



League of Women Voters of San Francisco

THE VOTER

Spring 2009



Letter from President Karen Clopton

2009 A Year to Remember the Past and Begin

New Initiatives

As we continue to commemorate the 89th of the League of Women Voters and the 50th anniversary of California's Fair Employment and Housing Act (our nation's seminal civil rights), we also mark the bicentennial of President Abraham Lincoln's birth and the 100th anniversary of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (the NAACP), America's premier civil rights organization. 2009 is indeed a very special year with continued enthusiasm from young voters, previously disenfranchised voters, and renewed hope; as a result our chapter has an opportunity to promote voter education, civil discourse, and good government reform. Proposition 11 on state redistricting reform passed and now we are entering the implementation phase. Hearings will be held throughout the state by the State Auditor's Office, including San Francisco on February 27th.

Honoring the Presidency

Born in Kentucky on February 12, 1809 and raised in Indiana and Illinois, Abraham Lincoln became a frontier lawyer who served one term in the U.S. House of Representatives before his inauguration as President. He faced the severest test of any chief executive and rose to meet the challenge with inspired leadership that carried the nation through the Civil War. His Presidency is honored for reuniting the North and South and

emancipating the enslaved, for promoting settlement of the West through homesteading and improved transportation, and for providing educational opportunity through land-grant colleges. I was very fortunate to take my 12 year old daughter, Olivia, to Washington, D.C. and Virginia for the inauguration festivities. We called it the "Presidential Tour" and studied the biographies of all 44 presidents, visited Monticello, the home of President Thomas Jefferson (and the Hemings family), and toured the nation's capitol. One of the most striking aspects of the trip was meeting people of all ethnic and religious backgrounds who had travelled to Washington celebrate this peaceful change in government. It struck me that while the election had been contentious and many regrettable attempts had been made to make religious differences an issue, religious tolerance and freedom remain basic tenets of our American way of life. During the visit to Monticello, we discovered that this incredible historic home was saved for posterity by a prominent Jewish family, led by Commodore Uriah P. Levy, because of Jefferson's support of religious freedom. Jefferson authored the Virginia Act for Establishing Religious Freedom in 1786 which states "...our civil rights have no dependence on our religious opinions, any more than on our opinions in physics or geometry...no man shall be compelled to frequent or support any religious worship place or ministry whatsoever, nor shall be enforced, restrained, molested, or burthened in his body or goods, nor shall otherwise suffer on account of his religious opinions or (President's letter cont. on Page 2)

Women Who Could Be President

Following the very exciting November 2008 election, the League of Women Voters celebrated five "Women Who Could Be President" at our second gala reception on February 12 at the City Club of San Francisco. This date coincided with the 200th anniversary of President Lincoln's birth. We raised our glasses to and enjoyed birthday cake for both Lincoln and the League's 89th birthday. The gala was chaired by Chandra Friese and emceed by Cheryl Jennings of KGO-TV. During the Gala, the League premiered the LWVSF video produced by David Pfeil and donated by Dr. Elisa Stephens. If you would like to view this video, please go to our website www.SFvotes.org.

The 2009 Honorees, League Board Members and Emcee

Back row: Karen Clopton, Lisa Stevens, Julie Castro-Abrams Diane Jones-Lowrey and Chandra Friese
Front row: Cheryl Jennings, Michela Alioto-Pier and Carolyn Wente



More Gala Photos on Page 3

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belief...all men shall be free to profess, and by argument to maintain their opinions in matters of religion, and that the same shall in no wise diminish, enlarge, or affect their civil capacities." (from original text) This sweeping act ensured Jefferson's place in history to the same degree as his role in the Declaration of Independence and the founding of the University of Virginia. These three accomplishments were the only Jefferson listed on his tombstone epitaph.

Fostering Civil Discourse

Growing up, my father encouraged debate at the dinner table, quizzing me on current events, however, these discussions were limited to our immediate family and politics and religion were verboten topics when company was present. While this custom was part of my parents' generation of hospitality (which extended to the lovely cigarette box and lighter for guests in a household of non-smokers), this prohibition might very well extend to the workplace as well as other more social environments. Civil discourse is a fundamental part of our democracy and the League can provide an acceptable, welcoming, and respectable venue to openly discuss important civic matters.

2008 was exciting and record numbers of people were engaged in the political process. The excitement and discussions often extended into the workplace and created some interesting situations that could have legal implications. There were heated moments about whether then Senator Obama was a Muslim and then more heated discussions when his Christian pastor's fiery sermons were brought to light. Proposition 8 elicited equally impassioned debate; one side viewing the issue as a civil rights violation and the other side considering it a religious issue. Famously, a Mormon theatre director was forced to resign from his job because he had made a personal contribution to the Yes on 8 campaign. This would appear to be a possible violation of both FEHA's prohibition against discrimination based on religion and the Labor Code's prohibition against discrimination for political affiliations. Ironically, prior to the inclusion of sexual orientation in the FEHA, this Labor Code section was cited to prohibit sexual orientation bias in employment. Sadly, the Proposition 8 controversy devolved into ugly finger pointing, racism, and religious intolerance on both sides of the issue. This was and remains an opportunity for coalition building, outreach, voter education, and understanding. Politics and religion often go hand in hand. With the recent resurgence of violence in the Middle East and the Gaza strip, many Americans are expressing concern. Can those who advocate peace and justice in the world do so without being considered anti-Israeli or anti-Palestinian? After chairing a 42-member Task Force at San Francisco State University on intergroup relations between the Jewish and Arab communities, I can

attest that every word and nuance means something different to each side in this tragic conflict. But is it suitable material for water cooler chatter? We interested in what our membership thinks about the future of civil discourse and how the League can continue to promote safe forums for candidates and issues to interact with voters.

Women Who Could Be President

The League chose five women whose contributions to our community make them eligible to be considered women who could be president. They are:

- Julie Castro Abrams, CEO of Women's Initiative for Self-Employment
- Michela Alioto Pier, Member of the San Francisco Board of Supervisors
- Diane Jones Lowrey, Director of Marketing at Levi-Strauss and community leader
- Lisa Stevens, Executive Vice President, Regional President of Wells Fargo and education advocate
- Carolyn Wente, leads Wente Family Estates with her brothers and philanthropist

I would like to extend my thanks to everyone who took part in the League of Women Voters "Women Who Could Be President" Awards Gala Reception held this past February. Thanks to the generous support of our members and our sponsors, we succeeded in raising over \$65,000 during these difficult economic times. These contributions will go towards supporting the League's voter education programs, publications, forums, and other services that benefit our community. Events like the Gala are possible thanks to your hard work and participation in the League. Thank you so much for being a member of our team!

We are working hard in our Education Committee on Election Reform and Healthcare Reform. We will be presenting a forum in late April on Healthcare. The details will follow. Which leads me to remind you that we really need your email addresses so that we can keep you up to date about events that are happening here at the League of Women Voters of San Francisco. Please let us know what you think and check out our award winning, nationally recognized website at www.SFvotes.org.



Delicious Birthday cake to celebrate the League's 89th Anniversary and the Bi-centennial of Lincoln's birth.



Board Member Stina Skewes-Cox and President Karen Clopton



Gala Chair and Board Member Chandra Friese, Emcee Cheryl Jennings and Gala video producer David Pfeil



Elisa Stephens, Carolyn Wente and Karen Clopton



Fran Finney/Storyboard

In 1982, I moved to San Francisco and wanted to learn all I could about the city that was now my home. Though I wasn't a League member, I had worked on League-like issues when I lived in Portland, Oregon, and realized that a great way to learn more about this city would be to join the League of Women Voters here. So I did.

A League member picked me up and took me to my first meeting. I enjoyed the women I met. They were smart and cared a lot about making a contribution to the city by informing voters about important issues.

The first project I worked on was a study about noise at SFO. After that I became involved in a study about California finances. I continued to be more and more involved in League projects and had the opportunity to present information about the projects at League meetings. It was a valuable experience.

Occasionally, I got to learn about San Francisco at the highest levels. The League members were invited to attend meetings at the homes of Nancy Pelosi and Diane Feinstein. And on one occasion I met Barbara Boxer. These opportunities made me feel more closely aligned with the political process of the city. And it meant a lot to me that the League had the prestige to influence and discuss issues with prominent local, state and national level leaders.

Another opportunity I prized was being able to attend Bay Area League meetings which discussed and studied issues affecting the region. That further broadened my knowledge of the city and the Bay Area.

Along the way I have been elected to the San Francisco League board of directors. Currently I am working on the Advocacy committee and helped lead the study of local propositions on which the League took a position in the November, 2008 election. I have also participated in our Speakers' Bureau which presents and explains the local propositions to groups of interested citizens.

I have gotten so much out of my membership and involvement with the San Francisco League of Women Voters. I've certainly learned a lot about the city and I believe it has given me the opportunity to make a difference in the education of voters. And when the League "talks" it's based on solid background. That's a value that means a lot to me.

The California League of Women Voters has not endorsed the concept of convening a constitutional convention, but it has been an active participant in the discussion about this possibility and was one of the sponsors of the California Constitutional Convention Summit held on February 24, 2009. League members who are interested in knowing more about the process of convening a constitutional convention can find information on <http://ca.lwv.org/>. Some of the answers to frequently asked questions prepared by the Bay Area Council organization are reprinted here from the California League's website http://www.bayareacouncil.org/takeaction_ccc_Q&A.php

What is a Constitutional Convention?

A Constitutional Convention is a gathering of delegates for the purpose of revising an existing constitution or writing a new constitution.

Why should a Constitutional Convention be convened?

We think it is undeniable that California's government suffers from drastic dysfunction – our financing system is bankrupt, our prisons overflow, our water system teeters on collapse, our once proud schools are criminally poor, our democracy produces ideologically-extreme legislators that can pass neither budget nor reforms, and we have no recourse in the system to right these wrongs.

Most of these problems are a byproduct of the outdated system and rules of governance enshrined in our current constitution. California's constitution was always meant to be a living document that could adjust to the times, but it hasn't been systematically reformed since 1879. Our constitution needs serious structural reforms, chosen and authorized by the people, and a Constitutional Convention is the only politically viable means to achieve those reforms.

Who are the delegates in a Constitutional Convention?

The makeup of the Convention in California is not stipulated, except that delegates geographically represent proportionate amounts of population. Delegates would likely come from either Senate, Assembly, Board of Equalization or Congressional districts, or a combination of these districts, to meet "one-person, one-vote" standards and requirements under the Voting Rights Act. (It also avoids the expense and political contentiousness of redrawing districts lines.) In other states the general practice is to have the Convention size be roughly comparable to the legislature, in California's case, 120 delegates. In the 1878 Convention, there were 152 delegates: 3 from each Senate district and 32 at-large delegates.

What revisions could be made during the Constitutional Convention?

We do not presume to have the answers at this point, but through our consultations consensus seems to be

emerging on the need to address the following issues:

- Adopt a two-year budget cycle
 - Implement an open primary system and/or make state offices nonpartisan
 - Extend term limits
 - Increase the number of members of the legislature to ensure better representation of the population
 - Create a Sunset Commission, similar to Texas, where every state agency is up for review and automatically abolished unless legislation is enacted to continue, merge or transfer their responsibilities.
 - Reform California's system of taxation and spending, and ties to local government spending
 - Address the initiative process, raise the minimum number of signatures required
 - Remove 2/3rds requirement on passing a budget (either if the increase is below 5%, or altogether)
 - Guarantee steady funding for infrastructure
- Enable greater funding for education in exchange for important reforms.

DC VOTING RIGHTS BILL CLEARS CRITICAL SENATE HURDLE

League of Women Voters Congratulates Senate on Cloture Vote

Washington, DC – The League of Women Voters today congratulated the U.S. Senate for invoking cloture on the motion to proceed to consider S. 160, the District of Columbia House Voting Rights Act of 2009.

"Today's victory is particularly sweet," said Mary G. Wilson, national president of the League of Women Voters. "This is a critically important step toward final passage in the Senate," she said.

"The U.S. Senate's vote to debate the bill moved us closer to rectifying a long-standing civil rights injustice against American citizens living in the District of Columbia," Wilson stated. "Now we have to defeat any amendments that will sidetrack or kill the legislation," she said.

"There is more work to be done but this is a hopeful sign that lawmakers are taking seriously their duty to provide voting representation for all citizens of this country," said Wilson. "We intend on ensuring they see this effort through."

"For two hundred years, Americans living in our nation's capital have been denied their right to elect a voting member to the body that taxes them, makes their laws, and sends them to war," concluded Wilson. "Citizens living in our nation's capital are treated uniquely and the League has been working tirelessly to end this discrimination."

Report on Independent Redistricting Commission Meeting on Friday, February 27 at Milton Marks Auditorium

This was a meeting organized to hear public input on how to choose the 60 people from which a commission of 14 people will serve.

At the meeting, twelve people spoke on how a commissioner should be chosen. Topics touched on were: geographic balance, detailed job description, clear exposition of time commitment, transparent selection process, criteria of prior successful participation in commissions or committees, reference checking, insuring diversity, requiring completion of Form 700 (State Conflict of Interest Form), requiring people serving to represent themselves, not some group or organization, fully accessible training for potential applicants via regional workshops, clear description of what support staff will be available and how they will work with the Commission, post everything on a web site and advertise the site, make sure those without \$\$ can participate, representation from rural areas, provisions for alternates, clear rules about how people can be removed from service.

There was representation from different Leagues around the Bay Area. Here is a photo taken at the event.



Sherry Smith, Berkeley/Albany/Emeryville LWV Nancy Bickel, same Helen Hutchinson, President, Oakland League (our speaker) Joyce Hlava, Southwest Santa Clara County LWV Kirsten Chu, Treasurer, San Francisco LWV Kate Quick, President, Alameda LWV Lynette Lee Eng, Los Altos/Mountain View LWV Mary Anderson, Program Manager and Executive Assistant to the Board, San Francisco LWV

California Sets Special Election Date

California voters will be asked to go to the polls again on May 19, 2009 in a special election focused on six ballot measures. Important dates to remember are Monday, May 4, which is the last day to register to vote in the election and Tuesday, May 12 Last day to apply for vote-by-mail ballot.

The short time between calling the election and the day it will be held will make it difficult for many voters to find out about the issues they'll be voting on. The League will have to work hard to provide information about the ballot measures.

Propositions on the Ballot for May 19

Proposition 1A Stabilizes State Budget. Reforms California Budget Process. Limits State Spending. Increases "Rainy Day" Budget Stabilization Fund.

Proposition 1B Election Funding. Payment Plan.

Proposition 1C Lottery Modernization Act.

Proposition 1D Protects Children's Services Funding. Helps Balance State Budget.

Proposition 1E Ensures Funding for Children's Mental Health Services. Helps Balance State Budget.

Proposition 1F Elected Officials' Salaries. Prevents Pay Increases During Budget Deficit Years.

To keep up with the latest election information, the three websites to watch are:

League of Women Voters San Francisco www.sfvotes.org

California League of Women Voters www.ca.lwv.org

California Secretary of State <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/>

League of Women Voter' Online Presence

The LWVSF is in the forefront of League chapters in having a strong presence on the Internet. For the last three years the League's webpage has been used to

- Announce the mission and goals of the League
- Provide informative articles and videos about current public issues
- Give reports about League activities and volunteer opportunities
- Present information about current city elections including videos and podcasts of candidate forums, pro-con discussions on ballot measures, candidate statements
- Give links to other League websites and to important local and state government sites
- Publish a blog linking to information about current civic issues

Allow individuals to join the League, give donations, and register for events



League of Women Voters' of San Francisco



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LEAGUE SPOTLIGHT ON

Water: California's New Gold



A stark description of the deterioration of California's water infrastructure jolted a large group of League members who attended the Bay Area League program "Water: California's New Gold" on January 31, 2009. [Read More>](#)

Renewing California's Precious Water



Orange County Tackles the tough problem of finding enough water for it's population.

GET INVOLVED! TAKE ACTION NOW

Preserving Healthy Hearts **Thursday, February 26, 2009** **Time: 6:00 to 8:00**

The League honors American Heart Month by sponsoring a speaker from the American Heart Association to discuss helping women fight heart disease and stroke. For information about location, call 415-989-8683 or email lwsf@lwsf.org.

Hearing on Implementation Process for Proposition 11 **Friday, February 27, 2009** **Time: 10 a.m. to 4 p.m**

The State Auditor's Office will hold a public meeting about redistricting at Office of the Courts Milton Marks Auditorium 455 Golden Gate Ave. San Francisco, CA 94102

[Full Calendar Listing >](#)

- 1 JOIN THE LEAGUE!
- 2 DONATE NOW!
- 3 VOLUNTEER!
- 4 TAKE ACTION ON ISSUES!
- 5 GET OUT THE VOTE!
-  LEAGUE LADY BLOG

RECENT ACTIVITIES

[>> San Francisco League Forums](#)

[>> League of Women Voters of San Francisco Annual Meeting](#)

[>> Story Bank - League Members Tell Their Stories](#)

[>> Remembering Kay Blalock](#)



Starting in 2009 the S.F. League has had a Facebook page to publicize our activities, invite people to events, and facilitate communication among members and friends. To access the Facebook page, click on the button at the top of www.sfvotes.org

facebook Home Profile Friends Inbox 3 Adele Fasick Settings Logout Search

League of Women Voters of San Francisco
Global

Basic Info
Type: Organizations - Non-Profit Organizations
Description: The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan, multi-issue organization that encourages the informed and active participation of citizens in government. The League works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. We are an organization of women and men who want to make a difference in the political future of our communities. The League has fought since 1920 to improve our system of government. We neither support nor oppose candidates for office. At the same time, the League works to influence policy through advocacy and impact public policies. The League is a grassroots organization, working at the national, state, and local levels.

Contact Info
Email: lwsf@lwsf.org
Website: <http://www.lwsf.org>
Location: San Francisco, CA

Members
Displaying 8 of 35 members See All

Group Type
This is an open group. Anyone can join and invite others to join.

Admins
Julia Fasick (creator)

Events
2 past events See All
Hearing on Implementation Pro...
Courts Milton Marks

Advertise
Free Pink Macbook
Want a free Macbook? We'll give you a free pink Macbook Air to use/keep. You tell us what you think of it. Check area availability.

Applications Online Friends (2) Chat

Thank you to the following for donating to the Year End Appeal:

Maxine Anderson
Eva Auchincloss
Dr. Joseph Barbaccia
Marilyn Campbell
Kristin Chu
Christine Clark
James Derbin
Ann Lyon Dudley
Michele E. Hagan
Adele Fasick
Kay Holley
Corry Holstine
Ruth E. Knier
Mona Lessing Harroch
Mary Moran Pajalich
May Pon
Marcia Schneider
Martha K. Soeldner
Jolinda Sim
Suzanne Stassevitch

LWVSF Committee and Chairs:

Advocacy (formerly Action): Maxine Anderson, Fran Finney
Budget: Suzanne Gautier
Communications: Adele Fasick, Jody Sanford
Development: Stina Skewes-Cox
Education: Chandra Friese
Events and Calendar: Tricia McGovern
Finance: Kristin Chu
Membership: Nancy Zinn
Voters Services: Lilia Tamm

If you would like to get involved in any of these committees, please call the office and speak to Mary to get the chair's phone number or email address. We are beginning some very interesting short studies/advocacy/programs concerning election reform, health care, K-12 education and global climate change and need members to get involved. Please send us your email addresses so that we can keep you informed via email blasts. Thank you.

Calendar

Dates to remember this Spring:

SFLWV Annual General Meeting--June 6 (location to be announced)

May 15-17 California League Convention "Catch the Wave to the Future" Long Beach

April 17 EdSource Forum "What's Next? Big Issues for California and for Education" Hyatt Regency Irvine

California Special Election--May 19 (last date to register May 12)

For more information about California State League activities, visit www.ca.lwv.org



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
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VOTER NEWSLETTER
Spring 2009 Edition

Return service
requested