

January 2004 Calendar

January 14
League Program Planning
Home of Chris Carson
See flyer on page 2

Thursday
January 29
7:30-9:00 pm
**GLENDALE CHARTER REVISION WITH
EILEEN GIVENS**
Community Room
Glendale Fire Station 21
421 Oak Street
Glendale
Bring a friend
See flyer on page 4

Saturday
January 31
**SPEAKER'S TRAINING FOR MARCH
BALLOT MEASURES**
Hollenbeck House

Saturday
March 20
9:30-11:30 am
HEALTH CARE; WHO WILL PAY
Atherton Baptist Home
Alhambra
\$3.00 for refreshments

Saturday
March 27
COUNTY LEAGUE CONVENTION
Tamayo's Restaurant
Commerce

President's Message

Chris Carson President LWVG/B

HAPPY NEW YEAR TO ALL. This is the season when we all make lofty resolutions about self improvement. Some of us tend to focus on improving our minds by reading more books and watching less television. Others earnestly promise themselves to spend more time on housework and less time on chocolate chip cookies and the Internet. Whatever the topic we choose to address, the intent is obviously to do ourselves and the people around us some good by changing our behavior or attitude. Let me suggest that you turn your attention to our community—local, state and national.

THIS IS a Presidential election year. The media will be filled with 30 and 90 second sound bites giving candidate “information”—if you can call it that. Turn off the sound bytes and seek out other sources for information on candidates and their positions. There are plenty of intelligent, balanced print, radio, and television and Internet options out there if you look for them. And while you're at it, think about how we go about selecting our President. The process is complex, confusing and astronomically expensive. Four years ago the system completely broke down. The League of Women Voters is in the process of reviewing its position on the Presidential selection process and we'll be considering it here in our League next month. Make a resolve to join us and engage your mind in some serious and stimulating conversation about how we select our national leader.

THIS IS also a year when Californians will be voting on some extremely crucial ballot measures which attempt to address the financial and political meltdown now occurring in our state. Again, there will be no lack of “information” out there. Make a resolve to read and consider the impressive amount of research and information the State League has put together to educate voters. Share it with your friends. Monitor the work of the Legislature and your legislators. Let them know what you think. The State League advocates for our positions but you need to let your elected representatives know that you are concerned and are watching.

IN OUR local communities the financial chickens have come home to roost. Our Councils are struggling to juggle conflicting claims and priorities in an attempt to keep our cities running. Watch the Council meetings instead of a sitcom. Bring League positions and concerns to bear on the debates. Individual League members have the right and duty to make their voices heard. Speaking as individuals you should be letting your Council members know what you think. If you want our League to speak out on an issue, let me know. The Board will carefully consider each request. We are here to represent you.

I WOULD urge you to resolve to become more involved in the League. Come to a few programs. Volunteer for an event. Get a friend to join us. League is only as strong as the number of committed members we have.

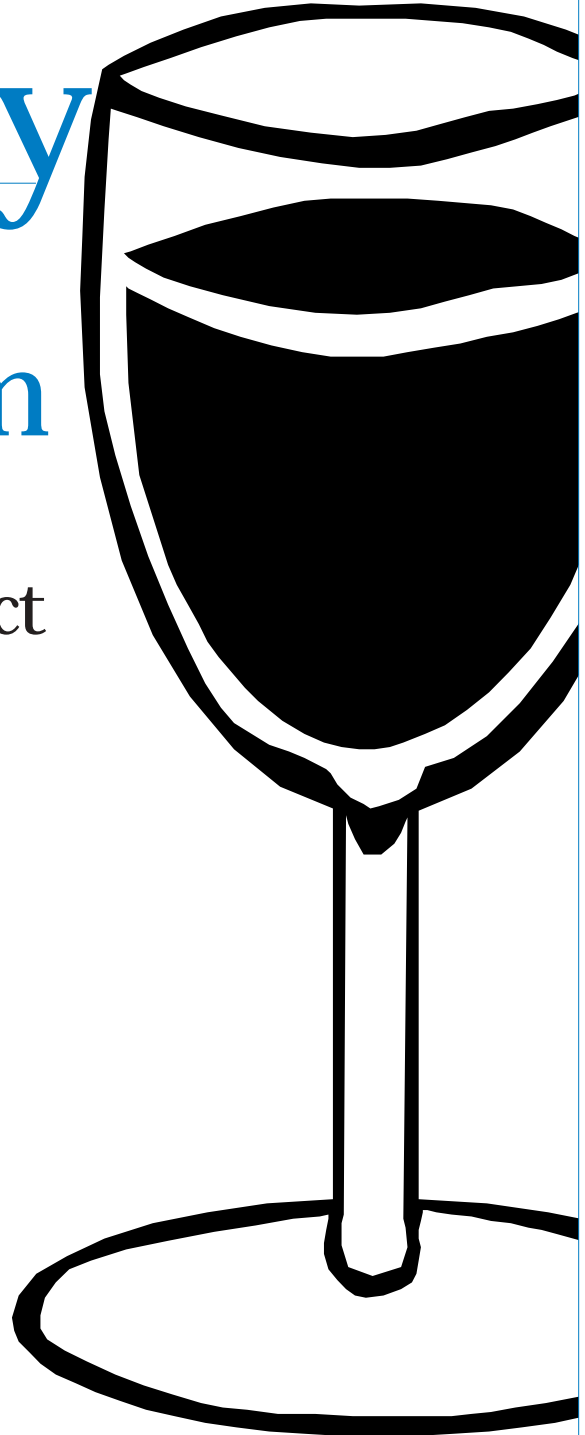
JOIN US on January 14 for League Program Planning and January 29 for Charter Revision with Eileen Givens. Give your mind a treat and your community a hand.

Wine, Cheese & Government Policy

Throw in a little
**Program
Planning**
and you have a perfect
League evening

Wednesday, January 14
7:30 pm
at Chris Carson's
beautiful home
1718 Via La Paz
Burbank, California

Directions from Mountain
North on Thurber
Left on Via La Paz



Program Planning: The Heart of the League The Reason We're Here in the First Place



LEAGUE IS A GRASSROOTS ORGANIZATION. We make policy choices from the “ground up.” Every two years we consider what we want League to do. We need your thoughtful input and participation in order to make it all work. Join us for wine, cheese and policy making on January 14.

NATIONAL

At our convention next June, we will set the course for LWVUS for the next two years. National League is in the process of reviewing its positions to determine which ones may need updating. So locally we will look at the National positions and make recommendations to the National Board.

Some suggestions currently being considered around the nation are:

CIVIL LIBERTIES

We all immediately think of the Patriot Act, but some of the greatest threats come from outside government. Identity theft, credit reporting, telemarketing—all invade our privacy. Should we rethink our position?

SUSTAINABILITY

California League has a great umbrella policy. Threats to our environment aren't going away. Should we adopt a national position?

ADVOCACY

What should LWVUS lobby for? HAVA implementation? Protection of Reproductive Rights? Environmental issues like clean air and a national energy policy? Civil liberties issues?

Lots to think about.

Check out National positions on the website
<http://www.lwv.org/where/index.html>

COUNTY

At our convention in March we will set a course for the County League for the next two years. County League represents all LA County local leagues and coordinates their efforts.

We've just concluded an update of our County Government position. Are there other aspects of county government we didn't get to? Should we have a new study this time around?

ADVOCACY:

Some suggestions heard around the local Leagues are:

Health Care Reform

The County system is in meltdown. Should we focus on working with State League in this area?

State/Local Finance

Also in meltdown. Should we work with State League to advocate for needed changes?

Land Use

Vast development and redevelopment projects are transforming the land. Should the County League, working with local Leagues, advocate for rational, sustainable development?

Lots to think about.

Check out County positions on the website
http://lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org/about_action.html



The League of Women Voters
Glendale/Burbank present

Charter Revision in Glendale

Guest Speaker

Eileen Givens

Charter Revision Committee Chair

Thursday, January 29

7:30 to 9:00 pm

Community Room

Fire Station 21

421 Oak Street

(across from Galleria parking structure on Columbus)

Glendale



Ability First: Reducing Voting Barriers for the Handicapped

WHEN ABILITY FIRST'S housing coordinator, Chris Otero, called the League, it was clear that the opportunity

to reach out to people with disabilities and help overcome the barriers to voting was irresistible. First established in 1926 as the Crippled Children's Society, Ability First works as a partner across the life span of persons with a wide range of disabilities. Their outreach includes independent living apartments, group homes and senior housing; employment training and placement; socialization programs; and summer camp for all ages. Their objective is to look beyond disabilities and to focus on capabilities and expanding possibilities.

Ability First was eager for its clients to learn how to become active advocates for the disabled and focus on the importance of one vote and the power of many votes.

Headquartered in Pasadena, Ability First has facilities throughout Los Angeles city and county. Thus, the Los Angeles city LWV and the Pasadena Area LWV joined forces to create a curriculum with the objective of preparing Ability First's clients to vote in the presidential election in November, 2004, as well as encouraging current voters to participate in every applicable election as informed citizens.

Three League members met to design a curriculum of topics to present at bimonthly meetings held at various residential sites. The topics included: "What is Voting/Why Don't You Vote?" "Registering to Vote," "How to Vote," "Why Vote?" "Access to Voting," "Who are your Representatives?" "How to Decide About Candidates?" and "How to Decide About Issues?" These interactive sessions provided information, encouraged participation, and solicited involvement from those who attended.

The residences were in a wide-ranging geography from Woodland Hills to Signal Hill, from Malibu to Glendale. The hour long presentations were

offered on Saturdays and Monday evenings to be available to the most people, a number of whom worked. The disabilities were as diverse as the geography, testing our flexibility as we engaged people with significant cerebral palsy, blindness, severe balance problem, as well as other mental and physical challenges.

Each presentation brought different rewards but the one in Glendale about the question of "Why Vote?" was memorable for the issues that were generated by the seven attendees: "What are the laws of citizenship for Native Americans?" "Should we have compulsory voting?" "What happens if you are called to jury duty and can't get to your assigned room because of physical barriers?" Four residents were registered to vote that day and one thought she might want to become a member of the League. Thinking about this group of people only from the point of view of disability would have been a big mistake. Other presentation high points were the support we got from the County Registrar of Voters to demonstrate Ink-A-Vote and Touch Screen voting to several groups; the opportunity to introduce SmartVoter as a resource for ballot and office information on-line; and the creation of erasable posters for listing various elected officials that could then be posted in a residential public place and changed with new elections.

According to Chris Otero, persons with physical and mental challenges historically have not had a voting voice; they need to be empowered to use their voting voice so people will listen; and they need the ability to take part so they can effect changes. "The League of Women Voters is helping us empower our clients." It is our hope that the curriculum we have devised and our experience in presenting it can assist other League members as they inform, educate and empower as well. For more information, contact Liza White at lizawhite@earthlink.net or (310) 441-4461

Liza White, LWVLA
Jean Thomson, LWVLA
Sharon Mullinex, LWV Pasadena area

Prop 13: Twenty-five Years After

EXPERT PANELISTS DISCUSSED the financial impacts of the passage of Proposition 13 on cities, counties and the state as well as the benefits to taxpayers at the Los Angeles City/County League Day in Burbank on November 15. Nearly 100 League members and guests attended the event.

As an introduction to the topic of Prop. 13 as a significant player in the arena of state and local government finances, **Susan F. Rice**, LWV Los Angeles, former president of the League of Women Voters of California presented a summary of the LWVC positions on taxes and government financing. Chief among the points in the League's position, updated in 1995, are Adequacy of Revenue; Equity of the Tax Burden; Flexibility of Revenue; Statutory Control over tax sources, rates and expenditures; Distribution of Revenue Sources among state and local governments to fund responsibilities and requirements of each; and Accountability.

In addition Ms. Rice noted ballot measures that the League has supported and opposed over the years, including opposition to Prop. 13 in 1978; Prop. 4, the Gann Limit on Spending; Prop. 8 which specified that California would reimburse cities in proportion to the funding lost in 1978; and most recently Prop. 49, the Schwarzenegger After School Program; Prop. 51, the Traffic Congestion and Relief measure; and Prop. 54, the Funds Dedicated for State and Local Infrastructure. On the March 2004 ballot will be the Budget and Accountability Act, Prop. 56 which the LWVC supports.

Giving their perspectives on the impact of Prop. 13 and revenue sources since its passage were William T. Fujioka, Los Angeles City, David Janssen, Los Angeles County, and Fred Silva, California.

William Fujioka, Chief Administrative Officer for LA and longtime administrator in LA County who worked to implement Prop. 13, pointed out that cities survived the loss of local property tax revenue by raising or enacting new fees, parcel taxes, and by increasing sales tax opportunities. In the 25 years since the passage of Prop. 13, the share of the Los Angeles City generated by prop-

erty tax has shrunk from 41% to 21%.

What hurts cities most is the uncertainty created by the state's use of local revenues to balance its own budget and the frequently very late budget passage which makes it difficult for cities, counties and schools to budget and to pay their bills. The legislature's "Triple Flip" Tax Proposal, which would return some property tax to cities in exchange for sales tax, would pose its own problems, particularly cash flow, because sales tax revenues come in monthly but property taxes come in only twice per year.

Loss of the Vehicle License Fee increase will cost Los Angeles \$127 million. Repeal of the VLF will amount to a loss of \$200 million in funds for local services.

"The most important change that needs to take place is to return local control of taxes to cities," stated Mr. Fujioka.

David Janssen, Chief Administrative Officer for Los Angeles County, pointed out that there were two benefits to Prop. 13. It slowed the growth of government and it made government more creative. He noted, however, that since the state passed Prop. 8 to reimburse local government for property tax losses, the state Legislature took the attitude, "We bailed you out, so now we get to tell you how to use the money." He also reminded the audience that the "obscene" surpluses in the state budget caused by tax increases under Gov. Reagan both angered the public and gave the state the ability to send money back to local governments.

Janssen also suggested that Los Angeles County was responsible for both Prop. 13 and Prop. 218, which requires a two-thirds vote for all tax and fee increases because the Supervisors had developed budgets which were inflated and then figured out what tax rate would be necessary to fund the budget, with little regard for the effect on individual taxpayers. Reassessments by neighborhood, specifically the San Fernando Valley in the late 1970s sparked the tax revolt, because real estate values were escalating.

PROP 13 continued on page 7

Mr. Janssen mentioned that he agrees with the *LA Times* editorial which advocated modifying term limits to 12 years for each house, removing responsibility for Redistricting from the Legislature to an appointed commission, and modifying the Initiative Process to make it more difficult to qualify initiatives for the ballot. In his opinion, ballot box budgeting does not work for the state or for local government because the consequences of initiatives are not predictable.

Fred Silva, Senior Advisor for Governmental Relations at the Public Policy Institute of California, reviewed the history of State and Local Fiscal Relations in California. From 1849 to 1910 the state controlled all local revenue. The Progressive movement in 1910-11 reacted to heavy private business influences by passing a set of reforms including the Initiative, Referendum and Recall processes, and separation of sources of revenue, creating state and local tax sources and control. A second revolt occurred in 1978 with the passage of Prop. 13. This caused control of local finances to return to the state.

Silva reiterated that state and local finances are interdependent. About 30% of all state revenues pay for state functions, of which 22% goes to higher education and 30% funds prisons. Local governments get 70% of the revenue of which 43% goes to schools and 41% goes to counties to pay for state mandated services. Since 1978 cities have slipped from having control of 70% of their own funding to about 30%, while counties which had control over about 50% of their funds now have discretion over only about 15%. The counties have very little ability to increase revenues due to the two-thirds vote requirement of Prop. 218.

After lunch two experts debated the Effects of Prop. 13 on the state. Taking the Con position was former LA County Supervisor and LA City Councilman Ed Edelman and arguing in favor of the measure was Joel Fox, formerly president of the Howard Jarvis Taxpayers.

Ed Edelman argued that Proposition 13 caused a loss of Home Rule for cities and counties and a lack of local accountability. It “caused abdication

of responsible representative government in California.”

Edelman agreed that in the 1970s there had been a need for a “change in assessment practices, especially in LA County, so that people with little income would not be devastated by escalating property taxes.” But he emphasized that relief was needed for homeowners but not for commercial property because commercial property generates income with which to pay its taxes. He reminded the group that a competing measure which failed, Prop. 8, would have created a split roll (treating homes and commercial property differently) and would have provided less financial relief. Prop. 13 passed with 64% of the vote, but it required a two-thirds vote to amend it and to pass future tax measures.

Mr. Edelman also opined that the Initiative Process in California needs to be reformed. He suggested the Indirect Initiative, which the League also supports, to prod the Legislature into acting before collecting signatures to place a measure on the ballot. He said that Prop. 13 has caused a “what’s good for me or my little interest group” attitude instead of what’s good for the whole society. This he called “out-of-hand democracy.”

In supporting Prop. 13 **Joel Fox** asserted that Californians were better off because Prop. 13 set limits on the power of government to tax and created stability for neighborhoods and taxpayers. He posited that people are better off now than before 1978 because there is predictability of an individual’s taxes over the long term and that important limits were placed on government.

Fox stated that Jarvis did not create a Split Roll for homes and business in the original Prop. 13 because he wanted to keep the measure very simple. According to Fox, the Chamber of Commerce loves Prop. 13 because it provides for tax certainty which helps to attract business to and within California.

Fox acknowledged that a big issue for government is stable and predictable revenue. But, he reiterated that taxpayers want certainty also.

County Budgets/County Services



Often overlooked when considering state budget issues are local governments and the funding for services they provide. Among their chief activities, counties furnish programs mandated by the state. The county is often seen as the provider of last resort—many of its programs serve the least able in our society. Important programs administered by counties are the court system including the District Attorney, probation department, juvenile hall, and sheriff; the provision of health care including county hospitals and Medi-Cal; and social service agencies including General Assistance, children’s services, Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), foster care, etc. These account for the largest share of any county budget; however, the county also provides a public works agency, registrar of voters, auditor, and more.

Relying almost exclusively on a portion of the property tax as allocated by the state Legislature, counties have very few other ways to augment their income. About ten years ago, the legislature began shifting some property tax revenues from cities, counties, and special districts to schools as a way to meet the minimum allocation from the state’s general fund for K-12 funding. The loss from this shift in funding grows as the property tax grows and local governments fail to receive that income. The annual shift is nearing \$5 billion, and the total shift from counties to schools approaches \$30 billion, according to the California State Association of Counties (CSAC).

This year’s budget issue of highest concern for counties relates to the rollback of an important county funding source—the Vehicle License Fee (VLF). Reducing the fee without adequate backfill will create additional hardship for county programs. Although the Governor has made strong statements indi-

cating support for local governments, he has left it up to the legislature to find the financing to back up such statements. Now that the VLF rate has been reduced, a substitute source of revenue must be found that will not decimate county programs.

Counties are seeking state funding for reimbursable mandates, coverage of the costs of the special recall election, additional mandated child support costs, and other program costs. How the legislature chooses to fund counties for these expenditures is of grave importance to all county programs and those served.

Labor costs, the growing expenses of health care coverage and workers compensation expenses create major and ongoing budget pressures for counties. The caseload growth of In-Home Supportive Services (IHSS) and increased health and safety costs for homeland security add to monetary pressures. When the state or federal government cuts health and social service programs, it usually means additional costs to counties.

As the program arm of the state for many mandated programs, but with little control over revenue sources and many of their own expenditures, counties find themselves in a difficult position. The quality of life for the poor and near poor is often totally dependent on county services. It is important that this arm of the state government has a dedicated source of funding for the programs important to California citizens. A state budget process that provides funding for local government services may require some structural changes.

In the debate Edelman brought up the ballot initiative promoted by the California Teachers' Assn. which creates a Split Tax Roll with specific requirements for reassessing commercial property. The proceeds of the increased tax revenue would be earmarked for teacher salaries and other school expenses. Edelman stated that he was opposed to earmarking the proceeds from a split roll.

Fox brought up the Herzberg "Triple Flip" tax shift proposal which would return some property taxes to local government in exchange for some of the local sales tax. This, he said, would encourage local areas to build housing.

Edelman proposed that if Schwarzenegger does away with the VLF, amounting to \$4 million in local government funds, then he should give local governments the power to raise revenue to make up for the loss of VLF money. Fox countered that Schwarzenegger is proposing a \$20 million bond to cover both the VLF and the past and current years' deficits. The legislature proposed a bond to cover the debt but the public should vote on approving the bond. He also stated that "Arnold plans to come forward with a broad plan to reform the structure of finance" in California. The \$20 million bond is to get "over the hump."

Margo Reeg LWVLAC Voter Service Chair



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Membership Application

It is easy to join the League of Women Voters of Glendale/Burbank. All citizens of voting age are welcome.

YES! I want to add my voice to yours by joining the League of Women Voters as part of your voice for citizens and force for change. I enclose: (please check one or more of the following)

- \$50.00 for a one-year individual membership (includes a copy of our VOTER, nine times per year)
- \$70.00 for a one-year household membership for two members who share the same address (includes a copy of our VOTER, nine times per year)
- I am unable to join League at this time, but enclose a contribution of \$ _____

Name/Names _____

Address _____

City, State, Zip _____

Telephone _____

- I would like to receive my VOTER by email.
My email address is _____

Make check payable to League of Women Voters. Mail to Vera Naylor, 7714 Via Capri, Burbank CA 91504.

Gifts made payable to "LWV Education Fund" are tax deductible.

Easy Money for our League

This comes to us from the LWVTopics listserv: A painless way to make money for our League.

“HAVE YOU LOOKED at www.igive.com? Register your organization, and start on-line shopping. It is easy, and some good companies participate including...Barnes & Noble, Lands End and Coldwater Creek. Yes, it's commercial but League needs the money.” Ove 400 vendors to choose from. I registered the League of Women Voters of Glendale/Burbank as an organization. Of course I've already started shopping myself. Join me in combining internet shopping and raising money for our League. Chris



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Andrea Williams

Manager/Notary Public

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League web sites:
LWV Glendale/Burbank
<http://www.gb.ca.lwvnet.org>

LWV California
<http://ca.LWV.org>

LWV United States
<http://www.LWV.org>

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

The League never supports or opposes any political party or candidate. We advocate only on issues that members have studied and come to a consensus on. In an era of proliferating and powerful special interests, the League's advocacy in the public interest is increasingly recognized as an essential voice of democracy.

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