



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ANGELES

NOVEMBER 2006

VOTER

LWVLA IN THE NEWS...

LWVLA project on Emergency Preparedness was cited in an article in Colorlines, a national magazine on race and politics.

Revolving Door II was cited by the LAPD Assist. Chief Jim McDonnell in an article in the USC Daily Trojan.

The On Target show tape of Revolving Door II aired at a USC IGM Art Gallery Mixer in collaboration with the Lincoln Heights Chamber of Commerce and the USC Neighborhood Outreach Program on Oct. 5 and Oct 8 on Channel 36.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

Running and Winning

As you learned from the October VOTER our vigorous Program Committee is organizing a youth outreach project called *Running and Winning*, which we hope will be supported by a recently submitted grant. This project partners us with the LAUSD and the Constitutional Rights Foundation. It aims to increase political awareness, empowerment and positive leadership in high school students from diverse communities. *Running and Winning* was initiated by another League several years ago to counter the deep distaste for politics that students have. Youth with no appetite for engaging in electoral ambition seemed an alarming prospect for the future. The goals of this project define the League's mission but I was also struck with how the League and its members are continually running and winning and even sometimes losing... without loss to our enthusiasm for that engagement.

What keeps us running?

Action has taken many fronts recently. As of this writing, Proposition R (Measure R on the ballot-see the bottom of page 5 for explanation), which we wrote with the Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce, is on November's ballot. We are fully engaged in speaking and distributing information on behalf of this measure which is designed to make our City Council members more accountable to the voters by amending term limits and strengthening rules governing lobbying and campaign finance disclosures.

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE(cont.)

There is opposition to this measure and debate has kept the newspapers, the courts, and the discussion programs busy. Putting this before the voters is our short term win. Approving the measure would be the long-term win for the voters and for Los Angeles.

We are also endorsing Measure H. We are considering what action, if any, to take with regard to the passage of AB 1381 that has created a new governance structure for the LAUSD. We are supporting full public campaign financing at the local level, as the California Clean Money Campaign Committee continues to refine provisions and build strong community support citywide.

We are tremendously proud of coming to the finish line on our *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government* book. Some members remember this publication from years ago but it hadn't been revised for at least 20 years and since then our City Charter was reformed.

Two new efforts are keeping us moving. One will help us honor our history. A number of our members who were League leaders will be interviewed and recorded for an oral history project initiated by CSUN as part of its archives. The other will help our treasury, as our Elections Committee goes out to help manage elections of "common interest developments" (also known as condominium and homeowner associations).

And beyond managing the race of traditional Voter Service activities that shoot out of the gate in every election: publications, briefings, speakers, hot line, poll workers, Smart Voter, Hot Topics/Cold Facts, there are the other program events. Planning the Judicial Independence, Homeland Security, and Incarceration Recidivism events will challenge the energy of the most active members.

Running with League brings great momentum for achieving our mission. Winning as a League brings credit to the values our members share. But win or lose, the League will always engage.

-Liza White, President

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THE BIRTH OF A BOOK: LOS ANGELES: STRUCTURE OF A CITY GOVERNMENT

It's mid-September as I write this *VOTER* article, and *Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government* has just gone to print. As you read this some weeks later, *Structure* will be getting "ready for its close-up" at the League's reception and panel presentation on October 25.

It's been three years since the Haynes Foundation awarded the League a grant to revise its 42-year-old reference guide to city government. The book had been updated several times over the years, but not since 1986. This fifth edition would be a fresh look at our city, which has grown significantly in size and complexity. It would include numerous changes brought about by voter approval of comprehensive charter reform in 1999, including the creation of neighborhood councils.

So, what would it take to give birth to such an ambitious publication? The League's committee, chaired by Past-President Jane Goichman and including Carryl Carter, Renee Chanon, Evon Gotlieb, Sandy Wolber, and Administrative Director Ellen Glettner, with valuable counsel from President Liza White, was soon to find out.

We were extremely fortunate to have as the book's author, Raphael J. Sonenshein, Ph.D., professor of political science at California State University, Fullerton, whose commentary is often heard on radio and seen on TV and in the opinion columns of the *Los Angeles Times*. Raphe collaborated closely with the committee throughout the book's many drafts, fostering a high level of confidence among the members in his meticulous research and ability to bring city government to life.

As for the role of the committee, mere mention of the members' names falls far short of the accolades they truly deserve. The committee read early drafts of the book, along with League members Peter Perkowski and Ruth Horgan, and met frequently to consider content, book design, appropriate fonts and paper, graphs,

STRUCTURE OF A CITY (cont.)

charts and photos, and how best to launch and distribute the book. Sandy Wolber and I served as co-editors and proofreaders. In typical League fashion, all were (compulsively) attentive and responsible, but Sandy must be singled out for the time, effort and knowledge she committed to working on draft after draft, even arranging her work schedule to accommodate the time-sensitive rewrite demands.

Now comes the fun. Finishing touches are being put on a distribution plan. Thanks to the generosity of the Haynes Foundation grant, the League can make 14,000 copies of *Structure* available, free of charge, to League members, city workers, schools, neighborhood councils, libraries, civic groups, and others. We will be able to give Angelenos the information necessary to participate effectively with city government.

And isn't that what the League is all about?

-Evon Gotlieb, Chair of the LWVLA Ed Fund

ACTION CONTINUES ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING ISSUES

LWVLA recommends a YES vote on Measure H, the Affordable Housing Bond on the November ballot (see Recommendations State and Local Measures insert in this VOTER). We are one of the organizations endorsing Measure H, listed on the Homesforlafamilies.org website.

That website, sponsored by a nonprofit organization, lists other endorsing individuals, organizations and businesses. It contains fact sheets and media information on the measure. LWV California recommends a YES vote on Proposition 1C, Housing and Emergency Shelter Trust Fund Act of 2006. Local measure H complements 1C. Both measures leverage

funds to attract matching grants from the federal government.

In September, Mayor Villaraigosa added another \$100 million to the city's Affordable Housing Trust Fund, divided equally between constructing housing for low- and middle-income families and building housing and supplying support services for the homeless population.

The Mayor and Councilmember Bill Rosendahl, representing the City Housing Authority, also announced in September that \$100 million of federal Section 8 funds will provide housing for more than 2000 homeless individuals and families. The "Skid Row Families Demonstration Project" will use \$18 million of Section 8 rental housing vouchers, contributed by the city, and \$6 million of social services and housing vouchers, contributed by the county, to move families of women and children off Skid Row into subsidized rental housing. They will be connected with nonprofit organizations that provide supportive social and mental health services to meet their needs and help them maintain independent living.

At the time of writing this article in late September, the legal settlement between the ACLU and the city of the ACLU's federal appeals court law suit (see September VOTER article) was rejected 10-3 by the City Council. The city will appeal the April, 2006, 3-judge panel decision to a full 15-judge panel of the 9th Circuit. The decision bars removing homeless people from day or night sleeping on the sidewalks as long as shelter space for them is not available.

The number of homeless far exceeds the existing shelter space. However the City Council also directed the City Attorney to work with the Police Department on guidelines for policing Skid Row. The guidelines may incorporate some elements of the rejected settlement, including allowing homeless persons to sleep in public at night. The guidelines will be implemented for a 90 day trial period.

-Barbara Braunstein, LWVLA Consultant

PROP R QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

What is Prop R ?

Prop R is a government reform measure designed to make our elected officials more accountable to voters by amending term limits and strengthening the rules governing lobbying, campaign finance disclosure and ethics training.

Why is it necessary to have this on the ballot?

In light of the lobbying scandals over the last several years, voters have indicated a willingness to consider changes in existing laws. Ethics and lobbying violations reduce the public voice, and reflect undue influence at City Hall. Restrictions on terms Council members serve to minimize long-range policy thinking and expertise causing reliance on outside interests. The result is that lobbyists and staff, who have not been elected, or who may have unique special interests, are the voices most heard.

Why does Prop R include both lobbyist and ethics reform measures and term limit amendments?

All serve one aim. Prop R is designed to reduce the influence of lobbyists and special interests while increasing the knowledge and expertise of our electeds who shape our public policy.

Why will amending terms limits make for better government?

As a result of term limits, one-half of the members of our City Council are replaced every four years with newly elected and inexperienced members. It takes time to develop expertise and to envision, advocate for, and see completion of long-range projects. In the meantime, Council members often rely upon the greater persistence and experience of lobbyists and departmental staff, none of which are accountable to voters.

Why is Prop R on the November 2006 ballot?

Prop R was placed on the November General Election ballot because most voters turn out for November elections. This allows for the greatest number of voters to have their voices heard.

How does Prop R change the rules for defining individuals who lobby?

Presently, individuals must register as lobbyists when they earn \$4000 in a calendar quarter (3 months) for lobbying and have at least one lobbying contact with a city official. The Ethics Commission has no uniform method for calculating whether the financial threshold has been reached. Therefore this qualifying amount is subject to interpretation by lobbyists. The City Council has questioned the levels of registration compliance.

Prop R sets an hourly threshold of 30 compensated hours in any 3 month period. This change creates a uniform standard for lobbyists and is a step toward better compliance. This hour based standard is considered a "best practice" by a recent nationwide study.

How does Prop R change the rules for organizations that lobby?

Under existing law, any public or private organization that earns lobbying fees of \$4000 in any calendar quarter (3 months), and has at least one employee who qualifies as a lobbyist must register with the City Ethics Commission as a lobbying entity.

Prop R lowers the organization registration threshold from \$4000 to \$1000 earned in any 3 month period. This lower qualifying amount will result in more entities having to register, and less avoidance of this requirement.

Why have lobbying registration requirements been taken from the City Charter and placed in the Municipal Code?

Prop R retains the provisions for registration in the Charter, but specific implementing ordinances have been placed in Municipal Code amendments. Once passed by a vote of the people, these ordinances cannot be amended by the City Council, but only by popular vote.

POSITIONS IN REVIEW #3 (A Series)

Why didn't the City Council correct the lobbying reforms themselves?

The City Council and the Ethics Commission, together, advise and vote on lobbying laws. These bodies have considered many of the provisions in Prop R, but no action has resulted. Now the voters can decide.

Why does Prop R only refer to the City Council and not other City elected offices?

The City Council is responsible for making public policy. Citywide officers implement that policy and enforce laws. Prop R provides a balance between the Legislative and Executive Branches of city government on behalf of public policy, but does not reduce the powers provided the Executive through Charter Reform, passed in 1999.

What are independent expenditures (IEs) and how does Prop R address knowing who is paying for campaigns?

IEs are made to support or oppose the election or defeat of a candidate or ballot measure. They are not made to campaign committees or candidates. Unlike contributions to campaign committees, IEs may not be coordinated with a specific candidate or issues committee, and determining who makes the expenditures is currently difficult.

Prop R toughens disclosure rules to reveal contributions and independent expenditures in city elections. It also requires greater disclosure by candidates in all of their political advertisements.

How does Prop R address the perceived pay-back for campaign support or "pay to play."?

Prop R bars lobbyists from being appointed to any City Board or Commission and bans all gifts to City officials.

-Cindy O'Connor, Prop R Campaign Director

You will see two designations on this ballot measure-Proposition R and Measure R. The City of Los Angeles refers to all its initiatives as "Propositions" in its official filings. However, because all the November city propositions will be included in the larger state ballot which is managed by the LA County Registrar, the term used in the County, and on the ballot, is "Measure".

This is the third in our series of articles reviewing state and local League positions in preparation for program planning scheduled for January 2007. We have two assignments—make recommendations regarding current positions, and make recommendations for 2007-2009 program emphasis. Is there an issue we should study and/or are there issues that should be on our agenda for education and advocacy? The League is truly a grassroots membership driven organization and program planning is where that process begins.

The three positions discussed in this article are Campaign Finance, Energy and Redistricting.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE

LWVC statement of position on Campaign Finance was adopted in 1973, updated in 1976 and again in 2005. It "supports state campaign finance practices for candidates and advocates of ballot measure positions which will ensure full disclosure of campaign contributions and expenditures, and enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office."

This position supports measures that provide full public funding of election campaigns. LWVC supported the California Clean Money and Fair Elections Act (Hancock). LWVC also supports Proposition 89, Political Campaigns, Public Financing, Corporate Tax Increase, Campaign Contribution and Expenditure Limits on the November 2006 election. The League supports practices which will enable candidates to compete more equitably for public office and which place realistic limits on campaign contributions and expenditures.

The Los Angeles City Ethics Commission has held workshops throughout the city on the nuts and bolts of how full public financing of city campaigns might work. We are monitoring recommendations from the Ethics Commissions to the City Council regarding the feasibility of full public financing of local election campaigns

-Cecilia Schlesinger, Consultant, Campaign Finance

ENERGY

Following more than two years of study, a new consensus position was adopted by the State Board on July 17, 2006, that interwove existing energy policy with additional positions and clarifications. The revised policy was needed to allow the League to testify on current energy issues facing the State Legislature, Public Utility Commission and Energy Commission.

The League supports development of a state energy policy that will ensure reliability of energy resources and protection of the environment and public health and safety at reasonable customer rates, giving primary consideration to conservation and energy efficiency. State government should provide an efficient, coordinated energy administrative structure with open transparent procedures.

Among the specific recommendations are that state regulatory and planning agencies should give primary consideration to conservation and energy efficiency. The state should implement an integrated energy planning policy that forecasts the need for transmission lines and other infrastructure concerns. It should streamline the regulatory process and establish statewide procedures for setting aside land needed for transmission corridors.

Municipal utilities should meet the same requirements for renewable resources, demand-side management and reserves mandated by state regulatory agencies for publicly owned utilities. Coordination among the state agencies responsible for energy planning and enforcement should be ensured. Public participation at all levels of energy planning and implementation should be encouraged, and all communications should use plain language.

If direct access is approved so that customers may leave utilities for other energy providers, they should be charged a fee adequate to insure that remaining customers do not incur additional costs. Energy policy should recognize the interrelationship between energy use and water usage.

-Jo Anne Aplet, Consultant, Energy Policy

REDISTRICTING

The LWVC position on redistricting was adopted in 1988. The position in brief: "Support a state redistricting process and standards that promote fair and effective representation in the state legislature and in the House of Representatives with maximum opportunity for public scrutiny". The position supports a bipartisan commission as the preferred redistricting body with membership representative of the diversity of California. The position recommends goals and processes for redistricting but not specific methods.

The issues behind the struggles over redistricting vary over time. In the latter half of the 20th century the issue was often minority representation. More recently, redistricting plans which ensure the re-election of the incumbent, or another candidate of the same party, have proliferated. Before the 1990 census, the League was prominent in an unsuccessful initiative attempt to establish redistricting by a bipartisan commission. In 2001, the vertical position was used by local leagues and the LWVC on the processes used in local redistricting.

Many in the state were dissatisfied with the 2001 redistricting plan as it appeared to have the effect of protecting incumbents. In 2003-04 we studied several draft redistricting proposals and found none we could endorse. For much of 2005 the LWVC, along with other non-partisan citizen groups, lobbied the legislature and governor to develop a new redistricting plan. The effort ultimately failed. In November, 2005 the voters of California were presented with a redistricting reform proposal – Prop 77. LWVC did not support it because it proposed a redistricting commission made up of three retired judges nominated by legislative leaders, and would not have reflected the diversity of California. Given the widespread concern about the fairness of the state's current district boundaries, this issue will remain on the active list.

-Margie Engel, Program Planning Committee

Please keep these summaries for the January Program Review. The full text of these and all our local positions are on our website, www.lwvlosangeles.org.

