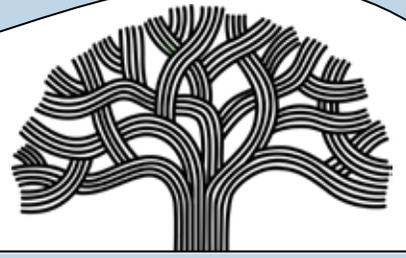


# VOTER



## Spring Budget Watch

April Program  
Oakland Unified School District  
New Budget Challenges

Wednesday, April 1, 6 to 8 p.m.  
Oakland City Hall Hearing Room 3



The way California’s public education system is funded is changing dramatically as a result of a law signed by Gov. Jerry Brown in July 2013. Its centerpiece is the Local Control Funding Formula, designed to send additional funds to districts where Gov. Brown believes “the need and the challenge is greatest.” For the first time, the law requires that parents, students, teachers, and other community members be involved in the process of deciding how new funds are spent.

Come hear Ruth Alahydoian, the Oakland Unified School District Chief Financial Officer, speak on how the District developed local priorities to build a budget that addresses the common good for the unique student population in Oakland.

- Yolanda Schonbrun

**Hot Topic for March**  
**Building a Budget for the Common Good**  
 Wednesday, March 25, 6 to 7:30 p.m.  
 436 14th Street, 2nd floor conference room

Oakland’s new city budget process calls for more complete information available to everyone, and for more public involvement. But money is still tight, and putting together a budget responsive to community needs is a daunting task. What should we be thinking about as we participate in this process? How do we work together for the common good? Join us and budget experts for a roundtable discussion on this timely issue.

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# President's Message

Money, money, money makes the world go round! Or, in the immortal words of the late Molly Ivins, "You got to dance with them what brung you." The subject of money in civic life will be important in the League's program and education work this spring and for much of 2015. We recently learned that the city may face a \$30 million budget shortfall, the school district is dealing with new state funding formulas, and we are approaching the heart of the budget season. Decisions will be made about what to spend public funds on. That is our money we are talking about, and the League believes firmly that budget decisions need to be made with ample opportunity for public input and in an orderly and transparent process.

Our January Hot Topics discussion dealt with public pension costs. We decided we all need to know much more about the impact pensions have on the budget, so we invited Dan Borenstein, a respected expert on the subject, to speak on March 4. The Hot Topics roundtable discussion on March 25 will focus on the city's budget process, which was pretty much



Katherine Gavzy

a disaster for years. This time around we hope to see dramatic improvement, helped by recent technology innovations to provide better public access. Then on April 1, the School District budget director will present and explain the OUSD budget process; in other words, how they will decide about spending our money to benefit our children.

So where does "You got to dance with them what brung you" come in? LWVUS

has launched a new review and update on Money in Politics – how do we balance First Amendment rights against the potentially corrupting influence of campaign finance contributions? Many are calling for a constitutional amendment to undo the impact of Citizens United, but what does this really mean? The League will start a new study on the process of amending the Constitution. Many of you have told us that this is also your passion; here is your chance to participate. We will be forming LWVO committees to work on both issues. Look for links to readings and resources in future editions of *The Voter* and on our website.

- Katherine Gavzy

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# LWVO's Annual All-City Luncheon and You

Our gala fundraiser – featuring as speaker Dr. Sylvia Earle, renowned oceanographer, explorer, author, lecturer, and National Geographic Society Explorer-in-Residence – will be Wednesday, May 13 in the ballroom of the Scottish Rite Center at 1547 Lakeside Drive from 11:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.



Dr. Sylvia Earle

We will present Making Democracy Work Awards to Sandra Threlfall, Executive Director of Waterfront Action and long-time waterfront watchdog, and to the Oakland Museum Women's Board, whose White Elephant Sale has raised over \$20 million for special projects such as the Cordell Bank Marine Sanctuary exhibit.

There are several ways in which you can be involved in this special event:

- 1) Plan to attend!
  - a. Underwrite a table. See the pledge form at [www.lwvoakland.org](http://www.lwvoakland.org);
  - b. Buy a ticket for yourself and a friend, or, if you cannot come;
  - c. Make a contribution.

2) Spend an hour or two (or more) on Wednesday, March 25 helping us prepare the invitations to be mailed to a couple thousand people. This is a fun way to meet other League members

## Mailing Party Volunteers Wanted

Come to the League's equivalent of a quilting bee!

Drop in for an hour or two (or more) on Wednesday, March 25 between 10 a.m. and 4 p.m. Help stuff, seal, and label over 3,000 invitations to the League's All-City Luncheon.

A fun way to meet other League members while performing a really helpful task!

The mailing will be prepared at Swan's Co-Housing, 930 Clay Street.

Sound like fun? Send an email with questions or to volunteer to [info@lwvoakland.org](mailto:info@lwvoakland.org) or leave a message at (510) 834-7640.

and help make a large task manageable.

3) Volunteer to help out on the day of the Luncheon – if you are planning to buy a ticket, we would welcome your assistance with:

- a. placing flowers and handouts on the tables before the guests arrive;
- b. registering guests; or
- c. helping people find their table.

Interested in helping with the mailing party or on the day of the Luncheon? Email us at [info@lwvoakland.org](mailto:info@lwvoakland.org) or call and leave a message at (510) 834-7640.

- *Bonnie Hamlin*

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## League a Sponsor for P.O.W.E.R.ful Women

LWVO is again a co-sponsor – along with the Mills College Public Policy Department – of P.O.W.E.R.'s (Progressive Oakland Women for Empowerment & Reform) Women History Month event at Mills College on Saturday March 21 from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. This year's theme is "Women Making History: Civil Liberties/Civil Rights in Action - How Do We Move Forward?"

This event will feature a conversation with Betty Suskin (the oldest US Park Service Ranger), pioneering Bay Area journalist Jerri Lange, Oakland Fire Chief Teresa Deloach Reed, and historical aviation specialist Lynette Lung Lee. All are welcome; a donation of \$10 per person is suggested but not required.

- *Louise Rothman-Riemer*

# State League Set to Study Public Higher Ed

Currently, the League of Women Voters has no position on public higher education in California, so at the last State Convention a decision was made to undertake a study to enable LWVC to advocate for budget and policy matters affecting UC, CSU, and the community colleges. After the State Study Committee was formed, the scope was defined as “A study examining access to quality public higher education in California including funding, affordability, preparedness, equity, and opportunities and barriers to success.”

The State Study Committee has been hard at work conducting research and preparing a report for submission to the LWVC Board and final approval in July 2015. In August 2015, the Study Committee will send out a study kit, including consensus-type policy statements for a new series of consensus meetings, and a reading list to local Leagues. After Local Leagues form their own study committees, they will have nine months to educate members about the study via monthly newsletters and/or meetings, submitting their responses to consensus questions in April 2016.

1960 California created a historic Master Plan for Higher Education with the specific goal of expanding access and keeping the costs very affordable so that all who could benefit from a college education would be able to achieve their dream. Several reports have come out recently presenting alarming statistics regarding the current ability of Californians to get a college education. The California Budget Project ([www.cbp.org](http://www.cbp.org)) states in their recently released *From State to Student: How State Divestment Has Shifted Higher Education Costs to Students and Families*:

...cuts in state General Fund support have led to significantly increased tuition and fees in recent decades at California's public four-year higher education institutions, threatening the promise – enshrined in the state's Master Plan for Higher Education – of affordable, quality higher education that is accessible to all eligible

Californians. These trends have fundamentally altered how higher education costs are shared between the state, on the one hand, and students and their families, on the other. Whereas the state once paid most of the cost of public higher education in California, years of budget cuts and tuition hikes have shifted more of the costs to students and families, especially at the state's four-year institutions: the California State University (CSU) and the University of California (UC). This cost-shift undermines California's commitment to higher education and potentially puts the state's economic future at risk. It also means that more students are graduating with increasing amounts of student loan debt, while others are forgoing higher education altogether. A well-educated workforce is critical to California's future prosperity. Yet, at current rates, California will not produce enough college graduates to meet the demands of the state's economy in the years ahead.

A recent report from the Public Policy Institute of California ([www.ppic.org](http://www.ppic.org)) entitled *Defunding Higher Education: What are the Effects on College Enrollment?* finds:

- Increasingly, high school graduates in California are less likely to enroll in any four-year college.
- Enrollment rates at UC and CSU have fallen by one-fifth over the past five years from about 22 percent of all high school graduates to below 18 percent.
- Among the state's most highly prepared high school graduates, the enrollment rate has declined even more—from around 67 percent to 55 percent.
- Many opt for overcrowded community colleges, but increases in enrollment rates there do not make up for declines at UC and CSU.

A national report from the Pell Institute ([www.pellinstitute.org](http://www.pellinstitute.org)) entitled *Indicators of Higher Education Equity in the United States – 45 Year*

Report found that rising cost and lower government aid have made it even more difficult for poor students to obtain a college degree today than 45 years ago. The report draws on U.S. Census statistics and educational data to make the compelling and disturbing case that inequality in obtaining a college education has substantially grown in the past 45 years.

So, if government support for colleges has dropped, who is picking up the tab? Families and students have struggled to make up the difference. They contributed one-third of revenue needed to support the higher education system in 1980, but

just over half in 2012.

The General Election held in November 2014 saw the lowest turnout in decades. If we do not have an educated electorate that feels empowered to civically engage, then our democracy cannot function. California and, in fact, the nation are at a tipping point. By 2025, sixty percent of all new jobs in our state will require a college education. It is time for the League of Women Voters of California to weigh in. It is time for all of us to stand up and recommend choices about educational opportunity in California.

- Leslie Smith

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## Low Voter Turnout - A Civics Dilemma

In 2014, voters decided not to show up and eligible voters did not register. Nationally, the turnout in the 2014 election was an abysmal 36.3 percent, second-lowest to the 1942 election, according to *The New York Times*. For the California 2014 June primary, the voter turnout was 24.6 percent, out of 24,192,752 eligible voters (Fairvote.org). According to the California Civic Engagement Project at the UC Davis Center for Regional Change, only 8.2 percent of eligible youth ages 18-24 voted in the state's November 2014 election. The total turnout for California was only 42 percent of those registered to vote. While Oakland's election included 47 percent of its registered voters, it still means that more than half chose to stay home.

How do we engage voters and encourage others who are eligible to participate in the electoral process? This is what the League has dedicated itself to for almost a century. Civic awareness and voter registration are important elements to increase voter turnout at every election.

Civics education and awareness should begin at the middle school level and continue through high school. Consider getting local schools and the school district

involved to discuss the need for civics education at an early age. For those who grew up with Schoolhouse Rock and celebrated our country's bicentennial, civics education occurred outside of the classroom during Saturday morning cartoons. In our tech age, to engage future voters we will have to use different methods to increase civic awareness and inspire voter participation, but the goal remains the same.

To vote is a constitutional right that all citizens should exercise whenever possible at every level - local, statewide, and national. Our democracy depends on it.

- Natasha Middleton

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# League Lunch Meetings Start with BART

The debut of LWVO's "Lunch and Learn with the League" featured three BART board members presenting information about the Bay Area's most extensive transit system. Directors Zakhary Mallett (District 7), Rebecca Saltzman (District 3), and Robert Raburn (District 4) addressed a crowd of roughly 20 attendees on February 4 in Oakland City Hall during the noontime hour.

After an introductory welcome by Mallett, Saltzman spoke about BART's evolution, laying out a timeline of the system's history and explaining how transit demand has increased "faster than anybody projected even a few years ago." She mentioned that last November marked BART's highest-ever average weekday ridership, which hit 415,000, and revealed that projections for 2018 are forecast at 500,000. "If you ride BART every day, you can probably imagine that won't be very comfortable," she said.

BART's main strategies for accommodating this growth take the form of three capital projects, the biggest of which entails replacing its trains, whose average age is more than 30 years old, making the system's fleet the oldest in the nation. For a price tag of \$3.286 billion, BART plans to have the first new train cars in service by 2017, with 1,000-plus such cars on the rails by 2025. The other two projects involve a train control modernization effort (estimated between \$700 and \$900 million) to increase trip frequency through



From left: Katherine Gavzy, Zakhary Mallett, Rebecca Saltzman, and Robert Raburn

the Transbay Tube, and construction of the Hayward Maintenance Complex (budgeted at \$433 million) for working on and storing the expanded fleet.

Raburn followed these comments with a description of BART's interest in implementing station improvements. Sources of funding for such work remain uncertain, and BART hopes to recruit public support in figuring out a way to make the upgrades happen. On the whole, Raburn said, "We're here today to remind you of how important BART is to Alameda County, and to also ask for your advice as to how we can better serve Alameda County in the future."

- Alec MacDonald

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## Close, but No Cigar – So Check Your Label

Last month LWVO was pleased to discover that we are now the largest League in the state. However, we missed our LWVUS membership objective to grow 5 percent last year. Close, but no cigar... Our membership numbers on January 31 form the basis for our per member payments to LWVUS and LWVC for the current year. This number also impacts how many delegates we are entitled to send to State Convention this May.

Please check the mailing label on your Voter.

Look for a date above your name; if there is no date there, you are not a member. We invite you to join. If there is a date but it is a date prior to June 30, 2015 your membership has expired. Please renew.

Each January 31 all Leagues across the country submit their membership numbers to LWVUS. To encourage League growth, a goal for increased membership is set each year. The goal is to grow by at least 5 percent. Our membership objective and challenge is to bring in new members so that on January

31, 2016 we will be able to show a net gain of at least 16 new members. This is a challenge because our members are busy and mobile.

However, now that we have come so close, we are champing at the bit to make sure we meet our objectives in 2015. We grow because you help us grow. We grow when you invite your friends and colleagues to join our League and help make our democracy work. So won't you do that now?

- Louise Rothman-Riemer

## Membership News

### Welcome New Members

Morgan Henderson	Trisha Ong	Margaret Schultz
Cheryl Perry League	Thaddea Pojanowska	Allison Williams
	Robin Rosario	

### A Loss in the LWVO Family

Eleanor "Toni" Locke, founding editor of the *MacArthur Metro*, a community newspaper serving the Laurel and Dimond neighborhoods, died recently at age 97. Toni joined the League in 2007 shortly after participating as a panelist at the League's All-City Luncheon. She and several other journalists talked about the media's role in Making Democracy Work. Toni was honored by the Oakland Office of Parks and Recreation as "Mother of the Year" in 2011, recognizing her for her many volunteer contributions to the community. We extend our condolences to her family.

## SHARE THIS WITH FRIENDS – INVITE THEM TO JOIN US!

Membership in the League of Women Voters of Oakland is a bargain and a statement. It's a bargain because you will have access to valuable information and insights via the Voter newsletters and LWV websites, through membership not only in LWVO but also in LWV Bay Area, LWV California and LWVUS, and via a variety of events and dialogues with key leaders throughout the year.

Your statement as a League member will be that you are committed to providing non-biased, well-researched information to voters, and that the issues your League follows are those that affect every area in Oakland: schools, public safety, local government, parks, our economy, and more.

Join the League, one of the nation's most trusted, nonpartisan grassroots organizations where "hands-on work to safeguard democracy leads to civic improvement."

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual Membership (\$65)           | <input type="checkbox"/> Each additional member at an address (\$32.50) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student membership (\$25)              | <input type="checkbox"/> Limited Income (\$10 minimum)                  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Susan B. Anthony Membership (\$100)    | <input type="checkbox"/> Elizabeth Cady Stanton Membership (\$250)      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Carrie Chapman Catt Membership (\$500) | <input type="checkbox"/> Other  |

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The League of Women Voters of Oakland  
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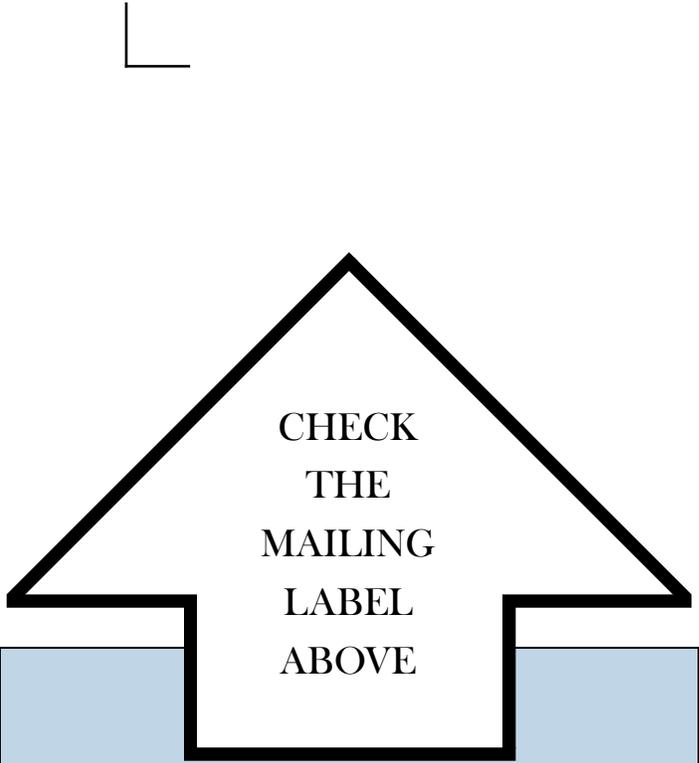
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**CALENDAR**  
 (Visit [lwvoakland.org](http://lwvoakland.org) for more event listings)

Monday, March 9 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.	LWVO Board Meeting	Central Building 2nd Floor ConferenceRoom 436 14th Street
Wednesday, March 25 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.	Hot Topics: Building a Budget for the Common Good	Central Building 2nd Floor ConferenceRoom 436 14th Street
Wednesday, April 1 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.	OUSD Budget Program	Oakland City Hall Hearing Room 3
Monday, April 13 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.	LWVO Board Meeting	Central Building 2nd Floor ConferenceRoom 436 14th Street
Wednesday, May 13 11:15 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.	All-City Luncheon	Scottish Rite Center 1547 Lakeside Drive



Is there a date at the top of it?  
 If there's no date at the top of it, you're not a member. Please join; see how at [www.lwvoakland.org](http://www.lwvoakland.org).  
 If there is a date, it shows when your membership expires. Renew using the form in this Voter or online.