

The VOTER

LEAGUE of WOMEN VOTERS
of BERKELEY, ALBANY
and EMERYVILLE



1414 University Avenue, Suite D, Berkeley, CA 94702-1509 Tel. 510/843-8824

President: Nancy Bickel

September, 2001

Editor: Jean Safir

Fall General Meeting

Saturday, September 15, 2001, 10:00 am to 2:00 pm
Northbrae Community Church
941 The Alameda, Berkeley

- 10:00 Gathering with old friends and welcoming guests
- 10:30 Business Meeting: Vote on motion to change one Issue for Emphasis
- 11:00 Speaker: **Brad Clark**, Registrar of Elections, Alameda County
Topic: "Bringing Elections Into the 21st Century"
- 12:00 Lunch and "table talk" on areas of special interest
- 2:00 Adjourn

After all the controversy over last fall's general election, it is not too early to start preparing for the 2002 congressional and local elections. Join us to learn what Alameda County will be doing to be sure the voting here is as fair and open as possible, and to figure out what you can do to help.

Please **call the office (843-8824) before September 10** to let us know if you will attend the fall meeting — for the business meeting, for the speaker, or only for lunch — all three are special and important. Lunch is \$10 — you can pay at the door or send it in ahead of time, or you can bring your own lunch — drinks are on the house. The church is served by public transit, has lots of parking in the rear and on the street, and also has wheelchair access. Let us know if you need more information or help with transportation.

When you call the office, you can choose the "special interest" table where you want to have lunch, or you can take your pick when you get to the meeting. (Read the President's letter for more information about this.) In either case, please do join us and help get this new year off to a swinging start.

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Letter from the President

ways at election time.

Dear fellow Leaguers,

Each one bring one — Let's revive that grand League practice. It works. *Sybil Dinaburg* brought me to League meetings and, dazzled by the knowledge and competence of the Leaguers I met, I became an active member. Think about which one of your friends, your friends' children, your neighbors, or your work colleagues is interested or concerned about local government, about schools, about the fairness of elections, or about any of the other public issues the League works on so energetically.

Sat., September 15, and Sat., October 6, are your opportunities to introduce someone to the League and to your fellow Leaguers. The League is revving up to reach out very widely to the Berkeley, Albany and Emeryville communities. The very best way to reach out is by reaching out your own hand to one other person and bringing him or her along with you.

The September 15 fall general meeting will introduce you and your friend to League plans for the coming year. To improve the League's visibility and impact in the community, the board has agreed to focus on a few key areas. If the membership votes at that meeting to confirm the board's proposal, one of our three key focus areas will be voting practices and systems.

To give us a thorough and early start for the March primary elections, Registrar of Voters Brad Clark will report on his efforts to improve election administration in the county. New computerized voting machines and new opportunities for voting before election day are major elements in his plans. You'll be able to ask him about his response to the reports of the County Grand Jury and the National Commission on Federal Election Reform. Some of you may have the chance to continue the discussion over lunch. We hope to work with Registrar Clark in recruiting more League members to help as poll workers and in other

In discussions over each lunch table, you'll learn what we're planning in key areas of League activity, from campaigning for Instant Runoff Voting in Berkeley to working to close the achievement gap in the Berkeley schools. And, of course, we hope to energize and interest you, so that you will sign on to help make our plans really happen.

The Community Conversation on October 6 will tackle an issue that our local community is no closer to resolving than is the country as a whole. This first **Community Conversation** will be: **Confronting Racism — Finding Common Ground for Building a Stronger Community.** As a co-sponsor of the event, LWVBAE will be part of a broad coalition of community organizations. Marissa Saunders, the new chair of our Education Committee, is the driving force behind this effort.

Why are we addressing this issue? Because it is still an important element in the disadvantages and difficulties that African-Americans and Mexican-Americans and many others face. Even in our liberal communities, children of different races and cultural backgrounds still have, on average, widely different test results and widely different school dropout rates, different levels of access to health care and medical insurance — just to mention the most obvious differences. These familiar facts are a disgrace to our local community and our country.

We need to bring people from our whole community together; we need to begin the community conversations that can break down the barriers that still divide us. Please join us in these efforts.

-Nancy Bickel, LWVBAE President

Community Conversation — Confronting Racism — Finding Common Ground for Building a Stronger Community

Saturday, October 6, 2001, 10 am to
3 pm
City of Franklin Elementary School
1150 Virginia Street, Berkeley

Although Berkeley has worked long and hard at building an equitable community, the job is still unfinished. There is growing recognition of the continued effects of racism on education, health care, housing employment and government policy, and a need to develop possibilities of constructive resolution of these issues.

The goals of this meeting are (1) to advance the understanding of racism and its daily impact on persons in our community and (2) to develop a community strategy for building a stronger and healthier community.

This meeting is called a conversation rather than a forum in order to emphasize its intent to share and profit from each others' experiences and gain a common understanding and a dedication from each participant to work toward a solution of the problem.

Thirty minutes of introductory activities will present the problem through poetry, a skit and some "warm-up" exercises. Next, discussion groups will be formed, each with a facilitator, recorder and timer. Each person will get a packet of readings and resources. The packets will be numbered to enable random groupings into small breakout groups of about 10 each. Name tags will be first names only, to make participants feel comfortable and avoid feeling influenced by another's organization or position. The seating will be in a circle and everyone will be asked not to sit next to persons they already know.

Lunch will be provided, and it will be a working lunch - the time to bring together the findings of the discussion groups, to identify priorities and to devise strategies for attacking the problems identified.

After lunch, we return to the large group and try to develop a group strategy and overall priorities. Each person will be asked to sign a pledge card to work on a specific goal. A date for a follow-up meeting will be chosen, so we can see what progress we've made and what obstacles we've encountered in pursuing our goals.

The LWVBAE is sponsoring this meeting, but a wide array of other community organizations have also signed on as co-sponsors. It is an opportunity for League leadership in an area that we have never taken on, but an opportunity that we must not pass up. It deserves everyone's support and everyone's participation. We hope to see you there.

-*Marissa Saunders*, Education Chair

Help Wanted/Needed

A **Treasurer** for LWVBAE: Board member, knowledgeable oversight of our finances, periodic reports, minor bookkeeping.

A volunteer to **supervise staffing and training of Office Volunteers**. Time required:

1-2 hours per month to telephone volunteers and set up monthly schedule.

2-3 hours per month to train new volunteers, as needed.

Please call *Ruthann Taylor* if you are interested.

Environmental Concerns

The first fall gathering of the Environmental Concerns group will be on **Monday evening, September 10** at 7:15 pm. The speaker and topic have yet to be confirmed, but after September 1 you can get the information from *Eva Bansner* or from *Gail Schickele*.

At the April 9 meeting, physicist and UC Berkeley professor emeritus *Wulf Kunkel* was the honored guest speaker on global climate change and world energy resources and needs.

To read a summary of this informative talk and find out more about this important subject, check out our web site: [<home.pacbell.net/lwvbae>](http://home.pacbell.net/lwvbae). It will soon begin to have special links of interest to League members and include write-ups of many of our speakers.

Speaker Series

Thursday, October 11, noon to 2pm
Albany Library, Edith Stone Room
Speaker: *Helene Lecar*

The season's first Speaker Series gathering will give League members and guests a chance to learn about the Peralta Community College District, in general, and about Vista, our local college, in particular. This will also be an opportunity for *Helene* to share with us the findings of the two-year study her committee has worked so hard to bring before us. Later this fall, we will have Consensus Units for the purpose of adopting new action positions on this important topic. So please join us for an early start.

Personals

Jim Lindsay has just accepted an appointment on the Albany Board of Education, to fill an unexpected vacancy. Jim is the father of three children, two of whom are currently in Albany schools.

Lucie Buchbinder is Executive Director and one of two founders of the non-profit Bread Project. This vocational project teaches the baking trade to 12 students every nine weeks and is free to its students, who are recruited from low-income neighborhoods and receive \$6.50 an hour during training.

I. Michael Heyman, featured speaker at the LWVBAE first annual community luncheon in 1999 and Chancellor Emeritus at U.C. Berkeley, has returned to U.C.'s School of Law at Boalt Hall, where he has renewed his academic interest in land use matters.

Jeffrey Leiter, a fifth generation member of the Shattuck family that has had influential ties to Berkeley for 150 years, has taken up residence in Grass Valley in a move he labels as "semi-retirement." He plans to be involved in arts organizations there, but will continue as chairman of the Berkeley Symphony Advisory Board.

Sylvia McLaughlin was among Berkeley notables who told stories about the City during a recent evening event at the Julia Morgan Center for the Arts. This event was held in conjunction with the Berkeley Arts Festival.

Beth Springston, League member extraordinaire, is moving to North Carolina to live closer to her family. Beth, who has been treasurer and secretary to the Board, as well as an ever-willing volunteer, was honored with a special award at our annual meeting in May. She tells us she will definitely join a (fortunate) League in North Carolina.

Solano Stroll Anyone?

The annual Solano Stroll event is scheduled this year on Sunday, September 9, from 10 am to 5 pm. As usual, the League will have a table to give out information and to register new voters plus any that have moved since the last election.

Karen Nelson will be organizing it and will need to get lots of volunteers to staff the table all day. If you'd like to get an early choice of the hour you want to serve — or just to volunteer to help out — please call her.

Issue for Emphasis: Voting

We all hope that all voters have equal access to the polls, that polling places are staffed by well-trained people, that the process of casting votes is clear and understandable, and that all votes are counted with the least possibility of error. Since the last election, it is not clear that these things are always true, in all places.

Because good voting practices and systems are so central to the League, the Board is asking you to vote at the Fall General Meeting to make this one of our Issues for Emphasis for this year.

I'm hoping to assemble a **Voter Service Team** that will look at our local situation, and find ways that our League could work cooperatively with the local Registrar of Voters and City Clerks to make sure that elections are run as well as possible. For place and time of the first meeting, please contact me at.

-*Phoebe Watts*, Voter Service

Highlights of LWVBAE Board Meeting of 8/1/01

The first Board meeting for the new officers of the LWVBAE was held on Wednesday, August 1, in the League Office. Full minutes of the meeting are available at the office. What follows is a summary of the major actions taken by the Board:

All agreed to recommend to the full membership at the Fall General Meeting the following change in our "Issues for Emphasis" for the coming year: drop the Berkeley general plan and add voting practices and systems. (See adjacent article.)

It was also unanimously agreed that we would co-sponsor or support "Community Conversation: Confronting Racism - Finding Common Ground for Building a Stronger Community." The Board authorized up to \$500.00 for "seed" money to help pay program costs. Based on the budget to be presented, the Executive Committee is authorized to increase these funds. (See article on Page 2.)

Ginette Polak was appointed to serve on the nominating committee.

-*Jane Barrett*, Secretary

Donors

for June and July, all to the General Fund:

Jane Barrett

Mary Foster

Ann Crowe

James Lindsay

Report on State & National Action

While the energy crisis made this session of the State legislature a crazy one, LWVC did take stands in support of numerous bills, covering many subjects of concern to the League. It urged support of bills on air quality, campaign finance, foster care, child care, and many others.

Many proposed reforms were the victim of budget worries, but most recently LWVC urged the Governor to sign AB 767, which would have overturned the law that bans certain felons convicted of drug use from getting food stamps and Calworks. Without these programs, it is almost impossible for women to get the services they need in order to eventually reunite with their children. Unfortunately, the Governor failed to sign the bill.

In August, LWVC will sort through the bills that were in the hopper and see which ones are to be held over to next year. We'll keep you posted.

Election Reform

If you are wondering what the national League has been doing about Election Reform, check their web site at <www.lwv.org>. It has held a symposium on election reform, testified before various Senate committees on election reform, supported reform legislation, and been active in many other ways.

Calls to Action

When LWVBAE receives "calls to action" from LWVC or LWWUS, your Action V.P. responds in the name of the League. I can forward these action calls to interested members who would like to write letters of their own.

— *Lois Brubeck*, Action V.P.

Community College Study

Last spring, LWVBAE members, together with members of Oakland, Alameda and Piedmont Leagues, interviewed the 7 Peralta Community College District trustees. Here is a summary of what we found out:

Every trustee mentioned adequate funding as the most important improvement that needs to be made. Many pointed out that 11% of Prop. 98 funds is supposed to go to the Community Colleges, but they have not been receiving their full share.

An increase in student enrollment is not seen as a problem. The District can now accommodate 40,000 students and has about 27,000. The new Vista building will give the District even more space for new growth.

Other issues identified: better high school preparation to reduce the number of remedial classes needed at the colleges; remedial courses to be funded at the same rate as fully accredited courses; technical and skilled service training and accreditation at the colleges; and the role of community colleges to prepare students for transfer to four-year institutions.

Shared governance and greater community involvement also need attention, including: better publicity for the district as a whole; better communication with the public and with students; and more listening sessions like those held in summer of 2000. The newly named presidents of all four colleges in the District (Alameda, Laney, Merritt and Vista) can now appoint citizens advisory boards to help oversee major construction projects funded by Measure E.

Watch for more background information in next month's *VOTER*, as we prepare for **consensus meetings this fall**.

— *Helene Lecar*, Study Chair

Berkeley Redistricting

All submittals, including staff analyses and maps, will be available for public review in the City Clerk Department and on the web by Sept. 4. The City Council has scheduled public hearings for Sept. 13 and Sept. 25, and on Oct. 2 will finalize the proposal in the form of an ordinance. This ordinance will be voted on in March, 2002, and the new districts will be effective in November, 2002. All of the relevant documents will be available in the League office.

-Lois Brubeck, Action V.P.

LWVCA Ed Fund Fund-raising Banquet

A fund-raising banquet in San Ramon on Thursday, September 20, will benefit the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund. The location will be the San Ramon Marriott Hotel, off I-680 near the I-580 interchange. Loretta Lynch, president of the California Public Utilities Commission, will be the featured speaker. Tickets are \$75.

If you are interested in attending, please call the Diablo Valley LWV at 925-283-2235.

Welcome to New Members and those Rejoining us

Mary Lou Breiman

Kati Casida

Shirley Issel

Prof. Christopher McKee

Frances Starn

Andrea Venezia

Alice Waters

Concerned About Housing Issues?

We have recently adopted a new set of housing action positions, to apply to all three of our cities. Berkeley and Emeryville are working on an update of the housing elements of their General Plans, and Albany will soon begin theirs, to comply with State regulations. All three cities are feeling pressures to meet a growing demand for affordable housing.

A **Housing Action Team** will soon be formed to take on the task of implementing our new action positions and making the LWVBAE an effective advocate in this important field. Will you join us? If interested, please call me or send an e-mail.

-Jean Safir, Housing Action

LWVBAE OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS 2001-02

Officers

President:	<i>Nancy Bickel</i>
V.P. Action:	<i>Lois Brubeck</i>
V.P. Administration:	<i>Ruthann Taylor</i>
V.P. Community Outreach / Development:	<i>Sherry Smith</i>
V.P. Election Services / Smart Voter:	<i>Phoebe Watts</i>
V.P. Program	T.b.a.
Secretary:	<i>Jane Barrett</i>
Treasurer:	T.b.a.

Directors

At Large:	<i>Mary Wainwright</i>
Community College Study:	<i>Helene Lecar</i>
Historian & Publications:	T.b.a.
Membership:	<i>Ginette Polak</i>
Special Events:	<i>Karen Nelson</i>
Voter Editor:	<i>Jean Safir</i>

- Berkeley addresses unless otherwise indicated -

August

- 13 Mon. 10a-4p LWVBAE Office reopens 1414 University Av. Office, 843-8824
 24 Fri. 11:30a- **Third Annual Community Luncheon**
 1:30p — Hs. Lordship's on the Berkeley Marina *Jackson*
 27 Mon. 6:30- Education Committee Savo Island, Community Room
 8:30p *Saunders*

September

- 3 Mon. 10a-4p LWVBAE Office closed for Labor Day Office, 843-8824
 5 Wed. 4-6p Board Meeting LWVBAE Office *Bickel*
 6 Thurs. 5p Deadline for October VOTER *Safir*
 9 Sun. Solano Stroll *K. Nelson*
 10 Mon. 7:30p Environmental Concerns *Bansner*
 12 Wed. 4-6p Community College Study LWVBAE Office *Lecar*
 15 Sat. 10a-2p Fall Membership Meeting, Northbrae
 Community Church 941 The Alameda *Bickel*
 20 Thurs. LWVC Ed. Fund Banquet San Ramon Marriott *Bickel*
 20 Thurs. 7-9p Action Committee *Brubeck*
 24 Mon. 6:30-
 8:30p Education Committee Call for location *Saunders*

October

- 3 Wed. 4-6p Board Meeting LWVBAE Office *Bickel*
 4 Thurs. 5p Deadline for November VOTER *Safir*
 6 Sat. 10a-3p **Community Conversation: Confronting Racism**
 City of Franklin Elementary School,
 1150 Virginia St. *Saunders*
 11 Thurs. 12-2p Speaker Series: Peralta Community Colleges
 Albany Library 1247 Marin Avenue *Laurence*

