



2007-2008

ANNUAL REPORT

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS

of

SAN JOAQUIN COUNTY

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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 and advocacy.

2007-2008

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Ann Pentecost, President

The League of Women Voters of San Joaquin County has had a busy year. We had two excellent and well attended programs - our kick off on "How to Create a Better World Through Shopping" with Dr. Ellis Jones and a fine Pros & Cons presentation by Vickie Markarian and Dee Matteucci in a joint meeting with AAUW. We have had some social events with the opportunity to visit and get to know each other better.

Able lead by Colleen Foster and a fine committee, we took part in the National Immigration Study. There was good participation from the membership as we looked at values and reached consensus on most of the issues.

There were several other events which stand out for our year.

- The Water Privatization Lawsuit came to a successful end. Many League members were in the forefront of making it happen.
- The Voter is now available online, thanks to the work of Colleen Foster and Dale Stocking. This saves printing and postage costs and has reached people outside the local League.
- Susan Loyko, the League's nominee, was named Susan B. Anthony Woman of Achievement.
- A number of League members were interviewed by UOP students from the Sex and Gender class of Professor Marcia Hernandez.

On a sad note, several long time League members passed away this year. Joan Darrah, Jerry Briscoe and Fran Abbott will be greatly missed.

ACTIVITIES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

REPORTS ON OUR LEAGUE YEAR

MEMBERSHIP

Report: FY 2007-2008

Information as of 5/25/2008
LWVSJC: total membership: 85

Membership breakdown

55 - Individual Local Members
16 - Household Local Members
14 - Members Who Joined Nationally (Rather Than Locally)

New Members for the 2004-2005 year: 4
Members who didn't renew: 21

Membership is down again from last year's 97 members. Membership two years ago was 103. While some moved away or have told us they will be taking a 'break' from League membership, most have just 'slipped away', even though all members are contacted by email and/or letter at the beginning of the new fiscal year. Membership recruitment needs to be a focus if we are to maintain a vigorous League. Member help in recruiting new active members is always welcomed.

Thank you to Barbara Walker, online database manager, and to Pat Thomas who continued as membership secretary.

Note to Members:

We'd love to have your phone number and email. If your full contact information isn't in the roster, please forward it to us so we can keep you informed.

FINANCES

San Joaquin County League Fund

The **SJC League Fund** was created in December 1984 by Sylvia Kothe, Pearl West, and Barbara Walker to provide a tax-deductible mechanism to support the League's voter services activities, to manage the 501 (c) (3) non-profit organization which supports the League of Women

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Voters of San Joaquin County (the “League”) and to assure the funds were used for the correct purposes.

The Ed Fund

- Manages the League Fund’s CDs;
- Receives Education Fund donations;
- Reviews educational projects for nonpartisanship;
- Approves requests for transfers of funds to LWVSJC, when needed.

The League keeps \$10,000 in an Ed Fund CD. Interest income and direct contributions to the Ed Fund may be transferred to the San Joaquin County League for operating and voter services expenditures during the year.

As of 5/25/08, the SJC League Fund check book balance is \$1,939.40 and the CD balance is \$10,000.

- Sylvia Kothe, Treasurer

LWVSJC Finances



The League of Women Voters is structured a bit like the US government: we have Leagues at the local, state and national levels. Our financing is like the government’s, too — the local level has the smallest pot.

Local Leagues receive services from LWVUS and LWVC for our Per Member Payment—the amount that each League pays *per member* to the state national Leagues. So, local Leagues do get benefits from both the state and national Leagues. **BUT**—at a serious cost.

Our local League dues are \$50—and have been for several years. Of that \$50:

LWVC gets \$21.

LWVUS gets \$26.80

LWVSJC gets \$2.20

Yes, two dollars and twenty cents.

The national League is proposing to raise the national PMP by \$1.20 for each of the next two year. Our national PMP in two years would be \$29.20. If LWVC also raises its PMP by \$1.00, as proposed, our total PMP would be \$51.20 ----- or \$1.20 more than we collect in dues.

While the LWVSJC Board voted unanimously to oppose the LWVUS increase, the Board felt that it had not choice but to raise our local dues accordingly. The recommendation that our annual dues be \$60/member will be voted on at the Annual Meeting.

□ **FUNDRAISING**

Asparagus Festival: The League's chief fundraising effort this year was our participation in the Asparagus Festival this year. Last year we made approximately \$1000.00 from this volunteer effort and we hope to do as well this year. Thanks to Loralee McGaughey who coordinated the volunteers for us and to all the League members and friends of League members who participated in the Asparagus Festival for us this year.

The League needs to emphasize fundraising in the coming year. Any members interested helping our League raise money for overall operations, our participation in community events (e.g., Family Day in the Park or Earth Day), or for specific voter services or advocacy services, please contact any Board member.

LEAGUE ACTIVITIES



VOTER SERVICES

- Vickie Markarian

With two primary elections in 2008 (February and June), the League had a busy early election season.

▪ **Pros and Cons**

Pros & Cons were distributed for both the February and June election ballot initiatives. Pros & Cons were distributed to retirement centers, churches, as well as to League members. Easy Voter Guides were also distributed to senior centers and libraries.

▪ **Speakers Bureau**

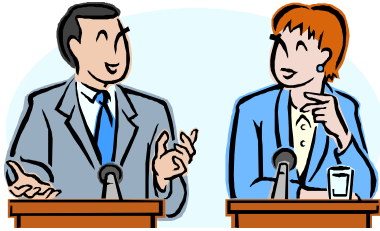
Vickie Markarian and Dee Matteucci did several presentations on the ballot measures for the February primary election, including the joint meeting with the AAUW, which was very well attended. No presentations were planned for the June primary, as there were only two ballot measures.

Vickie Markarian also recorded radio spots on KSTN for Propositions 98 and 99, including information on eminent domain (the subject of both propositions) as well as important dates regarding the June election (registration deadlines, etc.).

▪ **Smart Voter**

Candidates for local office have been invited to add their information to the League's Smart Voter Web site. As of May 25, approximately one-third of all candidates had responded. We continue to urge candidates to submit their sites and we hope the General Election will generate more interest.

▪ **Candidates' Forums** – *Daphne Shaw*



Countywide Races

The League once again partnered with the Greater Stockton Chamber of Commerce and Comcast Cable to present forums for candidates the Mayor of Stockton and for County Board of Supervisors District 1 and 3. This year The Record also participated in the televised forums.

The forums were broadcast live and were available On Demand as well as at scheduled on SJTV Channel 26 from the day of the forum until Election Day. Channel 3's political reporter Steve Swatt, under a contract with Comcast, was moderator for the evening. Dee Matteucci represented the League on the interview panel.

Because of the large number of candidates in the mayoral and Districts 1 and 3 Supervisorial races, we were unable to cover the two-person District 5 Supervisor's race within the time allotments given us by Comcast.

Following the June 3rd election, we will begin to look at which races we will include in the Comcast broadcast.

We are planning to do additional forums and hope to partner with AAUW and other organizations that expressed an interest in participating in candidate forums sponsored by the League.

Stockton City Council candidates

The League was unable to sponsor a forum for Stockton City Council candidates before the June 3rd primary. A forum for these candidates is anticipated before the November General Election.

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ACTION/ADVOCACY

LWVSJC Year in Advocacy 2007-2008

By Cate White, Advocacy Chair

We now have two active advocacy committees; one focused on Healthcare, headed by board member Cate White, the other on the Environment, specifically water issues, headed by board member Esther Vasquez. Reports from each of these committees will appear under separate headings in this Annual Report. A brief description of other local and state issues where we have been active follows.

On the local front, Colleen Foster attended hearings of the City of Stockton Planning Commission in the fall of 2007 to give our input on the Stockton General Plan. Working in conjunction with the Campaign for Common Ground, Colleen prepared comments on the plan on behalf of LWVSJC. Unfortunately, the city approved the General Plan without addressing our concerns.

At the state level, LWVC has long been seeking a sound redistricting plan. A proposal that has the backing of the League and Common Cause will hopefully appear on the November ballot. As a League member, you probably received a petition to place the measure on the ballot several months ago. Essentially, this measure would take the power to draw district lines out of the Legislature's hands, establishing a special commission for that purpose. Assuming the measure appears on the ballot, LWVC will be advocating its passage.

For all Californians, one of the most pressing issues is our state budget. We are facing a huge shortfall in revenues, and the Governor is proposing across the board cuts. These cuts will have particularly negative impacts on Education and Social Services. LWVC has allied itself with a number of other organizations in pressing the Legislature to consider all options including increasing revenues as well as carefully considered cuts. This is a developing crisis, and its full extent won't be known until the Governor comes out with the budget's May revise in mid-May (after this writing). Locally, our League has affiliated itself with a number of concerned religious, labor and community groups to raise public awareness and lobby our legislators. Stay tuned for future developments.

Health Care Committee Report

Issues in Health Care 2007-2008

By Cate White, Health Care Committee Chair



LWVC and LWVSJC continue to advocate for SB 840, the Single Payer Health Care plan. The bill was passed by the Legislature two years ago, but was vetoed by the Governor. It has been reintroduced and passed in the State Senate, and is now pending

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in the Assembly. In the meantime, the Governor and Legislative leaders proposed a new bill, ABX1-1, in 2007. It was deeply flawed and was opposed by the League. Fortunately, that bill failed. The window for passing SB 840 this year will close at the end of this Legislative session, and the League will be actively lobbying in its favor. This month at the Leaders Council there will be a workshop discussing ways to approach the small business community, since they are one of the key groups whose support would help to pass a single payer plan.

LWVSJC also continues to network with other local groups to advocate for SB 840 by lobbying local legislators, writing letters to the editor, and holding informational meetings for the public. LWVC has also asked all League members to send letters to the local press as individuals in support of a Single Payer Plan.

Environment Committee Report

By Jane Wagner-Tyack and Esther Vasquez,
Co- Chair and Chair, LWVSJC Environment Committee

LWVUS has a position “that natural resources should be managed as interrelated parts of life-supporting ecosystems. Resources should be conserved and protected to assure their future availability. . . .” In keeping with that position, the Environment Committee has been involved in identifying and framing critical regional areas of concern.

Although various environmental issues are currently of concern in our region, the Environment Committee has largely focused on water and regional transportation development and its impact on present and future land use decisions. The initial concept was to do a water study and to address issues relative to the proposed Peripheral Canal. The committee decided to begin by better educating ourselves on critical water concerns and ramifications and to address the Peripheral Canal as a side issue. Additionally, we decided to monitor legislation and ramifications of governmental decisions in these areas. We also decided to identify individuals in the respective fields from whose expertise we could draw from.



Jane Wagner-Tyack, Committee Co-Chair, and the League’s representative to the San Joaquin County Council of Governments (SJCOG) Blue Print Leadership Working Group, has been an exceptional asset to the committee by taking the lead in keeping the committee informed on various aspects of water-related developments. Jane also took on the task of developing an informational summary of 34 water agencies and organizations involved in San Joaquin water issues, with mission, major initiatives and contact information for each. We hope this Water Table can be attached to the League’s web page as a PDF file.

The Environment Committee has been aggressively represented at the following monthly meetings: the San Joaquin County Flood Control and Water Conservation District Advisory Water Commission, the San Joaquin County Council of Governments (SJCOG), San Joaquin Council

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of Government's Citizens Advisory Committee, Blue Print Leadership Group, and the Long Haul Work Group. Additionally, Committee Co-Chair Esther Vasquez attended the 11th annual Great Valley Center conference, Green Momentum, as well as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers open house for the San Francisco Bay to Stockton Improvement Project (EIS/EIR). Finally, Jane attended the Bay Delta Conservation Plan EIR/EIS Scoping Meeting at which the Department of Water Resources laid out alternative plans for a peripheral canal/cross-Delta conveyance. Given the rapidly evolving water, land use and transportation decision-making that is occurring, it may be wise to consider undertaking a study or update of prior studies in one or more of these areas. Enthusiastic interest within committee membership exists. Various documents have been disseminated via e-mail for membership review, thus laying the groundwork to discuss the scope and scale of a potential study. In addition, the committee has discussed holding a forum on one or more of the subject areas and inviting both League members and others in the community.

Various experts have been engaged by League members at several of the above mentioned meetings, and others have been identified through e-mail dialogue, as for example Dr. Jack Sullivan, a League member from Southern California. Dr. Sullivan has graciously shared his most recent article, "Back to the Future: A Peripheral Canal for the Delta?"

Tasks currently on the table are:

- (1) Learn from policy studies, legislation, and ongoing regional political debate
- (2) Select and use experts (researchers, analysts, and doers) for a study input or forum presentation/s.
- (3) Analyze and shape the relationship between political entities, private industry, sponsors and experts.

IMMIGRATION STUDY



Several LSVSJC members participated in the LWVUS Immigration Study and to consensus on the study questions posed by the national League. The discussion was lively and opinions were diverse. Below is a summary of our League's response to LWVUS:

In response to the question *what criteria federal immigration laws should take into consideration* and what priority should be given to the criteria, our League responded that **high priority** should be given to

- Economic, business and service employment needs
- Environmental impact/sustainability
- Family reunification of authorized immigrants and citizens with spouses and minor children
- History of criminal activity
- Humanitarian crises/political persecution in home countries
- Rights of all workers to safe working conditions and livable wage
- Rights of families to remain together
- Rights of all individuals in U.S. to fair treatment under the law (fair hearing, right to counsel, right of appeal and humane treatment)

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Lower priority should be given to ethnic and cultural diversity.

The members were not able to reach consensus on how to weight Immigrant Characteristics (health and age) or the role of education and training of immigrants should play in their immigration status.

When asked **how unauthorized immigrants currently in the U.S. should be treated**, the membership **disagreed** with options some of the options, e.g., to deport unauthorized immigrants, to deport some while some would be allowed to earn legal adjustment of status based on length of residence in the U.S. We also disagreed that some should be deported or some allowed to earn legal adjustment of status based on needs of U.S. employers.

The members also gave a lower priority to the suggestion that all should be allowed to earn legal adjustment of status by doing things such as paying taxes, learning English, studying civics, etc.

The group could not reach Consensus on the questions of assessing fines before possible re-entry into the country or assessing fines before being allowed to earn legal status.

Discussion

League members felt that the treatment of unauthorized immigrants should depend on how they became 'illegal' - that is, those who have tried to go through the system and whose legal status changed due basically to the enormous amount of time and unwieldy bureaucratic process should be treated differently from those whose entry was illegal. The group preferred sanctions that included fines, community service, learning English and pursuit of citizenship.

In Question 3, LWVSJC assigned a **high priority** to groups that federal immigration law should provide an efficient, expeditious system (with minimal or no backlogs) for legal entry into the U.S. for immigrants, as follows:

- Immediate family members joining family member already admitted for legal permanent residence in the U.S.
- Those entering the U.S. to meet labor needs
- Those entering the U.S. as students
- Those entering the U.S. because of persecution in home country

Our League **disagreed** with the concept of a national identification card.

Our League assigned **high priority** to the following law enforcement practices dealing with unauthorized immigrants:

- Increased personnel at land, air and sea entry points
- More effective tracking of persons with non-immigrant visas until they leave the county
- Verification documents, such as green cards and work permits with secure identifiers
- Improved technology to facilitate employer verification of employee visa status
- Improved technology for sharing information among federal agencies
- A program to allow immigrant workers to go in and out of the US to meet seasonal and sporadic labor needs
- Significant fines proportional to revenue for employers who fail to take adequate steps to verify work authorization of employees

The membership **disagreed** with physical barriers (such as fences) and surveillance at borders.

Our League **agreed** with the statement that “Federal immigration law should address and balance the long-term federal financial benefit from immigrants with the financial costs borne by states and local governments with large immigrant populations.”

We also **agreed** that “Federal immigration law and US foreign policy should pro-actively help improve economies, education and job opportunities, and living conditions of nations with large emigrating populations.”

Comments

We also added a few comments to our Consensus report:

- Path to legality should be clear and capable of expeditious navigation.
- Employer needs, while important, should not **drive** immigration law.
- To secure U.S. borders, neither a national identity card nor a fence will solve the existing problem. Only enhanced opportunities in sender countries will effectively minimize numbers of illegals here.
- Employer fines are supported **IF** supporting technology is available.
- Federal immigration law and U.S. foreign policy should be coordinated with the goal of encouraging developing countries’ economies and thereby encouraging people to remain in their home countries.

The topic of Immigration is both vast and complex. Thanks go to the Immigration Committee (Colleen Foster, Chair; Bea Lingenfelter, Sally Miller, Esther Vasquez and Barbara Walker) for their diligence, organization and thoroughness in guiding our members in discussion and consensus.



Committee members Barbara Walker and Sally Miller

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WATER PRIVATIZATION LAWSUIT – 2008 UPDATE

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. - Margaret Mead

This quote was appended to every email sent by CCCoS Chair Sylvia Kothe during the long battle over water privatization in Stockton. Sylvia did indeed lead a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens, including League members Diane Park, Dale Stocking, Bill and Susan Loyko, Ursula Meyer, Jerry Briscoe, Ava Langston-Kenney, Ann Johnston, Genie Van Schoten, and Pearl West along with many other concerned Stocktonians. Stockton and the League owe them a THANK YOU for their tireless dedication—and their hard won success!

For those who would like a reminder of what the lawsuit was about, here is an article reprinted from the September 2007 Voter: **When Lawsuits are the Right Thing to Do**

For the League to file a lawsuit there must be outrageous conduct by a government agency. The 2003 Stockton City Council provided that behavior. In their haste to thwart public input, they outsourced the City's municipal water utilities to private operations just two weeks prior to a ballot measure to let people vote on contracts of this nature. In so doing, they failed to conduct a required environmental impact report (EIR). Clearly, public process had been violated.

The League sponsored ballot initiative -- along with Concerned Citizens Coalition and Sierra Club -- passed by more than a 60 percent margin. Late League member and former Mayor Joan Darrah formally endorsed the initiative, along with former Senator Patrick Johnston.

The 20 year contract with OMI-Thames Water was the largest privatization contract west of the Mississippi. The City and OMI were able to hire several law firms and had the financial resources to appeal court decisions each time we won – resulting in a 4 year battle.

We were fortunate to receive expert legal advice from the outstanding legal firm of Shute, Mihaly and Weinberger. Our attorneys Rachel Hooper and Amy Bricker were thorough and professional, at the same time patiently educating our coalition as to legal intricacies – of which there were many.

Under court order by Judge Elizabeth Humphreys, the city must return the utility to municipal management. This is of course as it should be. In a SF Chronicle opinion piece Sunday, August 5, 2007, Alan Snitow and Deborah Kaufman, whose documentary THIRST featured Stockton, said of course the public has a right to have a say in the transfer of *taxpayer created assets* to private industry!

Thank you ALL for your support.

Sylvia Kothe, Coalition Chairman
Diane Park, LWVSJC Liaison

Note: The League received \$2,475.00. as our part of the settlement of the water privatization lawsuit.

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COMMUNITY EVENTS

Family Day in the Park

**Casting Ballots
at Family Day in the Park**



While parents learned about the importance of voter registration, 172 youngsters marked their ballots to decide what kind of activity they'd like to see return to Stockton as part of the League of Women Voters booth at Family Day in the Park.

The students had four choices: roller skate rink, miniature golf, water park with water slides, and 'other'. More than half enthusiastically voted for the water park with water slides. Thirty one percent (31%) of the young voters liked the idea of a roller skating rink, while 9% thought having a miniature golf course would be a good activity to have.

But they didn't limit themselves to the three choices. Other suggestions included a graffiti wall, a social club, ice skating rink, box track and a drive-in movie. "The purpose of the event was to give young people the opportunity to vote for something meaningful to them and, in doing so, impress upon them the importance of voting," said Ann Pentecost, President of the League of Women Voters of San Joaquin County. While the students were voting we also had the opportunity to talk with their parents or family member about voter registration and voter education."

LWV volunteers for the day's event included Jane Wagner-Tyack, Ronda Sanders, Fran Abbott, Ann Pentecost and Susan Mora Loyko. Thanks to Ronda, a fifth grade teacher at Victory School, for the terrific idea of the subject matter for the vote. Much appreciation to all the volunteers for turning out on such a rainy day.

*- Susan Mora Loyko,
Event Coordinator for LWVSJC*

Earth Day

Thanks to Peaches Ehrich for again organizing our participation in Earth Day and for spending all day at the Victory Park event giving out voter registration forms and information about the League and for coordinating our volunteers from the University of the Pacific, Sex and Gender class.

Program Highlights



Dr. Ellis Jones, UC Davis Professor of Sociology, was the League’s Kickoff speaker at our September General Membership meeting. Dr. Jones spoke on

HOW TO CREATE A BETTER WORLD THROUGH SHOPPING!

Dr. Ellis Jones believes in democracy—and the power of the individual.

“Democracy is a system of government founded on the idea that power in the hands of the few is inherently destructive. For a government to even have a chance of being truly fair and just, it must begin by distributing power into the hands of its people.

In today's world it’s easy to see that we have another form of power we must consider in this democratic experiment, namely money. Wherever large amounts of money collect, so also new centers of power form. The most recent historical manifestation of this kind of power center is the modern corporation.

Make no mistake, these new power centers are not democracies. We don't vote for the CEO's or their policies (unless we are: rich enough to be significant shareholders, informed enough to know what's going on, and compassionate enough to care about more than just personal profit), yet our lives and destinies are increasingly in their hands.

As these power centers shift, we must shift our own voices if we wish to be heard. As citizens, on average, we might vote once every 4 years, if at all. As consumers, we vote every single day with one of the purest forms of power...money. The average American family spends around \$18,000 each year on goods and services. We must begin to think of it as casting 18,000 votes every year for the kind of world we want to live in.”

Five years of intensive research into social and environmental responsibility of companies has resulted in a comprehensive database of over 1000 companies that utilizes over 25 public, private, and nonprofit sources of data to cover issues like: the environment, human rights, community development, animal protection, and social justice. This research has been translated into A to F rankings of products and brands to allow consumers to make more informed decisions when they cast the economic votes that shape the face of our world.

In his book the better world SHOPPING GUIDE, Dr. Jones names names—what products and brands can we buy to encourage responsible business practices and what products *not* to buy. League members who attended the Kickoff meeting left with a renewed purpose that we can change the world – one dollar at a time.

UOP Intern

After two years of working with one intern from the University of the Pacific, the League this past year worked with a group of students. League member and Pacific Professor Marcia Hernandez invited the League to work with students in her Sex and Gender class. We embarked on a number of projects, from a first pass at compiling our local League history to interviews with League members to participation in Earth Day. The League received a valuable report from Dr. Hernandez on the experience from the students' perspective:



“For the spring semester (January –May 2008) students in Sociology 123, *Sex and Gender* participated in various service learning projects with community organizations in the Stockton. The League was selected as a community partner as it is a well-established, nonpartisan institution whose goal is to increase citizens' political awareness and involvement in government. By offering the opportunity to explore the relationship between political engagement to gender within sociological texts, students were required to complete projects for community partners that would provide a service or need that might otherwise not be filled. Beyond meeting the goals of the fellowship program and service-learning; the service-learning also linked Pacific students with important community and civic organizations in Stockton, allowing them to gain insight into community policy and politics which are often marginalized issues in the everyday life of undergraduates.

The following activities were options provided by the League for students to participate complete:

- History Project of the San Joaquin League (Amy Yocum, and 2 students)
- Interview with League Members (7 completed)
- Volunteering at the League voter registration booth for Earth Day (4 students)
- Assisting the League volunteers at the Asparagus Festival (2 students)
- Assisting with the Candidate Forums coordinate by the League (2 students were present- yet failed to make contact directly with the League member)

While the majority of students working with the League reported having a rich learning experience, two challenges that arose were difficult to address and overcome in the course of a semester. First, a lack of *flexible time* proved to be a challenge to arrange meetings or schedule interviews between some students and League members. Second, a lack of clear *communication* between the students and League members made completing some tasks a challenge.

Noting how the League encourages members to investigate a variety of social and policy issues, not just those related to women or gender, students reported that the “*focus on cooperation addresses how all people are necessary to change social norms and indeed highlights our [position] that breaking down societal stereotypes requires group efforts in service learning be-*

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cause service learning simply pertains to our everyday interactions with one another and the steps that we take to help one another.”

In this line of thinking a third challenge students faced was overcoming their own misconceptions regarding what the League does and who are members. After having personal contact with League members and participating in League events, this issue quickly became one in which most students embraced the spirit and practice of the League. For example, one student writes *“volunteering is hard work and sometimes things don’t go the way you want or are frustrating. Just because something is frustrating doesn’t mean you can’t get anything out of the experience. It may even give you a better insight to why community based organizations need so much help and support from the community members.”*

While both time and communication between some League members and students may have been difficult at times, most students working with the League seemingly met these challenges in stride, were able to conceptualize these issues within an appropriate context and were able to turn them into valuable learning moments.

The value of working with the League can be summed up in two major themes: 1) discovery and awareness, and 2) individual and collective responsibility.

Discovery and awareness. Students were largely unaware of the League’s history and activity prior to the course and service-learning experience. Many approached working with the League with misconceptions regarding who the group worked with and its goals; for example some students specifically chose the League hoping to have a gender-explicit learning experience. Yet members of this group were provided with a broader understanding of the League, service-learning, community organizations and political engagement. *Many students reported feeling a new or renewed sense of responsibility to volunteer in the community after working with the League.* A few found it interesting the League performed a range of community service, from volunteering at Earth Day and the Asparagus Festival to hosting the candidate forums. *The range of League activities helped students to reconceptualize how political engagement can be defined in their personal lives.*

In addition to this discovery about the League, there was a heightened sense of the lack of awareness about the organization and what it does for communities. In writing about the experience of tabling the voter registration booth, some reported: *“The League is truly beneficial to the entire community (both men and women)... [but] it was disappointing to see that so many people had no idea or a negative idea about what the League is.”* Furthermore, students reported some patrons of Earth Day were verbally aggressive or hostile to them. They found this experience frustrating at times but placed it in a larger context that community organizations are often misunderstood, particularly those with “woman” in the title. The students were able to analyze the irony of the situation stating that if the men who were questioning them knew and understood what the League has done they many not have “complained about the benefits they reap from League members’ hard work.” Fortunately many people were also supportive of the student’s efforts at the voter registration table. Students also reported that they were approached by a man who *“told us the League has done amazing work over the years and they are a great organization that does so much of the community.”*

Individual and collective responsibility. The interviews with League members provided students an opportunity to speak with individuals about their political engagement. Based on student comments papers, this was probably the most rewarding experience for students working with the League. Those who were able to complete interviews reported learning much more about the members, the organization and collective responsibility than they initially thought possible. Below are some of the insights students shared with the class or in their reflections after doing the interviews:

- “I was amazed at learning how much I did not know. [The interviews] made us aware of how unaware we were.”
- “We noticed that all of the women we interviewed were very involved citizens and have been engaged in multiple organizations (both political and non-political) in every city they had lived in. These amazing women truly believe in the ability of one person to make a difference, and we found their passion very inspiring.”
- “Their level of civic engagement was above and beyond simply volunteering their time for issues that pertain to the League... for these women civic engagement is a lifestyle.”
- “My interview with the League member shed some light on the importance of being involved in the community and making a difference and if you see a problem you need to be the one to take action.”
- “I have as much to learn about being a productive and active member of society. Being around Donna Brown reminds me that we should always strive to be more than we are. She is someone who achieved one goal and moved on to the next - continually throughout her life.”

The History Project is still being compiled.

In closing, I am extremely grateful to the League, and to Colleen Foster and Anne Pentecost specifically, who initially agreed to have students work with the organization. Partnering with a professor and agreeing to oversee student involvement with the League, could have been an idea that was easily rejected as just one more thing to add to most members already very long and full “to do” list. Furthermore, I am very appreciative that the League members served as role models for my students in dealing with flexibility, change, and how to make a community organization function even without all of the resources one would like to have at their command. Thus for the League members who agreed to oversee the various activities students were involved with and those who volunteered to be interviewed I’d like to thank you very much for your time and effort in making the students learning a more meaningful, holistic experience than if they were only asked to read about the League in a book.”

- *Marcia Hernandez, Professor, University of the Pacific*

League Perspective

The League boardmembers who worked with the students also found the experience a valuable one. While some of the students did not fulfill their commitments to support League activities, e.g., the candidate forum, others were reliable and enthusiastic – especially those who interviewed League members. The League and Dr. Hernandez will discuss whether to continue this student participation project in the future.

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LEGISLATIVE INTERVIEWS

Each year each League is assigned interviews of our local State legislators. It is one way to promote League legislative positions. It also gives LWVC and our local League some insight into the issues and priorities of our State officials. This year, our League was asked to interview Assemblymembers Greg Aghazarian and Alan Nakanishi.

Legislative Interview: Assemblyman Greg Aghazarian
By Cate White

Assemblymember Aghazarian represents Assembly District 26, taking in parts of Stockton, Manteca and rural areas of San Joaquin and Stanislaus Counties plus the city Turlock. He was one of the two legislators we were asked to interview by LWVC this year. Ursula Meyer and I conducted the interview. Our questions centered on budget issues, since those are the most critical challenges this year.

When asked if he supports the Governor's proposal for 10% across-the-board cuts, Assemblyman Aghazarian said he believes that it is the Legislature's job to set funding priorities, so he doesn't favor the governor's plan. He thinks that "all options" should be on the table, since the budget cannot be balanced by cuts alone. He stated that the Legislative Analyst's Office had some good proposals, but was not specific. He mentioned "opening up the tax code to find efficiencies" and said it was "time to look at commercial and corporate taxes", but didn't elaborate.

In response to a question about the Governor's proposed Budget Stabilization Act, he stressed again that he had issues with separation of power and was not in favor of increasing the Governor's powers over those of the Legislature, although he "supports the concept" of the Governor's proposal. He thought we should be considering a two-year budget plan with allowances for carryovers to bring more efficiency and continuity to program funding. He also felt that the budget should be separated into two categories; Operating expenses and Capitol expenses. He believes that deficit spending makes sense for Capitol expenses, but not for Operating expenses. He stipulated that he was not opposed to infrastructure bonds but wants to take it on a "case by case" basis to make sure that San Joaquin County gets its fair share of funding. In the long run, he would like to see greater transparency in the budget process and in tracking expenditures, mentioning a "Registry for Resources Funding" showing how money is spent.

As the budget debate unfolds in the Legislature this summer, Mr. Aghazarian bears watching, especially in regard to his comments that the budget can't be balanced through cuts alone, since this is in agreement with LWVC's position.

Legislative Interview with Assemblyman Nakanishi
by Jane Wagner-Tyack

I interviewed Assemblyman Nakanishi on April 24th by myself since no representatives of other League chapters represented by the Assemblyman responded to my invitation to participate in the interview.

Regarding funding priorities in the face of the Governor's proposed across-the-board budget cuts, the Assemblyman named health and human services as priorities. However, he said that no real prioritizing can be done until actual tax revenue figures become available in May and the Governor begins negotiating with the Democratic leadership of the legislature.

Assemblyman Nakanishi does not support any new revenues, elimination of tax expenditures, or changes in the way commercial property is assessed. He said that increased taxes on commercial property tend to cause employers to move out of California, with a resulting loss not only of jobs, but also of tax revenues, health benefits, and retirement benefits associated with employment. His solution to recurring budget problems is to do something about the structural deficit caused by measures like Proposition 98, which locks in budget allocations for education.

The Assemblyman supports the Budget Stabilization Act proposed by the Governor. Asked whether that might place too much power in the executive branch, he responded that the executive branch already has very little power relative to the Legislature.

Assemblyman Nakanishi would support further borrowing by the state provided that the borrowing did not exceed five to six percent of revenues, a percentage he compared to prudent home budgeting. He would be most likely to support infrastructure bonds for roads and water.

Because he is termed out, Assemblyman Nakanishi did not emphasize any personal legislative priorities. However, in regard to major issues the Legislature must deal with in 2008, his answer was "Budget, budget, budget. Deficit, deficit, deficit."



The Voter is Online!

In October, 2007, The Voter became available online! We are hoping to accomplish two things: with this change: 1) Save money on printing and postage and 2) Make our publication and League activities, programs and concerns available to a wider audience. Members who give us their email contact information receive The Voter online. We mail The Voter to those who don't have an email address --- and members who prefer to get a paper copy of the newsletter can pay a small fee (\$20) to have The Voter mailed to them, too. Check us out at www.sjc.ca.lwvnet.org.

Many thanks to League member Dale Stocking for making this plan a reality!



SUSAN LOYKO NAMED SUSAN B. ANTHONY WOMAN OF ACHIEVEMENT

Susan Mora Loyko joined the ranks of League members who have been recognized by the San Joaquin County Commission on the Status of Women as a Susan B. Anthony Woman of Achievement.

The League nominated Susan for the recognition in the category of Community Service. As the City of Stockton's Stormwater Outreach Coordinator for their Municipal Utilities Dept., Susan ran programs to educate the community about water pollution prevention and water conservation. This led to her leadership role in the partnership with the Peace & Justice Network to coordinate Stockton's Earth Day Festival since 2001. Her environmental vocation "spilled over into my personal life as my avocation" in efforts with the Concerned Citizens Coalition of Stockton (CCCoS), the Social Justice Ministry of Presentation Catholic Church, the Environmental Justice Committee of the San Joaquin Catholic Diocese, Restore the Delta—and, of course, the League.

A founding member of the CCCoS, Susan has been an activist for local control of our water, a mission that has had global ramifications. Susan is also involved in educating the community about global warming and energy conservation and advocating for universal health care.

Susan has been on the League Board for the last four years, serving as Secretary and on the Environment/Water Committee.