

Voter



**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
GLENDALE/BURBANK**

December 2009

The LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS is where hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement.

JOIN US

**Thursday
December 10, 2009
6:30 pm**

Holiday Party

**Rosa and Roger
Frommer's Home
1762 Allen Avenue
Glendale CA 91203**

**Please rsvp to
Monica Marquez at
mmarquez47@earthlink.
net
or (818) 760-3667**

<http://www.lwvglendaleburbank.org>

Co-President's Message

Joan Hardie

I'm excited! I'm also pleasantly surprised that our Senate and House of Representatives have made progress toward health care reform. Hopefully this will open the debate to what I feel is the most important aspect of health care reform, covering more people. As a nurse in a hospital, I take care of what I feel is a surprising number of uninsured patients. I don't know what the exact percentage is, but I do know that the uninsured require a lot of hospital resources and had they been insured in the first place, much or all of an uninsured patient's hospitalization could have been prevented. I hope our Representatives have the patience for what will certainly be a spirited debate.

One aspect of the health care reform bills that is worrisome is the highly restrictive language regarding access to abortion. As one of our League members stated, it seems as though we are going backwards on this issue. If this is an important issue to you I urge you to contact your Representatives. The LWV US website <http://www.lwv.org> has both current and useful information regarding the healthcare debate and can also assist you in contacting your congressman via Action Alerts.

Everyone is invited to the Annual Holiday party; please remember to RSVP to Monica Marquez by Dec. 3. The holiday party is planned for Thursday, Dec. 10, 2009, 6:30 pm at **Rosa and Roger Frommer's house**. Thank you to Rosa and Roger for being so gracious. Looking forward to seeing you all at the party and sharing good food and company.





Holiday Party

Thursday

December 10, 2009

6:30 pm

**Rosa and Roger Frommer's Home
1762 Allen Ave
Glendale, CA 91201**

**Enjoy hors d'oeuvres
prepared by the
Burbank High School Culinary Arts class.**

There's no charge,
and guests don't need to bring anything.
But please RSVP AS SOON AS POSSIBLE to
Monica Marquez
at mmarquez47@earthlink.net
or (818) 760-3667



LEAGUE HOSTS EDUCATION FORUM IN BURBANK AND GLENDALE

by Monica Marquez

Education is among the most important topics of our time. A democracy depends upon an educated populace, and free universal education has been a hallmark of our democracy since its inception in the 18th Century.

California once took that responsibility seriously, and prided itself on having among the best educational systems in the country. We are in a dramatically different time now. We all hear of continued state cuts to education. However, the news is often incomplete. It is difficult to reduce so complex a topic to sound bites, and so often important details are omitted from the newscasts.

It is against this backdrop that the Glendale/Burbank League sought to give the public clear and effective information about how the schools in Glendale and Burbank are financed, the current problems with financing, and what changes might be made to improve financing.

The League assembled panels of experts in school finance from Glendale and Burbank, and presented a Forum in each city to discuss the issues. The Glendale Forum was broadcast on Channel 15 and is being replayed on Channel 15 and GREG-tv (ATT U-Verse).

The Glendale panelists included:

Eva Leuck, Chief Business and Financial Officer, Glendale Unified School District

Mary Boger, President, Glendale Unified School District

Patricia Scriptor, Representative from the PTA Council

Michael Romo, Representative from the Teacher's Union

(Dr. Michael Escalante, Superintendent of GUSD, was scheduled, but was unable to appear due to illness.)

Co-President Chris Carson moderated both the Glendale and Burbank Education Forums



Glendale Education Forum Panelists from left: Mary Boger, Eva Lueck, Michael Romo, Patricia Scriptor



Burbank Education Forum Panelists from left: Michelle Hurst, Dr. Kevin Jolly, Dave Kemp, Lori Ordway Peck and Michael Romo

The Burbank panelists included:

Dr. Kevin Jolly, Superintendent, Burbank Unified School District

Lori Ordway-Peck, Assistant Superintendent, Business Services

Dave Kemp, President, Burbank Board of Education

Michelle Hurst, President, Burbank PTA Council

Michael Romo, Representative from the Teacher's Union

Representatives from each panel explained the nuts and bolts of school funding. Then the floor was opened for questions. The questions covered a wide variety of issues. In the end, all the panelists agreed that funding to the schools is inadequate.

One question asked about the role of the PTA. As state funding is cut, ways are being sought to make up the difference. The PTA was not founded as a fundraising organization, but has come under increased pressure to raise money. But, as Glendale PTA Council representative Patricia Scriptor noted, they "can't sell enough gift wrap or cookie dough to fund these cuts."

Cuts have a dramatic effect not only on the children in the classroom, but also on the teachers and administrators who must cope with them. Funding cuts have led to teacher layoffs. In Burbank, for example, the teachers that were laid off were the young ones. Losing the young teachers was a difficult choice because they lost the energy and new ideas that new teachers can bring. Those teachers may be lost to education forever because of the lack of good jobs.

Some of the panelists called for more revenue from the state to bring back funding to education. For example, several called for a change in the 2/3 majority required for the state to pass a budget. They also called for a parcel tax on homeowners, and a fee for oil extraction.

What was most evident at both Forums was the passion each panelist had for the education of children, and the importance of education to the country. The League extends its gratitude to the dedicated professionals who participated in the Forums.

The Basics of California's School Finance System

Every summer, the California Legislature and governor decide how much money will go to kindergarten through 12th grade (K–12) public education and how it will be divided among school districts, county offices of education, and the California Department of Education. A series of voter-approved initiatives provide significant restraints on both revenue options and how much funding must go to public schools. Although some changes occur each year, the system has looked about the same for more than 25 years.

What are the sources of district operating funds?

The column on the left of the diagram below shows the five sources of operating funds for schools in California:

- The federal government contributes about 10% of the education budget.
- About 60% of the funds are from the state—generated by business and personal income taxes, sales taxes, and some special taxes.
- Local property taxes are a little less than 23% of all funds. The Legislature and governor determine what part of these revenues goes to schools.

- The tiny line near the bottom of the column—less than 2% of the total, or about \$150 per student—is from the California Lottery.
- Miscellaneous local revenues are about 6% of the total. These come from a variety of sources, such as special elections for parcel taxes (needs a two-thirds vote for approval); contributions from foundations, businesses, and individuals; food service sales, and interest on investments.

These simple boxes tell the whole story: there are no other sources of funds to run California's K–12 public schools.

How are the funds distributed to local school districts?

The column on the right shows how the different sources feed into school districts' operating budgets. Currently, about two-thirds of the money is for general purposes and almost one-third is earmarked for special purposes or categories of students.

Each district has its own particular combination of federal, state, and local sources. The amount depends on:

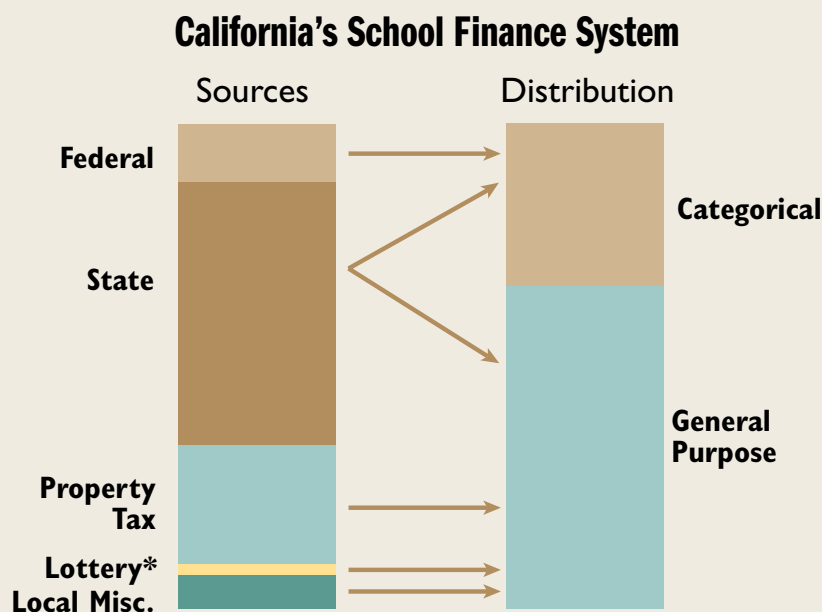
- the average number of students attending school during the school year (average daily attendance or ADA);
- the general purpose money the district receives for each student (its "revenue limit"), and
- the support for specific programs for which it qualifies ("categorical aid").

The miscellaneous and lottery revenues provide less than 8% of funding statewide. But this money is important to school districts because few restrictions are placed on its use.

In some districts, this income represents a significant source of discretionary funds.

How is the amount that goes to each school district determined?

The Legislature established revenue limits at roughly what each district spent on general education programs in 1972, and it has adjusted them for inflation since then. The *Serrano v. Priest* court case, decided in 1976, had the net effect of making districts'



About a third of the state's allocations and all of the federal ones are earmarked for special uses.

School Finance Basics continued from page 4

general purpose money more nearly equal per pupil in each type of district (elementary, unified, high school). Since the late 1990s, revenue limit equalization has been an intermittent issue, and various strategies have been implemented when funding was available. Revenue limits are now within about a \$450 range for school districts.

A district's revenue limit can be increased only by legislation, not by the school board, superintendent, or local voters. When property taxes rise, most schools do not directly benefit. The additional income goes toward the revenue limit, and the state's share is reduced proportionately. In about 60 of the almost 1,000 school districts, however, property taxes fill up or exceed the revenue limit. These districts are allowed to keep their excess property tax revenues.

Categorical aid is distributed by the state and federal governments according to the needs of the children in the district and the special programs for which the district qualifies. This aid is quite substantial in some districts and minimal in others. Since the 1960s, court decisions, legislative priorities, and pressure from interest groups have created a wealth of categorical programs.

Funding for some programs can be used only to provide specific services, such as school lunches, or to serve the needs of particular students, generally those who were traditionally underserved. The largest of these programs is Special Education, which provides funds for extra services needed to educate students with disabilities. Some programs are completely voluntary. Others provide money to help districts pay for services

they are required by law to provide. Still others are incentive programs intended to encourage districts to implement a specific program or reform, such as California's K–3 Class Size Reduction program.

Since the late 1990s, state policymakers have made some attempts to consolidate and simplify categorical programs. But that has been balanced by their tendency to create new programs when extra funds are available.

Do California schools receive enough funding?

In California, the question of funding adequacy consistently underlies discussions about improving public schools. Many people point to comparisons with education funding in other states to say California's funding is insufficient.

For almost three decades, this state's expenditures per pupil have trailed the national average. The precise amount varies from year to year, depending on a variety of economic factors and policy decisions among the 50 states. Since 1996–97 the state's expenditures have ranged from 87% to 96% of the U.S. average, depending on the year.

In addition, the number of personnel California schools are able to hire is substantially lower than is true in most of the country. California has a high cost of living, and its residents' salaries are also consistently near the top.

The combination of below average per-pupil expenditures and above-average salaries results in some of the lowest ratios of staff to students in the country. On average, California school districts have about three-fourths as many adults available—and

three-fourths as many teachers—as is true on average in the nation. The numbers of school site administrators, district administrators, counselors, and librarians have historically been even lower.

What can California do to improve its funding system?

There are many critics of the state's funding system, and the debate about school finance has intensified.

Some people focus on how much money schools receive, and others worry about how fairly the funds are distributed. A serious and compelling question is whether schools in this state have the resources they need to meet California's demanding academic goals—in particular the extra investment that may be necessary to improve the achievement of the state's English learners, low-income students, and students with disabilities. Some people advocate for greater flexibility for local school districts and schools. Others worry about how to hold them more accountable for spending their resources appropriately and in ways that improve student achievement.

Dealing with these concerns is made more difficult by the complexity of the state's school finance system. A system that was simple and transparent might better enable the public to understand how much money their local schools receive, how they spend it, and who is responsible for those decisions. It could also make it easier for policymakers to evaluate the impact various investments have on student performance and adjust school expenditures accordingly.

How do I find out more?

- For more detailed information and tools for understanding and explaining California school finance, go to: www.edsource.org/iss_fin_tools.html
- For detailed financial data on districts, counties, and the state, go to the Ed-Data Partnership website: www.ed-data.k12.ca.us
- For information and publications about California's education issues, go to EdSource's website: www.edsource.org

Reprinted with permission. EdSource is a not-for-profit 501c3 organization established in California in 1977. EdSource is an independent and impartial organization that develops and distributes information about California's public school system.

MAPPING CALIFORNIA'S FUTURE

by Chris Carson

You can participate in a once-in-a-decade opportunity to map California's future!

For decades, the state legislature designed the districts from which we elect our representatives to the legislature and congress. The result? A series of gerrymanders that protected parties and incumbents while ignoring community interests. For example, in 2001 the Berryessa area of northeast San Jose, an area with a large concentration of Asian American voters, was divided into four Assembly districts, effectively leaving the community without the opportunity to elect their own representatives. Organizations like the League of Women Voters are determined that in 2011, the district maps will be drawn to keep communities like Berryessa intact and hold politicians accountable.

In 2008 the people of California put a stop to this kind of disregard for the voters and their communities by passing Proposition 11 – The Voters First Act. Now the responsibility for drawing new district maps for the state Senate, Assembly and Board of Equalization will go to 14 voters chosen to serve on California's first Citizens Redistricting Commission. With a state as big and diverse as California, who draws the lines – and how those lines are drawn – will truly shape the future of our state. The commission gives this power to real people—political candidates, lobbyists and big political donors can't serve.

The commission will be made up of five Democrats, five Republicans, and four members from neither party, so every view will be heard. You may be one of the right people to do this job — or you may know someone who is. **How do you get involved or encourage others to? It's easy to apply—go to www.WeDrawTheLines.ca.gov for details.** Applications will be accepted online between December 15, 2009 and February 12, 2010. You'll also find much more information at www.commoncause.org/redistrictingCA.

Now's your chance! Step forward and be a part of historic change in California!

Update Fund Drive

We are so grateful for the wonderful response to our Annual Fund Drive. Even in this difficult economy, our contributions are up. That is a testament to the dedication and generosity of our members, and their commitment to the League and its work.

As we celebrate our birthdays—the 90th for the League of Women Voters and the 70th for our Glendale/Burbank League, we are reminded of the commitment of our predecessors to education, advocacy and democracy.

To help us celebrate our League birthdays in a meaningful way, some of our members are providing a challenge grant. They will match, dollar for dollar, any increase in the total contribution we realize through December 31st this year as compared to our fundraising efforts last year!

A very big THANKYOU to all who have given so generously. You are our lifeblood and we appreciate you!

There's still time to donate! Please send contributions to our Treasurer, Vera Naylor,
7714 Via Capri, Burbank, CA 91504.

Green Corner

According to the California Department of Conservation, Division of Recycling, Californians bought 21.9 billion carbonated and non-carbonated drinks in aluminum, glass, plastic and bi-metal containers last year. More than 16.1 billion of those containers were recycled, saving natural resources, conserving energy and extending the life of our landfills. That leaves 5.8 billion still to go!

LWV GLENDALE/BURBANK is pleased to announce notecards designed especially for us are now available.

Local artist Robin Palanker features five local women. All proceeds benefit LWV Glendale/Burbank

Set includes 10 cards, on 80 lb. paper two each of 5 figures LWVG/B logo on the back

\$13.00 per set, 2 sets for \$25.00 includes tax and handling

The supply is limited. To order, send the tearoff with your check.



PLEASE mail check payable to:

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS GLENDALE/BURBANK,
PO Box 21010, Glendale CA 91221-5110

Name: _____

Street: _____

City: _____ State: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

Enclosed is a check for \$ _____ for _____ sets of notecards.



Membership Application

It is easy to join the League of Women Voters of Glendale/Burbank. All Citizens of voting age are welcome. Associate Membership is open to all others.

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)

- \$60.00 for a one-year individual membership (includes a copy of our VOTER, nine times per year)
- \$100.00 for a one-year household membership for two members who share the same address (includes a copy of our VOTER., nine times per year)
- \$30.00 for a one-year student membership.

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

I am unable to join the League at this time, but enclose a contribution of \$ _____

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

Voter

The Voter is published nine times a year by the League of Women Voters of Glendale/Burbank, California

Co-Presidents: Chris Carson
Joan Hardie
Editor: Monica Marquez
Production: Carole Dougherty
Circulation: Anna Rundle

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



What will your legacy be?

As a leader in your community, you know what you want to accomplish for yourself, for your family, and for your community. Consider making the League of Women Voters* part of your overall estate plan next time you speak with your attorney or financial professional, so that your hard work will carry on.

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Glendale, CA 91203
Corner of Brand/Calif.
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fax: 818.244.4795
M-F 8:30-6, Sat. 10-4

1125 E. Broadway
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fax: 818.242.0525
M-F 8:30-6:30
Sat. 10-4, Sun. 12-4



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<http://www.lwvglendaleburbank.org>

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

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

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