

Kern Voter

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KERN COUNTY

November/December 2009

President's Message

One of the benefits of League membership is being informed about critical issues on local, state, and national levels. Being a League member means...

At the national level—

The League fights for voters. Do you remember the problems with voting systems during the 2000 election? New voting systems failed during the close presidential race. The League acted quickly and joined a coalition to lobby for improvements to the voting procedure to ensure that every vote was counted.

The League fights for American Democracy. The League launched the Democracy Agenda—an effort to strengthen and renew electoral processes. Key areas of focus are election reform and reauthorization of the Voting Rights Act, making sure we have representative government through nonpartisan redistricting, and monitoring civil liberties, campaign finance and lobbying reform.

The League fights for Health Care Reform. Quality, affordable health care should be available to all U.S. residents. The League believes that access to a basic level of care that includes the prevention of disease, promotion of health through education, primary and prenatal care is essential for all citizens. Reform should include the option to purchase any medical package.

At the State level—

The League is watching every move. In California in 2008 the majority of voters agreed that state legislators should no longer have the power to make redistricting decisions. The League quickly responded to a draft proposal on selection of a redistricting commission and asked for revisions and clear language.

The League is calling for Government Reform. Many Californians feel we need change in our state and local government. The League responded on August 18, 2009, releasing a statement on constitutional and budget reform that highlighted the need for a simplified constitution giving the legislature the flexibility to deal with state problem and initiatives that limit the use of revenues during financially strapped years.

At the local level—

The League is studying our water supply. A study group comprised of our members is committed to a two-year investigation, researching the distribution of our water supply.

The League is educating our community on Health Care. The best way to learn more about this complex topic is through small group discussions. Start understanding health care now so that you will be ready to make an informed decision on a health care system that will provide access for all.

Your continued membership is sincerely appreciated. Your annual dues allow the League to educate and advocate on critical issues, present candidate forums, and continue to provide free publications to educate voters.

Thank you for your membership. I look forward to helping to keep you connected during the next year. Spread the word and ask someone to join us!—Diane Williams

Calendar

November 10—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. LWVKC Board meeting, Merced Center, 2000 K St, Room USC-3.

November 12—Thursday, 7 to 8:30 pm. Informal Koffee Klatch focuses on health care legislation at the home of Del Gardner, 3518 Pickwick Drive. Call the League Line for reservation.*

November 18—Wednesday, 5:45 pm. General meeting at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue with speakers Ken Secor and Dale Mills of Kern Transportation Foundation discussing Kern County transportation concerns. View film, *Crisis at the Crossroads*. Cost is \$22. Reservations required by noon, November 16; call the League Line.*

December 8—Wednesday, 6:30 pm. LWVKC Board meeting and holiday potluck at the home of Lynne Rosenstein, 5508 Bayshore Drive.

December 18—Friday, 11:45 am at the Guild House, 1905 18th Street. General meeting with Assemblywoman Jean Fuller presenting a legislative update. Lunch is \$16. RSVP to the League Line by noon December 16*

December 19—Saturday, 11:30 am. New member orientation luncheon at Country Rose Tea, 163 H Street.

Reminder: General meeting are usually the third Wednesday of the month. If you need transportation to a meeting, please leave that message on the League Line.

Reservations are required for dinner and luncheon meetings and special events. Please call the League Line, 634-3773, by Monday noon prior to the Wednesday event. No charge for attendance at program only. Thank you.

Kern County transportation video featured in November

C*risis at the Crossroads*, a video produced by the Kern Transportation Foundation (KTF), will be the centerpiece of the League's November meeting. The video highlights the urgency of

transportation issues confronting Kern County residents. The dinner meeting will be held November 18 at 5:45 pm at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue.

Ken Secor and Dale Mills, members of the KTF Board of Directors, will present the video and provide current information about transportation needs and projects. KTF works with state and local government agencies and private sector organizations to develop planning strategies and find funding solutions to meet Kern County's present and future needs. *Crisis at the Crossroads* was produced to emphasize the vital importance of these efforts.

Please make your dinner reservation by calling the League Line, 634-3773, by noon November 16. Cost of dinner is \$22. As always, there is no charge for those wishing to attend the program only.—editor I

Legislative update from Assemblywoman Jean Fuller

Assemblywoman Jean Fuller is the scheduled guest speaker at our December 18 general meeting. She will share her views on current legislative happenings. Please note that this meeting will take place on a **Friday**, 11:45 at the Guild House, 1905 18th Street.

Elected to the California State Assembly in November 2006, Jean Fuller represents the 32nd Assembly District which includes Bakersfield, Ridgecrest, Tehachapi, Taft, Kern River Valley, and the Frazier Mountain communities.

Fuller serves as Leader of the Water Policy Team. In this role, she focuses on solutions to California's current water crisis. The team will be crafting comprehensive legislation to increase above-ground water storage, expand conveyance, and improve conservation efforts across the state.

Fuller also serves as Vice-Chair of the Water, Parks, and Wildlife Committee and is a member of the State Allocation Board, the Assembly Agriculture Committee, the Assembly Utilities and Commerce Committee, and the Assembly Budget Subcommittee on Education Finance. Her top legislative priorities are to expand career technical education programs for high school students and to improve California's business climate. Call the League Line, 634-3773, for reservations. Cost of the luncheon is \$16.—editor

Remember the dues statement you received in the mail?

Your annual dues are due now.

Please do your part and send your check
payable to LWVKC to

League of Women Voters of Kern County
PO Box 132, Bakersfield CA 93302

YOUR CONTINUED SUPPORT IS APPRECIATED.

THANK YOU!

Coffee, tea, health care and me!

I had assumed that President Obama and the Congress would have narrowed down the fine points of a health care proposal by October 22. But, as I write this article, the legislators have not

been able to agree on the components that may or may not be in the final bills of the Senate and the House. It now appears that both bodies will have their versions of a national health care measure by the first week in November—in time for us to consider them on **November 12**. Please note the new date!

So please call the League Line, 634-3773, and make a reservation to join us when we discuss the (hopefully) finalized version of the health care plan.—Del Gardner

New Date: Thursday, November 12, 7-8:30 pm

Del's house: 3518 Pickwick Dr—Bakersfield Country Club area

Purpose: To review health care legislation and the League's position on health care

Coffee, tea and dessert

Turner, Whitley and Jepsen attend regional workshop

The League of Women Voters Stanislaus County was recently hosted a regional training that the LWVC conducts throughout the state. Four Leagues were represented, including our own Kern County. Dee Whitley, Patti Jepsen and I attended.

The program included information on the League's Member's Only web page: lwvc.org/lwvonly. This page has many valuable links to specific issues and League positions. Every interested member who is connected to the Internet should give this a look once a month.

During our lunch break, we met with Bonnie Hamlin, LWVC Member Services Director, who explained the basics of membership growth to us. We got several helpful ideas. The State's program is called Membership Growth Is Key or MGIK (Magic). One easy step to get out the word is to have a LWV table at local events. With all the recent town hall meetings lately, the three of us from Kern County thought we can easily work something that simple into our efforts.

Later, we heard from Linda Craig, LWVC Off-Board Consultant on State Constitutional Reform and Global Climate Change. She shared the state League's efforts on redistricting and constitutional reform.

Finally, Linda A. Davis, LWVCEF 2nd Vice President of Voter Services, discussed the difference between *political* and *partisan*. She presented several scenarios and asked the group if we thought there might be a conflict of interest. This is a whole new area when you include the Social Networking sites, such as Face Book. While we may want to give our personal opinions, or to campaign for a candidate, it is best not to do so if serving in a board position. Issues are acceptable and even welcome as posts on public forums, but not backing a candidate or working for an elected official. This turned into a very lively discussion. The rule of thumb? Issues, not candidates.

I appreciated the opportunity to attend the workshop and came away with a renewed pride and energy in the League of Women Voters. We are powerful.—Michelle Turner

Hello - I joined LWV approximately one year ago and here I am a board member, serving as Treasurer!! Since I have joined this organization, I am amazed at how knowledgeable our members are on political issues and I have found that I also want to learn and gain knowledge on these issues.

On September 26 I had the opportunity to attend a Regional Training Workshop in Salida, California. It was great to be able to get to know League members from other cities and to listen to presentations on various topics. A presentation that I particularly liked was "Political YES, Partisan NO". I learned that the League's reputation must be trustworthy, reliable, and objective when researching various political issues.

As a board member, I have a responsibility to maintain the nonpartisanship position of the organization. The LWV mission statement sums it up best where it states we are a nonpartisan political organization. We are encouraged to actively participate in government and to increase our understanding of public policy issues. That is the reason I joined the LWV. All of the presentations were quite interesting and I was able to learn a lot, and I want to thank the League for sending me to the workshop.—Patti Jepsen

Knowledgeable, well informed, intelligent League leaders delivering well organized, informative Power Point presentations, made the regional conference an enjoyable and impressive experience for me. I readily admit that the *learning curve* was high!

The full and well- planned agenda included: Public Web Site, LWV Members Only Web Site, Facebook, You Tube, Twitter along with California Redistricting, California State Constitution and the Political yet Non Political aspects of LWV membership.

The focus was on membership and for a specific Membership Plan for each individual League. A pitch for membership needs to be included at all events with brochures ready for distribution. Reaching out to "allied" organizations is essential.

Surely, a special bonus for me was getting acquainted with Patti Jepsen as we drove to Modesto and back to Bakersfield together. Relationships as well as "hands on" work are the means upon which League safeguards Democracy.—Dee Whitley

Report from KHSD board meeting

The Kern High School District Board of Trustees met on October 5. As always, funding is still a major concern as are the drop-out rate and test scores. While the District continues to improve its test scores, it still falls below the requirements of *No Child Left Behind* and below other schools in the state. The issue of tying teacher evaluations to test scores is a hot button item. The large federal education grants require such a linkage while the teachers' unions (at least in California) oppose it vehemently.

One major issue confronting the KHSD is the overcrowding of Golden Valley High School. Built to accommodate 2,100 students, it now is 600 students above that number. A District committee, composed of community representatives from all schools in the District, will create a plan to

address that issue. This is less thorny than boundary changes often are since it involves only a few schools. Costs and neighborhood schools are issues that the committee will evaluate.

Nation-wide, tests scores of US students compare unfavorably with those of other countries. We must understand, however, that in the United States all students are tested while in many other countries only those students on a university track take the comparable tests. The federal government's education plans, under the control of Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, include grants to schools to improve test scores, to guarantee that those students most in need will have the most experienced teachers, and to reduce drop-out rates. California has yet to qualify for these grants.

Overall, education has taken a back seat to health care reform and the war in Afghanistan.—Terri Stanton

New communications group spreads LWVK word

The LWV of Kern County now has a Communications Committee. In theory, we are ALL on the Communications Committee, in that the single most effective way to spread the word about our great work is by word of mouth.

That said, Majida Shehadeh, Toni Sallie, Tracey La Monica and I met recently to see how we can better support our local League. We recognize that our membership is woefully underrepresented in a few areas and we discussed ways to reach out to prospective members. We are all working together to build the LWVKC. Our tasks break down like this:

- Toni is our web-page guru, keeping it up to date and looking great.
- Tracey has access to information regarding events, getting the word out through our page on FaceBook.
- Majida emails reminders of events and meetings to members and other interested parties, such as CSUB political science instructor.
- I submit information to local media and cross-pollinate by making submissions to other group newsletters, such as the Kern County Network for Children.

We meet monthly to update our message and solidify the plan for the month. We know that by spreading the responsibilities, our contributions are valuable as well as manageable. We make a great team!

The LWVKC is also working on a bi-monthly **New Member's Orientation Luncheon**, to personally welcome and recruit new members...as its name suggest. The first luncheon will be held at the Country Rose Tea Room, 163 H Street, Saturday, October 24, 2009, 11:30 am.

Membership Growth IS Key, and it's up to all of us to strengthen our League.—Michelle M. Turner

Union asks League for assistance monitoring elections

SEIU 525 (Service Employees International Union) has asked our local League to oversee their upcoming election. Two League volunteers are needed to serve as monitors at each of the following times and locations:

SEIU Local 521, 1001 17th Street, Bakersfield
Saturday, November 7 from 9am - noon
Friday, November 13 from 7-10 am
Department of Human Services, 100 E. California Avenue,
Bakersfield in the cafeteria
Monday, November 9, 3-5 pm
Wednesday, November 18, 11 am-1 pm
Kern Medical Center, 1700 Mount Vernon, Bakersfield in the cafeteria
Tuesday, November 10, 6:30-8:30 am
Thursday, November 12, 6:30-8:30 pm
East Bakersfield Veteran's Hall, 2101 Ridge Road, Bakersfield, room 3
Saturday, November 14, 11 am-2 pm
Delano Civic Center, 1009 11th Avenue, Delano, main room
Tuesday, November 17, 5:30-7:30 pm

Please contact Michelle Turner, Voter Services Vice President, and tell her that you will lend a hand. In exchange for your help, SEIU 525 will donate a generous sum to the League. Michelle can be reached at 397-1631 or by email, mmt57@pacbell.net.—Michelle Turner

STAY INFORMED
For current up-dated information, check the local, state, and national
League of Women Voters' websites:
www.kerncounty.ca.lwvnet.org
www.ca.lwv.org
www.lwv.org

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Bakersfield, CA 93302
League Line (661) 634-3773
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