

Bakersfield Voter

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF BAKERSFIELD

SEPT/OCT 2007



WELCOME
NEW MEMBER
PARIS BYINGTON

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LWVB holds "Buck a Book" sale October 6

According to the late Harry S. Truman, "Not all readers are leaders, but all leaders are readers." Another truism is that League members are readers, and readers accumulate books. So we are here to help you clear out your old books to make room for new ones.

The League of Women Voters of Bakersfield will hold a used book sale on Saturday, October 6. The sale will take place at Jastro Park from 9 am to 1 pm in the area directly behind the tennis courts. Proceeds will be used for voter registration and education as well as other League projects. All books will be sold for a dollar each.

Please clean out your book shelves, and donate your hardcover and paperback books to the League. We will be happy to pick them up directly from your home. Call one of the following board members to schedule pick-up:

in the southwest—Jackie Rudnick, 832-6645

in the northwest—Lynne Rosenstein, 588-5566

in the northeast—Terri Stanton, 589-7314

"No matter how busy you may think you are, you must find time for reading or surrender yourself to self-chosen ignorance." —Confucius

"I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book." —Groucho Marx



We need people to assist with sales the day of the event. If you are willing to help our League in this fundraising happening, please call Terri Stanton. And please tell your friends to come to Jastro Park the morning of October 6.—Lynne Rosenstein and Terri Stanton

Future of Bio-fuels in the Central Valley

Daniel Rudnick, CEO,

Byogy Renewables, Inc.

Wednesday, September 19

5:45 pm at the Petroleum Club

See article on page 3

Is Private Money Buying Public Policy?

Moira Brennan, Associate Director,

California Clean Money Campaign

Wednesday, October 17

5:45 pm at the Petroleum Club

President's message



It is League tradition to take time during the summer to *retreat* and *reflect*. At the Annual Meeting in April, you approved the program for 2007-08 and elected officers and a board of directors. Gathering together with Kathy Webb, our state League training assistant, the board spent a Saturday preparing for the year ahead. With Kathy's guidance, we had a discussion on *Board Basics*, updated our organizational chart, and evaluated the 3-year goals. I was proud of the honest feedback from the board; each person kept our members' wishes in the forefront. Thanks to all the board members for spending a Saturday at board training.

Important! There is a proposal to change our name to LWV Kern County on the table. Your vote is needed at the September 19th general meeting. Please review the article in the July/August *Voter* which presents arguments on the name change. Be ready for a short discussion and then cast your vote. The Petroleum Club is experimenting with a new menu without increasing our fees, so come out and try a new meal at the same price of \$22.

The OneCareNow Rally in Bakersfield and Los Angeles were scheduled a couple of weeks apart. The Bakersfield rally was cancelled, sending Kern County supporters over the hill to Los Angeles on August 11th to make a bigger and louder impact. This well-attended event included key speakers Lieutenant Governor John Garamendi and presidential candidate Dennis Kucinich. We heard testimonies that brought tears to our eyes from people who had experienced life threatening insurance coverage restrictions or whose pre-existing conditions precluded their health insurance from covering needed treatment. Our very own LWV California President Janis Hirohama took to the podium and rallied support for OneCareNow. Doctors, nurses, self-employed workers, students, retirees, and representatives from many organizations all joined forces, displaying their signs and t-shirts.



You still have time to sign-up for a Regional Workshop! The Fresno workshop is scheduled for October 6 from 9:30a.m. to 3 p.m. Contact Lois Chaney for registration information at 832-5884 or email her at lchaney@sbcglobal.net.

As we near the end of summer, we realize that the presidential primary election is just around the corner. Start NOW! Get to know the presidential candidates by following the debates and researching their backgrounds.—Diane Williams

League of Women Voters of Bakersfield

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

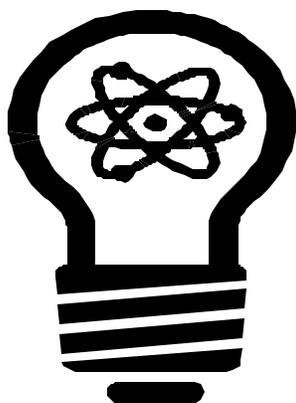
The League of Women Voters of Bakersfield, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism. There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the LWVB on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.

Can a cow power your home?

League members and their guests will have a rare opportunity to learn about a unique method of producing renewable energy when they hear Daniel Rudnick speak at the September 19th general meeting.

Rudnick will address "The Future of Bio-Fuels in the Central Valley. He is the co-founder and CEO of a relatively new company, Byogy Renewables, Inc., which develops renewable resources and bio-energy facilities utilizing organic wastes and energy crops as feed stocks. The company has created a method to convert feed stocks to valuable bio-fuels, bio-chemicals, bio-power, and organic fertilizers while reclaiming water, rebuilding soil fertility and reducing pollution and greenhouse gases.

A tireless and highly motivated individual, Rudnick has traveled around the country talking about renewable energy. Recently his company was awarded a large grant from the State of California.



At the tender age of seven-teen, Rudnick ran a ranch with 200 head of cattle near Lake Isabella. While his primary focus is renewable energy and transforming waste to energy, he is still active in the livestock business. A graduate of Cal Poly San Luis Obispo, he received his J.D. from California Western Law School in San Diego. In 1990 he and a partner received the President's Pro Bono Award for District 5, the highest honor given by the California Bar Association.

Daniel is the oldest son of LWVB director Jackie Rudnick and her husband Philip.

The general meeting will take place at 5:45 pm at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue, 12th floor. Cost of dinner is \$22 payable at the door. Those who wish to attend the program only should arrive by 6:30 pm. Please call the League Line, 634-3773, by noon on September 17th for reservations.—Editor

A solution to pay-to-play politics

Maira Brennan, Associate Director of the California Clean Money Campaign, will be the guest speaker at the October 17th general meeting of the LWVB. She will discuss the pervasive influence of private money on public policy and talk about how publicly funded elections enhance representative democracy.

The California Clean Money Campaign (CCMC) serves to educate Californians about this important alternative to pay-to-play politics and the efforts going forward at the statewide and local levels.

In her position, Brennan is responsible for outreach and development activities in northern California. She joined the staff of CCMC from The CALIFORNIA LIST, a fund-raising network that supports women running for state-elected office. Her work there provided her with a first-hand glimpse of the deleterious impact that the increasing costs of campaigns—and the current method of funding them—place on both candidates and the democratic process.

"Money shouldn't be the only criteria for a candidate's viability or the deciding factor in elections," according to Ms. Brennan. "We deserve the best, not the best funded."



As a former adult educator, Brennan brings considerable communication experience to CCMC, having worked with the Milken Family Foundation developing promotional materials to raise public awareness of organizational initiatives and increase media coverage.

The meeting will take place at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue at 5:45 pm. Dinner reservations may be made by calling the League Line, 634-3773, no later than noon October 15. As always, those who wish to attend the program only are welcome.—Editor

LWVC supports single payer health insurance (SB840 Kuehl)



The LWV of Bakersfield will present a unit meeting in early January 2008 about the health care crisis across the United States. The LWVC supports SB 840 (Kuehl), a single payer insurance system, and believes that it is a solution to the health care crisis. The details of that plan will be discussed.

A single payer health insurance system is a publicly financed insurance system that would pay all covered charges from providers, hospitals, and pharmacies. Under SB 840, the single payer insurer would be a public health insurer administered by the state that would replace the hundreds of insurers who administer thousand of different policies. Excessive health care spending that goes

into administration instead of the delivery of health care is a result of having so many insurers. The Lewin Group, a premier national health care and human services consulting firm, has found that several single payer insurer models similar to SB 840 would reduce these costs significantly.

The total operating cost of the new single payer health insurance system would be less than the cost of maintaining the agencies and insurance policies that it would replace. The current health care finance system now spends nearly 50 percent for each health care dollar on administrative and clinical waste, excessive drug prices, and fraud. Instead, the new system would streamline administration and use the state's purchasing power to negotiate price discounts on pharmaceuticals and medical equipment. It would establish an Inspector General for Health Care with strong investigative tools to deal with fraud. With all bills sent to one insurer, it would be easier to detect patterns of fraud than it is now under the multiple insurer system.

The above paragraphs are intended to stimulate an interest in knowing all of the factors that make a single payer health insurance system a must for California's citizens, business community, and health care providers such as doctors, hospitals, clinics, and pharmaceutical dispensers. It obviously will meet strong opposition by the health insurance industry since they would be basically put out of business.

The unit meeting is intended to provide questions and answers to all the issues of this complex subject. We are prepared to respond to approximately thirty different areas of this issue that studies suggest the average voter will need to make an educated decision in support of a single payer health insurance system for all Californians.—Del Gardner

Additions and corrections to the 2007-2008 Handbook and Directory

Add new member

Paris Byington P O Box 10105, Bakersfield 93389
663-5112 work 246-7818 cell

Changes—please correct your directory

Nancy Burciaga NTB162000@yahoo.com
Kathleen Cassil 822-9802 home
kmcassil@earthlink.net

Barbara Lomas 589-8554 home
323-0443 work 565-5435 cell

Cydney Henderson crhcanuk@cox.net
Vic King viking4@cox.net

Area codes are 661 unless otherwise noted.

Local unit meeting will discuss LWVUS immigration study at Guild House

The League of Women Voters has recently launched a two-year Immigration study aimed at helping communities understand the implications of immigration at the local, state, and federal level. As part of this project, League members and leaders will explore the underlying values and principles regarding immigration, reasons for immigration, current federal immigration policy, and the impact of immigration in American society. Other related topics will include:

- business and economic effects and impact
- diversity
- effects of global interdependence on migration
- motivation of refugees, asylum seekers, and other immigrants

Immigration is an especially hot topic in California's agricultural Central Valley, and 44 percent of Kern County residents are Hispanic. So that we may be better informed and have an opportunity to discuss our views, the LWVVB will hold a unit meeting on Thursday, October 11 at 11:30 am at the Guild House, 1905 18th Street. League members and their guest have two options: 1) prepare for the unit meeting by reading some of the material posted on the League's website by going to lwv.org, clicking on Projects and then clicking on Immigration study; or 2) just come and hear what your fellow Leaguers have to say. Of course, everyone can participate in the discussion whether they have read material or not. Luncheon at the Guild House will cost \$16. Space is limited so make your reservation early by calling the League Line, 634-3773, no later than noon Monday, October 8. Lynne Rosenstein will facilitate the discussion.

To peak your interest, the following are excerpts from an article on the LWVUS website titled "Immigration and the Economy" written by Chris Carson, a member of the Immigration Study Committee.

Over the course of American history, numerous businesses have targeted specific immigrant groups for employment. For instance, they brought in the Chinese to work on the railroads, the Irish, in many parts of the country, to work in railroad building or mining, and Eastern and Southern Europeans for manufacturing enterprises. Overall, the flow of immigration throughout the 19th and early 20th century was directly tied to the strength or weakness of the American economy; levels of immigration fluctuated widely in response to economic cycles of boom and panic in this country. Generally, peak immigration flows coincided with periods of fundamental transformations of the American economy.

The current high volume of immigration is second only to that of a hundred years ago, prior to the introduction of significant immigration restrictions during the 1920s. This is the result of a complex interaction of changing U.S. demographics, global developments and a growing U.S. economy.

According to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, 56 million new jobs will be created in this country between 2002 and 2012. During this same period, more than 75 million Americans will retire, and declining native-born fertility rates will be approaching replacement level. Half of the new jobs will require no more than a high school education, but native-born workers are becoming more educated with every decade. Arguably the most important statistic for an understanding of the immigration situation in this country is that in 1960, half of all American men dropped out of high school to look for unskilled work, whereas less than ten percent do so now. (See more at lwv.org.)

Water banking supplies Kern County in times of drought

Over a period of a million years, the Kern River has shaped a huge alluvial plain with just the right degree of slope and mix of gravel and sand. This makes it ideal for taking in surface water and filtering it down to aquifers beneath the ground. Because geologists and hydrologists recognized this geological phenomenon, a total of 566,000 acres in Kern County has been set aside for the specific purpose of storing water beneath the ground where it is protected from loss through evaporation.

Prior to the beginning of the LWVC state convention in Bakersfield last spring, some convention attendees toured the 27,302 acre Kern Fan Projects which include the Berrenda Mesa, the Kern Water Bank, Pioneer, West Kern/Buena Vista and the City of Bakersfield Water Bank, all of which are located southwest of Bakersfield.

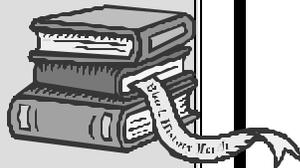
Large intake basins which, during the dry season, appear to the untrained eye as nothing more than dirt fields, are filled with water during spring run-off and wet winters. Water seeps into the ground during the wet season at an average rate of four inches a day. During an average year that can amount to 892,000 acre feet of water. During dry seasons or drought years, the water is pumped up to the surface and directed toward city water systems and farms that have purchased the right to use it.

Because the Kern Fan Projects contains a large section of untouched Kern River riparian and thousands of acres of farmland which is being allowed to return to its natural state with a reliable source of water, this area has become a wild life preserve as well as a water preserve.

Those who took the pre-convention tour saw many intake basins and pumping stations. They saw the actual movement of water that had been pumped from underground into the California Aqueduct to be used by a local farming company. In addition, they had an opportunity to see great white egrets, cattle egrets, redwing blackbirds, a rookery of blue herons, white pelicans, tule elk, and a variety of ducks. One of the highlights of the tour was the sighting of a bobcat.—Lois Watson

League of Women Voters Bakersfield Book Club

Over the summer months participants are reading books about women in politics and will share their views of these books on Tuesday, September 25 at 7 pm at the home of Lois Chaney, 6509 Tevis Drive.



RSVP to Marilyn Beardslee home 822-7282
or work 861-2191.
You are invited.

Stay informed.

For current updated information,
check the local, state, and national
League of Women Voters' websites:



www.bakersfield.ca.lwvnet.org
www.ca.lwv.org
www.lwv.org

Infrastructure: a needed investment in California's future

Infrastructure means the basic building blocks, the public structures and facilities, that support our social structure. Normally, it is not the focus of major debate at the start of an election year, but this year it is at the top of both the Governor's and the Legislature's agendas. The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has issued a report summarizing some of the main considerations on the subject.

The state's capital facilities include everything from colleges to highways, dams to prisons and parks to offices. The state also funds local public infrastructure, usually requiring local matching funds. The LAO says that "most of the state's infrastructure investment was made in the 1950s through the 1970s, particularly in such areas as higher education, transportation, and water management."

Spending dropped sharply in the 1970s, before resuming a steady rise after 1981. It has not, however, kept pace with our population increase or the needs of an expanding economy, nor has it adequately provided for the maintenance that might have kept facilities from deteriorating. For example, the Central Valley's levee system needs.

A 1999 law called for a comprehensive five-year plan for infrastructure to be submitted each January by the Governor. Such plans were produced in 2002 and 2003, but not since then. Now state agencies are updating information and a plan is expected soon. It was foreshadowed in the Governor's State of the State speech and press announcements, which called for multi-billion dollar capital expenditures for transportation, water storage, levees, schools, prisons and air quality. Legislative leaders are working on an \$11 billion infrastructure bond measure with a different list of projects.

With any plan, a key question is how it would be funded. The 2003 plan proposed expenditures of \$54 billion over five years, about 54 percent from existing state and federal transportation funds, 36 percent from General Obligation bonds and lease-revenue bonds, and the rest from direct appropriations from the General Fund and other special funds. Governor Schwarzenegger has listed lease-revenue bonds,

continued next column

a water fee on households and businesses, higher port fees, tolls and other possible revenues as additional sources of funding. Of the Governor's \$223 billion ten year infrastructure spending proposal, about \$101 billion would be from existing sources, \$68 billion from new General Fund-supported bonds, and \$53 billion from new funding sources.

Although user fees or taxes such as the gas tax or water fees have been used to pay for some facilities, most infrastructure is financed by bonds and repaid from the state General Fund. Facilities are expensive to construct but last a long time and serve generations of taxpayers. Interest costs to repay the bonds can make the total cost nearly double the bond proceeds but adjusting for inflation over the usual 30 year repayment span makes the price tag much less, e.g., \$1.25 million for each \$1 million borrowed.

California now has about \$53 billion of General Fund debt outstanding, \$42 billion for infrastructure and another \$10.4 billion for the outstanding deficit financing bonds. We also have about \$30 billion of bonds authorized but not yet sold, although some of that is committed to projects not yet ready to build. Debt service costs will be about \$5.8 billion in 2006-07. The state's level of debt service is still within what is considered an acceptable range, but could become problematic if not carefully managed. California's credit rating has improved but is still the lowest of any state rated by the major credit rating services, and this increases our costs of borrowing. The major reason given is not our total outstanding debt, but the state's continuing inability to deal with its structural deficit.

Infrastructure spending is an investment in California's future, and we have many areas of critical needs. The question, however, always comes down to how to weigh those needs against other needs that are competing for the public's dollars.—LWVC website



Bakersfield League will participate in national membership initiative



The LWVB has agreed to participate in the Membership Recruitment Initiative—Year Two (MRIY2) developed by the LWVUS. California is one of only five states selected by the LWVUS to be involved in this project which focuses on increasing membership. Participating Leagues will receive hands-on training from the LWVUS, free materials, and continuous guidance from their state coordinator.

Program components which are required for participating Leagues include everything most League members already know as requirements for effective membership recruitment:

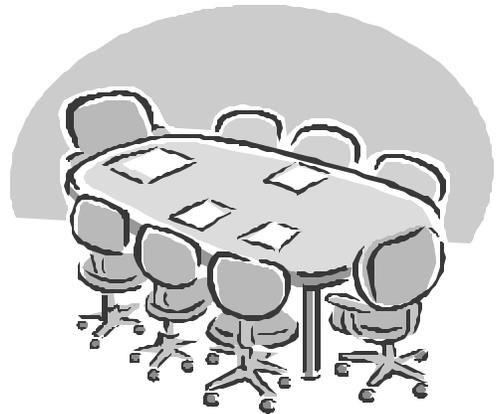
- **Using the message or communicating the benefits of League membership.** For the MRIY2 this message is targeted to educated, 50 to 65 year-old women and men who have recently retired or are approaching retirement: League members make their communities healthy, vibrant and strong; the League offers leadership opportunities and a way to have an impact outside the home.
- **Asking people to join.** To make this easier, participating local Leagues will create their own storybanks, profiles of members that demonstrate the value of League membership.
- **Reaching out to allied organizations.** Participating local Leagues will want to review their calendars for the purpose of finding activities that lend themselves to partnerships or collaborations with other community organizations or institutions such as colleges and universities. Such partnerships help elevate the League's visibility and bring in a pool of potential members.
- **Developing relationships with the media.** Persistent sharing of information about your League's work again raises the League's visibility. The LWVUS will supply ideas and materials to help your local League strengthen its media ties, and the LWV of San Luis Obispo County is willing to share its success with a weekly television program that has drawn in many new members.

In addition, participating Leagues will celebrate four annual milestones. Our local League already observes Women's Equality Day and International Women's Day. Other program components are tied to our activities and provide opportunities to share what we do with the public through the media.—Lois Chaney

OBSERVER CORP

The League of Women Voters of Bakersfield is committed to attending and observing as many of the governmental and agency board meetings as possible including the Bakersfield City Council, Board of Supervisors, school boards and other important decision-making groups. We can only do this if we have a dedicated Observer Corp. If you are interested in local government and can undertake this obligation, please call contact Diane Williams at 664-7010 or diane.williams.cht5@statefarm.com.

Thank you!



LWVC REGIONAL WORKSHOP



The LWV Fresno invites you to attend an exciting and unique LWVC Workshop in the heart of the Valley.

Carpools will be arranged from Bakersfield; notify Diane Williams if you plan to attend:
diane.williams.cht5@statefarm.com

When October 6—Registration 9:30 am—Adjourn 3 pm

Where Stone Soup Fresno, 1345 East Bulldog Lane, Fresno
Free parking on site; directions will be emailed to you when registration is received.

Classes

- ? Using Voter Services to Enhance Membership and Community Visibility
Presenter: LWVC Director Lois Chaney
- ? League in the 21st Century
Presenter: LWVC President Janis Hirohama
- ? Everything you wanted to know about the BROWN ACT
Presenter: Attorney Terry Francke,
General Counsel to Californians Aware

Enjoy a live presentation of native Hmong culture and a delicious hot lunch.

Tear off and mail by Sept.15 with your check for \$25 to : LWV Fresno, 1345 East Bulldog Lane, Fresno, CA 93710. Fee without lunch is \$15. Late fee after Sept. 26 is \$30. You may register with a credit card through the LWVC website: www.lwv.ca.org. Checks are payable to LWVC.



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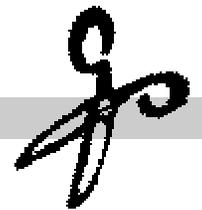
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League Book Sale, October 6 in Jastro Park

Future of Bio-Fuels in the Central Valley, September 19

Is Private Money Buying Public Pol- icy?, October 17



Bakersfield Voter

September/October 2007 Calendar

- September 11**—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. LWVB Board meeting, Merced Center, 2000 K Street, Room UC-2.
- September 19**—Wednesday, 5:45 pm. General dinner meeting at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue. Program: *Future of Bio-fuels in the Central Valley* with Daniel Rudnick, CEO, Byogy Renewables, Inc. Vote on League name change. Cost is \$22. Reservations required; call the League Line.*
- September 25**—Tuesday, 7 pm. LWVB Book Group, home of Lois Chaney, 6509 Tevis Drive. Bring two books to recommend to group. RSVP to Marilyn Beardslee, 822-7282.
- October 6**—Saturday, 10 am to 2 pm. LWVB **Book Sale**, Jastro Park behind tennis courts. Donate your books to this fundraiser for the League. (See front page.)
- October 6**—Saturday, 9:30 am to 3 pm. LWVC Regional Workshop in Fresno.
- October 9**—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. LWVB Board meeting, Merced Center, 2000 K Street, Room UC-2.
- October 11**—Thursday, 11:30 am. Unit meeting on LWWUS Immigration Study. Guild House, 1905 18th Street. Cost of luncheon is \$16. Call the League Line for reservations.*
- October 17**—Wednesday, General dinner meeting at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue. Program: *Is Private Money Buying Public Policy?* with Moira Brennan, Associate Director, California Clean Money Campaign. Cost is \$22. Reservations required; call 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.*