

Happy Halloween

THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF FREMONT, NEWARK AND UNION CITY  
Presents:

## A SPIRITED DISCUSSION OF THE NOVEMBER BALLOT PROPOSITIONS



STARRING

OUR OWN MEMBERS



MONDAY, OCTOBER 17

7:00 Coffee and dessert  
7:30 Program

At Fremont Main Library, Fukaya Room A

Be a Star!



Participate in the pros and cons.  
Learn how to access nonpartisan information.  
Practice your speaking skills.  
Have fun.  
Call Letha Saldanha (623-8483) or Ellen Culver (656-7973) to volunteer.

Program:

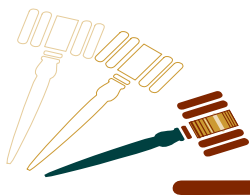
Pros and Cons on the Propositions  
Small group discussions of election issues

Californians are disgusted with the Legislature and the Governor. What would real reform look like?

### MEET FOR DINNER ON OCTOBER 17 AT SWEET TOMATOES

Come at 6:00 before the October 17 meeting and look for fellow Leaguers. We don't get enough time to visit. Over dinner, we'll have time to get acquainted or catch up with each other. Bring a friend who is interested in the League. Why stay at home and slave over a hot stove?



**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE**

My "to do" list is overflowing. October is always a busy month for the League. There's a candidate forum for Newark council, several registration booths in Newark, a cable program giving the League's stand on propositions on the special election. There's a public meeting with practice being a pro/con speaker, delivering the LWVC pros/cons to our usual places, and getting the Easy Reader Guides in English, Chinese and Spanish to people who need them. We need more "hands" to help us do the above, so also add to the list that we need more members. You have already volunteered for the membership committee. And please don't forget to "save" things for the League Garage Sale on Oct. 29.

We also have two studies starting. At our Annual Meeting we decided to have a local study on the governance of our community hospital and its role in promoting a healthy community in Fremont, Newark and Union City and there is an LWVC study to update the Energy position. Both committees will be starting in October and that is a good place for you to start. Call Judy Zlatnik or Susan Gearhart to sign up. There must be something on the list that you can help with. Pick one, call the appropriate leader and volunteer.

Help me do my "to do" list.

—Miriam Keller

•

**Board Briefs**

At the September 12 Board meeting, the Board

- heard the fall Voter Service Activities; Newark candidate forum, several registration booths. Pros/Cons and Easy Reader will be available.
- agreed to pursue an Action Committee request to ask LWVBA to discuss the governance of the Hetch Hetchy water system at their Jan. Meeting
- approved Muriel Nolan to the League seat on the Integrated Waste Management Advisory Committee (IWMAC).
- discussed the use of our name on the CCCR (Committee to Complete the Refuge) letterhead.
- approved a League Garage sale on Oct. 29.
- decided to have a membership contest and appoint mentors.
- thanked the Voter Service team for continuing registration packets in the Fremont schools.

**ANNUAL GARAGE SALE: Saturday, October 29th 8AM-2PM**

At Holly Bell Walter's Home 2754 Olive Ave. Fremont

Once again, it's time to clean out your closets, garages and storage units and donate your treasures (no trash please!) to the Annual Garage Sale. Drop off the items to Holly on Friday Oct. 28th from 5PM-8PM and/or help to price the items at that time. It's a fun event. Save those treasures, big or small, we want to sell them all!

Items WITH PRICING ATTACHED can be dropped off at Holly Walter's porch, side yard, or patio anytime starting Oct. 8th. Mark your calendars now, volunteers are needed Friday night Oct. 29 to price items and all day Saturday to sell. Pricing starts at 5PM Friday - pizza will be provided.

The next morning we need Helpers to sign up for 2 hour shifts starting at 7AM and going on to 3PM. Actual Garage Sale time in the newspaper will be 8AM until 2PM.

With your help, this fundraiser will be a tremendous success!  
Call Alison Kieft at 657-8454 to help or with any questions.



**VOTER SERVICE NEEDS YOUR HELP**

These are one time volunteer calls and a great way to see how the League works at election time.

Saturday October 1st: 1:00PM to 3:00PM; Voter Registration at Newark Library--you will work as a pair

Sunday October 16th: three shifts available: 9 to 11, 11 to 1, and 1 to 3, Voter Registration--Safeway, Jarvis Avenue Newark

Thursday October 6th: 6:30PM to 8:30PM; Newark City Council Candidate Forum: We need people to distribute question cards.

Monday October 17th: Speakers Bureau. We are looking for volunteers who will study one of the November Ballot Measures 'in-depth' either for or against it, and then make a presentation to the audience who will be mainly fellow league members. This is a great way to train to be a future speaker for the LWVFNUC.

Please Call Ellen Culver at 656-7973 to volunteer

**Weekender's Fashion Fundraiser****Drop By Sat. or Sun. Oct. 8 and 9**

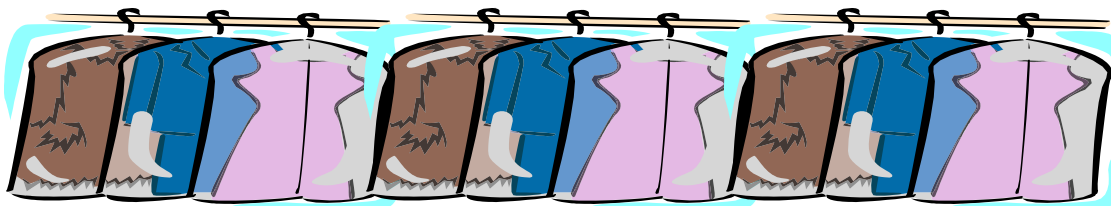
Slate, Redwood, Purple, Emerald, Ruby, Cobalt, Amber, along with the some Whites and Black! The new fall colors are here, with something to complement everyone's wardrobe and body style. Lots of styles and fabrics to choose from - quilted jackets and a poncho, pinstripe, casual French terry, Yoga pants, hounds tooth and tweed suits and even an evening wear jersey! These clothes are comfortable, fashionable, easy care, flattering and also perfect for traveling.

Official Open House hours are **Saturday 9:30 a.m. - 3:30 p.m. and Sunday 12:00-3:00**, but any sales to LWV members and friends that occur in the week prior also count toward the fundraiser. So, don't hesitate to call and schedule an alternate appointment. Any weekday after 3:00 p.m. can work.

2754 Olive Ave., Fremont (near Washington Blvd. intersection) Alternate appointments: 656-0459

**P.S. Save time and drop off your Garage Sale items on Oct. 8 or 9 while you shop!**

—Holly Walter

**MEMBERSHIP REPORT**

We have 109 members. Can we get 150?

The League of Women Voters of the U.S. suggested that we have a contest to get new members. They would also like to be updated on our e-mail addresses. So our LWVFUC Board challenges our membership to a contest. Can we get our membership up to 150? Who can get the most members? There will be a prize for the one who comes in with the most new members.

Sam Neeman and Peter Starr are preparing the new membership directory in October. So hurry and get your renewal in.

—Sr. Marjorie Wakelin, Membership Chair

**ACTION COMMITTEE STIRS UP ACTION**

You named us the ACTION COMMITTEE, so that's what we do. We act!

We received a large booklet full of information about the Hetch Hetchy Water System, and the entire committee has read and absorbed the information in it. We learned a lot, and we decided to recommend to the Bay Area League that the governance of the Hetch Hetchy System needs to be studied.

Susan Gearhart summarized the materials, and Sam Neeman edited the summary. Then we asked our Board to give us approval to seek out the support of all the Leagues who are in areas that use Hetch Hetchy water. We will use this group support when we request that the LWVBA study the governance of the HH system at their January meeting. The HH summary and cover letter (written by Kay Eamuele) is on the League's website and makes interesting reading. Go to [www.lwvfnc.org](http://www.lwvfnc.org) to find it.

The Voting Matters program that will run in October will be a League Advocacy program on the ballot issues. The League's positions on the ballot issues will be discussed and explained by Alex Starr and Greg Bonaccorsi, and the moderator will be Gus Morrison. We know that many of you get asked what the League recommends when it's time to vote. You can refer people to the October cable program for information on the League's positions. Note that this is not the usual pro/com format, but is ADVOCACY.

All you wonderful observers: please send your forms to us so we can keep informed about all the Boards and Commissions you observe. Thanks.

Ellen Culver is now our eyes and ears at the Union Sanitary District, and Ken Ballard has been appointed to the Measure A Oversight Committee. The LWVFNUC is omnipresent, almost. We could use an observer at the Alameda County Water District, so if you are interested, let Marilyn Singer know at [singer756@sbcglobal.net](mailto:singer756@sbcglobal.net).

Your Action Committee  
—Marilyn Singer, Chair

**LOCAL STUDY**

At the Annual Meeting last June, a new study was approved. Our League will study the governance of our community hospital, its role in promoting a healthy community in Fremont, Newark and Union City. Judy Zlatnik is organizing a meeting. To become involved in this study, please call Judy at 510-797-1389.

**Energy Update Study:** Delegates to the 2003 convention of the LWVC voted to undertake a study to update the LWVC position on Energy. The information provided is comprehensive and there are suggested guidelines to help us cover this material in the most efficient manner. We will be meeting a couple times and dividing the various topics or sections. We will be meeting as a group with hopefully six interested league members. Our information is to be returned by March 15, 2006. This will allow the LWVC to update their position and you will have a deeper understanding of the League process. The first meeting will be October 21, 9:30 AM at Miriam Keller's. Interested members, Please let me know as soon as you can at [grasslandladyvrn@aol.com](mailto:grasslandladyvrn@aol.com) or call Susan Gearhart at 656.7703.

**CEQALIST OF SIGNIFICANT EFFECTS**

**A project will normally have a significant effect on the environment if it will:**

- (a) Conflict with adopted environmental plans and goals of the community where it is located;
- (b) Have a substantial, demonstrable negative aesthetic effect;
- (c) Substantially affect a rare or endangered species of animal or plant or the habitat of the species;
- (d) Interfere substantially with the movement of any resident or migratory fish or wildlife species;
- (e) Breach published national, state, or local standards relating to solid waste or litter control;
- (f) Substantially degrade water quality;
- (g) Contaminate a public water supply;
- (h) Substantially degrade or deplete ground water resources;
- (i) Interfere substantially with ground water recharge;
- (j) Disrupt or adversely affect a prehistoric or historic archaeological site or a property of historic or cultural significance to a community or ethnic or social group; or a paleontological site except as a part of a scientific study;
- (k) Induce substantial growth or concentration of population;
- (l) Cause an increase in traffic which is substantial in relation to the existing traffic load and capacity of the street system;
- (m) Displace a large number of people;
- (n) Encourage activities which result in the use of large amounts of fuel, water, or energy;
- (o) Use fuel, water, or energy in a wasteful manner;
- (p) Increase substantially the ambient noise levels for adjoining areas;
- (q) Cause substantial flooding, erosion or siltation;
- (r) Expose people or structures to major geologic hazards;
- (s) Extend a sewer trunk line with capacity to serve new development;
- (t) Substantially diminish habitat for fish, wildlife or plants;
- (u) Disrupt or divide the physical arrangement of an established community;
- (v) Create a potential public health hazard or involve the use, production or disposal of materials which pose a hazard to people or animal or plant populations in the area affected;
- (w) Conflict with established recreational, educational, religious or scientific uses of the area;
- (x) Violate any ambient air quality standard, contribute substantially to an existing or projected air quality violation, or expose sensitive receptors to substantial pollutant concentrations;
- (y) Convert prime agricultural land to non-agricultural use or impair the agricultural productivity of prime agricultural land;
- (z) Interfere with emergency response plans or emergency evacuation plans.

*\*Source: California Environmental Quality Act of 1970, Statutes and Guidelines. Sacramento; 1986. (List of Significant Effects identical in 1992 edition)*



**SCOPING HEARINGS**

Scoping hearings for the SFPUC's Environmental Impact Report for the Water Supply Improvement Program will cover planned water supply and infrastructure projects in the Alameda Creek watershed, including the Calaveras Dam replacement, Sunol rubber dam, Sunol Valley water Treatment Plant enlargement, and fish restoration activities.

**Oct. 11—Fremont Library, 6—8 PM**

—Susan Gearhart

**COUNTY SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS UNDER MAGNIFYING GLASS**

For the past eight months, a team of local leaguers from seven Alameda County LWV's collected data on the position of County Superintendent of Schools. Their research is geared toward determining the efficacy of a position filled by election vs. a position that is appointed by an elected Board of Education..

Currently, 53 of California's 58 counties have an elected Superintendent (Alameda is one of the latter). Five counties, however, have a county superintendent appointed by an elected Board of Education: San Diego, Santa Clara, Sacramento, Ventura and San Francisco.

The Committee, appointed by the Alameda County Council of LWV Presidents, recently reported to the Council that seventy letters had been sent to superintendents and board members in nine counties. Counties selected are adjacent Bay Area counties; urban in nature and serve an average daily attendance (ADA) of 56,000 to 480,000 average daily attendance (ADA). Alameda County's ADA is 216,822. Three Bay Area counties fall below this range: Solano, Marin, Napa.

In the letters incumbents are asked:

What are the advantages of an elected superintendent?

Disadvantages?

What are the advantages of an appointed superintendent?

Disadvantages?

Co Chairs Lynn Groh (Alameda) and Eleanor Parker (Eden Area) reported they hope to learn of governmental efficiencies that can result from each process. Educational meetings will be presented in Spring 2006. They acknowledge the study is singly focused and may leave some issues unanswered.

Other Leaguers involved in the study: Sherry Smith, BEA, Miriam Keller, Fremont, Judy Belcher, Oakland, Joyce Brown, Livermore, Ann Trutner, Piedmont; resources Suzanne Barba, Eden Area and Anne White, Livermore.

**NOT ALL CHANGE IS REFORM****PROPOSITION 76**

Calls for reform of the California's system of state and local finance have issued from every corner with growing intensity for a number of years. Commissions have issued reports, ballot measures have been put to the voters, some succeeding, but the failures of the system seem only to have multiplied.

In 1998 the League of Women Voters of California produced a special edition of our California VOTER based on the work of the California Constitutional Revision Commission. Then LWVC President Karyn Gill wrote that "the challenge of reformers will be to show how the political process can identify and translate the needs of citizens into tangible and measurable outcomes that positively impact their lives."

Once again, voters are offered fiscal 'reform' with Proposition 76, the Governor's Live Within Our Means Act (LWOM). It would change parts of the system, but those changes were not recommended by previous studies. A number of them introduce new contradictions into the system. Certainly there is no vision of meeting citizens' needs in a positive manner.

The "purpose and intent" of the measure is defined as producing budgets that reduce "pressure for tax increases" and are "balanced by reductions in spending." Cutbacks in state funding, however, have forced schools and local governments, faced with citizen complaints about reduced services, to resort to a variety of local property taxes, fees and sales taxes, which cannot be tailored to considerations of equity or ability to pay.

LWOM would add a new spending limit on top of the existing one. The new limit would apply to spending from special funds, as well as the General Fund, and to spending supported by fees and voter-approved taxes. The measure also has a formula for allocating any revenues collected over the new limit, so that some of these special taxes or fees might still be collected but not spent for their intended purposes if total revenues exceeded the spending limit. Examples include Proposition 72's tax for public safety programs or Proposition 10's tobacco tax for early childhood programs, as well as fees paid

by students in the state university system. Any excess revenues would instead be shifted to the budget reserve, school or transportation construction or debt repayment.

The spending limit would be calculated by taking the amount spent in the prior year and adjusting it by the average annual percentage growth in both the General Fund and special fund revenues for the three prior years. This formula runs counter to both the budget cycle and the business cycle, and could have the adverse effect of allowing spending to increase in an economic downturn but holding spending down when the economy, and thus revenue, improves.

The measure would also reduce the long-term Proposition 98 spending guarantee for schools by \$4 billion a year, which translates to nearly \$600 per student in K-12. It would eliminate the legislature's power to suspend Proposition 98 in a bad budget year. Suspension now requires lost funds to be restored in better revenue years, but under LWOM, a governor could cut school funding with no requirement for future restoration of lost funding.

LWOM's shift of power to the governor is a serious erosion of our system of checks and balances. It would give a governor the power to declare a "fiscal emergency" and then to cut spending any time revenues fall 1.5 percent below forecast levels (forecasts being just educated guesses, not actual revenues) or if the governor determines that the state is likely to need to spend more than half of its reserve account to meet budget obligations. The legislature would have a limited time to solve the problem, by the same two-thirds vote that now hangs up the budget, and then a governor could make cuts without legislative approval.

Perhaps the most striking thing about the act is the lack of concern about the potential impact on the public or of any vision of where California should be heading in the future. There is no attempt to address equity in taxation, only to restrain spending with the goal of keeping any taxes from going up. California voters may not like taxes, but a number of times they have been ready to approve them for purposes they thought important, most recently with the tax for mental health services, and they have shown very little appetite for any reduction in public services. —LWVC

**THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS RECOMMENDS  
NOVEMBER 8, 2005 SPECIAL ELECTION****✗ PROP 73     *Waiting Period and Parental Notification before Termination of  
Minor's Pregnancy.*     **OPPOSE****

Parents rightfully want to be involved in their teenagers' lives and all parents want what is best for their children. But good family communication can't be imposed by government. Mandatory notification laws may sound good, but in the real world, vulnerable teenagers who can't talk to their parents may resort to unsafe, illegal abortions.

**✗ PROP 74     *Public School Teachers. Waiting Period for Permanent Status.  
Dismissal.*     **OPPOSE****

The League supports fair, rigorous, and effective teacher evaluation and tenure procedures. However, this measure raises questions of due process rights and may limit the use of dismissal for cause. It does nothing to encourage teachers to enter and remain in the profession.

**✗ PROP 75     *Public Employee Union Dues. Restrictions on Political  
Contributions. Employee Consent Requirement.*     **OPPOSE****

The League supports fair, even-handed campaign finance reform, but this measure is bad policy. It restricts public employee unions' use of member dues for political activity but has no similar constraint on corporations.

**✗ PROP 76     *State Spending and School Funding Limits.*     **OPPOSE****

This constitutional amendment changes the state's spending cap, increases the governor's power to make budget cuts, and revises the Proposition 98 minimum guarantees for state support of education. It reduces flexibility to address changing needs and will cause cuts in essential services. School funding will be permanently reduced by \$4 billion per year. Our system of checks and balances will be undermined by giving this and all future governors the power to make cuts unilaterally. This is not budget reform!

**✗ PROP 77     *Redistricting.*     **OPPOSE****

California needs to reform the way legislative and congressional district lines are drawn, but this flawed measure doesn't measure up. The makeup of its redistricting panel and its neglect of communities of interest in drawing plans are bad policy. This proposal calls for an immediate redistricting that would ignore three million new Californians, and it requires a cumbersome, wasteful ratification of every set of plans by the people.

**✗ PROP 78     *Discounts on Prescription Drugs.*     **OPPOSE****

There are two prescription drug initiatives on this ballot. Drug companies have contributed over \$50 million to support Proposition 78, an inferior program that depends on their voluntary participation.

**✓ PROP 79     *Prescription Drug Discounts. State-Negotiated Rebates.*     **SUPPORT****

Proposition 79 offers deeper drug discounts to nearly twice as many Californians as Proposition 78. It has an enforcement mechanism to hold drug companies accountable for providing discounts.

Because League positions do not cover the issues in **PROP 80, Electric Service Providers. Regulation**, the LWVC is remaining neutral on this initiative.

9/13/2005

**VOTE WITH THE LEAGUE ON NOVEMBER 8**



## WHO PAYS TAXES IN CALIFORNIA?

### **How Much Do Californians Pay in State and Local Taxes?**

Measured as a share of family income, California's poorest families pay the most in taxes. The poorest fifth of the state's non-elderly families, with an average income of \$11,100, spent 11.3 percent of their income on state taxes in 2002. In comparison, the wealthiest one percent, with an average income of \$1.6 million, spent 7.2 percent of their income on state taxes. The total tax burden on California's families is a function of the state's highly progressive personal income tax and regressive sales and excise taxes. Higher income households pay more in income taxes. Lower income households pay more in property taxes. Households also bear a share of the burden of taxes imposed on business through higher prices and reduced corporate earnings. Higher income households pay a relatively greater share of the corporate income tax, while lower income households pay a greater share of businesses' sales and excise tax burden.

### **How Much Does the "Average" California Family Earn?**

California's 2003 median *household* income, the income where half of all households earned more and half earned less, was \$49,300.3 The median income for all California personal income *taxpayers* was \$31,734 in 2002, the most recent year for which data are available.

### **Who Pays the Corporate Income Tax in California?**

Small businesses pay a very small share of the corporate income tax. While 550,853 corporations filed tax returns in 2002, the 1.6 percent with taxable incomes in excess of \$1 million paid 81.2 percent of the 2002 tax. The most costly corporate tax credit is the Research and Development (R&D) Credit. In 2002, 1,625 corporations claimed \$450.1 million in R&D credits, averaging \$276,995 per firm. Overall, relatively few corporations claim the various state tax credits. In 2002, fewer

than 2 percent of the state's corporations claimed any of the state's tax credits.

### **Is California a High Tax State?**

California is a moderate tax state. In 2002-03, California ranked 16th among the 50 states with respect to state taxes as a percentage of personal income and the state ranked 18th with respect to total "own source" revenues – the broadest measure of state and local revenues - raised by state and local governments in 2001-02, the most recent year for which data are available. California ranks relatively high with respect to personal and corporate income tax collections, although the available data fail to take into account the relatively modest growth in revenues in recent years. The state ranks relatively low with respect to property, fuel, and alcoholic beverage taxes.

### **How Have California's Tax Policies Changed Over Time?**

Over the past two decades, the burden of funding state services has shifted from corporate to personal income taxpayers. The personal income tax is expected to provide 49.5 percent of General Fund revenues in 2004-05, up from 35.4 percent in 1980-81. Corporate tax receipts are expected to provide 10.9 percent of General Fund revenues in 2004-05, down from 14.6 percent in 1980-81. New, increased, and expanded corporate tax breaks and the 1996 corporate rate reduction are responsible for the decline in the share of state revenues provided by the corporate income tax. Tax reductions enacted between 1997 and 2004 alone will reduce 2004-05 revenues by \$7.2 billion.

### **Who Doesn't Pay Taxes in California?**

In 2002, the most recent year for which data are available, 347,189 taxpayers reported incomes of \$200,000 or more. However, 1,334 of these households paid no California personal income tax. How did they do it? The largest tax breaks claimed by "no tax" households include enterprise zone tax breaks, the Manufacturers' Investment Credit, Los Angeles Revitalization Zone Credits, and miscellaneous deductions. The

number of high income "no tax" returns more than doubled between 1999 and 2002.

—From the California Budget Project

From: League of Women Voters of California <lwvc@lwvc.org>

## **LWVC ANNOUNCES OPPOSITION TO PROPOSITION 77, THE REDISTRICTING INITIATIVE**

This year the LWVC and many individual League members across the state have sought reform of the redistricting process by which congressional, legislative, and Board of Equalization district lines are drawn. We urged Governor Schwarzenegger and legislators to work together to put a measure before the voters that would include an independent commission reflecting California's diversity; an open, accessible process for public input and scrutiny; and fair criteria for drawing the lines. (See [www.lwvc.org/lwvc/action/redistrict/](http://www.lwvc.org/lwvc/action/redistrict/).)

Unfortunately, negotiations did not succeed, and the only redistricting measure on the ballot is the Costa initiative, Proposition 77. The LWVC board, along with the Mexican American Legal Defense and Education Fund (MALDEF) and the AsianPacific American Legal Center (APALC), has announced opposition to Prop 77. See our press release below and the position paper posted at <http://apalc.org/pdf/files/prop77pos.pdf>.

Concerns about Prop 77 include the makeup of its redistricting panel; flaws in the standards for drawing lines; the provision calling for a "mid-decade" redistricting that would rely on outdated census data and could jeopardize the administration of the 2006 elections; and the requirement that every new set of plans would require a vote of the people.

We believe Californians should reject this flawed measure and press the legislature and governor to propose real reform in next year's legislative session.





August 2005

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS ABOUT CALIFORNIA SCHOOLS



## Holding School Districts Accountable

School district leaders not only have to make fiscally sound decisions, but they also must ensure that their financial decisions support the district's and state's goals for student achievement. And they must let the community review their decisions at public meetings. This guide explains the oversight of districts and how community members can get involved.

### Do districts have an Academic Performance Index (API) score?

Yes, a district's API score is based on the test performance of all the students in the district as a whole. However, there is no ranking of districts that compares them based on their API scores. The Ed-Data Partnership website lists district API scores at [www.ed-data.k12.ca.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us) as part of its district accountability reports.

### What about the federal No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB)?

Districts, like schools, must make "adequate yearly progress (AYP)" toward all students scoring proficient in English and math by 2013–14. There are set threshold scores that districts must meet each year based on state tests. (These scores are determined by the percent of students scoring proficient or advanced in English and math in spring testing.)

As part of making AYP, districts must also reach a certain API score or must raise their score by one point. For 2004–05 through 2006–07, that API score is 590. In addition, districts must test 95% of their students, and high school and unified districts must attain a specified high school graduation rate or show a certain amount of improvement.

Like schools, districts that for two years in a row do not make AYP must, in most cases, participate in the NCLB intervention called **Program Improvement (PI)**. However, a district would not enter PI if it could show that students in any of three specific grade spans (3–5, 6–8, or 10) have in either year met the AYP criteria that the district as a whole failed. Schools and districts must inform parents if they are in PI and explain what steps they are taking to improve. This information must be presented in English and, to the extent practicable, in one or more other languages that parents can more easily understand.

Based on the 2004 AYP results, 142 California school districts entered PI. During the first year of PI, districts must do a self-assessment and get support from their county office or other approved body. If a district does not improve after two years, it faces serious sanctions in the third year, such as replacing staff or restructuring the district. In order to exit PI, a district must make AYP for two years in a row.

### Is there a public record that explains how my district is doing?

Information about the district must be included on each school's **School Accountability Report Card (SARC)**. SARCs must contain student demographics (i.e., breakdowns of students based on ethni-

city, poverty, disabilities, and home language); academic data; teacher and staff information, including whether teachers have credentials in the subjects that they teach and whether there are vacant teaching positions; fiscal data; the condition of facilities and availability of textbooks; AYP status; and information about school safety.

Parents must be told how to access SARCs, either through the Internet or paper copies. SARCs must be understandable and, if more than 15% of a district's students have a home language other than English, must be translated into that language. SARCs are supposed to be updated annually, though many districts have fallen behind. If your school has not made its SARC available to you, ask your principal for a copy.

### Does my district's budget support student achievement?

District budgets can be complicated and difficult to understand, but they reveal district priorities. Salary levels, number of teachers per student, staffing arrangements, such as whether counselors are hired, all indicate what the district considers important. For more information, go to the Ed-Data website: [www.ed-data.k12.ca.us](http://www.ed-data.k12.ca.us). For a more in-depth discussion of district budgets, see the EdSource publication, *Understanding School District Budgets: A guide for local leaders at: [www.edsource.org/pub\\_abs\\_budgetguide04.cfm](http://www.edsource.org/pub_abs_budgetguide04.cfm)*

### What is the official budget review process?

Each spring, the school district superintendent submits a proposed budget for the next school year to the local school board. A required public hearing provides a formal setting for community input. A school board–approved budget must be submitted by June 30 to the superintendent of the county office of education, who reviews the budget to ensure that it is fiscally sound. The county superintendent then approves, conditionally approves, or disapproves it. Districts with *approved* budgets proceed with the implementation of their programs as planned. (For a few districts, such as San Francisco, the city school district and county office of education are one and the same. For those districts, the state takes over the role of the county.)

If a budget is *conditionally approved* or *disapproved*, the county office of education explains its concerns to the district and sets up formal processes for revising the budget, which include public hearings.

In December the district completes a **First Interim Report** of its financial situation for the current school year. The report is presented at a public hearing and submitted to the county superintendent, who issues a **positive certification** saying that the district will meet its financial obligations for the current and subsequent two fiscal years; a **qualified certification** indicating that it may not be able to do so; or a **negative certification** predicting that it will be unable to do so. The same process and reporting accompanies the **Second Interim Report** in mid-March.



When a district receives a qualified or negative certification, it loses some of its financial autonomy. For example, the county can review its collective bargaining agreements and it is prohibited from taking on certain financial obligations. It must also submit a **Third Interim Report** at the end of the fiscal year.

### How do parents and community members get involved?

Beyond this official review process, district staff, school principals, parents, teachers, and other district stakeholders frequently make arguments and lobby district officials over budget allocations outside of official public meetings. Sometimes decisions are based on new research and evaluations, but often they are made in response to pressures by parents and other stakeholders.

In some districts, parents are well organized and regularly lobby district officials. In others, parents are less familiar with the process. If parents want to have some say over how their district spends its funds, they need to meet with other parents, attend meetings, insist on getting copies of important documents, and learn how the process works in their district. Any document presented at a public meeting of the school board—such as budgets, interim reports, and audits—must be made available to parents and community members on request, though the district can charge a fee for providing individual copies.

### Are districts subject to financial audits?

Once the books are closed for a school year, an independent auditor must conduct a **final audit** of the district's financial records. The report must be presented at a public meeting and include a management letter that highlights any problems the auditors found—including serious "audit exceptions"—plus recommendations for addressing them. The absence of audit exceptions does not necessarily mean that a district has no financial worries. Similarly, a long list of recommendations does not automatically show that district officials are acting irresponsibly. The audit provides important—but not complete—information with which to evaluate a district's operations and its future financial health.

County offices also review district audits and are required to inform the state superintendent of public instruction and the state controller's office if any audits include exceptions related to state funding.

### What happens if my district is having financial trouble?

Districts can get help from the state-funded Fiscal Crisis and Management Assistance Team (FCMAT). FCMAT has established regional teams of experts that can be used as advisers when needed and also provides training for school business officials. When a district faces a negative certification, FCMAT develops an improvement plan, providing progress reports to both local and state authorities.

Sometimes the state provides an emergency loan to a district. When that happens, the state also appoints a trustee who has veto power over district actions.

### How will I know if my district is having financial problems?

District school boards must hold public meetings about budget issues. There are also 15 specific warning signs that a district may be having financial problems. They include problems with the district's governance structure, record-keeping, financial planning processes, and openness to public input and scrutiny. For the full list of 15 signs and further explanation, go to [www.fcma.org](http://www.fcma.org) and click on the FCMAT Predictors button.

The county office of education must investigate the district's finances if more than three of the specific warning signs are in evidence.

### What if school facilities are in bad condition?

Based on the settlement of the *Williams v. California* lawsuit, county superintendents must now ensure that low-performing schools—ranked in the bottom 30% (deciles 1–3) based on the Academic Performance Index (API)—have textbooks for every student, safe and clean facilities, and teachers with the right credentials. (See [www.decent.schools.org](http://www.decent.schools.org) or [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov) and click on "Williams case" for more information.)

However, all schools—no matter how they are ranked on the API—must post signs in every classroom that explain the standards for facilities. Any school that receives funding from the state's School Facilities Grant Program must establish a facilities inspection system to ensure that schools are well maintained.

### How do I complain about a problem in my district?

Under the *Williams* settlement, all districts must have a uniform complaint process for complaints regarding insufficient or damaged instructional materials, unsafe or unhealthy facilities, and teacher vacancies or teachers without the right credentials. The complaint process must include a standard form that explains where to file the complaint and a person or unit responsible for handling complaints. To see a sample complaint form, go to [www.cde.ca.gov](http://www.cde.ca.gov) and click on "Williams case." Complaints may be filed anonymously.

If the complaint involves problems beyond the school, the principal has 10 working days to forward the complaint to the district. The principal or district superintendent should remedy a valid complaint within 30 working days. If the person complaining is not satisfied, that person can go to the school board. Every three months, the district must report a summary of complaints made and how they were resolved to the school board and county superintendent. All complaints and responses are public records. ☐



EdSource is a not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization established in California in 1977. Independent and impartial, EdSource strives to advance the common good by developing and widely distributing trustworthy, useful information that clarifies complex K-12 education issues and promotes thoughtful decisions about California's public school system.

EdSource thanks the Stuart Foundation for its investment in our core work.

Reprints permitted with credit to EdSource.

© COPYRIGHT 2005 BY EdSource, INC.

520 SAN ANTONIO RD., SUITE 200, MOUNTAIN VIEW, CA 94040-1217 • 650/917-9451 • FAX: 650/917-0482 • [EDSOURCE@EDSOURCE.ORG](mailto:EDSOURCE@EDSOURCE.ORG) • [WWW.EDSOURCE.ORG](http://WWW.EDSOURCE.ORG) • [WWW.ED-DATA.K12.CA.US](http://WWW.ED-DATA.K12.CA.US)

### **Health Care: Long Term Plan and "Pilot Program"**

The goal of the League's long-term strategy is to utilize a focused plan to mobilize the resources of local Leagues to reach out to voters and build support to pass League-supported single payer legislation and/or initiative.

The following objectives will be utilized to achieve this goal:

- educate local League members about issues related to single payer health care so they can become effective advocates;
- develop a speakers bureau and an education outreach program that will reach individuals and a wide variety of public and private sector organizations;
- endeavor to obtain widespread support and overcome objections and negative myths about single payer legislation and/or initiative supported by the League;
- work in coalition with other health care advocates at the local and state level to promote voter education and build support for universal single payer health care.

The LWVC board also approved a pilot program in which seven Leagues statewide are considering participation in developing a speakers bureau and disseminating the educational materials provided by the Health Care Committee. The other two goals are to secure endorsements from organizations/individuals and seek support from local newspapers, elected officials and physicians. Lastly, a campaign endorsement will continue to seek signed support

statements for [SB 840](#) (Senator Sheila Kuehl) or any other League supported bills or ballot measures on this issue. The state board is hoping to receive results by February 2006.

Information on the whole program is on file with Joan Lancaster ([social\\_policy@lwvc.org](mailto:social_policy@lwvc.org)) or Barbara Storey ([bs\\_lwv004@cox.net](mailto:bs_lwv004@cox.net))

### **Health Care: Update on SB 840**

With the special election looming, it is most likely that there will be no further action on [SB 840](#) this year. It is expected that the bill will be amended to include financing structure and work its way through the State Assembly in 2006.

It is important that advocacy continue throughout this year. To date, there are 20 Assembly co-authors, including principal co-authors: Chan, Goldberg, and Leno and co-authors: Berg, Chu, Dymally, Evans, Hancock, Jones, Klehs, Koretz, Laird, Levine, Lieber, Montanez, Nava, Pavley, Ridley-Thomas, Vargas, and Yee. The League, as well as other health care reform advocates, could help move SB840 a long way toward passage out of the Assembly by contacting their Assembly Members and asking them to join the growing number of SB840 co-authors.

Barbara Storey, *Program Director for Health Care*,  
[bs\\_lwv004@cox.net](mailto:bs_lwv004@cox.net)

Joan Lancaster, *Social Policy Director*, [social\\_policy@lwvc.org](mailto:social_policy@lwvc.org)

### **NATIONAL BROADCASTERS NEGLECT LOCAL ELECTIONS**

In the month leading up to Election Day, 2004, viewers of local news in 11 media markets saw nearly four-and-a-half times more stories about the presidential campaign than they did stories about all other political races combined, a new Lear Center study has found. Only one third of all campaign stories focused on issues.

Ninety-two percent of the 4,333 regularly scheduled half-hour news broadcasts studied contained no stories at all about local candidate races. Eight times more coverage went to stories about accidental injuries, and 12 times more coverage to sports and weather than to coverage of all local races combined.

Across the nation, local stations in all U.S. markets took in more than \$1.6 billion in revenue from political advertising.

Polls consistently show that Americans get most of their news from local TV, "Last summer, Senate Commerce Committee Chairman, John McCain, FCC Chairman, Michael Powell and FCC Commissioner Jonathan Adelstein challenged America's broadcasters to live up to the promise in the licenses to provide significant coverage of local races," said Martin Kaplan, associate dean of the USC Annenberg School for Communication and director of its Norman Lear Center. "It looks like that challenge pretty much fell on deaf ears."

—From the Lear Center Local News Archive



**SACRAMENTO** – Teachers whose students are poor and members of racial minorities are generally less experienced and earn less money than their counterparts at more affluent schools, even within the same districts, according to a report released Wednesday by a nonpartisan research group. A bill now on the governor's desk would require districts to report per-pupil spending and teachers' salaries by school so parents can see if that's true at their children's school. —From the Sacramento Bee



**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**

\_\_\_\_\_ Individual Membership - \$50 \_\_\_\_\_ Household - \$75  
 Donate to LWVNUC \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Donate to Ed. Fund \$ \_\_\_\_\_ Total enclosed \$ \_\_\_\_\_  
 Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_  
 E-mail \_\_\_\_\_ New Member \_\_\_\_\_ Renewal \_\_\_\_\_ Transfer  
 from \_\_\_\_\_



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: Ann Crosbie: 510-657-3422, crosbieclan@comcast.net. 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's diversity.

**LWVFNUC Voter**

Published 10 times a year by the League of Women Voters of Fremont, Newark and Union City.

PO Box 3218

Fremont, CA, 94539

510-794-5783

President: Miriam Keller

Treasurer: Bunny Robinson

Editor: Vesta Wilson

Office Hours:

The LWVFNUC storage office address is:

4368 Enterprise St., off Grimmer, near Automall.

Materials are available 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM with permission from a board member.

**ELECTRONIC CORNER****Here are some useful websites:**

Bay Area Monitor: <http://www.bayareamonitor.org>

LWVC: <http://www.ca.lwv.org>

LWVBA: <http://www.lwvba.ca.org>

LWVUS: <http://www.lwv.org>

Smart Voter: <http://www.smartvoter.org>

**Do you want to let them know what you think about current affairs?****Emails:**

Barbara Boxer: [senator@boxer.senate.gov](mailto:senator@boxer.senate.gov)

Dianne Feinstein: [senator@feinstein.senate.gov](mailto:senator@feinstein.senate.gov)

George W. Bush: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

Arnold Schwarzenegger: [Governor@Governor.ca.gov](mailto:Governor@Governor.ca.gov)

**Mission Statement**

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

**QUOTE:** What government is best? That which teaches us to govern ourselves. —Goethe



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN  
VOTERS OF FREMONT,  
NEWARK AND UNION CITY**  
P.O. Box 3218 Fremont, CA, 94539  
(510) 794-5783

Nonprofit  
Organization  
U.S. Postage  
PAID  
Permit # 445  
Fremont, California

### WATCH VOTING MATTERS

Tune in to see Gus Morrison interview League Members, Alex Starr and Greg Bonaccorsi. Topic: Advocacy for League Supported Propositions.

**Fremont**, Channel 29, every Wednesday at 7:30 PM

**Newark**, Channel 6, every Thursday at 7 PM

**Union City**, Channel 15, every Thursday at 9:30 PM

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

Visit our website:  
<http://www.lwvfnuc.org>  
and Smart Voter  
[www.smartvoter.org](http://www.smartvoter.org)

## CALENDAR

Sat., Oct 1	Voter Registration	11 AM—3 PM	Newark Library 6300 Civic Terrace
Sat., Oct. 8, Sun., Oct. 9	Fashion Fundraiser	Sat. 9:30 AM—3:30 PM, Sun., 12—3:30 PM	Holly Walter's home
Mon. Oct. 10	LWVFNUC Board Meeting	7:15 PM—9 PM	Joanne Lander's home
Tues., Oct 11	SFPUC Water Supply Scoping Hearings	6 PM—8 PM	Fremont Main Library
Fri., Oct.14	Education Committee	9:30 AM	Miriam Keller's home
Sat., Oct. 16	Voter Registration	9 AM—3 PM	Newark Safeway, 5877 Jarvis
Mon., Oct. 17	Understanding the Propositions	7:00—9:00	Fremont Main Library, Fukaya Room A
Wed, Oct. 19	Cable Taping	2:30	Comcast Studios
Fri. Oct. 21	Energy Update Study Meeting	9:30 AM	Miriam Keller's home
Wed., Oct. 26	Action Committee	9:30	Marilyn Singer's home
Sat., Oct 29	Annual Garage Sale	9 AM—2:00 PM	Holly Walter's home