

April 2006 Calendar

**Local Election Study
Consensus Part II**

Friday April 21
7 pm

Burbank Public Safety
Headquarters
200 N 3rd Street
corner Orange Grove
See flyer page 2

LWVC Leadership Council

Sacramento
Saturday May 6/7

LWVGB Annual Meeting

Saturday May 20
10 am

DeBell Golf Club
Speaker Mitch O'Farrell

The LA River Revitalization Plan

**Last Day to Register to Vote in
the June Primary**

May 22

Election Day

June 6

LWVUS Biennial Convention

June 10-13
Minneapolis

President's Message

SPRING STARTED with a lot of rain in my neck of the woods, but it didn't dampen our spirits or our activity in the League. We spent much of January, February and March making plans for our March 17 forum on Openness in Government. The program was a great success, as you will see later in this edition of the Voter.

The next event coming up is our second consensus meeting on the Local Study of Election Systems. The date has been moved. It is now 7 pm on **Friday April 21** at the Burbank Fire and Police Headquarters Building Community Room. Please

note this change from our usual Thursday evening meeting time. Our Local Study Committee has worked hard for several months researching these issues. They will present the results of their research at the consensus meeting, so you will be able to make informed decisions on the consensus questions.

After the research is presented, we expect to have a lively discussion

on the following issues:

1) whether the League should support the appointment of City Clerks and Treasurers, and

2) whether the League should support the election of municipal officials by plurality or majority vote, and whether the League should support primary/runoff elections or instant runoff or choice voting.

**Local Study of
Election Systems
7 pm
Friday
April 21
Burbank Police/Fire
Headquarters
Community Room
200 N 3rd St
corner Orange
Grove
Street parking or
free lighted parking
lot across the street**

Then comes May. Please mark your calendars for our Annual Meeting on Saturday, May 20. Details of place and time to be announced. We will transact the business of the membership, and will enjoy hearing speaker Mitch

O'Farrell, District Director of Constituent Services, Office of Council President Eric Garcetti. He will speak to us about the renovation plans for the Los Angeles River.

This is an interesting topic, and relevant to our League because the Los Angeles River borders both Glendale and Burbank.

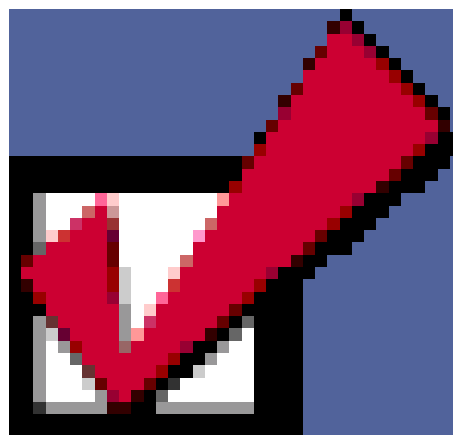
Please be sure to attend our upcoming events. **Monica Marquez**



PLEASE NOTE CHANGE OF DAY AND DATE

Consensus Meeting

Local Elections Systems Study



Part II

Friday, April 21

7:00 pm

Burbank Police/Fire Headquarters
Community Room
200 N 3rd Street

Burbank

Corner of Orange Grove and 3rd
Street and free lighted public parking lot across the street

Topics

Elected or Appointed City Clerk and Treasurer

What method we use to elect our Councils/School Boards/College
(plurality or threshold; and primary/run-off vs. Instant Runoff Voting)

Sunshine Week Forum

ON THURSDAY, March 16, 2006, the League presented one of the highlights of the year; a forum entitled “*Openness in Government: Looking for the Sunshine.*” *Looking for the Sunshine* is a League of Women Voters United States Education Fund project to broaden public awareness about the issues involved in, and the threats related to, accountability and transparency in government.

The LWV of Glendale/Burbank was one of 14 Leagues nationwide that hosted community discussions during “Sunshine Week 2006” (March 12-18). The purpose of “Sunshine Week” was to stimulate public discussion about why open government is important to everyone and why it is under challenge today.

We decided to take a look at openness in the Glendale and Burbank governments. First, we needed someone to speak generally about what local governments are legally required to do. **Barbara Blinderman**, an attorney and board member of the California First Amendment Coalition, graciously agreed to be our speaker. She gave a talk on the Brown Act, the California law that governs open meetings. The Brown Act requires all government business, with certain exceptions, to be conducted in public.

Ms. Blinderman talked about the exceptions to the Brown Act, particularly the need for the city council to meet in closed session when discussing pending legal matters with the City Attorney. The City would not be well served if it could not speak confidentially to its attorney.

She noted that it is not up to the City Attorney to provide citizens with open access to the government. The city attorney represents the city, not the people. It’s very difficult for a citizen to challenge a decision by a city attorney that something can be done in closed session or that certain information or documentation

shouldn’t be made available. Unless one has a lot of personal wealth, or a lot riding on the decision, it’s normally not worth it for a citizen to pursue a legal challenge.

Then we opened the forum up to our six panelists: **Scott Howard** Glendale City Attorney; **Gary W. Kemper**, Publisher, Glendale Focus; **Marsha Ramos**, Burbank City Council; **Will Rogers**, Columnist; **Joylene Wagner**, Member, Glendale Board of Education; and **Bob Yousefian** Glendale City Council. A lively discussion ensued.

Charter Cable taped the forum, and it will be broadcast on the local government channel. As of this writing, the program is being edited. Please check our calendar at <http://www.gb.ca.lwvnet.org/calendar.html> for broadcast times and channel listings. They will be posted as soon as they are available

In the panel discussion, one of the panelists made the point that it’s really up to the city’s political leadership to set the tone for openness and transparency in local government. They must make it clear to the municipal bureaucracy that they are there to serve the public, not block it out of the process.

Overall, the press members of our panel gave the cities of Glendale and Burbank high marks for openness. One noted that there has been significant improvement in openness in government in Burbank and Glendale over the past 15 years.

In the last portion of the program, we took written questions from the audience. One audience member asked that while the government is responsible for being open and accountable, what is the responsibility of citizens to inform themselves about their government. The panelists agreed that members of the public also bear some responsibility to keep themselves informed, and only with the cooperation of both government and citizens can openness in government truly be realized.

Charter Cable taped the forum, and it will be broadcast on the local government channel. As of this writing, the program is being edited. Please check our calendar at <http://www.gb.ca.lwvnet.org/calendar.html> for broadcast times and channel listings. They will be posted as soon as they are available.

Local Election Study Consensus

THIS MONTH we will be considering the questions of elected/appointed City Clerk and Treasurer and methods of electing Council, School Board and College Board. We present background information.

Local Election Study on Election or Appointment of City Clerk and City Treasurer

Glendale and Burbank voters elect the City Clerk and City Treasurer every four years. According to State law, there can be no qualifications requirements for candidates for these positions.

For many years it was customary in Glendale for a City Clerk who was planning to retire to submit his/her resignation before the end of his/her term. An interim City Clerk was then appointed, usually someone who worked in the City Clerk's office, and at the subsequent election that person was elected, with no challengers. In 2005, the current Glendale City Clerk did not submit her resignation until shortly before the election and others in the office did not apply. For the first time in 75 years there were only outside candidates for this office. There were nine candidates. One candidate raised \$93,000 for her campaign, another raised \$80,000; the remaining candidates raised less than \$25,000. The position of City Clerk pays a yearly salary of about \$105,000. There was one challenger for the office of City Treasurer so the incumbent had to campaign to retain his position. He was elected. The Burbank City Treasurer did not run for reelection and there were two candidates for the position. One was a former Councilman. The other was assistant to the City Treasurer and was elected. The incumbent Burbank City Clerk was unopposed and was reelected.

Many voters have questioned whether these positions should be appointed rather than elected. The trend in California is now toward appointing. Of the 478 incorporated cities in California, City Clerks are appointed in 320 cities and 158 are elected. City Treasurers are appointed in 304 cities and 174 are elected.

The City Clerk is responsible for all elections and for recording and maintaining records of various boards and commissions, as well as providing information and assistance to the public. The job is becoming more technical because of current business practices. The City Treasurer is responsible for the receipt and disbursement of all city funds, acting as Trustee for various bonds, and reporting investment activity to the City Council. His/her most important role is as Investment Manager of the city's funds to maximize yield without compromising safety and liquidity.

During the past three months we have interviewed City Clerks and City Treasurers in a number of cities in California. Those who have been elected feel that being elected by the voters assures their independence, as they are responsible to the voters, rather than to those who would appoint them. Appointed City Clerks and City Treasurers feel that a wide search for the best-qualified person for the job results in more professional officials, rather than someone who is not well qualified, but who is elected because of a well-financed campaign and personal appeal.

The LWV-G/B Local Election Study will discuss this matter on April 21, 2006 beginning at 7:00 p.m. at the Burbank Fire and Police Headquarters, 311 East Orange Grove, Burbank.

Arline Ames and Sylvia Sutton

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 (include a copy of our VOTER, nine times per year)
- \$30.00 for a one-year student membership

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

I am unable to join League at this time, but enclose a contribution of \$ _____ **Gifts made payable to "LWV Education Fund" are tax deductible.**

Voting Systems

We volunteered to analyze the issue of which voting systems would be “best” for municipal elections in Glendale and Burbank. Of course, the first thing to note is that there is no universally agreed-upon “best” system, and in fact it has been proven that all conceivable systems are flawed. However, this doesn’t prevent us from considering the pros and cons of various options. In what follows we have laid out some of these pros and cons for the two systems currently in use in Glendale and Burbank, as well as those of two likely alternatives.

Mike Allen/Tom Carson

PLURALITY (the current system in Glendale)

Each voter may cast a vote for as many candidates as there are seats available. The candidates with the most votes win.

PRO

Uses current voting hardware
Runaway fields of candidates
(i.e., the more candidates in the race,
the fewer votes it takes to win,
thus encouraging even more candidates to enter)
Familiar
Simple

CONS

Winners often have weak mandate
Voter expression limited

Can overlook good compromise candidates
Promotes “lesser evil” voting

PRIMARY/RUN-OFF (the current system in Burbank)

In the primary election, each voter may cast a vote for as many candidates as there are seats available. Candidates who receive more than 50% of the votes cast in the primary election are considered to have won an office. If there are unfilled offices, enough candidates are selected for the second, or runoff, election so that there are twice as many candidates as unfilled offices; candidates are selected in descending order of votes received in the primary election. In the runoff election, the open offices are filled by the top vote-getting candidates.

PROS

Uses current voting hardware
Familiar
Simple
Winners have strong mandate
Second round features small
field of candidates
More hassle for voters, sometimes reducing
turnout or changing electorates

CONS

Runaway fields of candidates (first round)
Voter expression limited
Can overlook good compromise candidates
Promotes “lesser evil” voting
Added expense for city

TWO LESS FAMILIAR VOTING SYSTEMS THAT WOULD ALSO REQUIRE NEW VOTING HARDWARE

CHOICE/INSTANT RUNOFF VOTING

Voters must rank candidates, in any order they wish. The candidate with the fewest first-place ranks is eliminated; voters who ranked that candidate first will now have their second-place candidate counted. The candidate now with the fewest first-place votes again is eliminated. Process continued until only the winner(s) remain.

PROS

Winners have strong mandate
Supports compromise candidates
Discourages runaway fields of candidates
Flexible voter expression
Discourages “lesser evil” voting
Results more proportional than under
plurality or runoff

CONS

Not familiar
Would need new hardware
Not simple

CUMULATIVE VOTING

Voters cast as many votes as there are seats, but can give more than one of their votes to a candidate. The candidates with the most votes win.

PROS

Supports compromise candidates
Discourages runaway fields
Flexible voter expression
Results more proportional than under
plurality or runoff

CONS

Not familiar
Would need new hardware
Not simple
Winners have weak mandate
Promotes “lesser evil” voting

The Voter

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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 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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VOTER

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