



## Starting The New Year Off Right

January will be an action-packed month for the League; here's your chance to fulfill those New Year resolutions, enjoy lively discussion with fellow Leaguers, and make your voice heard as we decide on policies and positions for 2016. Mark your calendar now:

Saturday January 9th, 9 AM to 1 PM: Consensus Meeting on Money in Politics Room 710 at 436 14th Street, downtown Oakland.

Tuesday January 19th, 12 noon to 4 PM: additional Consensus Meeting on Money in Politics (if you could not make it on January 9th) South Berkeley Library 1901 Russell Street, Berkeley. For more information also see: <http://www.lwvoakland.org/moneyinpol.html>

Saturday January 23rd, 10 AM to 1 PM: Annual Policy and Position Review at Rockridge Library corner of College & Manila in Oakland. Check our website Help the League of Women Voters of Oakland decide on local and national policies and positions, as well as new studies, for the coming year.

### Contents



President's Message	p. 2	Annual Luncheon	p. 5
LWVO Consensus on Constitutional Amendments	p. 3	Member News	p. 5
League About Town	p. 4	Money in Politics	p. 7
		Calendar	p. 8

# President's Message



## Happy Holidays Everyone

Holidays are a time of sharing, caring and of course parties. Friday December 11th from 6 – 8:30pm will be our League Holiday Party at 5560 Harbord Dr. just off the Moraga Thornhill exit from Highway 13. As it is at my house, I am extending a personal invitation to you. Please bring something to share plus lots of good cheer. LWVO loves to grow and there is not a better way to do that than for you to bring a friend whom you think would be a great League member.

In Oakland, the Fall of 2015 has been busy with three studies going on simultaneously. We had our consensus meeting on the Constitutional Amendment Study (Oakland supported most of the consensus questions, with a couple of comments). On Jan. 9th we will have our consensus meeting for “Money in Politics” followed by a March meeting to gain consensus on the “CA Higher Ed Study”. June 16- 19, 2016 is the LWVUS biennial national convention in Washington DC. LWV will announce the results of the national studies at the national convention in Washington D.C. in June, enabling LWV members all across the country to speak more forcefully on campaign financing.

As Spring approaches we will be moving into high gear because 2016 is an ELECTION YEAR. That's the time the League's voice is sought after by voters who are deciding on the candidates and the issues they need to vote on at city, state, and national levels. Are you ready? As a League member your family, friends and colleagues are likely to turn to you for input on the elections. It is a responsibility, but one I am sure you are up to.

We are a thoughtful organization. We think

before we act. We act because we have studied the issues. We present fair and balanced information for voters to consider. That is why our voice is so well received and respected. Thank you for the part you will play.

In addition to our League studies and the 2016 election, LWVO is working hard to make our website a real resource for you about issues that directly impact Oakland. We are beta testing the new League Easy Web which will make viewing our website on your mobile device easier. When it comes to social media we are on it. Have you checked out our Facebook Page? If you Tweet, so do we. LinkedIn, we've got a group going. We even use Instagram! How about that? While The Voter is on line, we will continue to send out paper copies to those who prefer it.

Now that you know that we have all these ways to communicate, please use them. When someone mentions the League, tell them about our website. Take the initiative, forward a League email blast, “Like us” on Facebook and “Share us” with your friends. One of the wonderful things about our digital age is that we can be connected by just a click on a send button. Too busy to come out to a League event? Participate with the League on line. Both ways you make an impact!

Oh, one last thing, when you are making up your holiday gift list, please doesn't forget the League! Our year end fund raiser is quiet but important. I hope to see you on Dec. 11th at the Holiday Party! We are a happening League because you make it so. Again, “Happy Holidays” from the Board of LWVO.

-Louise RR, President-LWVO

# LWVO Consensus on Constitutional Amendments

Oakland Leaguers participated in the national LWV study on amending the U.S. Constitution. On November 7th a group of League members met to discuss and come to consensus on responses to the Consensus Questions. Amazingly, LWVUS does not now have a position on this issue, so the results of our own consensus meeting, together with those of other Leagues around the country, will help create a new League position that can be used as a basis for advocacy and action.



The detailed list of questions and LWVO responses is posted on [www.lwvoakland.org](http://www.lwvoakland.org) - click on the "LWV Studies" page. Here is a summary of what we submitted to LWVUS:

When is a constitutional amendment appropriate and acceptable? In general we agreed that the Constitution should not be overloaded with amendments that are narrowly focused and would be more appropriately addressed by legislation (the California State constitution was considered a bad example: one not to follow!). Amendments should be used for policy objectives that have an "acute and abiding importance" and that aim to make our political system more democratic or to protect individual rights.

The Constitution allows for amendments either through a vote in Congress followed by ratification in the states, or through a Constitutional Convention. Apart from the original drafting itself in 1787, a convention has never been held, although there are current calls from various states on various issues, such as a balanced budget or undoing the Citizens United decision. The existing language is vague about how a constitutional convention would actually be set up and function, for example how state representation at a convention should be determined, or whether it should be limited to a specific defined topic or allowed to broaden its scope. We agreed that using a convention to amend the Constitution is so problematical that the League should oppose calls for a Convention unless questions about its powers and process are resolved.

League response to proposed amendments - the "balancing" question. The League (at all levels) is often asked to support a political initiative that would advance one of our policy goals even if the process used or parts of the proposal itself do not meet our basic criteria for good government. Basically, should the ends justify the means? This requires a balancing decision process within the League. Our group could not reach a clear consensus on directives to LWVUS for this balancing.

Discussion was lively and eye-opening; questions and issues were more nuanced and complex than they seemed at first. We all came away from the meeting feeling better informed and with some new ideas to chew on.

-Katherine Gavzy

# League About Town – Dia de los Muertos

Oakland celebrated the Mexican tradition of Dia De Los Muertos (the Day of the Dead) in the Fruitvale Village on Sunday, November 8, 2015. This is time set aside for families and friends to remember those who have passed from this life. It is a popular Oakland community event, hosted by the Unity Council, which fills the festival area with intricately adorned ofrendas (altars), marigold flowers, vendors, live music, dancing and more. Judging by the size and enthusiasm of the customarily ethnically diverse crowd, festivities this year were another huge success and it was great fun for LWVO to be in the middle of it. Heartfelt thanks to League volunteers who helped to register people to vote and handed out League materials: Carole Agnello, Nancy Auker, Mary Bergan, Kathleen Cha, Katherine Gavzy, Sharon Griset, Earl Hamlin, Eleni Hub, Karen Ivy, Ariel Ky, Rosalie Masuda, Pat Raburn, Yolanda Schonbrun, Zabrae & George Valentine, and Phyllis White-Ayanruoh.

-Phyllis White-Ayanruoh



## Rockridge Out & About

We reported in the November VOTER that LWVO had tabled in October at the Rockridge street fair but, inadvertently, didn't thank our volunteers -- Meg Bowerman, Karen Ivy, Ann Killebrew, Drew Levitt, Kathryn Moir, Louise Rothman-Riemer, Kathy Shaw, Deborah Sheffler, Sandy Venning, and Phyllis White-Ayanruoh. When we say we couldn't have done it without you...really, we couldn't have done it without you! Thank you, all!

### Please Welcome the Following New Members

Valerie Garry  
Jonathan Stein  
Rene Boisvert  
Treva Reid

# Member News

## Member Roster/Directory

For years we've printed a colorful 5.5"x8.5" directory of LWVO members and mailed one to each household. We're not planning to do that this year, anticipating that in the near future we will be able to have the directory on a password protected page of our Website. In the meantime, if you would like to have a printed copy of the roster in early 2016, please let us know that by calling us at (510) 834-7640 or sending an email to the League office [info@lwvoakland.org](mailto:info@lwvoakland.org).

## Is LWVO Still the Largest League in California?

Help us retain that status by renewing your membership (or joining) **by January 31st!** If you're not sure whether your membership has expired (or will soon do so) check the date on the mailing label of your voter. If the date is lower than 6/30/2016, you need to renew. If there's no date, we'd love to have you join. Go to <http://www.lwvoakland.org/> and click on "JOIN-RENEW" Questions?? Call us or send us an email. January 31st is the date we must close out our membership books and it is when we officially count and report our membership to the National LWV.

# ANNUAL ALL-CITY LUNCHEON

## Save the Date

LWVO is very pleased that California's Secretary of State Alex Padilla has accepted our invitation to be our speaker! Mark your calendar for Thursday, April 28, 2016 11:15 AM- 1:30 PM.

## Help Make Our 25th Luncheon the Best Yet

Do you know a person, business or organization that might support us? Would you be willing to approach them about taking a table? Or would you share their contact information with us? Support us by sponsoring a table or even a portion of a table? See the form on the back of the Making Democracy Work Award Nomination form, inserted in the middle of this Voter. Or send names/contact information or questions to [info@lwvoakland.org](mailto:info@lwvoakland.org).

## Make a Making Democracy Work Award Nomination

You'll find a form in the middle of this Voter or you can use the online Nomination Form at <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/MakingDemocracyWorkAwardNomination> Nominate a friend, yourself, or an organization. Nominations are open to any Oakland resident or organization that is contributing or has contributed to our community in a significant and meaningful way.

# Wine, Cheese and Oakland Debt!

On Nov. 16th a small group of League members and non- members met at Louise Rothman-Riemer's home for a Wine and Cheese Salon with conversation centered on the City of Oakland's debt. Rene Boisvert, a long-time Oakland resident, presented his concerns about Oakland's very large debt. He pointed out that Oakland is on a watch list by Standard and Poor's and Moody's. In 2013 Oakland placed #10 in a list of cities that could possibly declare bankruptcy.

Debt is a serious issue for Oakland as the interest the City has to pay on its debt takes away from services and infrastructure improvements that otherwise could be made. The discussion was informative and lively, especially interesting considering the subject matter.

These small Salons and Dinners are just another way the Oakland League is working to involve and inform members on issues important in Oakland.

If you are interested in attending a Salon or a Small Dinner please let Phyllis White Ayanrouh or Louise Rothman-Riemer. Their email addresses are listed on the Board Roster.

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## League Jargon Demystified : What is This Consensus Thing?

The League's "Positions" (statements of policy) are the foundation for League Advocacy. We never advocate without the support of a position on the issue. This is how we maintain our widespread public respect. The process at the heart of what we do is: Study - Position - Action. See your yellow-covered Member Roster and Handbook for more about this. Positions result from thorough, objective Study and member "Consensus."

So what is Consensus? The Study Committee that volunteered to do the research and analysis work makes their background readings and resources available to all members, organizes at least one public information event on the issue, and finally prepares a series of "Consensus Questions" intended to guide the League in writing our policy statement. Members gather at a Consensus Meeting to discuss and respond to these questions, which are usually in a simple multiple-choice format. The goal is to obtain a "sense of the meeting": we never take a vote, but continue discussion until everyone present feels that their voice has been heard, all minority opinions have been expressed and considered, and the group arrives at a mutual agreement on the response that best reflects their views. The outcome of the discussion and responses to the questions are submitted to the League Board (local, State or National) that approved doing the study. Sometimes we agree that there is in fact "no consensus" - that either the question is too vague or misdirected, or there is no common ground for an answer. In that case, we report "no consensus" and submit our comments on the question. The League Board then reviews all Consensus results and derives a final statement of policy (a Position). That way the grass roots membership helps build the Position that can then be used for action and advocacy.

As you can see, Consensus Meeting discussions can be intense and probe deep into the issue. It is a fascinating and empowering experience and we urge you all to consider participating in one of the upcoming Consensus meetings on Money in Politics: January 9th from 9 AM to 1 PM at 436 14th Street in Oakland or January 19th from noon to 4 PM at the South Berkeley Library. See the LWVO and LWVBAE websites for more details.

-Katherine Gavzy

## Ready, Set, Go...

Election Year 2016 is Less Than a Month Away!

In preparation for the work our League does around the elections Voter Service will be putting out a call for League Member involvement in our "Pros and Cons Sessions" as well as our "Candidate Forums".

If you are interested and willing to be involved please email Deborah Shefler at [voterservice@lwvoakland.org](mailto:voterservice@lwvoakland.org). Participating in these League sponsored events is not only a great service to the community, but a lot of fun and very informative.

Paid Advertisement



**Terry Kulka**

*28 LWV members have entrusted me with the sale of their homes – let's make yours ~~RR~~ #9*

**(510) 682-5917**

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## CALENDAR

(Visit [lwvoakland.org](http://lwvoakland.org) for more event listings)



Fri, Dec 11, 6pm - 9pm	Holiday Party for LWVO Members	Home of Louise Rothman-Riemer, LWVO President
Mon, Dec 14 6:30-8:30pm	LWVO Board Meeting	Conference room 710 at 436 14th Street
Sat, Jan 9, 2016 9am-1pm	Money In Politics Consensus Meet- ing	Conference room 710 at 436 14th Street
Tue, Jan 19, 2016 12-4pm	Money In Politics Consensus Meet- ing	Berkeley Public Library 1901 Rus- sell St, Berkeley, CA 94703
Sat, Jan 23, 2016 10am - 1pm	Annual LWVO Pol- icy and Positions Review	Rockridge Library Manila Ave & College

Check the address label on this news-  
 letter. The date that runs across the  
 top, above your name, is the date when  
 your membership expires. If this date is  
 6/30/2015, your membership has ex-  
 pired.  
 We'd hate to lose you!  
 Please renew at [www.lwvoakland.org](http://www.lwvoakland.org);  
 click on "Renew Online."  
 If there's no date on your mailing label,  
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 on "Join Online".  
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 834-7640 or [info@lwvoakland.org](mailto:info@lwvoakland.org);  
 someone will get back to you promptly.