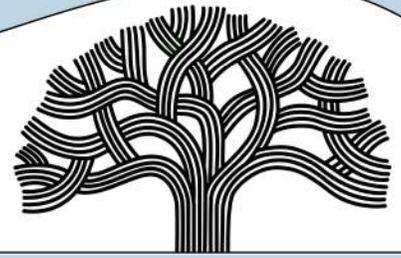


VOTER



AMENDING THE U.S. CONSTITUTION

DATE: Wednesday November 4

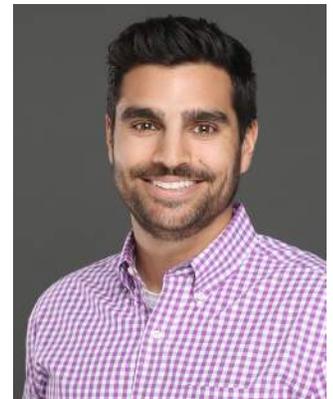
TIME: 6 PM to 8 PM

PLACE: Oakland City Hall

What should and should not be considered when amending the Constitution? What are the options laid out by our Founding Fathers? For background information, come hear from Jonathan Stein of Common Cause and the ACLU on Wednesday, November 4.

For full info about the LWVUS study, see: <http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/constitutional-amendment-study>.

There is a LOT of information here. Read one or two of the articles to get a sense for the range of opinion on these issues.



Jonathan Stein

NOW JOIN IN THE CONSENSUS MEETING

DATE: Saturday November 7

TIME: 9 AM to 1 PM Light Refreshments Available

PLACE: Conference Room 710 at 436 14th Street, Oakland

Local Leagues around the country will tell the League of Women Voters of the United States what we want the League's policy position on Constitutional amendments to be. With a solid position adopted, the League can take action on the issue. Here is where the grass roots have a voice. A list of the consensus questions can be found on the green pages inserted in this Voter and on the Web page referred to above. Bring your copy of the questions to the meeting on Saturday, November 7.

Non-members are welcome to attend but only League members will participate in the consensus process. If you haven't joined yet, or have not yet renewed your membership this year now is your chance: do it online at <http://lwvoakland.org/joinlwvo.html>.

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President's Message



This Land is Your Land ... This Land is My Land

In February of 1940 Woody Guthrie wrote a song that most of us can sing along with at a moment's notice: "This land is your land this land is my land, From California to the New York Islands; From the redwood

forests to the Gulf Stream waters, This land was made for you and me."

It's getting to be election time folks and even though it is just over a year before we select a new President, things are starting to heat up. People are talking and asking questions; they are hooting and hollering and banging their chests. Candidates are gearing up to have their voices heard; they have even begun the debates. And that means engagement, involvement, lots of ideas being slung around, and that means opportunity. Opportunity for making a difference to this land that is our land, this land that was made for you and me. And that is where the League comes in; we are here to speak out, to help challenge people's ideas on the issues, to make sure we are informed so we can vote smart.

Elections are an opportunity, yes, but only if we seize the moment, if we engage, then we make things happen! When we listened to Ann Ravel, Paul Ryan and Denise Barber in City Council Chambers at the League's October Program on Money in Politics, (Oh you missed it? Well KTOP recorded it, so you can still check it out) they all spoke about the importance of participation in the election process to make our democracy work.

We are told that when people contribute even very small amounts of money to a candidate's campaign or to a ballot initiative they care about, they are much more likely to follow through and vote. That means they

are also much more likely to talk to their friends and neighbors about the issues. And that is where you come in. Talk, whisper, yell to all that it is time, time to bone up and time to get to know the issues, to be informed.

The debates have brought passionate issues and ideas to the floor: gun control, free college education, support for the middle class, religious tolerance, immigrant issues and on we go. It is our job both individually and especially because we are Leaguers to further the conversations. Reach out to your friends in areas of Oakland that have little League involvement, like East and West Oakland. We need to bring information on the issues that people care about to where they live so they can be informed and ready to vote. So think about meeting with your friends from all over Oakland for coffee or tea, or take a hike, run the lake, sit with your friends and watch kids play at the park, and while you do these things talk, reach out engage and empower.

On November 4th at 6 pm in City Hall, Hearing Room 3, our League Program will feature Jonathan Stein, ACLU attorney and California chair of Common Cause talking about the realities of a Constitutional Amendment. Some think a constitutional amendment is the best way to counter Supreme Court decisions like Citizen United and McCutcheon, which have opened the monetary flood gates. You will find the consensus questions as an insert in this issue of the Voter. We will have a consensus meeting on Saturday Nov. 7th and we want you there to participate. You're a Leaguer, so lead the way and help us have an informed and actively citizenry. This land is your land; this land is my land, from San Leandro to the Berkeley border, this land that's made for you and me.

-Louise Rothman-Riemer, President LWVO

Money in Politics and the First Amendment

To understand the current framework of campaign finance in the U.S. requires a basic understanding of the First Amendment, which protects freedom of speech, the press, and association. The First Amendment guarantees citizens' right to express and to be exposed to a wide range of opinions and views. The media is free to distribute a wide range of news, facts, and opinions. The amendment protects the ability of citizens in a democracy to hear full discussion of issues as well as to speak their minds.

The right to free speech is not absolute. The U.S. Supreme Court has ruled that the government sometimes may be allowed to limit speech. Today the Court asks three questions before deciding on any First Amendment restrictions: Is there significant or compelling governmental interest that justifies the limitation? Is the limitation appropriate or the least restrictive means of protecting that governmental interest? Does the limitation apply too broadly to situations where the governmental interest is not in play? The Court uses these tests when they consider limits to campaign financing.

Political Speech and Money

Some maintain that "money is speech" and argue that limitations on money in politics unconstitutionally limit free speech. Others cannot accept that a billion-dollar corporation spending unlimited amounts in political campaigns can be the same as a single person speaking at a public meeting.

In our media-saturated society, it is necessary to spend money to get one's views to the public, so in this sense money is speech. On the other hand, is it democracy if a special interest group can spend unlimited money to drown out the speech of others?

Some Questions for Reflection

Does the right to hear include the right to hear the views of corporations and associations? What are the limits of First Amendment rights when it comes to associations of individuals? After all, the First Amendment protects the right to associate as well as speech and press. Associations take many forms, from political parties to religious organizations; from giant, for-profit international corporations to local charities; from newspapers and media outlets owned by corporations to non profits like the League of Women Voters. Do all these associations or should all these associations have the same or different rights under the First Amendment, and how should they be differentiated in law? Should the preacher of a tax-exempt church be allowed to urge parishioners to vote for a particular political party, and what is a "religious organization" anyway? What are the appropriate limits, if any, for a political party raising and spending funds to help its candidates in an election?

Should there be limits on the quantity of speech? Campaign finance limits are prohibited, the Court said in *Buckley vs Valeo* in 1974, because they "necessarily reduce the quantity of expression by restricting the number of issues discussed, the depth of their exploration, and the size of the audience reached." The concept that "More money allows for more speech" might mean that more people hear the ideas or it could be that some people just hear the same idea over and over. Another argument is that large quantities of some speech may interfere or not allow for the speech of others. How much money is needed to provide ample opportunity for an idea to be heard?

-Katherine Gavzy

League About Town – Tabling in the Rockridge

Sunshine, food trucks, music, and booths both informational and retail lined College Ave in Oakland’s Rockridge on Sunday Oct. 11th. The League was there, tabling outside Diesel, a bookstore. We sported flags and splashes of red, white and blue as we talked up the League and registered people to vote.

Within 10 minutes of setting up, a young woman ran up, excited because she could register to vote right then. Most of the voters registering were Millennials. They were jazzed about the coming election and anxious to register or re-register if they had moved. They were also very civically engaging and anxious to talk about their candidates and the first debates. Drew Levitt was a great person for them to talk to; a senior in high school and a League Member he eagerly engaged people about the League as they passed by.

We’ll be out tabling again on Sunday November 8th at The Dia de los Muertos Festival 10am - 5pm in Fruitvale Village. We’d love to have you table with us. Call the League office and let us know when you can come: 510-834-7640.

-Louise Rothman-Riemer, President LWVO



Phyllis White-Ayanruoh & Meg Bowerman

Drew Levitt & Deborah Shefler

Please Welcome the Following New Members

Martha Harnly
Sharon Hayden
Dana King

Welcome to the New VP Admin, Jane Klein

The Oakland LWV is lucky to have Jane Klein as its new Vice President-Administration. The League has a lot going on, and Jane has the skill to keep track of the details that would be easy to lose, and the tact to keep people focused on what needs to be done. She is also willing to jump in and help out wherever she is needed.

Jane has been a member of the League since 2009, when she met Iris Winogrand, who invited her to attend the annual meeting. Jane was hooked! She became active in the Education Committee, and served on the Nominating Committee with Rosalee Schubert, who subsequently encouraged her to take over the VP position.

-Sandy Venning



LWVC Celebrates Passage of AB 1461, California's New Motor Voter Program

The League of Women Voters of California joins with Secretary of State Alex Padilla in celebrating the historic passage of AB 1461, which was signed by Governor Brown on October 10. The new law will provide California citizens additional opportunities to participate in democracy through exercise of the basic right to vote. Voting is a fundamental citizen right that must be guaranteed. Bringing as many eligible Californians into our election process as possible has great rewards for our democracy. The League stands firmly behind efforts to make voter registration easy and accessible to all eligible citizens. California ranks 38th among the states in voter registration, a dismal record that must be improved. AB 1461 could potentially bring the 6.6 million eligible but unregistered voters in our state—who are predominantly Latino, African American and Asian-Pacific Islanders—into the electoral process.

The LWVC has worked relentlessly for full implementation of the National Voter Registration Act (NVRA) in state agencies including Covered California and, currently, at the Department of Motor Vehicles. We were encouraged that, during the course of NVRA negotiations with the Governor's office, the Secretary of State's office, the DMV, and the Department of Transportation, funding for the DMV to implement online voter registration during driver's license transactions was included in this year's budget. That momentum to implement an automated system must not be lost! This includes ensuring that the DMV will implement efficient, streamlined voter registration before the June 2016 primary.

No League Position on Initiative #15-0068

A recently filed initiative (Voters' Right to Know Act/#15-0068) is likely to gain the attention of League members in California. It includes an addition to the California Constitution and reforms to the California Political Reform Act (PRA), many of which were parts of bills we actively supported in the last legislative session.

However, there is one key provision that is missing—one that is important to the League at both state and local levels. This is the removal of the ban on public financing of elections that is currently in the PRA. This ban applies to elections at the state level and to local counties and general law cities. Only charter cities are allowed to enact any public financing plan for their elections.

Because of this missing provision, the LWVC **is not supporting this measure**, and therefore, **local Leagues may not work for it**, either by gathering signatures or by making any public comment. We also ask that local Leagues not promote the measure via social media, because this can imply that the League supports it.

Questions? Please contact Helen Hutchison, hhutchison@lwvc.org, Joanne Leavitt, jleavitt@lwvc.org, or Trudy Schafer, tschafer@lwvc.org.

League of Women Voters of Oakland 2015-16 Board of Directors

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MONEY IN POLITICS FORUM INFORMS AND ENCOURAGES

The League was honored to partner with Oakland's Public Ethics Commission to present a public forum on Money in Politics, October 15th in City Council Chambers. The featured speakers were:

- Anne Ravel, Chair of the Federal Election Commission (www.fec.gov) and former head of the California Fair Political Practices Commission, who addressed Current Challenges and Potential Reforms, and shared her frustrations in attempting to enforce campaign finance regulations within what she considers to be a dysfunctional FEC
- Paul Ryan, Senior Counsel at The Campaign Legal Center (<http://www.campaignlegalcenter.org>), who explained the current campaign finance legal landscape
- Denise Roth Barber, Managing Director of the National Institute on Money in State Politics (<http://www.followthemoney.org>), who showed us how her organization tracks and discloses the true funding sources of campaigns and candidates

Responding to questions from the Public Ethics commissioners, from LWVO spokespersons Louise Rothman-Riemer, Valena Williams Jr. and Katherine Gavzy, and from the audience and the general public (via Twitter and emails), the speakers explored further the issues of regulation and enforcement, public financing and disclosure, as tools to combat the corrupting influence of money. Chair Ravel believes that encouraging small donors is preferable to public financing of campaigns, since it supports broad public participation in the process. Mr. Ryan cited examples of cities that offer vouchers to facilitate multiple small donations; he believes that inadequate enforcement of existing regulations is enabling large contributors to flout the rules and causes voter cynicism and apathy. Ms Barber praised the state of California and the city of Oakland, with our new Open Disclosure system, for providing easy public online access to useful data on financial sources.

The Public Ethics Commission will use information gained at the Forum as it drafts amendments to the Oakland Campaign Reform Act and Limited Public Financing Act. League members will draw on this forum and the follow-up Hot Topics discussion on October 28, along with their own reading and reflecting on LWVUS resources posted at (<http://forum.lwv.org/category/member-resources/our-work/money-politics-review>) in preparing to participate in the Consensus meeting January 9th, when grass roots members tell the national League what we want to see in our updated policy position on campaign finance. For more information on upcoming events see <http://www2.oaklandnet.com/Government/o/CityAdministration/d/PublicEthics/index.htm> and <http://lwvoakland.org/index.html>

-Katherine Gavzy



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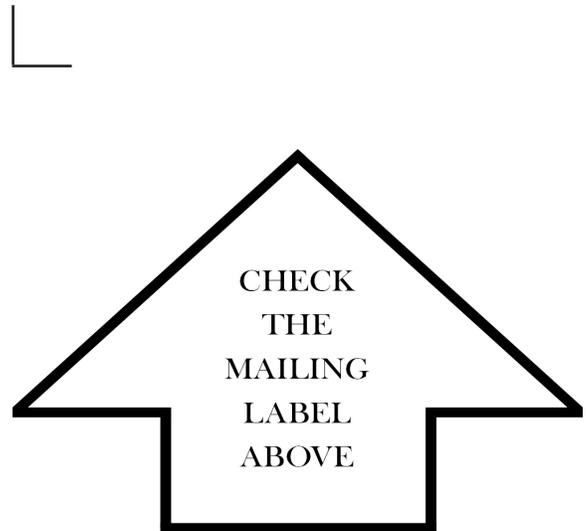
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CALENDAR

(Visit lwvoakland.org for more event listings)

Wed, Nov 4, 6:00 - 8:00 pm	Public Info Forum on Amend- ing the Constitu- tion.	Oakland City Hall 1 Frank Ogawa Plaza. Hearing Rm 3
Sat, Nov 7, 9:00am - 100pm	Consensus meet- ing on Constitu- tion amendments	Conference Room 710 at 436 14th Street
Mon, Nov 9 6:30- 8:30pm	LWVO Board Meeting	Conference room 710 at 436 14th Street
Thu, Nov 18	Higher Education Forum - Status of Public Higher Education in CA	TBD
Wed, Dec 2, 6pm- 8pm	Hot Topics Voting Rights for Felons	Room 710 at 436 14th Street Oakland
Fri, Dec 11 6pm - 8pm	Holiday Party	The home of Louise Roth- man-Riemer



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 your membership expires. If this date
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 click on "Renew Online."

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 someone will get back to you promptly.