



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS®

VOTER



FREMONT, NEWARK & UNION CITY

SEPTEMBER 2015



SAVE THE DATE

Monday, October 19, 2015
Fremont Main Library

Guest Speaker:
Bruce Cain

Professor of Political Science, Stanford Univ.
Director of Bill Lane Center for the American West
Author of *Democracy More or Less*

Dr. Cain is a pioneer in computer-assisted redistricting, elections, term limits, polling, and the relationships between lobbyists and elected officials.

Dr. Cain was a Summa Cum Laude graduate from college, a Rhodes Scholar, and has won numerous high awards for his outstanding teaching in the field of Political Science.

Join us for an evening of stimulating discussion with Dr. Cain.

KICK OFF MEETING

Monday, September 21, 2015
Fremont Main Library
6:30-7:00 Networking
7:00 p.m. Program



Public Higher Education In California

LWVC State Study Chair Eleanor Yick will give us an overview of the study and what some of the current problems are.

Questions to Consider:

What is the purpose of California's public higher education system?

To supply an educated, competitive workforce?

To ensure a large segment of well-educated citizens?

To develop future leaders?

To increase economic mobility for underserved youth?

To provide access to higher education for economically disadvantaged & minority students?

Co-sponsored by Alameda County Library

PRESIDENTS' MESSAGE



Dear Leaguers,

It's never boring being a Member of the League of Women Voters! We take our job of making democracy work very seriously and attend and observe, and provide testimony when needed, several local governments. Currently, we are working on areas of concern related to the Alameda County Water District (rate hike process) and the Union Sanitary District.

If our local issues don't keep us busy enough, we also have LWVUS and LWVC studies, voter service and action requests. Our community meetings have informed speakers and we have two very exciting ones coming up in September and October! The September meeting will highlight the LWVC Higher Education study and the October meeting will feature Bruce Cain speaking on Money in Politics. We invite you to join us by attending, participating and working together to keep the wheels of our democracy well oiled and functioning. For more information, you can visit our [website](#).

Speaking of higher education, Pauline just returned from Colombia where she visited Fundacion Casa Italia in Cartagena. The Foundation provides a very high quality education in its school, El Instituto Una Nueva Luz de Esperanza, for poor children in the area. These children cannot afford the public schools because they are required to supply their own pencils, paper and other supplies, including lunch. At the Foundation, these things are provided to them. But their education is only through the secondary basic grades. High school is out of the question because the children cannot afford the bus fare required to get to the schools in town. In addition, the parents are not convinced that an education is the right choice for their children. Most of the children simply end up doing what their parents did – selling trinkets on the street to tourists or fishing. It really enforced the fact that we are incredibly lucky to have the resources that we have here, but it is not perfect. Please join our Higher Education study and have your voice heard.

We would love to hear from you, you can contact us via the following email address

President@lwvfnc.org.

Syeda & Pauline

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Editor Alex Starr



Money in Politics

LWVFNUC Will Participate in National Money in Politics Review and Update.

The LWV of Fremont, Newark and Union City is joining Leagues from across the nation to take part in the Money in Politics (MIP) Review and Update. Adopted at the 2014 LWVUS Convention, this involves a member study and consensus to update the League's position on campaign finance in order to obtain member understanding and agreement on the extent to which political campaigns are protected speech under the First Amendment. Leagues are being asked to consider: the rights of individuals and organizations to express their political views through independent expenditures and the finance of election campaign activities; and how those rights, if any, should be protected and reconciled with the interests set out in the current position.

LWVUS has set this timetable for the MIP project:
Spring to Summer 2015: Education materials are posted periodically on the League Management website. Leagues can use these materials for member and community meetings;

Fall 2015: A study guide and consensus questions will be posted for the Money in Politics Review and Update. Leagues will hold consensus meetings;

February 1, 2016: Consensus reports (electronic) from Leagues due to LWVUS, and

April 2016 national LWV Board meeting:

Consensus reports and resulting position(s), if any, will be approved.

The LWVUS Money in Politics (MIP) Committee that formed last fall includes LWV leaders from across the country and national board and staff members.

The Committee is developing ready-to-use resources and strategies that are designed to help League members and the citizenry understand money in politics issues. They will prepare members for the update of LWVUS's campaign finance position. These educational materials, called "Meetings-in-a-Box," are designed to use for member and community activities and will be available at <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>. Resources will include a PowerPoint presentation with script, outside readings and issue papers prepared by the MIP Committee. Check the MIP webpage often, as materials are being added frequently.

Join the LWV MIP Google Group that replaced the Money in Politics Member Discussion Forum. Members of the former League MIP forum should have received an invitation; but if you didn't or if you would like to join the new discussion group, follow the instructions at <https://groups.google.com/d/forum/lwv-money-in-politics>.

Questions about the MIP Review and Update can be sent to MIPCommitteeChair@lwv.org.

Please join the League as we participate in this important League study on an issue that is critical to our democracy. John Smith will be leading our study group. Contact John at jsmith1152@aol.com to join the study committee.

Key Structures of Democracy: Money in Politics Review Google Group (NEW)

The Money in Politics Google Group is Up and Running! Sign up to join the MIP Google Group which is replacing the Money in Politics Forum today! Those of you who were members of the League MIP forum should have received an invitation, but if you didn't or if you would like to join the new group, click on the attached link and follow the instructions:

<https://groups.google.com/d/forum/lwv-money-in-politics>.

Questions can be sent to MIPStudyChair@lwv.org.



HELP WANTED **CONSTITUTIONAL AMENDMENT CONSENSUS MEETING**

The Constitutional Amendment Consensus Meeting has been set on Monday, Nov. 16. Location and starting time to be determined. Study Chair Merna Morse needs help to present the consensus material. She also needs a timekeeper and recorder. Now is your opportunity to participate in the third and last major study for the year.

Contact Merna at mmherstory@comcast.net.

This study of amending the U.S. Constitution is in three parts. The questions in Part I are to develop guidelines for evaluating constitutional amendment proposals. Part II asks about aspects of an Article V Constitutional Convention that may be important in conducting such a Convention. Part III relates to how the League might put these guidelines into practice and asks two overall balancing questions between process and positions.

Considerations for Evaluating Constitutional Amendment Proposals

In determining whether to support or oppose a particular constitutional amendment or the Article V Constitutional Convention process, the first and most important question is whether the League supports or opposes the subject of the amendment based on League public policy positions. Once League public policy positions are applied, Part I asks, "What are the other values that League members share regarding the purpose of the Constitution and its malleability?" Many believe the Constitution to be a near-sacred document, only to be amended in the most serious circumstances. Do we agree? Under what circumstances is it appropriate to amend the Constitution? What makes a sound and well-crafted amendment proposal?

Aspects of an Article V Constitutional Convention

As noted in the Background, Article V of the U.S. Constitution provides two ways of proposing amendments to the nation's fundamental charter. Under one method, called an Article V Constitutional Convention, legislatures of two-thirds of the states (34 at present) may ask Congress to call a convention to propose amendments to the Constitution. Amendments proposed by this method must be ratified by three-fourths of the states, 38 at present.

An Article V Convention, has never been successfully invoked.

Part II considers whether the League would support such a convention, and if so, under what circumstances.

Should the League oppose an Article V Constitutional Convention to propose amendments to the U.S. Constitution because of unresolved questions about the powers and processes of such a convention?

There is a debate among scholars as to whether a Constitutional Convention can be controlled in any way. Those who believe it cannot be controlled are afraid of a "runaway convention:" one that could go beyond its original purpose and alter the Constitution in any way it chose. Other people are uncertain whether the powers and processes of a convention can be controlled and worry about the magnitude of the risk. Still others are convinced that the Convention would be bound by its "call" or that Congress would have the power to impose some controls. Finally, there is the view that control does not matter – a Constitutional Convention is intended to be an unrestrained process. There is no consensus on how these questions would be answered. Congress has not passed any legislation to clarify, and the U.S. Supreme Court has refused to hear cases related to amendment procedures, calling such questions "political" and not ones for the Court to consider.

Balancing Questions

Part III relates to how the League might put the guidelines from Part I and Part II into practice and asks two overall balancing questions between process and positions. Should the evaluation guidelines from Part I and the process criteria from Part II always be applied or may they be set aside in the overall context of any particular amendment proposal?



Preview of Higher Ed Study Areas of Consensus Questions

Here is a description of the major topics that consensus questions will address on this study. The exact wording of the questions is almost finalized.

PURPOSE

What is the purpose of California's system of public higher education? Is it to supply an educated, competitive workforce for the state? Is it to offer the benefits of postsecondary school education to everyone capable of learning? Is it to ensure that the state will have a sufficiently large segment of well-educated citizens? Is it to develop future leaders? Is the purpose to increase opportunities for economic mobility otherwise lacking for first-generation and/or minority youngsters? Is it to continue emphasis on access and excellence as core values?

EQUITABLE ACCESS

Should everyone, regardless of preparation for college, have access to higher education? To what extent should access be apportioned proportionally according to the star population, i.e. should there be a distinctive focus on such issues as gender, race, ethnicity, and age? In admissions? Enrollments? Completion of degrees? With the elimination of affirmative action policies, there are no longer statutory requirements regarding university admission. The Master Plan's specified criteria for eligibility still hold sway and restrict enrollment at CSU and UC. Do these criteria meet the needs of California's changing demographics? Do they facilitate a seamless transition path from the California Community Colleges (CCCs) to 4-year colleges? Do they address the need for many more graduates of 4-year universities?

FUNDING & AFFORDABILITY

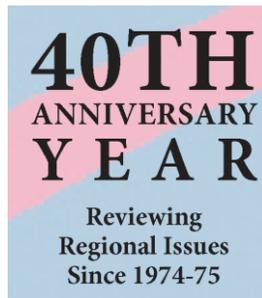
Who should pay? How should they pay? The state pay all? a portion? The individual pay all? a portion? Find additional funding streams? A broad based tax? What should financial aid policies include?

PREPAREDNESS

How well are K-12 students prepared for higher education? Is there adequate counseling? Are all students able to start earning college credits while still in high school? Do students and families have sufficient knowledge about enrollment procedures and the availability of financial aid? Will the implementation of current K-12 school reforms be sufficient to prepare students to meet college-readiness criteria? Other reforms and opportunities available to assist students in mastering the requirements have been suggested. Which of these seem appropriate or useful? How essential is K-12 preparedness?

OPPORTUNITIES/BARRIERS TO SUCCESS

Limited capacity and strict adherence to the 1960 eligibility requirements for 4-year colleges have contributed to California's low baccalaureate attainment. Lack of articulation and coordination between and among the three sectors has also created barriers to student completion of their degrees in post secondary education while others lack opportunities for lifelong learning as well as training or retraining. Some reforms and opportunities have been made available or proposed to assist students in meeting eligibility requirements, such as: the use of multiple measures of assessment for enter placement status; the development of a variety of innovative curricula and instructional strategies; development of satellite locations offering BA degrees; and the use of new and expanding technologies. Are they enough? Are they effective?



From the Bay Area Monitor History, Part IV
By Leslie Stewart

The decade between 1995 and 2005 included the dot-com bubble, 9/11, and the birth of social media. And in the Bay Area, as seen through articles in the *Bay Area Monitor*, these years also included hydrogen fuel cell buses, Caltrain's "Baby Bullet," and the first push to address climate change.

Several themes dominated *Monitor* coverage during that period: environmental protection, infrastructure (from transportation to water supply), and integrated regional planning. Articles in 1995 discussed air toxics, earthquake preparation, and the linkages between land use, transportation, and air quality. The themes may not have changed, but the strategies did. By 2005, some of the topics were regulating idling vehicles, intelligent transportation systems, and the health impacts of development patterns.

Two decades after the country began paying significant attention to environmental protection, agencies in the mid 1990s were reducing water pollution from construction runoff, monitoring pollutants in the Bay, and changing treatment for drinking water. Military bases and old industrial sites were targeted for cleanup and re-use. The region continued to have problems meeting its ozone reduction goals, but a new statewide plan to increase the number of "clean vehicles" was being implemented, and the terms EV (electric vehicle), LEV (light electric vehicle), and ZEV (zero-emission vehicle) entered the acronym list for the *Monitor*. Reformulated gasoline was another solution, although the additive MTBE (methyl tertiary-butyl ether) proved to have its own environmental side effects.

Air particulates drew increased attention, and in 1998, the Bay Area Air Quality Management

District passed a resolution establishing a model wood smoke ordinance that local governments could adopt to protect their residents. To combat particulates from diesel exhaust, Air District grants enabled purchases of cleaner freight trucks and buses (both for schools and mass transit). In 1999, the *Monitor* first wrote about air pollution as an environmental justice issue. By the early 2000s, the Air District began regulating refinery flares, a high priority for environmental justice advocates, and in 2005, the agency introduced its Community Air Risk Evaluation (CARE) program for highly impacted communities.

Monitor articles began covering a range of environmental issues: invasive species (both plants and aquatic "critters" in ballast water), endangered species in parks, and the impact on wildlife from public access to waterfront areas. The energy crunch in 2001 was a topic, as well as plans for desalination projects in 2004 and a regional water planning group in 2005.

Environmental protection faced new challenges brought on by regional growth. Aided by funding from local voter-approved "self-help" transportation sales tax measures and bridge tolls (including Regional Measure 2 in 2004, which assigned bridge toll money to regional projects), new infrastructure projects were hitting the drawing boards in the hope they would offset traffic congestion and accompanying pollution. Caltrain introduced the "Baby Bullet" express trains; the first plans for the Sonoma-Marina Area Rail Transit (SMART) system were approved, as well as the schedule for replacing the Transbay Terminal. Carpool lanes were expanded, and the first toll lanes were approved for the South Bay. In 2002, as the result of its two-year Bay Crossings Study, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC) concluded that constructing a new bridge connecting the East Bay and the Peninsula would be impractical. One

possible alternative, ferries, received coverage in many *Monitor* articles over this period. At the end of 2003, the ultimate infrastructure project, high-speed rail, was added to the mix.

Meanwhile, existing infrastructure benefited from preservation efforts, as engineers implemented seismic retrofits and upgrades to the Golden Gate Bridge and at water facilities and pipelines throughout the region. The East Bay Municipal Utility District constructed its Southern Loop Pipeline starting in 1998, followed by a reconstruction of the Claremont Tunnel through the East Bay Hills, and in 2002 the San Francisco Public Utilities Commission approved the Hetch Hetchy Water System Improvement Program.

These seismic projects, together with the planning for the replacement of the Bay Bridge, were a constant reminder of the impacts of the 1989 earthquake, and new regional disaster plans were a regular topic in the *Monitor* — earthquake planning for transportation in 1999, for airports in 2001, water agency pipeline interties in 2003, and post-quake water supplies in 2004. A more general regional disaster plan was created by the Association of Bay Area Governments (ABAG) in 2004, incorporating lessons from the Oakland Hills fire of 1991 and the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001. Transportation agencies and the Port of Oakland also did security plans after 9/11.

Disaster plans and an airport plan update were small compared to two regional plans developed during this period. In 2001, five regional agencies had established the Bay Area Smart Growth Strategy, and by 2003, Transportation 2030, a 25-year transportation plan, was underway. The *Monitor* covered workshops around the region for both plans, following earlier coverage of “livable communities” and regional planning. Related articles later examined the relationship between water and land use, balancing smart growth and social equity, access to health care for non-drivers, mobility for seniors, and planning for pedestrians.

Smart growth plans depended on reducing single-occupancy vehicle use. A regional bicycle plan was completed in 2002, and that same year, car-sharing

was introduced to the region. Transit “connectivity” — improving the transfer points between systems — was an important issue for both MTC and League of Women Voters groups around the region in 2004. David Schonbrunn, a Bay Area transportation activist, recently commented, “One of the best things the League has done was [LWVBA President] Eva Bansner’s research and advocacy on transit hubs. It was a great project and should have gotten more attention.” Transportation improvements were planned specifically along corridors, integrating concepts like bus rapid transit, and there was an increasing emphasis on “transit-oriented development,” including a push for station-area planning to guarantee ridership to new rail stations.

After several years of debate over merging MTC and ABAG, the agencies’ partnership on the smart growth plan smoothed the creation of a Joint Policy Committee in 2005. The new coordinating group, initially focused on smart growth and sustainability, also included the Air District.

Between 1995 and 2005, the region’s growth was funded increasingly by local sources: user fees, tolls (Regional Measure 2), parcel taxes (by park districts), and sales taxes for transportation. Concerns about pollution were transformed into a push for healthy, sustainable communities. The *Monitor* covered more regional and sub-regional agencies than ever before. Topics ranging from regional impacts of casinos to urban agriculture kept things lively for the editorial staff, but the editor’s favorite feature was probably the annual roundup of “bright ideas” from a multitude of sources. Like climate protection, which made its debut in the *Monitor* in 2005, these ideas were often the beginning of something new and important.

Leslie Stewart is the most recent former editor of the Bay Area Monitor. In commemoration of its 40th anniversary year, she has been writing a series of articles about the publication’s history, from its launch in 1975 to track the region’s progress in meeting federal Clean Air Act standards (Part I), to its first decade covering air quality and transportation issues (Part II), and on to its second decade expanding to a wider range of topics (Part III). This May, the Monitor will officially turn 40 years old



MAKE IT FAIR COALITION

Information for this article gathered from the Make It Fair web site.

The League of Women Voters of California has joined this coalition to close the commercial property tax loophole in Prop 13. This movement to reform California's property tax system protects home owners and renters as well as small business owners. It means closing the commercial property loopholes in Prop 13. The first step is educating people and communities about the need for this change.

Prop. 13 was passed to provide important protections for homeowners and renters, but it also included property tax loopholes for many corporations and wealthy commercial property owners. These loopholes allow them to avoid paying billions of dollars in property taxes. That means that we lose vital funding for schools, local services like police and fire, parks and other important priorities.

The coalition of community, faith-based, civil rights and labor groups is working together to find solutions to the problems in our state caused by the lack of funding for public education and other services we all use, while also leveling the playing field for small and large, old and new businesses in California.

The proposed reforms will not impact homeowners or renters at all—except to make the services we use and the communities we live in stronger.

Prop. 13 was a constitutional amendment passed in 1978 that made significant changes to how and when property is taxed. It changed the law so that properties would only be reassessed if they were sold or had major improvements done. It capped the

annual increase in value for non-reassessed properties at 2%. And it set a 1% taxation rate on the assessed value of a property, which is one of the lowest rates in the nation. As a coalition, we support its protection for homeowners, renters and owners of agricultural lands—but we do not support big corporations and wealthy commercial property owners who have been taking advantage of loopholes in the law to avoid paying their fair share of property taxes.

Prop. 13 needs to be updated because many big corporations and wealthy commercial property owners have used the law to avoid paying taxes on the actual value of their property. In some cases, businesses have gotten an unfair competitive advantage based solely on when they bought a piece of property. In other cases, they've used legal loopholes in the law to avoid reassessment when their property changed hands. The taxable value of a property is set at the time of purchase and artificially limited to a 2% increase in value each year, a big corporation could be paying just slightly more in property taxes today than they did in 1978—even if their property has become far more valuable.

Some companies actively work to get around re-assessment even when a piece of property changes hands. Under legislation associated with Prop. 13, if over 50% of ownership is transferred to one new owner, the property is then re-assessed. Some corporations and wealthy commercial property owners will break up the ownership of a piece of property across several sub-corporations so that no one sub-corporation owns more than 50%. So even though the property has been bought and sold, the new owners are paying taxes under the old assessment value.

We estimate that reforming the commercial property tax system would raise up to \$9 billion of additional revenue each year. We propose to use increased revenue for the same things our property taxes go to now: increased funding for schools and local services.

Important transparency and accountability measures are included to help local residents track exactly how the funding is being spent.

Thursday, Sept. 10th	Action Group	11:00 AM -1:00 PM League Office
Monday, Sept. 21st	CA Public Higher Education	6:30 PM Networking 7:00 Program Fremont Main Library
Thursday, October 8th	Action Group	11:00 AM -1:00 PM League Office
Monday, October 19th	Money in Politics	6:30 PM Networking 7:00 Program Fremont Main Library

ALL MEETINGS ARE FREE, OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AND WHEEL CHAIR ACCESSIBLE
ANNUAL MEETING

Mission

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

Diversity Policy

LWVFNUC affirms its commitment to reflect the diversity of our communities in our membership and actions. We believe diverse views are important for responsible decision making and seek to work with all people and groups who reflect our community diversity.

Join the LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS TODAY!

Any person, man or woman, who subscribes to the purpose and policy of the League may join. To be a voting member, one must be at least 18 years of age and a U.S. citizen. Members under 18, or non-citizens, are welcome as non-voting Associate Members. Dues include membership in LWVFNUC, Bay Area League, and the California and National Leagues. Financial support for dues is available through our scholarship program. Contact Evelyn La Torre, Membership Chair, for information.

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