



THE VOTER

**LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS
OF BERKELEY, ALBANY, AND EMERYVILLE**
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President: Doris Fine

March, 1998

Editor: Bob Hawley

Governing America: Our Choices, Our Challenges

This month we are having a very special meeting: a forum about what it means to be a citizen. This issue is at the core of our organization, and so we hope that you, our members, will take the time to join us as we deliberate what we mean when we say the mission of the League of Women Voters is “to encourage the active and informed participation of citizens in government.”

We know that many Americans feel cut off from and turned off by our government. Why? There are a range of reasons: negative campaigning, the erosion of community and family values; the power of special interests; government’s difficulty in dealing with real problems of real people. Many people feel that the political system has taken away their power to govern themselves. Yet, we have not given up on the idea that democracy involves self-government.

Our challenge is to find ways to help citizens get back into and to reconnect with government, and to recapture the knowledge that we are a part of a self-governing democracy. Most citizens still feel we ought to have a stake in deciding how to govern ourselves. But what can we as a people do, what direction should we take, and what trade-offs are we willing to accept? What are our choices? Can we reinvent government? Can we rediscover citizenship?

What is it we want our government to do? Our choices will be the subject of the forum. We will ask (1) What concerns you most? (2) How involved do you want to be? (3) Are you willing to accept trade-

offs? Among the issues we will raise are the following:

- ✎ What is your vision of citizenship?
- ✎ Does citizenship mean primarily being a good person, obeying the laws, paying taxes and being a good neighbor?
- ✎ Is citizenship a more active concept, working with fellow citizens in deciding what ought to be done and shaping the direction of government?
- ✎ Is citizenship expressed primarily through special interest groups, political influence and issue advocacy?
- ✎ Is citizenship being on guard to protect freedom by limiting the role of government?

Our discussions will be based upon materials prepared by the National Issues Forum, and will be led by experienced League facilitators. There will be hand outs describing the issues, and we will record the results of our deliberations.

This meeting is open to the public. You are encouraged to bring friends or potential League members. This will be a perfect opportunity to acquaint others with what the League stands for. There will be coffee, and you may bring a bag lunch. Our thanks to our Speaker Series committee for allowing us to use their monthly meeting time for this special event; the time and place and a map are shown below.

-Doris Fine, President



Governing America Forum
Thursday, March 19, at Noon
West Berkeley Branch Library
1125 University Avenue
(Parking next door)

**Local & Bay Area
Program Planning
March 11, 1S3 PM
Albany Library**

President's Message

Thanks to all of you who have responded to the WRITE IT! project. Believe it or not, over 300 Berkeley High students have signed up to participate, so we need EVERYONE to join in. If there is some reason you cannot personally participate, please pass the application on to a friend or neighbor. We simply can't let the students down. Isn't it wonderful that so many of them want to write to someone? It shows how much they need the personal contact, the interest and the support that we can offer. It also provides us with a real opportunity to help prepare these students to become responsible citizens. So little time is involved for so much reward! The LWVC has shown interest in this program, so look for a write-up in the upcoming California *VOTER*. We may just have the model everyone is looking for to close the gap between the generations.

In other news, our concern for compliance with the Brown Act has resulted in the Berkeley City Council opening up the meetings of its recently reconstituted Rules Committee. We challenged the City Attorney, who had tried to argue that Rules Committee sessions could be held in secret, and we won the support of committee members. This is a very important committee: it establishes the rules and procedures for conducting council business. It warrants and now will receive full public scrutiny.

Finally, we need five participants from the LWVBAE to volunteer for training in the use of the Internet. The LWVC will provide materials and do the training early this year. Once you receive the training, you will be expected to help others use e-mail, surf the Internet, and follow the LWVC and LWVUS home pages for information to be shared among all of us. You can call the office or e-mail your response to lwvbae@pacbell.net.

-Doris



JUST WRITE IT!

Board Briefs

The Board met at the South Berkeley Public Library on 2/4/98.

The Board agreed to a request that LWVBAE be included on an Honorary Board being formed to raise funds for the Berkeley Library. These funds are for furnishings and other things to supplement the money from the Library Bond issue. We will do no fund-raising.

The Board's policy committee has almost completed the task of updating and organizing our Board policies.

The Board ratified a letter from the Action Committee written to the Berkeley Planning Commission urging that they establish a more consistent public process leading to a complete General Plan that balances needs and evaluates alternatives.

The Board commended *Jo Ann Price* for her work in carrying out the dictates of the Soulages Writing Award Project. They have now been fulfilled and this year's award to Ann Swidler will be the last.

Linda Carothers has begun working as the new administrative assistant. She will be in the office Monday, Thursday, and Friday afternoons and occasionally on Friday mornings.

We received \$5593 as a result of our financial appeal and, of that amount, \$2519 went to the Foundation.

The March Speaker Series will feature a Governing America forum (see Page 1). It should prove very interesting and will also illustrate to others how the League works to achieve consensus leading to a position statement.

Many Berkeley High students have signed up for the WRITE IT! project. More members are needed to match with them. You might consider doing it.

ASUC elections will be held April 7-8-9. Monitoring them earns a considerable chunk of our budget. It requires many members to take part. Board members will be contacting everyone, and have committed themselves to serving as monitors.

-Violet Feinauer, Secretary

Update On Program Planning

It's time to plan for next year! This hardly seems possible-we're just getting into this year's program. I am writing this just after an informative, vigorous discussion at a UNIT meeting on our rent control position, and am looking forward to a forum on bilingual education in a few days. (Sorry, by the time you read this, these events will be past, but plan to participate in March activities.)

In January, a group of LWVBAE members reviewed LWVUS's National Program Positions, deciding whether to retain or drop each one, as every LWV unit is asked to do every two years, before the national convention. A requirement to indicate whether education or advocacy activities relating to the positions are in use led us to reflect, with some pride, on the projects we have carried out in the past two years. Then, from a list of possible issues for emphasis which LWVUS developed from a poll of Leagues nationwide, we chose "sustainable community development." The final decision will be made at the national convention in June.

Next, we need to consider program priorities for our Berkeley-Albany-Emeryville League, and for the Bay Area League. LWVBA is proposing a study of its housing position, to include consideration of the jobs-income-housing-transportation equation. This will involve local UNIT study, and Study Kits from the State Juvenile Justice Study Committee will soon be available. If there are other studies or activities you want to suggest for local or Bay Area League, the time and place to do it is Wednesday, March 11, 1-3 pm, at the Albany Library.

I also want to report on the LWVC Concurrence Process that took place last winter. Seventy-nine percent of local Leagues responded to the concurrence process for a Public Libraries position, and they were unanimous in supporting the position. On the Mental Health Care position, 87 percent of local Leagues responded. One League (LWVBAE) voted against concurrence and one abstained, but the position has been adopted. The adoption of these positions allows LWVC to act at the state level.

-Phoebe Watts, Program VP

LWVBA Program Planning Wednesday, March 11 at 1 p.m. At the Albany Public Library

LWVBA is asking local Leagues to become part of regional program planning for the next two years. On March 11, we will be reviewing LWVBA's current positions, recommending whether they be retained (and with what emphasis) or dropped, and making suggestions for new studies, updates or existing positions, and bylaws changes. Responses are due by March 20. The LWVBA Board will then review replies from the 21 local Leagues and prepare the recommended program for 1998-2000 for adoption at our national convention on May 30.

The meeting will feature descriptions of existing positions and highlights of their use in the last two years. LWVBA has positions on: Regional Government Structure and Planning; CEQA Mitigation; Environment-Air, Land Use, Solid Waste, Water; Hazardous Materials; Economic Policy; Housing; Airports and Surface Transportation. These are all vertical positions. Local Leagues can ask the LWVBA to address regional issues covered by these positions that affect their jurisdictions or, with LWVBA permission, approach the responsible regional agencies directly. Don't miss this opportunity to join with other Leagues in giving guidance to the LWVBA's future work.

-Yvonne San Jule, LWVBA Representative

Speaker Series Report Help for Legal Immigrants

Our January Speaker Series featured Kristine Washburn from Legal Assistance for Seniors. She described her agency, which provides free legal services to Alameda County seniors needing assistance with income and health benefits, housing, protection from elder abuse and preserving independence. A current issue for her agency is assisting legal immigrants who have been adversely affected by changes in recent legislation affecting allocations of food stamps, SSI benefits and medical services. Staff from the agency are also involved in advising legal immigrants and preparing them for naturalization procedures. Information about the services that this agency offers is available in the League office, or by calling the agency at 832-3040.

Education Committee Hears About Special Education

“There are miracles that happen,” said Joann Biondi, BUSD’s director of Special Education, as she described the success of a severely impaired student who was mainstreamed in the program. Together with *Luanne Rogers*, Ms. Biondi discussed the district’s mandate by federal and state law to provide free, appropriate education to all handicapped individuals, ages infancy through 21, and in the least restrictive environment in regular classrooms as much as possible (called “mainstreaming” or “inclusion” if for a full day). About 900 of the district’s 9000 students are special ed: 25% receive speech therapy, guidance, counseling or other services; 45% have a resource specialist help them in regular classrooms; 30% are in special day classes; 5 are in the state-operated school for the deaf in Fremont and 2 are placed with the California Youth Authority.

Unfortunately, state and federal funds cover only about half of the approximately \$6 million annual special education budget. As always, the shortfall, or “encroachment,” comes out of the general fund and it increases every year because of inflation and contract agreements. The miracle case cited above involved an expensive communication device or assistive technology, yet the state allows only \$375 for such a “low incidence” case, and even this special allowance doesn’t apply to many extremely difficult cases, such as autism. The district must also pay for transportation if children are sent for any special treatment.

There are other strains on the system. Every BUSD school has a special education program of some type. As the program improves, so do people’s expectations. People move here for the excellent services and nationally known programs, such as that for the deaf at John Muir. While the district aims to provide appropriate services and as many options as possible, parents often want their children put directly into private schools. However, the district is reimbursed only 58% for placements in a state-certified private school. Expensive unique placements are difficult to get into and get out of. For these reasons, the program’s in-house attorneys attempt to mediate solutions as much as possible.

Nationwide, full inclusion has fueled many court cases and debate about benefits and costs. There is uneasiness between “regular” and “special” education

teachers in some cases, which usually improves with experience and appropriate training. Should it end up not working well, it can be very difficult to change the setting. (A troubled child cannot be suspended because of the disability. If there is a clear and present danger, the student can be placed in an alternative setting such as a certified non-public school at BUSD expense.) Biondi feels that inclusion works best in elementary school. As an experienced special education teacher, she thinks that middle and high school students need a combination of socialization, more work preparation, and a specialized kind of instruction and pace.

Special education does not apply to children with economic, environmental or cultural problems. Nor is Attention Deficit Disorder (ADD) by itself a qualification. Two years ago a special coordinated FOCUS program was developed at considerable expense to deal with behavioral problems, and schools must be encouraged to implement the FOCUS program first.

The district’s reading goals will help special education tremendously, and Biondi praised the strategic intervention model and several programs at Malcolm X, especially Project Read which works with ESL (Education as a Second Language), special education and compensatory education students. In conclusion, asked for her wish list, Biondi responded that she would like to see the day when school sites would embrace all the kids and there would be no need for Special Education. She believes that we are moving in that direction with Healthy Start grants and their integrated services.

In February, the committee heard Margaret Kirkpatrick, principal of Berkeley’s Adult School, and heard reports from *Jean Safir* and *Doris Fine* on Albany’s and Berkeley’s goal-setting processes. On March 19 our final speaker in this series will be John O’Donnell, chairman of the Berkeley School Excellence Project (BSEP) Planning and Oversight Committee. All league members are welcome.

-Lois Brubeck, Education

Committee

Environmental Concerns

UC Berkeley Professor of Architecture Claire Cooper Marcus presented a slide show and discussion entitled Housing As If People Mattered at the Environmental Concerns January 12, 1998, meeting. In her book of the same title, Marcus and co-author Wendy Sarkissian offer a collection of guidelines for the site design and planning of affordable low-rise, medium- and high-density family housing for both public and private sectors. Most guidelines are based upon empirical research derived from case studies. The "meat" of the book explores the reasoning and research behind the guidelines, cites references to specific case studies and suggests possible design responses to stated needs. The book is intended as a reference tool for housing designers and planners, developers, housing authorities, citizens' groups and tenants organizations - in short, "anyone involved in planning or rehabilitating housing." It provides "guidelines for the layout of buildings, open spaces, community facilities, play areas, walkways and the myriad components that make up a housing site." It is the authors' belief that this form of housing, when done well, can serve the needs of many segments of the population better than the other two density extremes - low density, detached housing or high density, high-rise housing. Their plea is for a more urban, ecologically aware and potentially community oriented residential form. Accommodations for children rank high. "If a site plan works for children, then it works." Marcus stated, emphasizing the need for safe play yards for children. "A playground 'only' isn't enough. Kids need sand, building blocks, Legos...they need to manipulate the environment and to explore."

In her teaching, Marcus said she begins by having students explore their relationship to the environment. "Architects should understand their environmental biases so nothing is assumed," she noted. Good design examples would include housing units that looked out onto landscaped courtyards and play yards ("common space must be enclosed by the housing"); trees ("trees lower perceived density"); places for adults to walk and talk; footpaths; privacy areas; and play areas that include an intermix of grass and hard surfaces ("children are more likely to play on hard surfaces"). A good local example is St. Francis Square (Geary & Laguna) in San Francisco. The use of Marcus' guidelines are projected to be cost effective in new design work because "housing that

suits its residents will lead to higher levels of satisfaction and lower maintenance, replacement and administrative costs and fewer vacancies and transfers."

For more details reference Housing As If People Mattered by Claire Cooper Marcus and Wendy Sarkissian, University of California Press.

-Gail Schickele, Environmental Concerns

EdSource Conference In April

The 21st annual EdSource conference will be held Friday, April 3, at the Pleasanton Hilton, from 9 am to 3:15 pm. The topic is "Shifting The Focus To Learning: California's Accountability Debates," with speakers Mike Kirst, Stanford Professor of Education; Elaine Johnson, President, California Council on the Education of Teachers; and Scott Hill, Executive Director, Academic Standards Commission. Three superintendents will also share their perspectives on accountability and standards setting. The cost is \$55 for League members with \$10 off for registration before March 2. Lunch is included. Use the form included with this *Voter* to register and leave your name at our League office if you want to share a ride.

As EdSource points out, the State Board of Education has adopted new language-arts and math standards for K-12; those for science, history and social science are soon to be developed. But once the standards, curriculum and assessments are in place, decisions will have to be made about how accountable educators and students should be for the results. What about students struggling with poverty, difficult family environments, special needs or learning English? Should teachers be penalized if their students do poorly or be given extra resources to turn things around? Who is to teach to these standards? Teacher preparation is a huge issue; in California, out of 18,400 new teachers hired in 1996-7, half had no teaching experience; 30% lacked a teaching credential. These issues need to be considered.

-Lois Brubeck, Education Committee

Environmental Concerns

Monday, March 16, 1998 - THE PRESIDIO
Michael Alexander, Sierra Club
Meet at 7:15 pm, 1340 Arch Street, Berkeley

NOTE: This is the THIRD Monday of the month.
We are back on our regular schedule.

Contact *Erika Kunkel*



Publications Corner



The Road To Self-Sufficiency is a summary of a study conducted (pro bono) by the A. T. Kearney management consulting firm, in conjunction with the Bay Area Partnership/Bay Area Council. It is a comprehensive report providing "a regional assessment of aid-dependency in a critical welfare reform environment" for 10 Bay Area counties (including Santa Cruz).

The report details the number of recipients in each county in the several aid categories, provides an analysis of occupational growth and an inventory of training programs for each county, as well as an analysis of the adequacy of state and county budgets necessary for welfare reform. Through statistical analyses and narrative profiles, pictures emerge of aid recipients. What we find is that the needs and numbers of each group vary and different services may be required before self-sufficiency can be achieved.

The categories of aid recipients are identified as:

- AFDC (Aid to Families with Dependent Children) recipients constitute the largest group.
- UI (Unemployment Insurance) recipients are the second largest group, averaging in ages between 35-49.
- NAFC (Non-Assistance Food Stamps) recipients range in ages from 35-39 and are either unemployed or holding low-wage jobs.
- GA (General Assistance) recipients are the smallest group of persons receiving aid, and the make-up varies in different counties.

The recipients in each category of aid require different services. The study has identified four stages which aid recipients go through as they enter or reenter the work force. Listed in the study also are the resources needed to overcome the barriers. Research in this study points out that 90% of public and private money goes to social service agencies and helps people in the first stage of job entry: substance addiction, homelessness, domestic violence, children's health and behavioral problems; however, only six percent of funds are spent on work-skill development programs.

The 1996 federal welfare changes placed the burden for implementation on states through block grants, and in the Bay Area counties differences exist in the amount of money, types of services, types of and availability of jobs, and job growth projections. The study concludes that in order to achieve success,

counties need to realign financial and resource programs, redevelop training programs, work more closely with business and community groups, and communicate with other counties.

A copy of this report is on the Publications Shelf in the office.

-Lenora Young, Publications Chair

Update on Welfare Reform

Speaking at a meeting sponsored by the Oakland LWV on January 24, Assemblywoman Dion Aroner pointed out several areas where attention is needed to truly "reform" welfare. The California program, known as CALWorks, which starts operating March 1, will offer services for only 18-24 months. During that time, job training and child care will be available but to make these services really effective, she pointed out, there needs to be (1) full collaboration between welfare offices and private industry councils to assure that training leads to real jobs; and (2) quality child care offered by trained child care providers. A major stumbling block is (3) the retraining of social welfare agency workers, she added. State legislation in all three areas is needed, and the LWVC can help by supporting such reforms.

Keith Carson, president of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors, whose local planning process was recently completed, agreed that much needs to be done to coordinate jobs and job training. Despite a slight decline in the number of welfare recipients, there are still 53,000 in the County. Jobs are needed in the less affluent areas, transportation to those areas is critical, and coordination among agencies offering job preparation and other services is essential. County LWVs can help, he concluded, by monitoring progress and calling attention to areas being overlooked or neglected.

The Alameda County Council of the LWV recently wrote a letter to the County Board of Supervisors urging them to attend to such areas as staff training, basic literacy needs, and collaboration with community agencies.

The Oakland LWV has an active focus group that is following welfare reform issues. If you are interested in joining them, call our office or let me know.

-Doris Fine

Donors Through January 1998

General Fund

Addy & Merle Brodsky *Frances Packard*
Miriam Hawley *Marjorie & Hugh Rubinow*
Sondra Kennedy *Jean Saperstein*
Erika Kunkel *Gail Schickele*
Jill & Piero Martinucci *Helene Strauss*
Karen Nelson

Foundation

*Eloise Bodine** *Winifred McLaughlin*
Pamela Drew *Barbara Oliver*
Dorothy Field *Karen D. Carlson-Olson*
Linda Gerson *Gail Schickele*
Ann-Marie Hogan *Paul Warner*
Babette Maccoby

* In Memory of *Fanya Carter* and *Bonnie Wolfson*

Members and Membership

Pieces, Bits and News You Can Use

Bits

A warm and cordial greeting to new members *Mia Gittlen* and *Carrie J. Sprague*. We hope to greet you personally at a League function in the very near future (see back page for Calendar of Events.)

Member count, January 28: 414

Good News: Recovered:

Eva Brecher is "glad to join the living" after a thirty-day siege of flu.

Evelyn Light is "getting better" or perhaps, getting the better of her illness.

Anne Wallach is well enough to do her own shopping after having had cardiac surgery.

Thank You: *Ruthann Taylor* for managing the SCRIP program in *Eva's* absence.

Pieces

Attention: Members "new" to the League since March 1997, and all other members who would like more information on the hows, whens, wheres, whos and whys of LWVBAE -

You are invited to a New Member Orientation Meeting to be held in the League office at 10 am on Saturday, March 14. "New" members will be contacted prior to the meeting; others may call the office (10 am to 4 pm weekdays), FAX to 843-8828 (24 hours per day), or e-mail lwvbae@pacbell.net for further information.

By the way, all LWVBAE members who have an e-mail address are requested to electronically mail their address to us at lwvbae@pacbell.net. Having your e-mail addresses will expedite our responses to ACTION ALERTS and the sharing of information and inquiries between/among league members.

This "News You Can Use" can be of value to those of you who have not already taken advantage of becoming a League member. Non-member readers are aware of the scope and nature of the work of the League, but may not be aware of how worthwhile membership in the League can be. LWVBAE is a group of wonderfully interesting men and women from diverse backgrounds who are committed to "making democracy work" by giving as much or as little time to League work as each has available. JOIN US!! There is a Membership coupon on the back page of every *Voter*.

New position for former BUSD Associate Superintendent *Nancy Spaeth* - Portola Valley Superintendent of Schools. *Nancy* began her teaching career at Berkeley High School in 1960 and taught there until 1967. She returned to education in 1980 and was the Principal of Castro Valley High from 1982-1990 when she was named California High School Principal of the Year. She returned to Berkeley High that same year, and "hit the ground running, and hasn't stopped since."

On January 20, *Nancy* became the Portola Valley Superintendent of Schools, a district she described as "small and bursting at the seams." We wish her pleasure and success in her new venture. We are pleased that she will continue her membership in LWVBAE.

-*Eleanor Cox*, Membership Chair

LWVBAE extends sincere condolences to the family and friends of *Elaine Drukman* upon her death on January 13. *Elaine* was one of our members from Emeryville and had been a member of the League since April of 1993.

Action Update

March, 1998

Special Primary Election April 7, 1998

Congressman Ron Dellums retired as the Representative to Congress from the Ninth Congressional District on February 6, 1998, as this *Voter* was being prepared for printing. Unfortunately, until he is replaced, everyone in our Ninth District is without a voice in the House of Representative on the many issues of concern.

Governor Wilson has set April 7 as the date for an election to fill Dellums' congressional seat. There are 3 contenders: State Senator Barbara Lee, Randal Stewart of Oakland, and Emeryville City Councilman Greg Harper.

A runoff election will be held June 2 if no candidate wins a majority in April. The Alameda County Registrar's office estimates the cost of the April 7 special primary election at \$475,000.

With the national Congress and the state Legislature both back in session, this is a particularly busy period for League action at all levels. There are many issues requiring League action both from the Board and from you as League members. Please read the following carefully to learn how you can become more informed on these issues, as well as to take action.

NATIONAL Action Alerts

The National Voter Registration Act (NVRA or "Motor Voter") Is Under Attack

Did you think this matter was settled? Think again. The House of Representatives is expected to act very soon on proposals to undermine or kill "Motor Voter." The four main thrusts in this regard are: (1) proof of citizenship to register to vote; (2) Social Security numbers on voter registration applications; (3) purging for non-voting; and (4) photo ID at the polls. These items were brought up during a November, 1997, House Oversight Committee hearing on campaign finance reform as possible legislation to cure "voter fraud." By emphasizing "election integrity", the House leadership is trying to change the debate on campaign finance reform and to turn back the clock on voter registration reform.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Although Congressman Dellums has recently retired, we still need to let his staff know that we stand opposed to:
 - HR 1428 (Horne R CA) - Defeated on February 12
 - HR 224 (McCollum R FL)
 - HR 1139 (Tauzin R LA)
 - HR 2076 (Goodlatte R VA).

These are all "ballot security" measures of the 105th Congress that seriously undermine the "Motor Voter" Act, discriminate against ethnic minorities and abolish privacy protections. None

of these proposals is needed. On the contrary, the major voting problem in the United States is lack of voter participation. Ill-conceived Congressional efforts to undermine critical voting rights protections by raising the false specter of voter fraud deserve to be soundly defeated.

Do this by phone, fax, e-mail, or mail, but **do it soon!**

Campaign Finance Reform - The Promised Vote

By the end of the 104th Congress, the League had helped to transform the congressional debate on campaign finance reform from one deadlocked over spending limits to one focused upon incremental legislation to close the loopholes in the current law. You will recall that during the last days of the last session, leaders in both the House and the Senate promised to bring this issue to their respective floors in early March, 1998, after a bi-partisan effort in the Senate fell 7 votes short of cloture (60 votes needed).

Grassroots advocacy on campaign finance reform is essential to achieve real reform. Citizens must bombard Congress with a message in favor of incremental reform legislation that closes soft money and sham issue advocacy loopholes. Opponents in both houses will do everything possible to defeat it. Our representatives in Washington need to hear continually from constituents, as well as to see editorials and letters-to-the-editor in favor of meaningful campaign finance reform legislation.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Contact Senators Boxer and Feinstein.
 - Urge them to vote against a motion to table (kill) bi-partisan campaign finance reform legislation.
 - Ask them to oppose any “poison pill” or killer amendment.
 - Request that they vote in favor of cloture to allow a straight up or down vote on campaign finance reform.
- Contact Congressman Dellums’ office to notify his staff of our support of bi-partisan campaign finance reform legislation that closes the soft money and sham issue advocacy loopholes.
- Write a letter-to-the-editor of your local newspaper, as an individual and not as a League member, delineating the need for bi-partisan congressional campaign finance reform legislation that closes the soft money and sham issue advocacy loopholes in current law.

Do this by phone, fax, e-mail, or mail, but **DO IT TODAY!**

STATE Calls to Action

Defeat Parental Consent Legislation - Bill SCA 17

A parental consent constitutional amendment for underage abortions by Senators Tim Leslie and Bob Hurtt (SCA 17) will soon be heard in the Senate Judiciary Committee. The current Legislature has neither debated nor voted on this topic. We need to educate all our representatives why this topic does not belong in the constitution, as well as why it should not be the subject of legislation.

WHAT CAN YOU DO?

- Call Senator Lee today and urge her to:
 - vote NO on SCA 17.
 - help educate other senators why they should vote NO on SCA 17.

The California Parental Rights and Child Protection Initiative

Meanwhile, the above initiative is being circulated and would amend the state Constitution to require parental consent for minors to obtain abortions. It won't meet the March 16 deadline for 693,230 signatures, but the California Pro-Life Council plans to re-file with the Attorney General's office to get a new 150-day deadline. They may still meet the November, 1998, election deadline. Otherwise, it will be put off until June, 2000.

LWVC belongs to the California Coalition for Reproductive Freedom. All members of the Coalition are fully committed to defeating this initiative should it ever appear on the ballot, and are preparing for a full-fledged campaign. The risk to any teenage girl's health requires that there be no change in the current law.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

- Contact Governor Wilson and urge him to sign AB 160 to provide health care coverage for contraceptive drugs as part of insurance plans. The savings to the state and the insurance companies far outweigh the costs. The Health Association of America estimates a cost of \$16 per year per woman using this benefit, as opposed to costs well over \$3,800 per unintended pregnancy. While 97 percent of large group plans cover prescription benefits, only 33 percent cover oral contraceptives.
Do this by phone, fax, e-mail or mail ASAP.

More on Judge Karlton's Decision on Proposition 208 (Term Limits)

- At the January 15 meeting of the Fair Political Practices Commission (FPPC), the members considered how to respond to Judge Karlton's decision which:
 - enjoined them from enforcing any provision of the ballot measure that went into effect January 1, 1997; and
 - ordered them to submit a writ to the California Supreme Court asking for a determination on whether the provisions not held to be unconstitutional could be severed and implemented while those held to be unconstitutional would be rewritten by the Supreme Court to conform to our constitution.
- LWVC and other sponsors and proponents of Proposition 208 urged the FPPC to appeal the entire decision to the Ninth Circuit Court of Appeals and to seek a stay of the injunction. The Commission voted unanimously to file an expedited appeal of the decision rather than turn first to the California Supreme Court for opinions, but declined to seek a stay because they believe it unlikely to be granted and further believed that seeking one would create confusion and uncertainty in the 1998 election cycle.
- Craig Holman, executive director of the Californians for Political Reform Foundation, representing the proponents of Proposition 208 as interveners in the case, said: "All efforts are focused on overturning (Judge) Karlton's decision on appeal and reinstating Proposition 208 for the 2000 election cycle."

- Meanwhile, some legislators such as Senators Karnett and Kopp are taking pieces of Proposition 208 that were found to be unconstitutional and introducing them as separate pieces of legislation. The situation is in flux and the LWVC Legislative Office is keeping involved.

REGIONAL

The League of Women Voter of the Bay Area (LWVBA) is concentrating on transportation issues. In 1998, they will be focusing upon an update of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission's (MTC) Regional Transportation Plan (RTP). The plan would allocate \$74 billion in transportation funding over the next 20 years and needs thoughtful, knowledgeable public input to develop an efficient, equitable, and environmentally sensitive transportation system that encourages sensible land use decisions.

In Alameda County, LWVBA targeted the Expenditure Plan Development Commission (EDPC) for re-authorization of Alameda County's ½ cent sales tax, Measure B. Along with other public input, LWVBA helped to influence EDPC to increase funding for transit and stop the Hayward 238 "bypass," which the League had opposed for years.

Bay Area League Day, sponsored by LWVBA on January 31, followed up on the transportation theme. The somewhat complex title was "Starting With What We Have: Will Transportation 'Fixes' Work for All the People...for the Environment...for the Economy?" The speakers made a case for what needs to happen to accommodate all the stakeholders in the Bay Area. It appears that even modest success will require constant education of the decision makers and of the public as regards regional transportation issues. Look for the LWVBA Everymember VOTER in your mailbox with specific information.

LOCAL

Berkeley

- Letter to Planning Commission

A letter was sent to the Planning Commission in support of the Commission's desire to clarify Berkeley's planning process. The recent proliferation of public planning bodies appointed by the Mayor and City Council as ad hoc committees or task forces have needlessly complicated the city's planning process. It is the League's position that any ad hoc committee or task force appointed by the Mayor and City Council needs to have a defined method of appointment, a clear relationship with standing city commissions, a specific purpose and duration. The letter also made a plea for the publication and dissemination of the long overdue complete draft of the General Plan for public comment before adoption.

- Planning Commissioners at the February Action Meeting

The Chair and two members of the Planning Commission addressed the February 18 meeting of LWVBAE's Action Committee regarding the planning process in Berkeley, and engaged in a dialogue with League members. The committee is exploring how the League might support an effective planning process.

N.B.: If you want more specific information to include in your action letter(s), call the League office. This report was compiled from publications received from various levels of League and from information shared at the Action Committee meeting.

-Jo Ann B. Price, Action VP