

**January 2006
 Calendar**

Friday
 February 17
**Local Election Study
 Consensus Part I**
 Glendale Community Room
 Fire Station 21
 See flyer on page 2

Thursday
 March 16
Open Government Forum
 Auditorium
 Glendale Public Library
 222 E Harvard

Thursday
 April 13
**Local Election Study
 Consensus Part II**

Saturday and Sunday
 May 6 and 7
LWVC Leadership Council
 Sacramento

Saturday
 May 20
LWVGB Annual Meeting

Saturday thru Thursday
 June 10-13
LWVUS Biennial Convention
 Minneapolis

President's Message

The Glendale/Burbank League is in the midst of its study of Local Election Systems. The purpose of the study is to discern whether the current methods of holding elections best serve the citizens of Glendale and Burbank. As a new President, and a relatively new member of the League, this is my first experience with a League study. I'm very impressed with the study committee and process. Dedicated committee members have been interviewing elected officials in Glendale and Burbank, as well as reviewing information on elections in other jurisdictions.

The pay off for all their hard work will be at the first of two consensus meetings, to be held at 7pm on February 16, where the committee will present its findings to the membership. I encourage all members to attend this meeting.

Also, please mark your calendars for our Openness in Government Forum set for March 16. We received a grant from the national League of Women Voters Education Fund for this project to broaden public awareness about issues involved in, and threats related to, accountability and transparency in government. Our League is one of 14 Leagues

nationwide that will be hosting community discussions during "Sunshine Week 2006" (March 12-18). "Sunshine Week" aims to stimulate public discussion about why open government is important to everyone and why it is under challenge today.

Our forum will take a look at the transparency of the governments of Glendale and Burbank, and examine how well its citizens are being served. The public is invited to this program, and I encourage you and anyone you'd like to invite to attend.

**We Want
 Your E-mail Address**

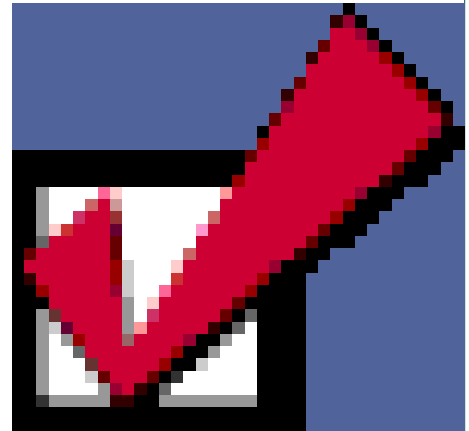
Do we have your email address? Currently, our email list of members is not complete. Some members are new to email, and some have not had the chance to provide it to us. Having your email address will allow us to send you the Voter electronically, saving on mailing costs. You will also receive Action Alerts and other items of interest to our members. We never give out member's email addresses. All League email communications go out as blind copy so no one sees your email address. If you would like to provide us your email address, send an email to me at marquezlwv@earthlink.net.

Monica Marquez



THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
GLENDALE/BURBANK present

Local Elections Systems Study



Part I

Thursday, February 16
7:00 pm
Community Room
Glendale Fire Station 21
421 Oak Street
Glendale, California 91204

(Across the street from the Galleria parking lot on Central
Please do not park in the small lot adjacent to the fire station)

Local Elections Study

What if an election was held and no one showed up at the precincts to vote? What if, on Election Day, not one person went down to their local precinct to cast a vote? That's exactly what a team from the League of Women Voters of Glendale/Burbank is researching as part of their study of the current polling systems in our two communities.

Most everyone remembers the election of 2000 with the "hanging chads" in Florida. That incident, along with a number of other issues across the country led the federal government and individual states to review the mechanics of the polling process and to ultimately decertify punch card voting. Chads are now out, and new voting options are under review.

There are two main proposals emerging in California: "Touch Screen Voting" and "Vote By Mail". Touch Screen voting is done on a computer monitor at a precinct, and votes are collected electronically. "Vote By Mail" voting is done with paper ballots being mailed to each registered voter; the ballot is marked, and then returned by mail.

The local study team is investigating the pros and cons of each of these two voting system proposals. The focus is on reliability, verification, and voter response. The study includes the experiences of several communities as well as the use of each of the two voting systems in statewide polls.

Cost, credibility and voter participation are certainly prime concerns. Also important in the study is the ability of individual voters to adapt to possible voting options being developed in response to punch card decertification.

Local, state and federal legislators are keeping a close eye on potential changes. Their concerns range from the tax-dollar costs of instituting a new voting system to immediate political concerns relating to possible changes in voter demographics. Changing to one or the other voting systems may have an important impact on the actual percentage of people voting and, ultimately, on election results.

The mission of this local study is to increase awareness and understanding of potential systematic changes in the polling process and should be of interest.

LWV - Glendale/Burbank Local Election Study - Timing of Election: Consolidated vs. Stand-Alone
Linda Lammers and Adrine Galstyan - January 24, 2006
Tom Carson, LWV Glendale/Burbank Local Study Co-Chair

Should Burbank and Glendale consolidate their municipal elections with state, federal or UDEL (Unified District Election) elections?

Municipal, School Board and Community College Board elections in Burbank, Glendale and sections of La Crescenta which are part of the Glendale Unified School District are conducted by the Burbank and Glendale City Clerks, who are elected to their positions. These elections occur every two years during the odd years of the election cycle, and they are stand-alone elections, which means that they are not consolidated with even year primary or general elections, or the odd year UDEL (Unified District Elections) elections. (Participants in UDEL elections in other cities and areas in Los Angeles are usually school districts, water districts, and library districts.)

Los Angeles County is unique in California because most of its cities conduct stand-alone elections. Cities in most other counties consolidate, such as those in Orange County.

There are advantages and disadvantages to both the consolidated and stand-alone systems. The principal advantage cited in favor of consolidated elections is higher voter turnout. On the other hand, a number of potential problems have been raised, including the limitations of our current voting system in L.A. County. The L.A. County Board of Supervisors does not accept requests from cities to consolidate with the even year primary and general elections if there are space constraints on the ballot, the only exception being single measures.

A "Pro" and "Con" list regarding the consolidation of municipal elections with the "on cycle" (even year) primary or general election is set forth below. (Consolidation with the UDEL election is not considered here because it is an election that is less likely to increase voter turnout.):

PRO

- Potentially lower costs because city governments pay a smaller share of election costs (not true in LA County - high costs).
- Reduces voter fatigue - elections occurs only once every two years.

Local Elections continued on page 4

- Increased voter interest in the election and voting because it includes state/federal issues.
- May be easier to comply with some aspects of HAVA (Help America Vote Act of 2002) - LA County Registrar automatically translates ballots into six languages.

CON

- Higher costs for the municipal candidates because the election is larger and there are more candidates; they may have to spend more money on campaigning to be noticed. (This may be even more challenging if the elected positions are part-time with limited salaries.) The candidates may need to go to developers and other higher profile contributors. With higher costs, candidates may be reluctant to come forward and may not be able to raise the funds to compete with other candidates.
- Use of partisan slate mailers creates a situation in which the non-partisan municipal candidate gets “pushed” to one side or the other, so it becomes difficult to maintain non-partisan status. (The public may not understand the generally non-partisan nature of municipal elections.)
- Press pays attention to statewide initiatives and higher profile state/federal candidates, and as a result, local issues and candidates do not get adequate coverage.
- The municipal issues are physically placed last on the ballot. Potential disadvantages are voter fatigue or lack of attention.
- Higher turnout may not increase interest in local politics or community involvement.
- Voters may be casting “uninformed votes.”

FACT BASED POINTS

- Costs - cities cannot control the costs incurred by the Los Angeles County Registrar in running the election. *Money is likely not saved* because the LA County Registrar is expensive.
- The reporting of municipal election results is delayed significantly due to the size of Los Angeles County and number of votes to be counted. (In Santa Monica, election results are received the last week of November.)
- Obviously, the characteristics of individual cities,

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Connie Wilson, Mike Chapman, Local Study Committee

County League Day – Keeping the Lights On

January 28, 2006, was County League Day. This interesting and informative program took place at Taix restaurant in Los Angeles. The topic of League Day was Energy: Keeping the Lights on. The program was put on as part of the LWV California state energy study.

League members provided much of the expertise. Jo Anne Aplet, an air quality consultant and member of the Los Angeles League, opened the meeting with an overview of the state study. The State League decided to update its position on energy after the energy crises of a couple of years ago, since its positions did not cover issues including transmission facilities and market and governance structure.

Martha Clark then provided an overview of generation and transmission issues in California. A member of the Long Beach League Energy Committee, Clark has 30 years of industry experience working with energy generation projects.

In her fact-filled presentation, she told the audience that the majority of California's electricity is generated from fossil fuel fired plants and hydroelectric stations. Renewable sources, including wind, solar, geothermal and biomass constitute only 9% of the state's energy generation.

The majority of California's gas-fired plants are older and less efficient. However, the plants still perform the heavy-lifting of supply (57%) to California consumers. Hydroelectric plants are older and in need of retrofitting, but still supply about 21% of our energy. No new hydroelectric plants are planned, since water is a finite resource and a precious commodity.

The keynote speaker was Lloyd Levine, State Assembly Member from the West San Fernando Valley and Chair of the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee. He gave an engaging talk on state energy policy.

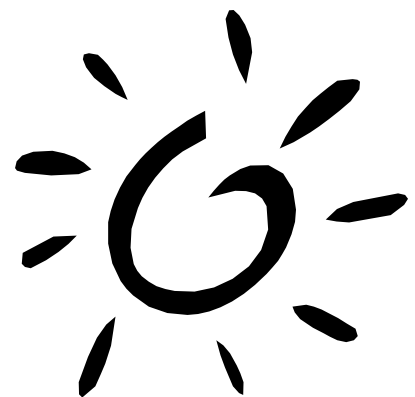
He described the energy market as a triangle. Price, reliability and environment are the points of the triangle. For example, if price goes down, reliability and the environment suffer. If the environment is

emphasized, price goes up and reliability diminishes. The best energy policy is one that balances the three points.

Levine will introduce a new bill, the 2006 Energy Efficiency and Conservation Act, in February. The bill will include incentives to homeowners and businesses to install energy efficient windows, insulation and appliances.

The last speaker was Lois Ledger, President of LWV Long Beach and Chair of the Long Beach Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) study; spoke about a proposed LNG terminal in Long Beach. The Long Beach League is studying a proposed LNG terminal in Long Beach. The proposed terminal would bring LNG from wells in Australia to a terminal in Long Beach, where it would be stored and used to operate city-owned vehicles.

The biggest issue is safety. There is a difference of opinion among experts as to how large a danger zone from a fire needs to be. Natural gas has the potential to explode. While some say a danger zone of a mile is sufficient, others claim that a 2.5 or even a 3 mile radius is necessary. The problem is that while there is no residential development within the one mile zone, there is some residential development at 1.5 miles, and thousands of homes within a 3 mile radius. The program was fact-packed, and, no pun intended, energizing for the audience.



INFRASTRUCTURE A HOT TOPIC



Infrastructure means the basic building blocks, the public structures and facilities, that support our social structure. Normally, it is not the focus of major debate at the start of an election year, but this year it is at the top of both the Governor's and the Legislature's agendas. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has issued a report summarizing some of the main considerations on the subject.

The state's capital facilities include everything from colleges to highways, dams to prisons and parks to offices. The state also funds local public infrastructure, usually requiring local matching funds. The LAO says that "most of the state's infrastructure investment was made in the 1950s through the 1970s, particularly in such areas as higher education, transportation, and water management."

Spending dropped sharply in the 1970s, before resuming a steady rise after 1981. It has not, however, kept pace with our population increase or the needs of an expanding economy, nor has it adequately provided for the maintenance that might have kept facilities from deteriorating. For example, the Central Valley's levee system needs more than \$1 billion just to rehabilitate aging levees, and that would not necessarily protect newer urban development in areas subject to flooding.

A 1999 law called for a comprehensive five-year plan for infrastructure to be submitted each January by the Governor. Such plans were produced in 2002 and 2003, but not since then. Now state agencies are updating information and a plan is expected soon. It was foreshadowed in the Governor's State of the State speech and press announcements, which called for multi-billion dollar capital expenditures for transportation, water storage, levees, schools, prisons and air quality. Legislative leaders are working on an \$11 billion infrastructure bond measure with a different list of projects.

With any plan, a key question is how it would be funded. The 2003 plan proposed expenditures of \$54 billion over five years, about 54 percent from

existing state and federal transportation funds, 36 percent from General Obligation (GO) bonds and lease-revenue bonds, and the rest from direct appropriations from the General Fund (GF) and other special funds. Governor Schwarzenegger has listed lease-revenue bonds, a water fee on households and businesses, higher port fees, tolls and other possible revenues as additional sources of funding. Of the Governor's \$223 billion ten-year infrastructure spending proposal, about \$101 billion would be from existing sources, \$68 billion from new GF-supported bonds, and \$53 billion from new funding sources.

Although user fees or taxes such as the gas tax or water fees have been used to pay for some facilities, most infrastructure is financed by bonds and repaid from the state GF. Facilities are expensive to construct, but last a long time and serve generations of taxpayers. Interest costs to repay the bonds can make the total cost nearly double the bond proceeds, but adjusting for inflation over the usual 30 year repayment span makes the price tag much less, e.g., \$1.25 million for each \$1 million borrowed.

California now has about \$53 billion of GF debt outstanding, \$42 billion for infrastructure and another \$10.4 billion for the deficit financing bonds. We also have about \$30 billion of bonds authorized but not yet sold, although some of that is committed to projects not yet ready to build. Debt service costs will be about \$5.8 billion in 2006-07. The state's level of debt service is still within what is considered an acceptable range, but could become problematic if not carefully managed. California's credit rating has improved but is still the lowest of any state rated by the major credit rating services, and this increases our cost of borrowing. The major reason given is not our total outstanding debt, but the state's continuing inability to deal with its structural deficit.

Infrastructure spending is an investment in California's future, and we have many areas of critical needs. The question, however, always comes down to how to weigh those needs against other needs that are competing for the public's dollars.

Local Elections continued from page 4

including their size, history and politics, must be taken into account when evaluating the benefits and costs of consolidation.

Sources:

Municipal Elections in California: Turnout, Timing and Competition, by Zoltan L. Hajnal, Paul G. Lewis, and Hugh Louch (2002), the Public Policy Institute of California
Sue Herbers, Torrance City Clerk
Maria Stewart, Santa Monica City Clerk
Margarita Campos, Burbank City Clerk
Joanne Leavitt, LWV Santa Monica
Margo Reeg, LWV Los Angeles County
Joanne Riddle, LWV
Deborah Wright, Executive Liaison, L.A. County Registrar
Linda Lammers, Adrine Galystan, Local Study Committee

WELCOME NEW MEMBER

Sheila Price

249 N. Brand Blvd.
Glendale, CA 91203
Corner of Brand/Calif.
tel: 818.244.4448
fax: 818.244.4795
M-F 8:30-6, Sat. 10-4
1125 E. Broadway
Glendale, CA 91205
Btwn Chevy Chase/Adams
tel: 818.242.4270
fax: 818.242.0525
M-F 8:30-6:30
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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.
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

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.

The Voter

THE VOTER IS PUBLISHED nine times a year by the League of Women Voter of Glendale/Burbank, California.

President: Monica Marquez

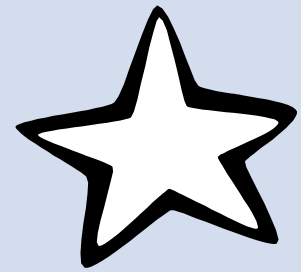
Editor: Chris Carson

Production: Carole Dougherty

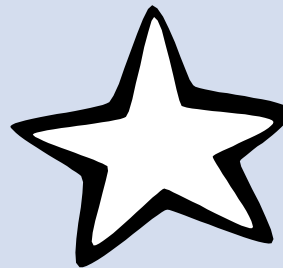
Circulation: Anna Rundle

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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BURBANK/GLENDALE

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