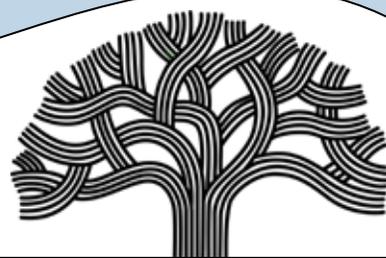


# VOTER



## Hot Topics: Beyond Gun Control



What is being done – and what can be done – to reduce violence in Oakland? Oakland has strong gun control laws, yet crime, including shootings, remains a major concern of residents and visitors. How can we work together to make our city safer? A Ceasefire worker will be on hand as a resource, but the discussion will allow everyone to share experiences and ideas.

Join LWVO for this next Hot Topics program on Wednesday, February 25, from 6 to 7:30 p.m. in the second floor conference room at 436 14th Street. - Mary Bergan



Dan Borenstein

## Understanding Oakland's Retirement Debt

Public pensions will be a topic of discussion during this year's city budget process. Come to LWVO's March program about public pensions to understand what is at stake and what the options are.

Our featured speaker will be Dan Borenstein, an award-winning columnist and editorial writer for the Bay Area News Group, which includes the *Contra Costa Times*, *Oakland Tribune*, and *San Jose Mercury News*.

The program will be held in Oakland City Hall Hearing Room 2 on Wednesday, March 4 from 6 to 8 p.m.

- Leslie Smith

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# President's Message

January was a fabulous month for Oakland, and hopefully it was just the start of a powerful year in the civic life of our city. Those who were lucky (or persistent) enough to attend the inauguration ceremony in the beautiful Paramount Theater heard our elected officials celebrate Oakland's diversity, vibrancy, resiliency, and great potential. I could not help noticing how many of the continuing and newly-elected city leaders on the stage are LWVO members. CityCamp (see story on page four) was a stimulating opportunity to share ideas and enjoy the enthusiastic sense of civic engagement in our new "techie" community. Maybe in San Francisco the Google gang are self-absorbed and materialistic; here they are busy researching a high-tech way to improve street lighting! The Inaugural Festival at American Steel Studios in West Oakland was a huge party for the whole city, with music, food (if you haven't tried Tina Tamale yet you are missing something truly delicious), and mind-blowing art.



Katherine Gavzy

Coming down from all this excitement to the hard, cold reality of government, this spring LWVO is focusing both our education and action efforts on budget. The monthly program on March 4 will deal with public pensions and their impact on the city budget. Then on March 25, the Hot Topics informal round table discussion will address the city budget process: a new and improved process, which LWVO had long been advocating for, has been adopted and we will be sure to monitor its implementation. The April program will turn to the school district budget process. Our emphasis throughout will be on transparency and public access. If making sure that public budget truly serves the common good is your passion, contact our Action Committee ([marybergan@aol.com](mailto:marybergan@aol.com)) or the Education Committee ([yolandaschonbrun2@yahoo.com](mailto:yolandaschonbrun2@yahoo.com)) and join them in observing the city council and the school board at work.

- Katherine Gavzy

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# LWVO Conducts Program Planning



LWVO members convened in the Rockridge Library for program planning on January 17

Saturday, January 17 was the League's annual program planning meeting. The issues that were agreed upon in this meeting will help inform our work for the coming year. Program planning is a key step in the League's process of study, position development, and action. The League only takes action if it is supported by a "position" (i.e. policy statement) that has been accepted by the members, and we use study and analysis to develop a position. This can take a while, and people often complain about that, but it means that when we act, we "know what we're talking about."

Program planning encompasses two primary activities: The first is position/policy review. Members review existing League positions, considering whether they are adequate to support action and advocacy on the subject, and deciding whether we should: a) retain them as is, b) propose updates/revisions to an existing position, or c) start a new study in order to develop a new position, if we think that no existing positions will support action that members consider important.

The second part of program planning is discussing and deciding on a few primary issues to be the focus of both education and advocacy

in the coming year. In doing this we take into account how much this focus will help further the League's long-term vision and impact in the community, hopefully perhaps attracting and retaining members and developing new leaders.

Since California State League convention will be this year, we reviewed LWVC positions. The State League board is gathering results from local Leagues for presentation and debate on the convention floor. Next year, we will review LWVUS positions in preparation for the national League Convention. The State issues were divided into three basic categories: Government, Natural Resources, and Social Policy. We agreed that we should retain all of the State positions, but with a recommendation to consider updating the Election Systems position to include review of alternative systems such as multi-member

*(continued on page 4)*



LWVO members (from left) Jane Klein, Louise Rothman-Riemer, Rosalee Schubert, Mary Bergan, Allene Warren, and Clyde Nelson

# Program Planning (from page 3)

districts, and to specifically include the conduct of primary elections. When the new “top two” primary system was on the ballot a few years ago, the League could neither support nor oppose it because we had no position on primary elections. At the State level, following some impassioned discussion we recommended increased focus for education and advocacy on the following three issues: 1) campaign finance, 2) public education on state and local finance issues, particularly those involving pensions and the impact of Proposition 13, and 3) ground water and aquifer issues, especially related to fracking.

We also agreed to support a statewide study recommended by the San Diego League on “Death with Dignity,” or as many call it, “Compassionate Choice,” for end of life issues.

LWVO also agreed to retain and work on the positions recommended by the nine-county League of Women Voters of the Bay Area. These positions include regional government and planning, environmental and natural resources, hazardous materials management, social policy (housing), and transportation on land and in the air.

At the Alameda County level we again agreed to retain existing positions, but work to focus attention on transparency and effectiveness of the County

Board and Office of Education in view of new leadership and new state funding formulas. We also voted to emphasize advocacy in the area of juvenile justice, including solitary confinement.

We agreed to retain all local Oakland positions. We will present the following three recommendations of issues for education and advocacy to the members at Annual Meeting in June: 1) To increase civic engagement among our members and the public (in particular to maintain our support of the newly-strengthened Public Ethics Commission and increase public awareness and participation in the Commission’s work); 2) Educate our members and the public about the new City budget process and monitor its implementation this year; and 3) Work to establish guidelines for use and retention of public surveillance in private thoroughfares.

LWVO’s objective with this planning process is to improve our democracy by refocusing and increasing our activism. Working on these projects and issues is an excellent way for our members to become involved with the League. We will be more effective when we increase our public presence on these issues that we have deemed of importance at local, county, regional, state, and national levels.

*- Louise Rothman-Riemer; photos by Trisha Gorman*



Members (from left) Louise Anderson, Anna Mathai, and Judy Merrill



Members (from left) Bev Solo, Sandy Venning, Katherine Gavzy, and Yolanda Schonnbrun

# LWVO Members Attend CityCamp

Eight LWVO members were among the large and diverse group of Oaklanders participating in the day-long CityCamp event at City Hall on January 10. We all agreed that it was stimulating, instructive, and fun. The organizing group, OpenOakland, plans to hold CityCamp regularly; I hope to go again and I recommend it to anyone interested in learning about community-based creative ways to improve life in our city. Although many of the participants came from Oakland's growing community of youthful "techies," people of all ages (as well as ethnicities) were there, and everyone was comfortable with everyone else.

As described by the organizers, "CityCamp is an unconference focused on innovation and collaboration for municipal governments, community organizations, and citizens." Note the use of "unconference" – this was not a tightly-scripted, carefully-timed, and agendized program, not at all "League-like." The topics for workshops and discussions were spontaneously crowd-sourced. Somehow it all worked. Topics covered ranged from how to improve availability and quality of public restrooms, through how to use data for police accountability, how to make the mayor's summer



LWVO Board Member Dawna Williams (left) and Mayoral Chief of Staff Tomiquia Moss at CityCamp on January 10

jobs website more user-friendly, to fresh ideas for increasing voter turnout. The City of Oakland supported the event (along with Oakland Public Library, Oakland Local, and others). There were several city officials participating and taking notes on suggestions about how to improve public services.

Now we look forward to learning what happens to all the creative ideas produced by this event.

- Katherine Gavzy

## Save the Date: All-City Luncheon Set for May 13

Same great event, new venue! After several years of selling out all available seats and asking our guests to squeeze into the Pavilion at Scott's Seafood restaurant, we are moving our Luncheon to the beautiful Scottish Rite Center, an arts and crafts jewel on Lake Merritt. Featured speaker will be Sylvia Earle, renowned ocean biologist, explorer, author, and lecturer. She is National Geographic's Explorer-in-Residence and a groundbreaker in a field dominated by men. Dr. Earle is also a dynamic and fascinating speaker – for a sneak peek at what to expect, look at her TED Prize-winning talk "How to Protect the Oceans" on YouTube. Stay tuned for more updates on the Luncheon, mark your calendar

for May 13, and tell your friends, neighbors, and colleagues about it.

- Bonnie Hamlin

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# Meet New Board Member Natasha Middleton

The Board of the League of Women Voters of Oakland is happy to welcome a new member to the Board, Natasha Middleton. Natasha has been a member of LWVO for a little over two years, and has been very active from the start. Currently on the Membership Committee and the Nominating Committee, she was drawn to the League by her strong convictions about the right to vote and the importance of voter registration. Natasha has felt strongly about the importance of voting ever since she took a civics class in high school.



Natasha Middleton

Natasha comes from a politically active family. Her father was in the military and was stationed in Germany where he met and married her German mother and where Natasha was born. She grew up discussing politics with both her parents and her German grandmother. They didn't always agree. Now she discusses policy and political issues with her 17-year-old son. They don't always agree either, but she is glad and proud that he takes political issues seriously.

Natasha earned a master's degree in Public Policy at Mills College in 2013. Her masters thesis, *Priority Based Budgeting: a Model for the City of Oakland*, in which her client was the Budget Advisory Committee for the City of Oakland, was published on the International City/County Management Association's website. An analysis of the option of applying Priority Based Budgeting as a budgeting model, the thesis examines and analyzes

Oakland's budget process. Natasha now works as a Management Analyst for the Alameda County Probation Department, managing various projects funded by the State and Federal government serving the juvenile population.

Natasha is a member of a number of civic organizations and has been involved with a number of political races. But policy and politics are not her only interests. Most recently, she ran the Northern California Ragnar, which is a 12-person 24-hour relay race from San Francisco to Calistoga.

- *Sandy Venning*

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## Support the League through Your Will

One easy way to support the good work of the League of Women Voters is to remember LWV Oakland in your will. By making bequests and other "planned gifts" to the League, you can leave a legacy of helping us to expand and enhance programs and voter education in your community. Please remember that although the legacies you typically read about in the papers are grand in scope, most people who leave assets to charitable organizations through their wills are of modest means. Gifts large and small are important and we welcome your help.

So how do you remember the League of Women Voters of Oakland in your will? When planning or updating your will, simply tell your attorney that you want to leave something for LWVO. A common practice when including a bequest in your estate is to leave a percentage, rather than a fixed amount, to us. That way, your bequest to our organization remains in proportion to other bequests. And remember to specify the League of Women Voters of Oakland. All levels of the League do good work, but this is your League.

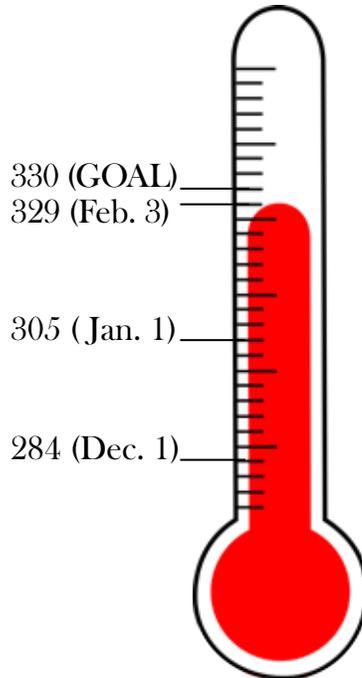
- *Katherine Gavzy*

# LWVO: Largest League in CA

Congratulations! Oakland is now the largest League in the state! On January 31, official membership stood at 324; new members and renewals received through February 3 brought us up to 329, just one shy of our target for January 31.

Help keep us moving ahead by engaging your friends and family in making democracy work in Oakland and encouraging them to join LWVO. We have especially been reaching out to Millennials and Gen Xers, as they will be our upcoming leaders. There is hardly a better preparation vehicle for civic leadership than the League! Thanks for your support – keep it up!

- Louise Rothman-Riemer



## Membership News

Welcome New Members:

Linda Brown  
Frederica Bunge  
Margaret Grace  
Emily Jackson  
Drew Levitt  
Sheila McCune  
Clyde Nelson  
Jeanne Robinson  
Shirley Schell  
Kathy Shaw  
Ann Livingston  
Ethea Farahkhan

Welcome Back:

Joanne Casey  
Judy DeVries

## SHARE THIS WITH A FRIEND – 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."

- |   |   |
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Make checks payable to LWVO, and mail to 436 14th Street, Suite 1213, Oakland CA 94612.

Dues are not tax deductible.



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 Oakland, CA 94612



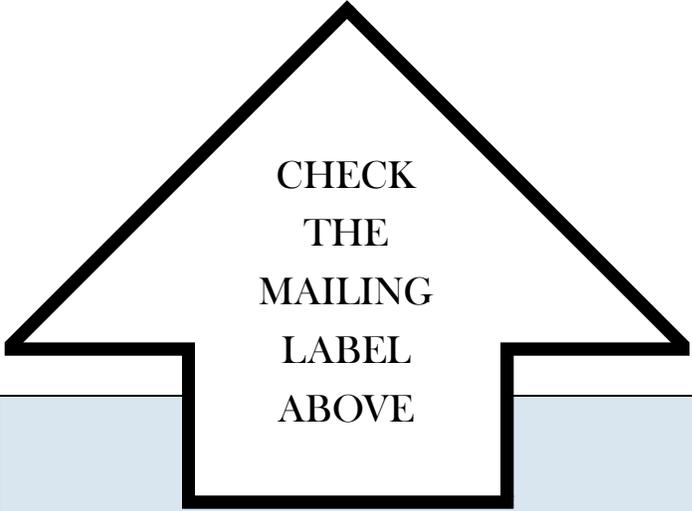
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**CALENDAR**  
 (Visit [lwvoakland.org](http://lwvoakland.org) for more event listings)

Wednesday, February 25 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.	Hot Topics: Gun Violence	Central Building 2nd Floor ConferenceRoom 436 14th Street
Wednesday, March 4 6:00 to 8:00 p.m.	Public Pensions Program	Oakland City Hall Hearing Room 2
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 2
Wednesday, May 13	All-City Luncheon	Scottish Rite Center 1547 Lakeside Drive



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