



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF LOS ANGELES

OCTOBER 2006

VOTER

Upcoming Events

Oct. 23 – last day to register for Nov. 7 election

Oct. 25 – Launch of the new edition of “Structure of a City Government”

Oct. 28 – State training hosted by Beverly Hills League – see flyer

Dec 14 – LWVLA Office Holiday Party

Feb. 28- Annual Event “Celebrating Leadership” (note change of date)

In This Issue	Pg
President’s Message	2
Proposition R	3-4
We Run Elections	4
LWVLA Programs	5
One Voice	6
Interact w/Smart Voter	6
5 Steps to Voter Service	7
Members Only	7
Positions in Review	8-10
City Finance Study	11
Intern & Youth Outreach	12
From the Editor	13
Video Treasure Trove	13
Civic Society Salon	14
OneCareNow Update	14
Education Action	15

You are Invited...

“Los Angeles: Structure of a City Government”

October 25 from 5:30 - 7:30 p.m.

The much awaited revised edition of our book on Los Angeles city government will be introduced at a reception and panel discussion to take place at:

The National Center for the Preservation of Democracy
111 N. Central Avenue
in Little Tokyo.

The program will be introduced by Dr. Jane Pisano, a Haynes Foundation board member and President & Director of the Natural History Museum of LA County. Panelists will include the book's author, Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, as well as Jim Newton, Deputy Editor, Politics and Government, Los Angeles Times with William F. Deverell, Executive Director, Huntington-USC Institute on California & the West as the moderator. The topic will be-

“Loose Ends: Los Angeles Government in the 21st Century”.

There is no charge for this event and invitations will be mailed in October. Reservations are a must, as seating is limited, so please call the office at 213-368-1616.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE...

Elections Are Coming

One of the most exciting and important times of a League's year is when elections provide the opportunity for citizens to vote. These opportunities seem to come more frequently and with more issues to understand than in years past. This November's ballot is no exception. This election season the LWVLA will, as always, have nothing to say for or against a candidate but will provide as much information as we can about all candidates for the voters' use. However, we will engage in both of our traditional roles on issues: as educator and as advocate. The League is proud of its ability to provide impartial information on issues through its speakers, publications and panel discussions while separately advocating for those positions which are invoked by certain ballot measures. These functions are separated by venue as well as by member participation. Members who speak as advocates do not speak as impartial educators, nor vice versa.

How will the public access the League to gain information about WHO and WHAT is on a person's individual ballot? There is no better source than www.SmartVoter.org. This premier website is produced by the California League and supported by many local Leagues including assistance and financial contribution from our Los Angeles League. Smart Voter is a vital source for fulfilling our mission of empowering the voter. I ask that each member be ACTIVE in recommending this website to all voters and using it as a source for the knowledge about elections that all who know you as a League member, expect you to have.

Beyond Smart Voter, our Los Angeles League, through its strong Voter Service committee and chair, will be partnering with other Leagues and

organizations to provide scarce, nonpartisan information about this election that includes candidates for national and statewide offices as well as 13 state ballot measures and 3 local ballot measures. We will brief League speakers as well as those from partnering organizations who also provide speakers on ballot measures. We will field League speakers as well as taped, pros and cons discussions. We will distribute our unique Pros & Cons and Easy Voter Guides. And the rarest of all, we will partner to produce and distribute interviews with judicial candidates for the five Superior Court offices.

On the advocacy side there are 10 state ballot measures that the League is urging a "Yes" or "No" vote on, and at the local level there is one proposition that is receiving the highest form of advocacy – we have co-sponsored it -- and another that we will consider advocating. Please remember as you engage in this election season as a League member, that the League does speak with one voice. Just as we separate our engagement as advocates from our provision of impartial information, so we separate our individual voting preferences from what the League may be advocating.

You will read more about these election oriented League activities in this VOTER. As members, you will have two separate unit meeting opportunities. At one meeting you will learn about how the League stands on these issues. At another we will discuss the impartial pros and cons of these issues. This helps prepare you to vote, as well as to embody the informed citizen your League membership promises to the public. The elections are coming and with them many opportunities to make your League membership relevant to yourself as well as to those around you. Why be a member if not for this?

-Liza White, President

PROPOSITION R UPDATE

Over the last several years, LWVLA has watched with dismay the increasing rise of special interest that affect city government. There have been scandals involving commissions, the inappropriate use of public money and an exponential growth in money spent on campaigns by unregulated independent expenditures. These have accompanied city-wide issues whose solutions don't seem addressed by consistent policy initiatives. We believe that loss of transparency, accountability, and time to do the job describe a system that discourages the long view that comes when city council members have experience and longevity on the job. It is clear that that longevity belongs less and less to elected officials whose job it is to set policy and hold the bureaucracy responsible.

We are now living with the results of term limits that force council members from office after two terms. Every four years, about 50% of the City Council comes in new. This creates a terrific disruption of the flow of knowledge. The only interest with the experience to make big ideas happen are those who may not have the interests of the city as their top priority, or have an experienced staff who suffer a constant turn-over of bosses and priorities. It is a system that more and more puts complex public policy solutions in the hands of those not directly accountable to the voter nor necessarily interested in greater public policy at all.

Proposition R is a reform measure that addresses the issue of public interest and public voice. The measure has several provisions which combined, serve to curb the undue influences of special interests, and allow more effective policy planning. It not only encourages long-range planning by allowing council members to serve a third term, it curtails the undue influences we have experienced through a "pay to play" system. It also requires more disclosure of campaign contributors, especially those who fund independent advertising free of the strict reporting requirements others must observe.

This sounds like a mouthful. The elements encompass one goal: achieving better and more accountable public policy for the voter. This happens by decreasing the power of non-electeds to shape or misshape policy, and increasing the ability and the political will of electeds to shape solutions to complex, long-term issues. The system does not encourage big ideas. Additionally, the current system does not allow the public to hold elected officials to accountable.

This linkage is the basis of several law suits which the opposition has brought. As of this writing, Proposition R is still on the ballot, awaiting a ruling by the Appellate Court regarding the legitimacy of the proposal. We offered a full explanation of these challenges on the e-unit, and the League office has copies.

It is important for League members to know why we have proceeded in this way. The ethics and lobbying reform portions of Proposition R are issues that have all been considered by the Ethics Commission and/or the City Council in the past. Because of the way things are done by both bodies, the proposals have languished on their calendars without resolution. We are comfortable with placing them in our measure, because they are not new to either body. We consulted with staff to ensure that we are proposing legal and helpful initiatives in a complex arena. The effort to get these elements right cost us in the time we had to formally propose the measure to the City Council and the Ethics Commission, under whose authority these elements reside.

Although we fulfilled the requirements, it is understandable why some, whose responsibility it is to consider ethics issues, were unhappy that they did not have time enough to consider these as a ballot measure. When presented to the council for the first reading, it was presented to the Ethics Commission as well, as an agenda item. The Ethics Commission could not achieve a quorum for further consideration before the second council meeting was called and the measure was placed on the ballot. (continued on next page)

PROPOSITION R

(continued)

There was one area where the process was murky, and has created misunderstandings. Were the Neighborhood Councils given enough advance notice about this measure? The Charter created Neighborhood Councils with an advisory role to the City Council. This relationship was contentious when the Charter was reformed, and continues to be debated as it is more formally defined. If anything, Proposition R has brought to the fore the need to resolved a process, other than agenda notification, for alerting the Neighborhood Councils of proposals for City Council approval that are in the works. Their consternation is about this process, but has spilled over into general opposition of the measure for reasons they would need to identify.

In the end, we have to ask: Are these proposals in Los Angeles' interest? Is it better to get more control over those who exert undue influence? Does the public deserve a stronger voice through its representatives? Can we benefit from requiring more transparency in campaign financing? Are we better off with a City Council that is free from pressure from special interests, and has the ability to see complex proposals implemented? Should the voter have the right to elect a representative who is solving problems just as she or he has the right to vote against that same representative who isn't?

The League believes that the choices are clear.

-Cindy O'Connor, LWVLA Proposition R Campaign Director

WE RUN ELECTIONS

For years the League of Women Voters has been called upon to give voters information about elections. We have lots of experience running elections such as those of the Junior College System, Public Housing Authority, Community Redevelopment Agency, and Condominium Associations.

The right for each voter to be heard is basic to the League. We think of that as we branch out to provide more services to the people of Los Angeles. The public respects the League's integrity in handling elections and guaranteeing secrecy of the ballot.

Last year, the state legislature passed an act requiring that "common interest developments", such as condos and homeowner groups, be required to select an independent third party to help run their elections. There are specific requirements set down in this law for such elections regarding the notification, sending and counting of ballots, as well as tabulation of votes, and people to do this. The new act is in effect for all such elections to be held after July 1, 2006.

Felita Waxman and Nancy Arnheim agreed to serve as joint chairs of this project. **We need YOU to call the office and tell us that you will help run these elections.** Specific training is planned for the first part of November, after elections.

The Beverly Hills League will host a State training workshop on this topic, Saturday, October 28 (see flyer for details). Call the office today to join us in this fun, League-like, new venture running official elections.

-Nancy Arnheim and Felita Waxman, Election Management Co-Chairs

LWVLA PROGRAM 2006/2007

The Program Committee will be a whirlwind of activity once again this year. In the last couple of years we have had some great successes and some disappointments. We have learned lessons about the challenges of community outreach, effective use of media, budgets, cooperation and coordination with other Leagues and within our own. We have faced the reality of diminishing attendance at our League Days and the reluctance of our members and the community at large to deal with the hassle and expense of commuting to meetings and public events.

We have also learned that our members continue to commit their time and effort to support a program that is relevant to our mission and makes a contribution to our community. Based on what we have learned, we plan to make changes in our approach to program projects, events and studies in the coming year.

All of our community education events will be open to anyone in our community, but we will target an audience for each meeting and tailor the time and location of the meeting to suit the needs of the audience.

LWVLA has a growing youth outreach committee. To support this important effort all program projects will include a youth outreach component. New member recruitment will become a part of all our projects.

To give our expanding and exciting Action Committee efforts more visibility, we will dedicate portions of unit meeting discussions to LWVLA action campaigns. Already somewhat controversial, this is causing angst in some members. By the time this is printed we will have had our first action-oriented unit meeting and will have gotten feedback from our members. Based on feedback, we will review this proposed approach. The kick-off meeting for the Program Committee was held on August 3. The following are the ongoing and new projects and studies the committees will undertake this year.

City Finance Study, led by Jane Goichman and Elizabeth Ralston. The study will focus on the impact of city employee pension plans on the city budget in the coming years.

Local Education Position Study led by Fran Lapidés. The study committee recommended and the board approved updating our local position on education. The committee is defining the study scope and looking for committee members.

Review of Local Community College Position, Lynn Lowry chair. Committee will make a recommendation on the need to update local community college position.

Revolving Door Community Education Project, led by Jean Thomson. This will be the third year of community education events. Focus this year is likely to be on recidivism rates. A public forum is planned for June 2007.

Homeland Security Community Education Project, led by Lynn Lowry. This will be the third year of community education events. Local committee will define the focus for this year. The project may tie in with a LWVUS national project.

City and State Program Planning will be conducted in January 2007. Margie Engel is coordinating this effort.

Additionally, the Program Committee recommended pursuing new efforts on immigration (LWVUS topic), on Safeguarding Democracy/Independent Judiciary (LWVUS topic), and participating in LWVUS "Sunshine Week" -the citizen's right to know- in March 2007.

Interested in any of these efforts? Contact Jean Thomson or Lynn Lowry...if you don't, we will be contacting you!

The next Program Committee meeting is scheduled for October 3 at 1:00 p.m. in the League office, JOIN US.

-Jean Thomson & Lynn Lowry, Program Committee Co-Chairs

LEAGUE SPEAKS WITH ONE VOICE

How does “one voice” materialize?

Leagues form positions based on membership engagement. Members study an issue, discuss the information developed by the study, reach consensus about the issue and develop a position on the basis of that consensus. The Board formulates the position which members vote on at the annual meeting. In the Los Angeles League, after a position has been adopted, members review all positions at their annual meeting.

Leagues **take action** on their positions in many ways. For instance, election season provides ballot measures that may offer opportunity for a League to advocate for its positions either by supporting or opposing the measure. Sometimes a League will sponsor a ballot measure on the basis of a position. Such action requires study of all relevant positions by committee, a recommendation to the Board for action, and approval by the Board for the action.

What does “speaking with one voice” mean?

It is the League’s policy as well as its strength and integrity that any League action is based on the decisions of informed members. A decision is reached through consensus. Consensus means the general will of the group, NOT that there will be no one who dissents. Indeed, there will inevitably be members who dissent and will act as individuals on a different point of view than the position of the League. The League is built on the participation of people with strong, and not always shared, points of view. Members may act as individuals, but they must not invoke the name of the League or appear to be representing the League unless authorized to do so by the appropriate Board. Speaking with one voice means that League action as a League is articulated by the President who represents the League, not by an individual member.

Part of membership in the League of Women Voters which is among organizations, almost uniquely based on membership participation, means accepting the process and values of the League. “Speaking with one voice” is a concept that any member of the League should understand and must adhere to.

-Liza White, President

HOW TO INTERACT WITH SMART VOTER

The basic instructions are easy, and probably familiar by now:

1. GO to www.SmartVoter.org.
2. TYPE in your address and zip code.
3. LEARN about the candidates and issues on your ballot.

In this election season, let's ADD a step:

4. INTERACT. Here are two easy ways to do it:
 - a. If you see the name of a candidate who has not posted any info, contact him/her and ASK for it. The Smart Voter team has invited all candidates to participate, but constituent requests are the most convincing;
 - b. If you know of additional resource material (local news articles, other websites, etc.) on any of the candidates or issues, use the 'suggest a link' or 'feedback' feature to pass it along to the Smart Voter team.

See you online!

-- Frances Talbott-White, Smart Voter SoCal Liaison; 310-397-4970
ca-south@smartvoter.org

FIVE STEPS TO VOTER SERVICE FOR ALL

My goal for the year is to encourage ALL LWVLA members to take some responsibility for Voter Service, just as we're ALL supposed to take responsibility for membership recruitment. If you're not a Voter Service Committee member, you may wonder how this applies to you. In the immortal words of Elizabeth Barrett Browning, "Let me count the ways"-five of them for starters:

1. KNOW that Voter Service is the absolutely nonpartisan and impartial dissemination of information to voters. If you happen to be aware that League supports a particular state or local ballot measure, you FORGET it while you're doing Voter Service; you simply focus on helping people cast informed votes.

2. KNOW that Voter Registration is a first and essential step to voting. October 23 is the last day to register for the November 7 Statewide General Election. If you have friends who've moved since they last voted, tell them they need to re-register. Likewise, when new people move into your neighborhood, greet them with Voter Registration info – a registration card you've picked up at the post office, library, or LWVLA office -- or a website such as www.smartvoter.org, where they'll find links to more info on Voter Registration.

3. LEARN about the 'Pros & Cons' of your state and local ballot measures by visiting www.smartvoter.org, reading League publications, and attending your October Unit meetings. You will be mailed a copy in the November VOTER and there will be copies available at your local library. Share your knowledge with family and friends, and refer them to the sources of information.

4. VOLUNTEER to be a poll worker on Election Day. This commits you to a long day on November 7 plus a training session, but it's a short-term commitment. For more information, phone 1-800-815-2666 (option 7) or go to www.smartvoter.org/ca/la and click on 'Take the Pollworker Plunge'. If you have problems getting in touch with the proper desk at the L.A. County Registrar of Voters, please contact me for help navigating the bureaucracy.

5. If you don't have time to be a poll worker, VOLUNTEER to be a poll WATCHER. Anyone can be a poll watcher. It doesn't take special training; you do need a briefing and materials to do it right. Again, contact me for information. I hope you'll get 'hooked' by the November 7 statewide election season this fall, and want to do more Voter Service when the L.A. City elections come up next spring. Mark your calendar now to be ready for the March 6 primary and the May 15 runoffs.

-Frances Talbott-White, LWVLA Voter Service Chair; 310-397-4970
talbwhite@yahoo.com

MEMBERS ONLY

LWVLA now has a members-only website running on an experimental basis. It currently features pages of extensive resources for Pros & Cons Speakers and Briefers, along with a Calendar of Events for League Members. Additional pages may be added for the use of committees and Units as time and space permit.

Visit the LWVLA Members-Only Site at <http://members.lvwlosangeles.org>. Frances Talbott-White, site coordinator, (talbwhite@yahoo.com; 310-397-4970) welcomes your suggestions and assistance.

-Elizabeth Ralston, LWVLA Webmaster

POSITIONS IN REVIEW (A Series)

In January, LWVLA will once again be reviewing current positions—this time for local and state positions. Every two years LWVLA members are invited to set the agenda for the League for the upcoming biennium, keeping the work of the League a truly grassroots function. We have two assignments—make recommendations regarding current positions, and make recommendations for 2007-2009 study and/or emphasis.

To prepare for this meeting we will present information on the more relevant positions in a series of articles in the VOTER prior to the January meeting. These summaries are being written by LWVLA members who were involved in the studies or are currently consultants on these issues. In some cases it has been difficult to find our “corporate history.” If you are interested in writing a summary or would like to be identified as a source of information on a topic, let the office know.

Please keep these summaries for the January Program Review.

This is the second article in the series discussing our local positions. The full text of these and all our local positions are on our website, www.lwvlosangeles.org.

In order to explain the relevance of our positions today, whenever possible, we will discuss how we came to the consensus, and how we have been able to utilize this in our local political scene or the statewide arena. In some cases we will discuss County positions or State positions as they relate to our local positions. Additionally, when appropriate, we will indicate questions relating to the topic that our position did not cover.

The three positions discussed in this article are Voting Rights, Planning and Land Use, and Community Colleges.

Voting Rights

Our position was determined in 1980 and has not been updated. This position supports election procedures that enable citizens to perform their rights and duties as voters. The position also supports the availability of adequate, impartial and clear information on elections, election issues and candidates.

Many of our Voter Service efforts act on this position. We provide voter education material in many languages. We support the Smart Voter website to provide additional information for our local voters on both candidates and measures appearing on their ballots. We sponsor community education events that provide impartial information on ballot measures. We sponsor candidate debates. We work with the County Registrar or City Elections Department to ensure sufficient access to polling places and availability of adequate multi-lingual materials.

Additionally, for the last two years, we have worked to inform the public about the voting rights of some who are, or have been, incarcerated. We worked with the County Sheriff’s Department to provide voting information and access to registration forms and absentee ballots for those who are eligible.

We have established a Campaign Watch Committee to assist in determining the standards requiring that all candidate and ballot measure campaigns be free of prejudice based on race, gender, religion, national origin, age, sexual orientation, personal character attacks, and/or false and misleading statements.

Planning and Land Use

LWVLA Position

LWVLA first studied planning issues in 1961 and revisited the subject in 1967, 1972, 1979 and 1989. An overarching theme in the consensus that resulted from each of these studies has been strong support for citizen participation in all aspects on city planning. Specific actions spelled out in the consensus documents include active citizen participation in: 1) Developing planning goals and 2) Development and implementation of citywide and community plans. Plans proposed by the city should be widely publicized. Public input should be sought during the development stage through many avenues, including radio, television, newspapers and neighborhood postings. Citizen advisory committees should be mandatory.

The Los Angeles League also supports aesthetic controls that enhance the visual aspect of the City, including strict sign controls. Additionally, the LWVLA supports enactment of conflict-of-interest legislation for all planning and zoning action, including full disclosure by all decision-makers of personal real estate holdings. All paid lobbyists should be registered.

Quality-of-life issues should be addressed through city plans that preserve low-density neighborhoods, and provide incentives to rehabilitate older neighborhoods. Growth in all areas of the city should be allowed only when there is adequate transportation, schools, sewers and other infrastructure in place or is provided simultaneously.

Current Issues:

The City Planning Department has a relatively new Planning Director. There are no citywide plans currently under development. Staff is currently working on a potential new ordinance that would set uniform guidelines to try to mitigate impacts of "big box" remodels that dwarf existing houses in older neighborhoods. Possible changes would cover both reductions in overall house size compared to lot size and

design features intended to make new houses fit better among older houses.

Los Angeles County LWV

The Los Angeles County LWV, an inter-league organization, first studied land use issues in 1974, and again in 2001-2002, and again in 2004-2006. The initial study focused on preservation of open space land in unincorporated areas of Los Angeles County. The two recent studies were directed at new and modified development of land in the unincorporated areas of the County. The two approaches have been combined in a comprehensive position that supports comprehensive regional planning consistent with LWV's Sustainable Communities Action Policy. This policy includes support for strong, enforceable environmental protections; planning which is responsive to the public; acquisition of additional open space, and study and reform of tax policies to improve land use.

In addition to adopting checklists for requisite inclusions in all developments to support Sustainable Communities, the League supports: comprehensive regional planning that includes meaningful input from city governments and the public; enactment of conflict-of-interest legislation covering all government officials who have decision-making powers, and support for strengthening and enforcing zoning laws, such as hazard zoning, to protect the public.

The League also supports the acquisition of additional permanent open space in the County which focuses on the distribution of parks and open space in all congested and newly developing areas by such means as the Quimby Act, land donations, leaseback agreements, federal and state grants, improved clustering laws, and school-park cooperation.

(continued on next page)

POSITIONS IN REVIEW

(continued)

Current Issues:

The only sites that can accommodate large new developments are in the unincorporated sections of Los Angeles County, principally in North County near the Kern County line, and in the Antelope Valley. The LA County LWV now has a set of development guidelines that it can use to assess potential impacts of these proposals and to testify with greater specificity as to how the developments measure up. This is an ongoing process.

In addition, measures have been proposed at the state and national levels that could affect land use planning in both incorporated and unincorporated areas. These include measures to supersede local zoning to allow affordable housing units to be added in some existing built-up areas. Initiative efforts are underway nationally on a state-by-state level to restrict local government's use of eminent domain and to restrict other local zoning prerogatives.

Community Colleges

Our local position was determined in 1997; it supports the Los Angeles Community College District role as an essential part of public education in meeting the needs of the Los Angeles community. Key points of the position include advocating sufficient state funding, low tuition fees, and financial support from the private sector. Academics should include courses that are designed to meet the needs of the local job market, resource allocation should give equal consideration to vocational and certification programs and courses intended to support students transferring to four-year degree programs.

In 2003, LWV California updated its position on the statewide community college system. In summary, the LWVC position supports a statewide community college system with sufficient resources to fulfill its overall goal: to offer all Californians access to a quality higher education. The position supports stable resources that allow for long-range planning and can accommodate all enrolling students. It supports a governance system that allows local districts to make decisions about priorities to meet community needs.

In 2005, LWVLA hosted a series of community education forums at community colleges across the city. These forums were intended to make a broader audience aware of the challenges facing our local colleges. Since that time, LWVLA has continued to work with our community college district in order to broaden the base of public advocacy for our local schools.

This year, the LWVLA Community College committee will make a recommendation on the need to update our local position. The recommendation will be based on our recent work with our district and the updated LWVC position.

-Jean Thomson (Voting Rights)

-Jo Anne Aplet (Planning and Land Use)

-Lynn Lowry (Community Colleges)

SCOPE OF LOCAL CITY FINANCE STUDY

At its June, 2005, Annual Meeting, the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles approved a study of Los Angeles City Finances. A study committee was formed, chaired by Jane Goichman and Elizabeth Ralston. During the past ten months, the committee has been educating itself on the basics of the city's finances – the budgeting process, revenue sources, and expenditures. Committee members attended two budget days held for Neighborhood Councils, and also monitored Budget Committee hearings on the 2006-2007 city budget. It is anticipated that the information gathered so far will become the basis for several VOTER articles and may become the basis for unit presentations.

The City Finance Study Committee now proposes to narrow its focus and to study the financial impact of employee pensions and retiree health care on the city budget. It has proposed this topic because the financial solvency of retiree benefit systems has become an increasing issue for both public and private employers. Although Los Angeles is in substantially better shape in terms of funding than many other municipalities, there are many indications that the cost of funding city pensions at the current level will be an increasing drain on the city budget. If so, this is a problem which requires a long-term solution.

The City of Los Angeles has two pension systems – the Los Angeles City Employees Retirement Systems (LACERS) and the Los Angeles Fire and Police Pension System (FPP). The Department of Water and Power has a separate retirement system. Employers (the city) and employees make contributions to these systems; the contributions are invested, and the investment returns are added to the pot of money available to pay benefits to those who have retired. It is complicated and uncertain as to whether a system is “fully funded” – that is, whether it can be expected to have enough money to pay benefits to those who are entitled to receive them. At the end of fiscal year 2004, FPP was fully funded, but LACERS had a

funding ratio of 73% at the end of FY 2005. The city is required to make payments into the system based on a percentage of each employee's salary, but is also required to amortize any unfunded obligations. As a result, city contributions to LACERS and FPP totaled \$396 million during fiscal year 2004-2005, an increase of approximately \$120M over city contributions in 2003-2004, and \$200M over contributions in 2000-2001. This increase was necessitated by a decrease in the investment performance of these systems.

According to a report from the City's Chief Administrative Officer, annual pension costs to the city are projected to increase by another \$200M dollars by fiscal year 2008, to around \$600M annually. This is a substantial fraction of the city's budget (\$6.6 billion for FY 2007). Some experts believe that even this estimate may be overly optimistic. If it is, then the city faces difficult policy choices. Possible options to fund required contributions include raising taxes, reducing other city services, reducing future benefits for new employees, or increasing the required employee contribution.

The focus of this study will be on evaluating the extent of the problem and investigating possible solutions. The study will look at the underlying assumptions of the retirement benefits to consider whether the package of retirement benefits is appropriate when compared to the private sector, taking into consideration relative income earned during the employee's working years. It is anticipated that the investigation of these issues will lead to consensus questions and possibly a LWVLA position on city pensions.

Members wanting to join the City Finance Study Committee, please call the office, 213-368-1616.

***-Jane Goichman and Elizabeth Ralston,
Local Finance Study Co-Chairs***

INTERN & YOUTH OUTREACH COMMITTEE DEVELOPS TWO PROJECTS

USC LWVLA

USC LWVLA is an indomitable group of students determined to bring LWV values and issues to their campus. They have successfully bridged graduation and summer, recruited two more campus members, enough to reapply for renewal of their status as an officially recognized campus group, and initiated their program of activities for this semester.

On August 30 they participated in the campus Political Involvement Fair. Assisted by the County Registrar's office, they offered voter registration, provided information about measures on the November ballot, distributed literature about LWVLA and Smart Voter and invited students to participate in the group's future activities.

On September 20 they held a program meeting on Clean Money. Dr. Catie Burke, the group's official USC faculty advisor, and Cecilia Schlesinger, LWVLA's Action Director, were the featured speakers.

One of the group members has volunteered to work with Jean Thomson on planning this coming year's program on The Revolving Door. Another will attend the national Student Conference on Hunger and Homelessness to be held at USC October 27-29. She will be supported by LWVLA for this event. All group members are interested in helping with Running and Winning, LWVLA's collaborative project with LAUSD high school students.

The members of the group: Founding members, Whitney Hurst, Kim Ngoc Le, Lilyanne Ohanesian, Briana West; new members, Genevieve Goetz, Rachel Zaiden, are committed, enthusiastic and practical. It is a pleasure and privilege to work with them.

Running and Winning

Running and Winning is the name of LWVLA's exciting new youth outreach project. Initiated by Leagues in Camden, New Jersey, and Tucson, Arizona, the project's purpose is to build political awareness and a sense of potential leadership in high school students from diverse backgrounds. For this project, LWVLA is partnering with the Los Angeles Unified School District and the Constitutional Rights Foundation.

The heart of the project is a one-day workshop with the following components:

- 1) Interview Legislators
- 2) Design a Campaign
- 3) Deliver Campaign Speeches
- 4) Student Facilitators

This culminating event is tentatively scheduled for March 23, 2007 at USC.

Prior to the workshop, student participants will research immigration issues. As part of students' preparation, the Constitutional Rights Foundation will provide resources and coaching in civic education, and LWV will introduce a variety of nonpartisan online resources including Smart Voter.

Every high school in LAUSD will have the opportunity to participate in this project. A teacher advisor from each school will select two or three students to represent their school. LWVLA and LAUSD have agreed that student participants should include "nontraditional leaders," those students who demonstrate natural leadership that needs to be directed to positive and constructive ends.

Outreach to youth is one of the most significant ways to ensure that the philosophy, commitment and work of the League, continues. We welcome your input and participation in this major and potentially significant project for LWVLA and its partners. Very much in the planning stage, this is an ideal time to join this project. Contact Zhita Rea, zhitajim@hotmail.com, 323-571-1603, for further information or to share thoughts or contacts related to the League's youth outreach.

***-Zhita Rhea, Intern & Youth Outreach
Coordinator***

FROM THE EDITOR...

The VOTER's purpose and that of the PROM Committee whose jurisdiction it falls under, is to raise awareness of LWVLA's mission to promote informed and active participation in government to all citizens. Our PROM Committee's first meeting resulted in our committing to organize governance and working structures to assist our study and action programs in engaging all the communities of the city to participate in activities that promote an open democratic society. For clarification, PROM is an anagram for:
 PUBLIC RELATIONS- To raise awareness;
 OUTREACH- To engage the community;
 MEMBERSHIP- To promote/increase membership.

The PROM Committee's first step is to recruit members. Its task is to illustrate the use of actual data generated by the LWVLA and its community conferences and forums; moderation of public discussions; candidate forums; talks on current topics on local TV and/or radio; provision of ballot measure speakers and election guides on ballot measures, and our information hotline prior to elections. To accomplish all this, we need PROM committee members to document, evaluate and create press, electronic media and web calendar listings, press releases and strategies to best present this material to our constituents, partners and sponsors.

Once we flesh out the roles and operating structures of the committee, we'll appoint co-chairs to oversee the committee's operations and change-managed governance. If you are interested in joining the committee or know of anyone with web design, radio, television, film, graphic design, communications and journalism expertise who would respond positively to an invitation to join the committee, **please contact me at 310-479-1817** or lynn.crandall@gmail.com.

The VOTER is the most developed aspect of the PROM committee at this time. Our Editorial Committee seeks to improve on our past efforts and requests your advice. What can we offer to more effectively engage our readers?

Enhanced graphic arts, cartoons and establishing an Op-Ed column have been suggested to encourage a higher level of reader interaction. Please let us hear your suggestions by contacting me.

-Lynn Crandall, Editor, ably assisted by Estelle Markowitz, Jean Cohen, Ruth Horgan, Ellen Glettner, David Holzman and Sandra Chen Lau

LWVLA HAS A VIDEO TREASURE TROVE

Are you fascinated with history? Do you enjoy watching intelligent and informative media? Do you like to bring order out of chaos? Have we got a project for you!

LWVLA has a large collection of miscellaneous videotapes. Some document League presentations and events. Others provide background for League members working on various projects. They are from local, state and national levels. Unfortunately, they have never been organized or cataloged. This makes the information they contain largely inaccessible. But there is a simple solution to this problem, and you may be the key (or, at least, one of the keys).

Cataloging these materials is simple and potentially enjoyable. For each video that you review, there will be a simple catalog input form for you to complete with the following basic info: title, date, genre (e.g. forum, debate, interview), persons appearing, and your comments. You are entertained and informed; LWVLA benefits.

You can do this project on your own time schedule and without ever having to leave home! (We can even bring the videos to you, one batch at a time.) If this sounds like your kind of project, please contact Ellen Glettner, ad@lwvlosangeles.org, 213-368-1616

CIVIC SOCIETY SALON

At a salon held on June 28, members of the LWVLA Civic Society met three dynamic women leaders now serving as general managers of city departments.

Featured speakers were Gloria Jeff, General Manager of the Department of Transportation; Gail Goldberg, Director of Planning and Rita Robinson, Director of the Bureau of Sanitation. The three women talked about their backgrounds and how they got involved in city government, the importance of mentors in their careers, their management style and how they work together to keep our city running smoothly.

Their audience was particularly delighted to learn that newly-appointed Planning Director Goldberg credits her active membership in the League of Women Voters for her grounding in local government that enabled her to rise to Director of Planning in San Diego and now in Los Angeles.

The salon was hosted by Lee Homes at one of its premier real estate developments, the new Sky Lofts at 8th and Grand in downtown Los Angeles. Before the formal presentations, members and guests were treated to guided tours of the lobby and apartment models, all with panoramic views of the city's skyline.

The Civic Society is a support group of the League of Women Voters of Los Angeles Education Fund. It offers exclusive salons with speakers on topics of current interest. Members make an annual tax-deductible contribution to the Education Fund of \$1,000 or more.

This was the second in a series of three salons being sponsored and coordinated by Maureen Kindel of gcg rose & kindel, a public affairs firm. For more information on the Civic Society and to join it, please contact the League office at 213-368-1616.

-Evon Gotlieb, LWVLA Education Fund Board Chair

UPDATE ON ONECARENOW CAMPAIGN and SB 840: (Kuehl) The California Health Insurance Reliability Act.

SB 840, passed in both the State and Assembly floors, awaits the Governor's signature. The Governor must sign or veto SB 840 by September 30. LWVC urges members to call or fax the Governor to sign this landmark bill.

The OneCareNow Campaign is in full swing. The Campaign is a 365-day, 365-events, and 365-city grassroots movement to support SB 840. This movement began statewide August 12, 2006, and continues until August 12, 2007.

"The HealthCare Solution: California OneCareNow" screened at the home of Judith and Arthur Hirshberg in Encino on August 21. SB 840 experts answered questions after the screening.

A "Rally and Walk" event, in Pacific Palisades took place on September 12. A screening of the film followed the rally.

-Cecilia Schlesinger, Action Chair

TREASURER'S REPORT CORRECTION

In last month's VOTER, it was stated that the League had made a profit; the correct term should have been surplus. Either way, it was good news and good work by all.

EDUCATION ACTION COMMITTEE TRACKS SAGA OF AB 1381

Members of the LWVLA Education Action Committee spent much of the summer months following the saga of AB 1381, Nunez: the complex state legislation which calls for partial mayoral control of the Los Angeles Unified School District.

Our activities included attending the final meeting of the President's Joint Commission on School District Governance where results of the commission's yearlong study were presented; various Town Halls, the one public forum in Los Angeles sponsored by Assembly Member Jackie Goldberg, chair of the Assembly Education Committee, and the Education Summit "Overcoming Hurdles and Unleashing Reform" presented by the Valley Economic Alliance in conjunction with the L.A. Area Chamber of Commerce, United Way and the County Economic Development Corporation. In addition, to understand how school district governance is covered in our charter, we met with Dr. Raphael Sonenshein, Professor of Political Science at California State University Fullerton and author of **The City at Stake**, a book that explores secession and reform.

The more we learned, the more we became convinced that any attempt to make substantive changes in LAUSD governance required fully informed participation of all parties involved. This was conveyed in a letter signed by LWVLA President Liza White, sent to the state senators and assembly members from areas covered by the LAUSD, as well as to the mayor and city council members. This happened while the debate over AB 1381 continued hot and heavy. The City Council was about to vote support of the measure and the bill was being amended almost daily in Sacramento.

The essence of the League's letter was that "finding and acting on the best approach to governance should include local understanding of the options; why one is favored over another" and that "any effective governance system must incorporate clear lines of authority with accountability." Furthermore we wanted to see that all voices were heard - including those of parents, teachers and youth - by those designing governance.

Our message seemingly was not addressed as AB 1381 has been passed and, barring legal challenges, will go into effect January 1, 2007. If there is League member interest and commitment of time and energy, there will be avenues for our involvement in monitoring its implementation. The governance structure set out in the bill calls for a greatly-curtailed role for the Board of Education. This is counter to our current Education position which states that "The School Board is responsible for determining the decision-making structure for all public schools in the District."

Persons interested in following the functions of the potentially restructured LAUSD are asked to call Nima at the League office at 213-368-1616.

***-Jean Cohen, Education Action Committee
Chair***

The League of Women Voters of Los Angeles	
3250 Wilshire Blvd., Suite 1005	
Los Angeles, CA 90010	
LWVLA President:	Liza White
Administrative Director:	Ellen Glettner
VOTER Editor:	Lynn Crandall
Phone:	(213) 368-1616
Fax:	(213) 368-1615
Proofreaders:	Jean Cohen & Ruth Horgan
Production Assistant:	Nima Long
Email:	info@lwvlosangeles.org
Copy deadline:	First Tuesday of each month
Website:	www.lwvlosangeles.org
E-mail copy to:	ad@lwvlosangeles.org

The League of Women Voters is a nonpartisan organization open to all men and women. The League's purpose is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government and to act on selected governmental issues