



The Voter

REACHING *CONSENSUS*

LWVSJC is participating in LWVUS' Immigration Study and we will be hosting a consensus meeting for our members in January. So just what is *consensus*?



Consensus is the process the League uses to reach member agreement on study issues. It is neither a simple majority nor unanimity. Instead, it is an *overall sense of the group*. Consensus results from answers to questions on which members can find common ground and agreement.

Merriam-Webster defines it as 'general agreement', 'judgment arrived at by most of those concerned' and 'group solidarity in sentiment and belief.'

compromise. Instead of one opinion being adopted by a plurality, stakeholders are brought together (often with facilitation) until a convergent decision is developed. If this is done in a purely mechanical way it can result in simple trading—we'll sacrifice this if you'll sacrifice that. *Genuine consensus typically requires more focus on developing the relationships among stakeholders, so that they work together to achieve agreements based on willing consent.*

In a study, the League entity conducting the study (national, state or local League) prepares *consensus questions* designed to focus the attention of the members on significant issues under study. The consensus questions for the Immigration Study will be published in our Voter in this and later issues so that our members can begin to consider them in preparation to a full discussion at our consensus meeting.

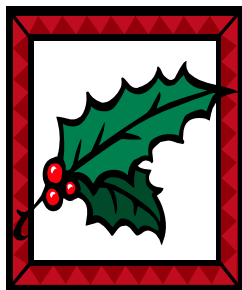
Wikipedia suggests "general agreement among the members of a given group or community, each of which exercises some discretion in decision making and follow-up action. Achieving consensus requires serious treatment of every group member's considered opinion." Exactly.

Consensus usually involves collaboration, rather than

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Holiday Party Set for
 December 11th
 Details in December Voter

President's Message — Ann Pentecost

At the end of October, I had the opportunity to address the El Dorado Kiwanis at the Stockton Inn bright and early in the morning. The focus of the talk was information about the League and what we do. A couple of areas I focused on were the Immigration Study and a chance to publicize Smart Voter. One member did comment that he was glad to know that the League did take positions on issues.

We are moving into the holiday season. Everyone will be very busy the next couple of months with preparations, parties and family gatherings. I do hope everyone will have an enjoyable time. But with all that will be going on in your lives, I do hope you will have time to participate in the Immigration Study and make your views known. This is a very complex and emotional issue. This is an important issue that is likely to continue to be in the news and this is an opportunity to have a say.

Environment Committee Report

After acknowledging the complexity and vast scope of 'environmental issues', the Environment Committee decided to focus on water issues this year. Even after narrowing the scope, there is still a huge arena of concerns: levees, flooding, air quality, legislation and the Peripheral Canal, which is again under legislative consideration. In addition, the group will begin to develop avenues and strategies to develop a forum on environmental impacts, possibly in the spring.

Because of the complexity of environmental issues, it is significant to keep in mind the integration of benefits, adverse impacts and possible problems and solutions. For example, pollution and its impact on air quality, and transportation modes and choices, residential development and the need/provision of support infrastructure (sewage and water). These

Take the time to review the articles that Colleen has included in the past few Voters. Take a look at the additional information on the National Leagues web page at <http://www.lwv.org> or you may have information of your own to share with other members. Colleen and the Immigration Study Committee will possibly be doing some of this study by email/mail, so please do find the time to respond.

We were saddened to hear of the loss of long time League member and active CCCoS member, Jerry Briscoe. This was followed a few days later by the news of the loss of William Guttieri, husband of long time member Peggy Guttieri. On a happier note, Sylvia Kothe is recovering nicely from surgery. She is home and hopefully will be back on her feet soon. Finally, I hope you will include the League Holiday Party on Tuesday,

issues are of especial significance as our region's decision makers are in the process of developing various basic and commuter mobility studies, predicated on projected growth scenarios. A couple of studies include the Blue Print Partnership Leadership Group Study, the Long Haul Freight Study and various other studies at similar or at a lower level of scale, which none- the- less affect planning decision input.

Due to the complexity of environmental issues, Jane Tyack will co-chair the Environment Committee. We look forward to her enthusiastic support in this endeavor which is augmented by the support and enthusiasm of all committee members.

- Esther Vasquez,
Committee Co-Chair

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Nominating Committee

Dee Matteucci, Chair; Tandy Gotschall, Sally Miller and two Board members to be appointed

Helen Pearson Award Committee

Vickie Markarian, Chair; Fran Abbott, Sylvia Kothe

Immigration Study

Eight background papers on immigration issues can be found on the national League web site: www.lwv.org For Members section. Excerpts from one of these papers is published here to give our members an idea of the issues and their complexity. Members are encouraged to seek out the complete documents.

WHAT MOTIVATES IMMIGRATION TO AMERICA?

By Patricia Hatch, LWV-Howard County, MD, a member of the LWVUS Immigration Study Committee

Migration theorists label “push” and “pull” factors that motivate individuals to leave their homelands. Religious persecution, political oppression and economic hardship are classic “push” factors. And, for many, the United States has offered the corresponding “pulls” of religious freedom, freedom of thought and speech and economic opportunities.



Historical Motivating Factors

Religious Freedom: History affirms that some of our earliest settlers were motivated to immigrate largely by their search for religious freedom.

Freedom from Oppression: Political oppression has pushed people to emigrate. “America, governed under the freedoms established by the Constitution, has been a sanctuary for people fleeing oppression. Dissidents, troublemakers, radicals ...they are those who have taken a stand against tyranny and injustice. Barred from their homelands as enemies of the state, they have come to America—a haven where their voices will not be silenced.” (Chuck Wills, Destination America)

Economic Motivation: economic hardship has been a powerful ‘push’ factor for many groups, from the Irish potato famine of 1845-1847 to the “Great Wave” of immigration to the US from the 1880’s through 1914.

Recent Immigrants

Humanitarian Protection: A small percentage of each year’s admissions—approximately 5-10% in any given year—continue to be persons seeking humanitarian protection from persecution or a well-founded fear of persecution because of race, religion, nationality, membership in a particular social group or political opinion, as set forth in the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Act. After being interviewed by U.S. government officials abroad, those who are found to meet these criteria are granted legal refugee status prior to entering the country. People who request humanitarian protection at a port of entry or while in the US may be granted asylum if they meet the criteria. Only a small percentage of those who apply are granted this status.

Family Reunification: Family unity is one of the most powerful motivators among current immigrants.

In 1965, the Hart-Celler Act abolished race-based prohibitions to immigration and created a new policy that emphasized the reunification of immigrant families. It allocated 74% of available visas to spouses and children of legal permanent residents and adult children and siblings of US citizens. Spouses, minor children and parents of US citizens were exempted from the family preference category quotas. During the past 10 years, more than 200,000 persons per year have been admitted to the US as beneficiaries of family preference visas.

In practice, then, how effective is current policy at reuniting immigrant families? For spouses and minor children of US citizens, the wait is often less than a

year. However, many legal permanent residents (“green card holders”) are not so fortunate. These individuals, who have themselves often waited for years to enter the US legally, often precede their spouses and children to the US in order to find work and housing and save money for air tickets for the rest of the family. They find visa quotas and processing backlogs can delay reunification for many years. A spouse or minor child of a legal permanent resident from Mexico, e.g., can expect to wait more than a decade to receive a visa to enter the US. Siblings of US citizens currently wait for more than a generation, 16-30 years, for visas.

“Little is more extraordinary than the decision to migrate...to say farewell to a community where [one] has lived...to abandon old ties and familiar landmarks...”
J.F. Kennedy,
A Nation of Immigrants

Jobs and a better Standard of Living: Wage disparities and buying power in their homelands as compared to those levels in the US provide strong motivation for many who seek to come here for employment. Nancy Foner points this out in her history of immigration to New York City:

“America holds out the promise of political and cultural freedom—and material abundance. The magnet for professionals as well as the less skilled is the chance to earn higher wages and maintain a better standard of living than was possible at home...”

Today, the pervasiveness of mass communication and mass marketing has made those in the developing world acutely aware of amenities that are out of their reach in their homelands.

(Continued on page 4)

Smart Voter Getting a “Slow Boot”

Don't worry! By “slow boot” I don't mean that Smart Voter is on its way out. But for better or worse, yours truly has now taken over as County Coordinator for Smart Voter, filling in for Lydia Tinder - who did a great job for several years. Fortunately, for me and all those who use Smart Voter, I'm getting help from the California Liaison for Smart Voter, Bonnie Hamlin. She is guiding me through the maze of getting the necessary information onto the website for the upcoming elections.

We've already put up one bit of election news for the November. It is “Measure P” for the community of Mountain House (near Tracy). This is a measure that concerns only that community, so the rest of us will not be voting on it, and it's something of a sure thing. The measure asks the voters whether or not they want to elect an

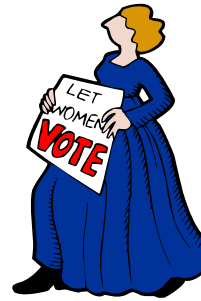
independent Board of Directors at-large to oversee the Mountain House Community Services District. While the measure itself is on the website for voters in that community to view, it has been a real challenge to find any related links to put on the site, because the matter is so narrowly local and not something that is controversial. But I'm sure all that will change as we approach the primary election.

Lucky me, I don't have to put the ballot measures on the site. That's handled by the State office of the League. But come the June primary, when local candidates will be making their bids for office, I will be busy contacting candidates to urge them to utilize Smart Voter. Prior to

that, I'll be contacting a few of our members who live nearby (Manteca, Ripon, etc.) to help me get out letters and make follow-up calls. In the meantime, I continue to try my technically-challenged hand at learning to navigate one of our most vital tools for educating voters: Smart Voter.

As a footnote, on a recent airing of “This Week in California” on PBS, the woman who launched the “Easy Voter Guide” gave the League and Smart Voter credit for being the leading sources of nonpartisan voter education. Hooray for us!

- Vickie Markarian,
Voter Services



What Motivates Immigration?

(Continued from page 3)

American Workforce: According to the Congressional Budget Office (CBO), one out of every seven people working in the US in 2004 was born elsewhere; a decade earlier, only one in ten was foreign-born. Furthermore, the CBO projects a slowdown in total labor force growth triggered by the retirement of the native-born baby-boom generation.

If the American economy needs immigrant workers in addition to native-born workers to sustain healthy growth and national prosperity, and if there are tens of thousands of workers eager to emigrate, how does the current US immigration system make it possible for American businesses to hire these willing workers?

As of January 2007, an employer applying for a typical worker who does

not hold an advanced degree or demonstrated ability in one of the designated “shortage occupations” would need to wait a minimum of *four and a half to five years* after all paperwork is approved by three government agencies successively (Depts. of Labor, Homeland Security, and State) before visa processing could begin. Because few businesses are able to anticipate their workforce needs five years in advance, the cumbersome labor certification process is ill-suited to the needs of American businesses or to the motivation of potential immigrant workers.

Frustrated by lengthy delays in the legal process, many businesses in need of workers [hire] unauthorized immigrant workers. Researcher Michele Wucker indicates what she sees as the crux of the problem:

“America's problem is not immigration itself, but how immigration occurs. The current immigration system is inefficient. Many businesses are forced to choose between breaking the law and closing down. The only way to end illegal immigration is to implement a system that allows the people our economy needs to come here legally.”



Network-Driven Immigration: Successful immigration becomes not exceptional but “the thing to do” for other thinking of emigrating. Networks are established not only between migrants and their kin and friends at home but between migrants and their employers who offer jobs.

So What's Wrong with Bottled Water?

The League has natural resources positions at the state and national levels (see below) that encourage environmentally sound practices. League member Susan Loyko has written an informed opinion piece that encourages us as individuals concerned with the environment, to think about where bottled water fits in the big picture. Taking individual action is a potent form of advocacy. - Editor

Ever stop to think about that bottled water you're drinking? Sure, it can quench your thirst when you're feeling parched and dry, but do you realize some of the impacts that little bottled water has on our environment?



The Sierra Club has produced a brochure entitled "Bottled Water – Learning the Facts and Taking Action" that provide some vital information of the impacts bottled water has had on our ecosystems and water resources. The following is a brief summary of the information in that brochure that warrants serious consideration before the next time you grab for that bottle of water.

The bottle water industries including Nestlé, Coca Cola and Pepsi, have developed aggressive marketing campaigns to encourage non-essential uses of bottled

water. The bottled water industry promotes its product as a healthy alternative to soda but fails to mention that the cost can be much more expensive just plain old tap water.

The withdrawal of large quantities of water from natural springs and aquifers around the world has lead to depleted wells in rural areas, damaged wetlands and polluted aquifers. Think of the tremendous amount of energy and resources needed to produced the plastic bottles. In the US, each year more than 10 billion plastic water bottles are not recycled and wind up in landfills, as trash along roads.

Local water utilities are required to maintain high standards and quality of their respective drinking water supplies while bottled water is regulated by the Food and Drug Administration, which has weaker regulations. The bottled water industry has done a tremendous marketing job convincing us that bottled water is safer for us to drink but the reality is that nothing could be further from the truth.

Consider the cost of bottled water. Most of us have complained about the rising cost of fuel for our cars, now well over \$3 per gallon. But we don't give a second thought to paying \$1.29 for a 16 oz. bottle of water which would amount to \$10.32 for a gallon of water!

Here's what you can do:

- Avoid using bottled water whenever possible
- Use reusable stainless steel containers carrying tap water
- Make of point of asking for pitchers of water at public events and meetings
- Learn more about bottled water in your stores and investigate if the pumping has impacted local resources
- Do what you can to educate local officials about the harm of bottled water

Most importantly, next time you consider grabbing that bottle of water, think of the tremendous impact of that little convenience has on our wallets, our water supply and our ecosystem. Is it really worth it?

- Susan Loyko

LWVC supports action on climate change

At its May 2007 Convention, the League of Women Voters of California passed the following resolution supporting actions by local Leagues on the issue of climate change:

RESOLUTION R-3-2007

ACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE
Adopted by Delegates to the LWVC
Convention, May 20, 2007

Whereas, The League of Women Voters of California has an action policy on Sustainable Communities and a newly updated position on Energy; and

Whereas, The League of Women Voters of the United States has issued an Advocacy Statement on Climate Change; therefore, be it

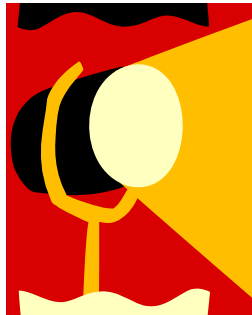
Resolved, That the League of Women Voters of California leadership, with the support of the Energy Committee, encourages local Leagues to work with their local governmental jurisdictions and residential, commercial, industrial and educational entities to reduce their contributions to global climate change.

LWVUS: for civil liberties and child health care—against public corruption

Civil Liberties

LWVUS signed on to the following letter sent to the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee regarding protecting Americans' civil liberties and objecting to warrantless wiretapping.

“We understand that the Judiciary Committee will soon consider the FISA Amendments Act (FAA) recently reported by the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence, or other legislation of its own to replace the Protect America Act, which expires in February.



ciary Committee should hear at open hearings from experts on FISA and civil liberties about how the bill will affect the privacy rights of Americans. We ask that you conduct those hearings as soon as is practicable on the legislation you intend to consider.”

The League signed the letter along with a wide spectrum of other organizations, including the ACLU, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, Defending Dissent Foundation, OMB Watch, and People for the American

Way.

Any such legislation is bound to be very complex and to raise serious concerns about surveillance that, while targeted at persons abroad, is likely to affect the rights of people in the United States. It may also, like the FAA, include broad immunity for telecommunications carriers who assisted with warrantless, illegal surveillance that continued for more than five years. In addition, it may also, like the FAA, include a sunset so far into the future that Congress would not for many years automatically be prompted to adjust the law to address any abuses of the surveillance authorities the law grants. The Senate Select Committee on Intelligence conducted no public hearings on the FAA and its mark-up was conducted in a closed session.

We write to ask that the Judiciary Committee chart a different course. The Committee has a strong record of holding open hearings on major re-writes of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act, such as would occur if the Committee considered the FAA or other complex legislation of its own to replace the Protect America Act. Prior to considering amendments to such a bill, the Judi-

Public Prosecution Improvements Act

In conjunction with the Common Cause, Public Citizen and others, LWVUS signed on to the following letter endorsing S.1946, the Public Prosecution Improvements Act of 2007.

“The bipartisan legislation ... is essential to strengthening the public corruption laws and increasing the ability of federal prosecutors to hold public officials accountable for misuse and abuse of their office.

The legislation is designed to increase the resources and strengthen the tools that prosecutors need to address public corruption problems. In particular, the legislation would increase the personnel available to investigate and prosecute public corruption cases, clarify the meaning and scope of the illegal gratuities statute and clarify the definition of "official act" as it applies to determining whether an action falls within the official responsibilities of a

public official.

The legislation would also appropriately increase the statute of limitations from five to six years for public corruption crimes such as bribery, deprivation of honest services involving a public official and extortion by a public official, and increase the penalties for public corruption crimes.

The Jack Abramoff lobbying scandals demonstrated the important role that the Justice Department must play in ensuring that public officials are held accountable for public corruption and in deterring others from engaging in such illegal conduct. The legislation would help ensure that the government has the resources and authority to effectively fulfill this role and to protect citizens from corrupt acts by public officials.”

League Denounces Presidential Veto on SCHIP

LWVUS President Mary G. Wilson condemned the President's veto of the crucial State Children's Health Insurance Plan (SCHIP) and urged Congress to act swiftly to override this veto.

“President Bush has left America's children behind,” said Wilson. “His veto goes against the overwhelming support of both parties in Congress, and shows disregard for the country's most vulnerable children. “I can not state it in clearer terms: The President is simply wrong. Congress has been left no choice but to override this misguided decision.”

The League of Women Voters has long supported the concept of universal access to quality health care.

News for Members

REDISTRICTING STILL ON THE LWVC AGENDA

Groups Urge Legislators to Act on Redistricting Reform NOW

The Asian Pacific American Legal Center, California Common Cause, and the League of Women Voters of California issued the following statement:

The Legislature has had sufficient time to consider redistricting reform, given all of the work that has already been done on the issue and the number of bills introduced. Now is the time to pass a viable redistricting plan.

The Senate has passed two redistricting bills that await action in the Assembly, and we understand that the Assembly leadership is discussing the Speaker's latest proposal. There is no reason why the session should end early when serious issues such as redistricting have yet to be decided on. The Legislature needs to stay in session until they pass a redistricting bill.

We have reviewed Speaker Nuñez's proposal. We commend the Speaker for being committed to the issue and moving forward. However, important changes are needed in order to address our concerns with the proposal.

Specifically, the proposal's selection process gives the Legislature too much unfettered ability to cherry-pick the commissioners. Towards that end, we recommend that the legislative picks must come from a screened pool of applicants. We also believe that the current list of disqualifications is inadequate to ensure that commissioners are free of ties to elected officials.

We believe the Speaker's proposal is close to what we want in a redistricting reform proposal. We also note that the redistricting reform bill our organizations supported last year is substantially the basis of SCA 10 (Lowenthal) and the redistricting portion of SCA 9 (Ashburn). We look forward to continuing work with the Speaker and other legislators so that the legislature puts a reform measure on the February 2008 ballot.

Members Please Note:

To forward e-mails or to send out messages to League members, **please send** information to lwvsjc@gmail.com

Your help is appreciated.
Thank you.

Woman of Achievement Nominees Welcome

Each year the San Joaquin County Commission on the Status of Women confers the honor of "Woman of Achievement" to women in our community. Several League members have received this award in the past. The Board would like your suggestions for a League member to nominate for this prestigious honor. Send your suggestions to President Ann Pentecost or to any Board member by December 1, 2007.

IN MEMORIAM

Jerry B. Briscoe

(Dec. 10, 1927 - Oct. 26, 2007)

Jerry Briscoe, League member and seminal member of the Concerned Citizens Coalition of Stockton, passed away in on October 26, 2007, with family and friends sending him on with love.

Jerry was a Professor of Political Science at the university of the Pacific who believed people should be actively involved in the democratic process. He was a formative influence in what became the CCCoS, giving reasoned input into all their major decisions. His rational eloquence and wise insights helped steer the direction CCCoS ultimately undertook.

Jerry had a quiet but persistent manner. He was well informed and had professional credentials to back up his viewpoints. For years he had called people's attention to obscure city meetings and PUC hearings that otherwise would have sidelined public participation. He was a true citizen activist.

There will be a memorial service for Jerry on Saturday, November 3rd at 1 p.m. at the Unitarian Universalist Church, 2737 Pacific Avenue, Stockton.



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CALENDAR

Holiday Party for League Members

**Tuesday, December 11, 2007; 5:30 p.m. at the home of Dee Matteucci
White Elephant gift exchange and potluck will get the season off to a fun start.**

LWVC Leadership Council is scheduled for May 16-18, 2008 in Sacramento.

LWVUS Convention: June 13-17, 2008, Portland, Oregon

Board Meetings

All League members are welcome to attend Board meetings. Board meetings are held on the first Thursday of each month.

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.