well ahead of schedule!!

GO TO WWW.SMARTVOTER.ORG FOR ELECTION INFORMATION.

ACTION COMMITTEE

The April Action Committee meeting featured discussion about many fiscal issues. We still hope to follow how the Federal stimulus package will affect our local area in areas such as transportation, housing, and education.

A presentation to Kiwanis about the May ballot measures went well. We may use that model for our May League meeting on the same subject.

We continue to follow the questions involved in how to evaluate possible mobile home park transitions. We hope to speak with a representative from owners of a local mobile home park in the near future. Changes in these areas affect owners, residents, and also the availability for low income housing.

Fremont is said to be planning to raise its Redevelopment fund to \$1.5 billion by the end of 2009. Some previous delays worried the affordable housing community about how to increase housing opportunities in this area without such a raise.

An opportunity to again stress the need for encouraging public comment is available to us at Ohlone. We will draft a statement to present to their board. As usual our observer alerted us to this need. We still need MORE OBSERVERS!!! If interested please contact Alex Starr.

We continue to schedule our interviews with local officials with Miriam Keller as our point person in this area. If you have never participated in this function and wish to learn more, contact Miriam.

Voting Matters is ahead of schedule in taping and will take a break in April! Look for a new program on the ballot measures in April on Comcast.

Interested in any of the aforementioned issues? Come join us at the next Action Committee meeting on May 7th at 12:30 at Kay Emanuele's home.

**MAY 19 ELECTION
LWVC POSITIONS**

Proposition 1A is touted by its proponents as the way to bring stability to the budget process.
OPPOSE

Proposition 1B would restore cuts to our schools and community colleges.
NEUTRAL

Proposition 1C attempts to raise money for the short term by selling bonds that would be paid off by future lottery revenue.
OPPOSE

Propositions 1D and 1E would temporarily take funds from early childhood and mental health programs.
OPPOSE

Propositions 1F would prevent pay raises for legislators and state-wide constitutional officers during budget deficit years.
NEUTRAL

For more complete information, visit the LWVC website.

Water: California's New Gold

By Leslie Stewart

"Our California tradition on water issues is to lurch from crisis to crisis," said state Senator Lois Wolk. "And then we fight!"

As keynote speaker for the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area's annual Bay Area League Day symposium — this year entitled "Water: California's New Gold" — Wolk addressed a capacity audience in Oakland's MetroCenter Auditorium on January 31, 2009. She summarized California's current crisis: a protracted drought and an increasingly fragile Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta at the heart of the state's water delivery system.

"There is no magic bullet or easy fix," she cautioned.

The Delta suffers the impact of massive water exports, invasive species, and runoff from both agriculture and growing urbanization. To manage this situation going forward, the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force recently concluded that a healthy ecosystem and a reliable water supply should be equal goals. "This sounds simple but is radical," commented Wolk.

She suggested that the Delta Protection Commission, in place since 1992, should develop a long-range plan and be given the authority to review all actions affecting the Delta for consistency with the plan. A second authority, such as a stewardship council or the state water commission, should be charged with making the final decisions. "It's essential to have an independent body with secure funding and the ability to approve spending, planning, and water export levels," Wolk said. She called for a balanced approach that takes into account the interests of many longstanding Delta communities as well as statewide needs, "but it has to be a mechanism that's action, not gridlock."

"All Californians have a vested interest in the heart and soul of our California water system," she concluded.

The Science of the Delta

Despite the fact that the Delta is an essential link in the state water system, "many people who live in California have no idea where the Delta is or what it is," said Christina Swanson, executive director of the Bay Institute.

Swanson described the Delta ecosystem as water plus the landscape, plants, and animals. Both the Delta and the larger watershed that feeds it have changed significantly since the 1800s, when the Delta was a huge tidal marsh and ships had difficulty finding channels to go upriver to Sacramento. Levees have been built, creating islands for farming and altering habitat. The islands are now much lower than the water level in the Delta, and often flood due to levee breaks.

There are dams on 9 of 10 major rivers feeding the Delta, and the rivers are managed for the purpose of sending water to the Delta for export to southern parts of the state. The dams release rainwater during the winter, but retain snowmelt during the spring for release in summer, making summer flows unnaturally high. Salmon habitat upstream of the dams is greatly decreased, putting additional stress on this species.

Meanwhile, other species have made massive invasions. Some of these species are a major problem, such as the Asian clam. "Calculations indicate that Asian clams in Suisun Bay can filter the entire volume of water in two days," said Swanson, explaining this removes the food needed by native fish species.

New reservoirs indirectly impact the Delta. "They used to fill up San Luis Reservoir and then couldn't export more because there was no place to put it," said Swanson. But with more storage built, the exports increased to fill those reservoirs, and exports over 6 million acre-feet have a major impact on the ecosystem.

Swanson said that while the Delta has been permanently altered by levees and subsidence, it can still retain a healthy habitat through the restoration of marshy and open water areas; this restoration would change the amount and timing of water flows, and remove stressors such as pollution and invasive species.

Unfortunately, drought makes many of these habitat improvements harder. For example, Asian clams like dry conditions. Moreover, low freshwater flows during droughts bring the salty Bay water farther inland to the confluence of the rivers, limiting the area that is hospitable to freshwater species. This keeps these species closer upriver to where reverse flows will pull them into the export pumps and kill them.

Management of the Delta ecosystem and water supply are almost totally disconnected, according to Swanson, who furthered, "It would be good not to have entities in an adversarial relationship controlling both of those things." She said managing the Delta to achieve the dual goals set by the Delta Vision Blue Ribbon Task Force would probably mean subordinating water supply to the ecosystem. The Delta is five percent of the state's water supply, and water is both limited and variable. "You cannot continue to take out this much water and find any way to meet the ecosystem goal," she said.

Agricultural Questions

California agriculture has benefited from predictability of both climate and water supply, according to A.G. Kawamura, secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture. Water has been capable of being turned on or off as needed. As a result, California provides half the nation's supply of specialty crops (such as nuts and fruits), and almost a quarter of the nation's dairy products.

California farmers need improved water supply infrastructure to maintain predictability, because factors such as urbanization are changing agriculture. "When we build predictability into the systems that we have, that's how you avoid collapse," said Kawamura. According to the state Department of Water Resources, agriculture now uses only 41 percent of state water, down from 80 percent, with urban users at 11 percent and the environment using 48 percent. Limited water supplies are leading farmers to reassess their crop choices.

Heather Cooley, a senior research associate at the Pacific Institute, also focused on sustainability. The Pacific Institute recently released a report with four scenarios that could lead to less water use by agriculture:

1. Shifting a fraction of the crops now irrigated by flood irrigation to sprinkler and drip systems;
2. Using weather stations to advise farmers how and when to apply water;
3. Employing a technique called "regulated deficit" to apply water at strategic intervals to crops that can tolerate more extended dry periods (such as vines, almonds, citrus, and pistachios); and
4. Shifting a small percentage of lower-value, water-intensive crops (such as cotton, alfalfa, rice, and wheat) to higher-value, water-efficient crops (such as fruits and nuts).

Cooley cautioned that not all of these practices can be used at once, or in all situations.

Answering audience questions, Kawamura stressed that over-irrigation is inefficient and costly. Farmers will therefore conserve because they are extremely sensitive to the bottom line, and have very sophisticated tools available to help them determine the costs of water and fertilizer. Cooley noted that reduced water use also results in less energy use for pumping, as well as the environmental and water quality benefit of minimizing fertilizer runoff.

Faced with impending drought, farmers will probably choose to fallow acreage in the short term, Cooley predicted. However, she and Kawamura agreed that in the long term farmers would look at changes in overall operations. Both Cooley and Kawamura also supported diversifying approaches to agricultural water use. Kawamura noted that sustainability requires education and innovation (with new technology like desalination, or perhaps considering salt-tolerant plants). "We can't afford in agriculture globally to make mistakes from this point out," he said. "When we get into a survival state, the choices disappear."

Levee Security

The fragile Delta ecosystem is accompanied by a fragile man-made infrastructure. "Levee security becomes an issue forced on us by our history and our development," warned Raymond Seed, a professor of civil and environmental engineering at UC Berkeley. Failure of New Orleans levees in Hurricane Katrina is the most vivid example, but California has miles of vulnerable levees along rivers and throughout the Delta. More people are moving to the Central Valley, many into new developments in areas that will be hard-hit by flooding if levees fail.

"Levees in the Delta fail a lot," said Seed. More extreme climate conditions and sea-level rise will add to the risk, as will the increasing threat of a major earthquake. In a 1995 earthquake in Kobe, Japan, 11 miles of well-built levees failed because underlying sand liquefied and spread. The Delta has 1,100 miles of levees, two thirds of which are subject to liquefaction. Liquefaction can be prevented, but at a high price. About 70 percent of Delta levees are privately owned. While bond measures for levee improvements may be feasible for urban and populated regions, it may be necessary to protect the channels across the Delta and let the other levees go.

Failure of levees throughout the Delta would rapidly create a salty inland sea, drawing Bay water upstream to fill the many islands below water level. According to Seed, there is a one percent chance each year of an earthquake that would topple so many levees that the Delta would need at least a year to recover, with water deliveries from the Delta interrupted for two to five years. Damage estimates have been set at \$50-100 billion, but Seed cautioned these estimates are usually low. He also noted that attempts to fix the damage faster than the two to five year time frame could risk losing the total ecosystem.

The state can rely less on the Delta as a water source, or the water source can be protected and stabilized. Meanwhile, Seed warned, "We are at great risk and more risk than ever in the history of California."

Conveyance Issues

Regional conveyance of water is not new in California, said Katherine Kelly, Bay-Delta chief of the Department of Water Resources, citing aqueducts such as Hetch Hetchy. Unlike an aqueduct, however, realistically planning a conveyance facility for water through or around the Delta isn't as simple as drawing a straight line.

One consideration is who owns the water. Under California law, water belongs to the people of the state. Water rights, for use of the water, are subject to the public trust doctrine and the reasonableness doctrine.

State and regional water boards have created plans that protect the beneficial uses of water, including a Bay-Delta plan. The State Water Resources Control Board must operate under the terms of the Central Valley Project and the State Water Project, as well as the decisions it has made regarding the Bay-Delta. Decision 1641 is the most current one and governs water quality standards that are measured daily by stations in the Delta. There are also agricultural water quality requirements that affect areas north and south of the Delta, as well as flow requirements and toxicity requirements. Court opinions on biological needs such as fish protection can require additional measures that modify water rights.

Currently the plans for a conveyance facility have several possible alignments, either east or west of the Delta, or through the Delta by reinforcing existing channels. Water could be exported from the south part of the Delta and also moved around the Delta in a dual conveyance plan. At the same time, planners are proposing "a great deal of habitat restoration," according to Kelly, possibly changing the Yolo Bypass near Sacramento to rear salmon, or developing tidal marsh habitat in the Suisun Marsh. "Something will probably be built but it may not be an isolated conveyance — also the habitat restoration will be built," she said.

A key issue is how the system will be operated if it is built. The State Water Resources Control Board will have a great deal of influence. The schedule calls for a public scoping meeting to be held this spring and a draft EIR/EIS to be in place by the end of 2009. The final EIR/EIS would be certified in 2010 and construction would begin in 2012.

The Regional View

Kathleen Van Velsor, a senior planner with the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG), said that ABAG has developed a Bay-Delta-centric view to guide regional decisions. Many of the Delta's roles — as a close-in agricultural center, an economic engine, a vital watershed, and a biological resource — need to be preserved and enhanced. Van Velsor noted that "water source" is not first on the list. ABAG's challenge is to match these Bay/Delta values to values developed by other groups and to government investment plans based on differing sets of values. One task is to coordinate with the many working groups implementing the Bay Delta Conservation Plan.

"Our Delta has been exhausted and is now reviving," said Van Velsor, despite the many stresses it faces. Many of these — such as salt intrusion and an altered flood regime — have happened because of a priority shift from controlling salinity to moving a large amount of water south. Southern California is still growing and it is a "demanding neighbor." Solving the water crisis will mean that the planning context will need to shift to fully engage regional and local government, according to Van Velsor. "The table needs to widen and lengthen to find balance and reduce conflict," she said, contending that councils of government such as ABAG have a role to play in the process.

Visit <http://lwvbayarea.org/documents.html#BALD> to view the January 31, 2009 presentations of Christina Swanson, Heather Cooley, Katherine Kelly, and Kathleen Van Velsor, as well as an event report by LWV Southwest Santa Clara Valley.

From **LWVUS**

At-Risk Americans: The Uninsured and Underinsured.

By Janis McMillen

Data from multiple sources agree that in 2007, 47 million Americans (15.6 percent of the total U.S. population) lacked any kind of health insurance coverage. When these numbers are adjusted for age (excluding those 65 years and older), the uninsured percentage of the population to 17.9 percent. Moreover, it is estimated that 25 million adults under age 65 were underinsured during 2007, despite having insurance all year. In total, 42 percent of all adults (86.7 million) were either uninsured or underinsured during 2007.



Putting a face on persons who were uninsured or underinsured during 2007 and 2008

- Age: One of three people under age 65 were uninsured for some or all of 2007 and 2008; of the total uninsured population, 60.1 million were adults (between 19 and 64 years of age)
- Duration: Among the underinsured/uninsured, 74.5 percent were uninsured for nine or more months and one-quarter were uninsured the entire 24 months
- Employment status: 80 percent of individuals who were uninsured were in working families and only 16 percent were not in the labor force (due to disabilities, chronic illness, or serving as family caregivers)
- Income: Nearly 60 percent were in families with incomes below the federal poverty level (FPL: \$21,000/year for a family of four); 52 percent with incomes between 100 to 200 percent of FPL went without health insurance in 2007/2008
- Racial and Ethnic origin: 55 percent of Hispanics/Latinos, 40.3 percent of African Americans and 34 percent of other racial or ethnic minorities had no health insurance in 2007/2008, compared to 25.8 percent of whites. While racial and ethnic minorities are more likely to be uninsured, whites accounted for 49.8 percent of the uninsured.
- Age breakdown: The likelihood of being uninsured declines with age; 49.5 percent of those 19-24 years old, 36.3 percent of those 25-44 years old, 32.5 percent of those 45-54 years old and 21.2 percent of those 55-64 years old were uninsured over this two-year time period. The 55 to 64-year old age group consumes more health care on average than younger adults.

For all ethnic and racial groups, lower-income families and individuals were more likely to be uninsured than lower-income whites. This disparity continues even as incomes rise in all groups.

There is a marked increase in the number of adults having difficulty paying medical bills - the most visible consequence of the weakening in insurance coverage. In 2007, 41 percent of adults (72 million people) reported problems paying medical bills, faced bill collectors or were in debt for medical care, up from 34 percent or 58 million in 2005. The majority had insurance at the time these bills were incurred - well in advance of the economic downturn.

It's easy to JOIN the **LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS**

Any person, man or woman, who subscribes to the purpose and policy of the League may join. To be a voting member, one must be at least 18 years of age and a U.S. citizen.

Annual dues includes membership in Local, Bay Area, California and National Leagues.

Make your check payable to: LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS and mail it with this form to:

LWVFNUC—MEMBERSHIP, P.O. Box 3218, Fremont, CA, 94539

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Dues and contributions to the League are not tax deductible. Contributions to L.W.V. Ed Fund are deductible to the extent allowed by law. For more information, or for confidential financial dues assistance, please contact: Sarabjit Cheema—sarabjitkaurcheema@yahoo.com

Mission Statement

The League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark, and Union City, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

Diversity Policy

LWVFNUC affirms its commitment to reflect the diversity of our communities in our membership and actions. We believe diverse views are important for responsible decision making and seek to work with all people and groups who reflect our community diversity.

NOTABLE WOMEN IN HISTORY

MARIAN ANDERSON

Marian Anderson (February 27, 1897 – April 8, 1993) was an American contralto and one of the most celebrated singers of the twentieth century. She possessed a rich and vibrant voice with an intrinsic quality of beauty. Most of her singing career was spent performing in concert and recital in major music venues and with major orchestras throughout the United States and Europe between 1925-1965. Although she was offered contracts to perform roles with many important European opera companies, Anderson declined all of these, preferring to perform in concert and recital only. She did, however, perform opera arias within her concerts and recitals. She made many recordings that reflected her broad performance repertoire of everything from concert literature to lieder to opera to traditional American songs and spirituals.



An African-American, Anderson became an important figure in the struggle for black artists to overcome racial prejudice in the United States during the mid twentieth century. In 1939, the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) refused permission for Anderson to sing to an integrated audience in Constitution Hall. Their race-driven refusal placed Anderson into the spotlight of the international community on a level usually only found by high profile celebrities and politicians. With the aid of President Franklin D. Roosevelt and First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, Anderson performed a critically acclaimed open-air concert on Easter Sunday, 1939 on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, D.C. to a crowd of more than 75,000 people and a radio audience in the millions. She continued to break barriers for black artists in the United States, notably becoming the first black person, American or otherwise, to perform at the Metropolitan Opera in New York City on January 7, 1955. Her performance as Ulrica in Giuseppe Verdi's *Un ballo in maschera* at the Met was the only time she created an opera role on stage. Anderson later became an important symbol of grace and beauty during the civil rights movement in the 1960s, notably singing at the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom in 1963. She also worked for several years as a delegate to the United Nations Human Rights Committee and as a "goodwill ambassadress" for the United States Department of State. The recipient of numerous awards and honors, Anderson was notably awarded the Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, the Kennedy Center Honors in 1978, the National Medal of Arts in 1984, and a Grammy Lifetime Achievement Award in 1991.

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PO Box 3218
Fremont, CA, 94539
510-794-5783

President:: Syeda Yunus
Treasurer: Carolyn Hedgecock
Editor: Vesta Wilson

Office Hours:
The LWVFNUC office address is:
3375 Country Drive
Fremont, CA

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Topic, BART.

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Hayward, Channel 28, every Monday at 9:30 PM

Visit our website:
<http://www.lwvfnuc.org>

CALENDAR

Mon., May 4	Pro and Cons Ballot Measures	7:00 PM	Fukaya Room Fremont Main Library
Thurs, May 7	Action Committee	12:30—2 PM	Kay Emanuele's home
Fri., May 8	Education Committee Meeting	9:30—11:00 AM	Ann Crosbie's home
Wed., May 13	Cable Taping	2:00—4:00	Comcast Studios
Fri., Sat, Sun., May 15—17	LWVC Convention		Long Beach Airport Marriot
Thurs, May 21	LWVFNUC Board Meeting	7:15—9:30 PM	Cultural Arts
Sat., June 6	LWVFNUC Annual Meeting	TBA	TBA