



The Voter

Helen Pearson Award Nominees Sought

**LWVSJC
Thanks**

Loralee McGaughey
for coordinating our
Asparagus Festival
participation — **and to**
all our AF volunteers!

**Thanks, too,
To**

Peaches Ehrich for
coordinating our **Earth
Day** Participation
**- and to all those
volunteers!**

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Helen Pearson was a two-time League president in the early 50s who was active in voter services, was a tireless observer of the City Council and Board of Supervisors and served as LWVSJC historian and parliamentarian. In 1978, the Board created an Award in her memory. We invite League members to nominate someone for this honor.

A few guidelines may help you decide on a nominee:

- Nominee must be a current League member

- Nominee can be a male or female and must have been a member for at least one year
- He or she should have done something exceptional in any one of the following areas:
 - * Worked on a special project, area or activity (e.g., voter services, advocacy, programs, community outreach, financial support)
 - * Held an executive position or other crucial Board position and performed exceptionally well

- * Overall, has worked hard for the League in some capacity, showing a real sense of commitment—and a sense of humor

If you have a nominee for this award, contact one of the members of the Committee: Sylvia Kothe, Cate White, Vickie Markarian, Tandy Gotschall or Fran Abbott.

Recipient will be announced at the Annual Meeting. Join us for the presentation—and an evening of fun and planning for the future.

SHARE YOUR LEAGUE STORIES

LWVUS is asking members to contribute to Storybank to share your personal story of League achievement and leadership. Here is an excerpt from LWV of Spartanburg, SC member Mary Lynn Conway's story...

As a newcomer it was hard to find friends who were interested in work-

ing on community issues. I attended a League meeting in January of 1981 and there I found caring and intelligent women who were hard at work on voter service, public housing and environmental concerns. These folks became my friends and extended family. We have supported each other through good times and bad, while working to-

gether to act on and influence issues of importance to the League.

Read personal stories on the Members Section of the LWVUS web site under League Storybank—or contribute your own story at www.lwv.org/storybank.

President's Message — Colleen Foster



Democracy is not a spectator sport!

April 15th kicks off National Volunteer Week so this is a great time to say **Thank You!** to ALL League volunteers! We do the hands-on work to safeguard democracy. No other volunteer-based group has the local, state, and national reputation of the League. We all make up the organization that makes democracy work! Take a bow!

Our League year is winding down, but we there are several things coming up—the Asparagus Festival and Earth Day at the end of April, the Annual Meeting and our Spring Garage Sale fundraiser in June. I hope you can join at both June events.

The Nominating Committee is hard at work recruiting League members for Board Officers and Directors. Voter services committees are evaluating the strengths and needs of this major segment of League activity to lay the groundwork for our future efforts. Advocacy committees focusing on health care and universal health coverage, water, land use and the environment are forming. Members interested in either arm of League involvement are encouraged to participate in these committees. The future will soon be here! Help us plan for how we can serve the community and influence sound public policy.

Are Informational Programs Passé?

This past year, attendance at League programs has been disappointing, to say the least. Programs have covered a variety of topics that could reasonably be of interest to League members: political ethics, water quality and levee protection, health care. Some informational programs that have been staples of previous years—like Pros and Cons presentations during the election cycle—were embarrassingly shy of member attendance.

Why?

Several possibilities come to mind:

- People are too busy
- There are too many competing programs
- Programs aren't regularly scheduled so we can't plan ahead for them
- Programs are poorly advertised
- Program topics are not of interest
- Members are already aware of current information on the topics being discussed

Whatever the reasons, public information programs—discussions, forums, presentations—that would address the League's mission ... *works to increase understanding of major public policy issues* ... are not working.

Are League members more interested in being active on specific issues? Should we focus more on advocacy or voter services campaigns where League members can be involved in specific, targeted activity? Should we have fewer programs, e.g., one kickoff program in the Fall and a special program in the Spring? Should they be linked to local issues (e.g., Measure K) rather than topics of general interest (e.g., open government)? Planning and presenting programs that few attend is a waste of precious people resources. If we dropped monthly programs, would the membership care? Would the community be the poorer?

What do you think? Let us know.

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Nominating Committee

Ann Pentecost, Chair; Donna Brown, Barbara Walker, and Board members Sylvia Kothe and Lydia Tinder.

LWVUS IMMIGRATION STUDY

Eight background papers on immigration issues can be found on the national League web site: www.lwv.org For Members section.. In the next several issues of The Voter, excerpts from these papers will be published to give our members some idea of the issues and complexity of the issues to be studied. Members are encouraged to seek out the complete documents.

ECONOMIC ASPECTS OF AUTHORIZED AND UNAUTHORIZED IMMIGRATION

By Dorrit Marks

Over the years, U.S. economic growth has accommodated an expanding labor supply that includes 1.5 million immigrants per year whose spending on homes and consumer goods has stimulated the economy and increased the demand for still more labor. Economists expect that demand to create millions of new jobs in the future at the same time that the workforce is decreasing as a result of declining fertility rates among the native-born and retiring baby boomers. Many see new immigrants as a necessary labor source to meet these increased needs.

Effect on American Workers and Their Wages

The effect of immigrants on the economic prospects of American workers is an important factor in the national debate on immigration. [Research produces contradictory results.] An article in [4/6/2006] *The Economist* [on “Myths and migration” finds studies inconclusive] but that “they suggest that immigration, in the long run, has had only a small negative effect on the pay of America’s least skilled...”

Costs and Benefits

Over the past decade, immigrants filled more than half of all new jobs across the U.S., even more in some parts of the

country—two-thirds in the Midwest and Southwest. On average, the additional tax burden per native household is no more than a couple of hundred dollars a year. However, the tax burden caused by immigrants can be large where the proportion of immigrants to the total population is exceptionally high. For example, in California, the tax burden in the mid-1990s was \$1,178. Per native-born household, the highest in the nation.

The effect of authorized and unauthorized immigrants on public-sector budgets is small. Immigrant workers pay into social insurance programs, lessening strains on social assistance for the elderly. Many unauthorized workers use false ID numbers and pay Social Security taxes but are not eligible to receive benefits. Fewer than 3 percent of immigrants receive food stamps. Unauthorized workers support local school districts, indirectly as rent payers or directly as homeowners through property taxes. They are a financial burden for hospitals and jails, but this is applicable to all low income, uninsured populations as a whole, unauthorized, authorized and native-born.

Fiscal Pressure on State and Local Budgets

1996 Welfare reform restricted immigrant access to many public benefits, such as Supplementary Security Income (SSI) and federal food stamps. Immigrants (authorized or unauthorized) are not barred from public education, the largest public expenditure item. Net fiscal transfer from natives to immigrants at the national level is small, albeit higher in certain states that have both generous welfare benefits and

large immigrant populations.

Studies and reports indicate that costs and benefits are not evenly allocated. Taxes paid to the federal government and added productivity of the macro economy make immigration a net benefit to the country as a whole. But, at the local level, communities face demands for costly services from immigrants, particularly in education and health care, that are not offset by tax income.



The Influx of Unauthorized, Less Skilled Labor

Nationwide attention focuses on immigration largely because of the growing number of unauthorized immigrants in the U.S.—an estimated 10 to 12 million persons, making up nearly one-third of the foreign-born population. The influx of unauthorized immigrants is primarily a response to laws of supply and demand. The number of authorized immigrants cannot meet the demand for labor. Filling workforce openings, many of which are year round, permanent jobs have proven more powerful than immigration enforcement. To a lesser degree, unauthorized immigration is also a response to the difficulty and time delays associated with immigrating legally.

On the whole, immigrants are young, mobile, hard workers who, for a variety of reasons, are willing to work at jobs shunned by native-born workers.

The CEO of the National Association of Home Builders estimates that 25 to 30 percent of construction workers are immigrants (authorized and unauthorized). Removing them from the workforce would [cause] construction costs [to] rise, causing a decreased demand for new housing.

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LWVUS IMMIGRATION STUDY

(Continued from page 3)

Andrew Sum, director of labor studies at Northeastern University, Boston, argues that the large supply of immigrants has displaced low-skilled, native born workers, particularly the young and poor, from jobs. He does concede that unauthorized immigrants have had a positive effect on the country's economy and have helped improve productivity of highly skilled workers. "Without the immigrants, we would have a decline in labor force of 3-4 percent. We couldn't have grown nearly as much as we did in the '09s if we didn't have immigrants." Still, he argues, "...we've ignored that illegal immigration has put a lot of young adults into economic jeopardy."

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Mexican Workers

During the 1990s, the U.S. workforce absorbed 2.9 million Mexican workers. At the same time, the unemployment rate fell from 6.3 percent to 3.9 percent. This influx of Mexicans gave American employers access to needed workers in a tight labor market. Owners and managers of factories, restaurants, hotels, construction firms, hospitals, orchards and innumerable other places of employment express a need for continued access to immigrant workers, mostly from Mexico. Although many Mexican immigrants lack formal education, they have skills compatible with available jobs. For instance, it is estimated that by 2010 nearly 43 percent of all job openings will require only minimal education. At the same time, native-born Americans are obtaining college degrees in record numbers and are unlikely to accept positions requiring just minimal education.

Other researchers disagree and find that the large influx of immigrants from

Mexico has adversely affected the wages of less-educated native-born workers and improved the earnings of college graduates. Low Mexican wages, in turn, helped lower prices of non-traded goods and services. Largely due to lower levels of education, the economic performance of Mexican immigrants lags considerably behind other immigrant groups and native-born workers. Non-Mexican immigrants' earnings begin to converge with that of native-born workers as they accumulate work experience, but the correlation is weaker for Mexican immigrants.

High-Skilled Immigrants

Immigrants make a large contribution to high-skilled occupations in the U.S. There is increasing global competition for skilled professionals as well as competition to attract foreign students to graduate studies. Skilled foreign-born persons make up an ever-increasing portion of the skilled workforce in the United States - 8 percent of 25-year-old or older skilled persons in the U.S. in 1990, 13 percent in 2000, and 15 percent in 2004.

The steady supply of skilled immigrants is important for the U.S. economy because these immigrants bring skills that are in short supply in this country. ... More than half of U.S. Nobel prize winners are foreign-born and have made exceptional contributions in the fields of science and engineering.

Immigrants have had a profound impact on company creation, economic innovation and market value in the United States. Over the past 15 years, immigrants have founded one of every four (25 percent) U.S. public companies that received venture capital. ... Nearly half

of immigrant entrepreneurs in the survey came to the U.S. as students and started their own businesses within 12 years of entering the country.

[One study] finds that foreign students receiving PhDs can adversely affect the earnings of native-born students earning doctorates in the same field by 3 percent. On the other hand, [another study] found the inflow of high-skilled professionals did not depress wages of the technology workers. [Still another study] concludes that having a larger number of immigrants in the same job results in higher earnings for skilled men and women, but notes that there is a tipping point beyond which additional immigrant workers result in a decline in earnings for all workers.

Looking Forward

Demographers expect to see increasing numbers of authorized and unauthorized immigrants coming to the U.S. in future years. New arrivals, mostly from Latin America and Asia, will spend money in the U.S. and increase earnings for businesses such as discount retailers, apartment building owners and home builders. In addition, many experts believe that young, tax-paying immigrants will help meet increasing labor needs resulting from a growing economy and a declining native-born workforce. Productive immigration discussions must include the impact of immigrants on the country's economy—their contributions as well as the costs.

Dorrit Marks, LWV of Miami-Dade County, FL., is a member of the Immigration Study Committee.



Member News

THIRST—the Book! Stockton's Water Pri- vatization Featured

The award winning producers of the PBS special "THIRST" will be at Barnes & Nobel in Weberstown Mall on Pacific Avenue, Stockton, California on May 21, 2007 .

Alan Snitow, Deborah Kaufman and Michael Fox have expanded on their documentary and written a book titled: "Thirst: Fighting the Corporate Theft of our Water."

This chilling expose' features Stockton's water privatization fiasco and other cities. In the author's words, "We are at the tipping point in the new, global water wars. The United States is ground zero. What happens in the next few years will determine the fate of water and our basic democratic rights. **THIRST** is a battlefield account of the conflict." For more information see: www.thirstthemovie.org

There will be a reception and refreshments at 6:00 p.m. and short program at 6:30. The presentation is cosponsored by the Concerned Citizens Coalition of Stockton (www.cccos.org) and Food & Water Watch, a national organization (www.foodandwaterwatch.org).

Rally in the Valley!

LWVC Convention
Is coming to Bakersfield!
May 18-20, 2007

Support our League colleagues in the Valley and consider attending Convention this year!

Contact Colleen Foster
for more information.

Annual Meeting

June 14, 2007

6:00 p.m.

Stockton Joe's

**Lincoln Center
Stockton**

Our Annual Meeting is set for June 14th at Stockton Joe's. It will be a time to re-cap our successes and, more importantly, to plan for future ones. Your participation is essential to keeping our League vital. And it's an opportunity to enjoy and evening with fellow League members.

The Annual Meeting Kit will be out in Mid-May. Hope to see you there!

Garage Sale Fundraiser for Spring

Saturday

June 16th

7:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.

1151 W. Vine, Stockton

Donations & Volunteers

Welcome/Needed

**Call Peaches Ehrich for more
information: 969-3944**

LWVUS Immigration Study

**An Opportunity
to Get Involved**

At a recent meeting, the LWVUS Board voted to shorten the LWVUS Immigration Study from a three-year study to a two-year study. Under the new timeline, LWVUS will distribute a Leader's Guide, including consensus questions, in August, 2007, and consensus forms will be due back in the national office by February 1, 2008. Using these responses, the Immigration Study Committee will prepare a position statement for Board approval at their spring 2008 meeting.

The Study timeframe has been shortened so that a position can be taken at national convention in 2008. The time for us to get involved is now!

An extensive reading list including League white papers on various immigration topics is available on the League web site: www.lwv.org. Some of this information will be reprinted in our Voter. The scope of the study as well as referral to other web sites is also on the LWVUS web site.

Immigration is a topic of interest to our local community. It is a study that our League should undertake. We have had two members indicate they would be interested in working on this study. **If you would like to be part of the study Committee, please contact President Colleen Foster: 951-2311 or malialani@comcast.net.**



League of Women Voters
of San Joaquin County
P.O. Box 4548
Stockton, CA 95204

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.

www.sjc.lwvnet.org

CALENDAR

EARTH DAY—April 22, 2007
Victory Park, 11:00 a.m.—5:00 p.m.
Thank you, Volunteers!

ASPARAGUS FESTIVAL—April 27, 28, 29, 2007
Thank you, Volunteers!

LWVC CONVENTION
May 18, 19, 20, 2007 - Bakersfield, CA

THIRST Authors Visit Stockton—May 21, 2007, 6:00 p.m.
Barnes & Noble, Weberstown Mall (See Article, p. 5)

LWYSJC ANNUAL MEETING—Thursday, June 14, 2007, 6:00 p.m.
Stockton Joe's

GARGAE SALE FUNDRAISER! - Saturday, June 16th, 7:00 a.m.—2:00 p.m.
Donations Needed! See Membership page.

Board Meetings

All League members are welcome to attend Board meetings. Board meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month at President Colleen Foster's home (4273 Boulder Creek Circle, Stockton) from 5:30—7:30 p.m. *Please let Colleen know* (951-2311 or malialani@comcast.net) if you'll attend as a light meal is served.