

Program Planning: Basis for Advocacy

As League members, we know you care about voting and never miss an election. So, we know you won't want to miss the League's program planning meeting, where the League sets its agenda and where we create the foundation from which to advocate our positions. This year's program planning will be on Saturday, January 17 from 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. It will take place in the Rockridge Library at 5366 College Avenue at the intersection with Manila Avenue. The library is a third of a mile south of the Rockridge BART Station, which has free parking on Saturdays. There is also a metered parking lot next to the library.



We'll be discussing League policy and positions at the state, local, county, and Bay Area levels, including where the League should focus its energy over the next two years. Do we think there should be a new study? What issues are important to you? Should we focus on community education? What are the areas of concern to us here in Oakland?

Morning coffee, tea, and snacks will be provided. For lunch, please bring your own brown bag or choose a nearby restaurant for carry out. Please come prepared by reading our current positions at lwvoakland.org/positions.html.

- Yolanda Schonbrun

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President's Message

I hope everyone had a relaxing and enjoyable time with family and friends during the holidays. After celebrating our successes together (see photos of the holiday party on page five), we will focus in 2015 on doing all we can to help respond to Oakland voters' message and make good government a reality. One success during the election was the passage of the charter amendment to strengthen the Public Ethics Commission, followed just a few weeks later by passage in City Council of a new ethical conduct ordinance. I am so proud that Oakland will be a model for effective, fair, transparent, and ethical city government. See the story on page four. Another success was the passage of the county transportation measure BB. LWVO members and many others supported it partly because they are committed to improving mass transit in the Bay Area. When I moved here from Los Angeles I was awestruck by BART, a Bay Area treasure which many of you may take for granted. At our program on February 4 we will learn about BART's plans for the future; come, bring your questions and opinions, and as always, bring a friend. We are also trying out a new approach: instead of the



Katherine Gavzy

usual evening programs, it will be a noon-time brown bag lunch and talk. We hope this will attract more people and be more convenient for many.

One question that came up over and over at the candidate forums last fall was the city budget. Will we have enough funds to undo the drastic cuts of the lean years? How much of a drain is the future liability for city worker pensions (particularly police and fire)? This last question is always controversial and hotly debated – so come learn more about it and exchange ideas and opinions at the Hot Topics informal roundtable discussion on Wednesday, January 28.

We will kick off the year with Program Planning on Saturday, January 17. This is one of my favorite League activities: your opportunity to help state and local League decide where and how we'll focus our resources of member time, money, and reputation. Come enjoy a day of lively discussion and critical decision-making. I especially urge new members to come; this is a great way to get to know your fellow League members and share your passions.

- Katherine Gavzy

League of Women Voters of Oakland 2014-15 Board of Directors

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Grand Jury Finds Problems with OUSD

In 2013-14 the Alameda County Grand Jury found that the Oakland Unified School District had many problems including high teacher turnover, low teacher pay, teacher assignment issues, an ineffective and cumbersome teacher evaluation system, contractual issues, and a history of a strained relationship with the Oakland Education Association. The lack of correct, comprehensive, and completed financial audits by OUSD has added to the district's woes. While many of these issues may still need attention, the OUSD responses addressed only those related to audits and financial findings.

The investigation concluded the Oakland Unified School District must: 1) satisfactorily complete its financial audits, 2) improve their financial and reporting systems, 3) strengthen procedures surrounding the collection and maintenance of records, 4) fill key financial staffing vacancies, 5) take steps to eliminate under-enrolled school situations (including inaccurate ADA figures), and 6) review financial impacts of charter schools.

On September 10, 2014 the Oakland Unified

School District submitted its responses to the findings and recommendations from the 2013-2014 Civil Grand Jury Report and Financial Update. Important to remember is that audits for fiscal years 2003-08 were conducted by the state controller and did not include impressions of the findings. None were performed for the fiscal years 2008-09 and 2009-10. The 2010-11 audit was issued in 2013 and is currently under appeal. In 2013 OUSD awarded a service contract to Vavrinek, Trine, Day & Co. to conduct audits for 2011-12 and 2012-13. They are not mentioned in this response.

OUSD has agreed to all six Grand Jury findings but lack of current audits has resulted in the withdrawal of a credit rating of the District by rating agencies. This, of course, has had a huge impact on the District's ability to raise money.

Visit www.acgov.org/grandjury/documents/2013-14_gjresponseOaklandUSD.pdf for a detailed report and a copy of OUSD Superintendent Antwan Wilson's Entry Plan.

- Allene Warren

League Assists with Senior Center Election

Although the League's Voter Service efforts are primarily focused on informing voters and getting out the vote for governmental elections like the one on November 4, that's not all we do. Occasionally we are asked by a non-profit group such as a public housing or senior center board to help run their elections. Thus it was that LWVO was asked to participate in the election of new officers and board members of the Golden Age Senior Center a few days after the state and local election had been held.

Allene Warren, Judi Bank, and Sandy Venning took our ballot box and vote tally sheets over to Eastmont Mall on November 7 to assist the voting process. Golden Age Senior Center meets at the Eastmont Mall and draws its members from the

surrounding area. County Supervisor Nate Miley had issued the invitation, and we were glad to help. He and the senior center staff were well prepared. The election was preceded by a candidates forum, and the LWVO role was limited to greeting and checking in voters, directing them to voting booths and the ballot box, and tallying the votes when the poll closed.

All members can feel proud that the League is respected and trusted to run elections fairly. Our reputation gives confidence to participants who might be concerned about the fairness of the vote. It was rewarding to feel that we were contributing to democracy at a grass roots level, and we felt warmly welcomed and appreciated.

- Sandy Venning

Progress toward Ethical City Government

The City Council voted unanimously on December 9 in favor of the Government Ethics Act drafted by the Public Ethics Commission together with Councilmember Dan Kalb, the City Attorney, and the citizens Ethics and Good Government working group (including LWVO). The act takes effect immediately. This is a strong positive response to the damning report on ethical conduct in Oakland city government issued by the county grand jury in 2013.

The act sets forth clear rules and guidelines governing conflicts of interest, revolving door, gifts and contracts, and more. It establishes and expands state ethics laws applicable to city local government. It gives the Public Ethics Commission authority to impose penalties for violations of the rules on non-interference with administrative affairs and nepotism.

In addition to authority to impose penalties and fines for ethical conduct violations, it authorizes the PEC to provide training on compliance with the laws.

The Public Ethics Commission, newly-empowered by the charter amendment approved by nearly 75percent of voters in the last election, has a lot on its plate. The League has been one of the strongest supporters of the Commission over the years. These are exciting times for the Commission as they begin work with their new powers and responsibilities, and they need our presence and encouragement now more than ever. The PEC meets on the first Monday of every month at 6:30 p.m. in City Hall Hearing Room One. I urge all LWVO members to come to a meeting and see good government in action.

- Katherine Gavzy

Hot Topics: The Impact of Pensions on the Oakland City Budget

Wednesday, January 28

6 to 7:30 p.m.

436 14th Street, Second Floor Conference Room

The city budget seems to be in better shape than in recent years. Still, many cite current required pension contributions and long-term pension liabilities as factors which must be included to give Oaklanders a complete view of the budget now in development.

How much do you understand about how public pensions work and what they mean for the city and its workers? Interim Assistant City Manager Donna Hom will be among the resource people in attendance for a timely discussion as the new mayor builds the next budget.

Lunch and Learn with the League February 4

BART is the transit backbone of our region. After more than 40 years of service and with the oldest fleet in the nation, BART now averages more than 415,000 weekday trips. BART reached its third highest ridership when the World Champion San Francisco Giants held their victory parade on Halloween. Escalating ridership indicates an improving economy, and increased use of mass transit takes more cars off the road, but it also puts

a tremendous strain on the aging system. Moving forward will need careful planning and increased support to keep up with demand.

Come join us to learn more at the Building a Better BART presentation on Wednesday, February 4 from 12 to 1:30 p.m. at Oakland City Hall Hearing Room 3. This will be the first in a new series of programs we are calling "Lunch and Learn with the League."

- Yolanda Schonbrun

LWVO Celebrates the Holiday Season

After a busy election season, it was very enjoyable to get together with other League members just to relax and celebrate our accomplishments and the holiday season. The evening, hosted by Louise Rothman-Riemer and her husband Davis Riemer, was festive and the perfect way to unwind after so much hard work.

- Sandy Venning



Yolanda Schonbrun, Joey Hansell, Louise Rothman-Riemer, and Sandy Venning



Carolyn Devol, Bonnie Hamlin, and Gen Katz



Larry Bowerman, Meg Bowerman, Carmen Murray, and Katherine Gavzy



Pete Bank, Davis Riemer, and Peter Crigger



Terry Kulka

~~7~~ **8** LWV members have entrusted me with the sale of their homes – let's make yours ~~7~~ **8** ~~9~~ **9**

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THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF THE BAY AREA

Invites you to attend

Bay Area League Day 2015

Saturday, January 31

**9:30 AM to 2:30 PM; Registration and refreshments from 9:00 to 9:30 AM
MetroCenter Auditorium, 101 Eighth Street, Oakland, CA 94607**

Featuring

**Keynote Speaker Annie Notthoff of the Natural Resources Defense Council
addressing
State Climate Change Laws, Target Reductions, and the Bay Area**

Panel 1: Measures to Achieve the 2050 Greenhouse Gas Target Reductions

John Gioia of BAAQMD and the California Air Resources Board

Ken Kirkey of the Metropolitan Transportation Commission

Stuart Cohen of TransForm

Panel 2: Adapting to Sea Level Rise

Assemblymember Richard Gordon of the Select Committee on Sea Level Rise

Bruce Riordan, Climate Change Consultant for the Joint Policy Committee

Linda Dismore (Diz) Swift of the Berkeley Public Works Commission

Panel 3: Local Impacts of Climate Change

Jenny Bard of the American Lung Association

Timothy Burroughs of the City of Berkeley

Paloma Pavel of Breakthrough Communities

Registration

Prepaid registration is \$35 (\$20 without lunch)

Day-of registration is \$40 (\$25 without lunch)

**To preregister, send a check payable to
LWVBA, 436 14th Street, #1213, Oakland, CA 94612
or register online at www.lwvbayarea.org/calendar.html
For more information, please call (510) 839-1608**

Membership Campaign Hits Home Stretch

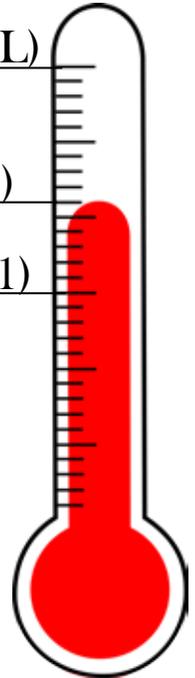
Did you renew your membership? Yes you, did you renew? We really need you to renew by January 31 to not only keep you current with all the great work we are doing in Oakland, but also to keep our standing with LWV National.

In the weeks since the publication of the last edition of *The Voter*, the number of new and renewing members is up to 305. We still need at least 25 of the 35 who haven't renewed yet to do so in order for us to meet our goal of 330 by January 31.

330 (GOAL)

305 (Jan. 1)

284 (Dec. 1)



We are hoping to have 330 members by the end of January and that means that if you have not renewed we urgently need you to do it now!

When you consider the low voter turnout in the last election, we have a lot of work to do. Therefore, the more voices we can say we represent, the more impact we will have locally, in Sacramento, and even nationally.

If you have a friend who is interested in moving Oakland forward, membership in the League will be a great advantage to them, so encourage them to join us. It is easy to do online at www.lwvoakland.com, or with the form below.

- Louise Rothman-Riemer

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."

- | | |
|---|---|
| <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 |

Name/Names: _____

Address: _____ City: _____ ZIP: _____

Day phone: _____ Evening: _____ E-mail: _____

Make checks payable to LWVO, and mail to 436 14th Street, Suite 1213, Oakland CA 94612.
Dues are not tax deductible.



The League of Women Voters of Oakland
 436 14th Street, Suite 1213
 Oakland, CA 94612



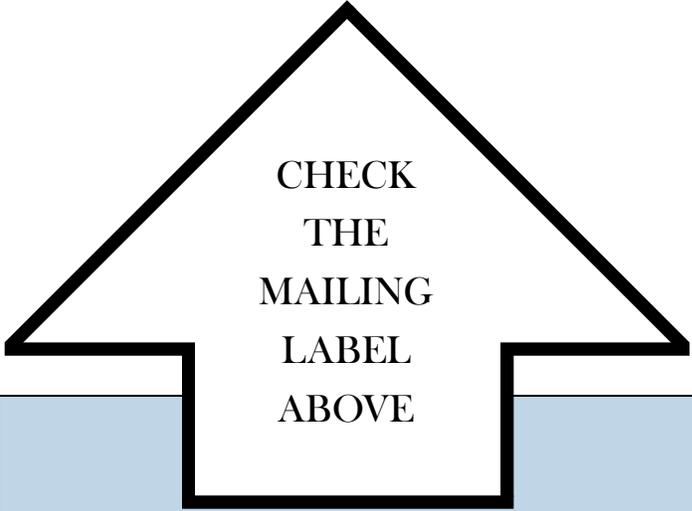
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 www.lwvoakland.org
 info@lwvoakland.org

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CALENDAR
 (Visit lwvoakland.org for more event listings)

Monday, January 12 6:30 to 8:30 p.m.	LWVO Board Meeting	Central Building 2nd Floor ConferenceRoom 436 14th Street
Saturday, January 17 10:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.	Program Planning	Rockridge Library 5366 College Avenue
Wednesday, January 28 6:00 to 7:30 p.m.	Hot Topics: Pensions & City Budget	Central Building 2nd Floor ConferenceRoom 436 14th Street
Saturday, January 31 9:00 a.m. to 2:30 p.m.	Bay Area League Day	MetroCenter Auditorium 101 Eighth Street
Wednesday, February 4 12 to 1:30 p.m.	Lunch and Learn with the League: A Better BART	Oakland City Hall Hearing Room 3



**CHECK
THE
MAILING
LABEL
ABOVE**

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.

If there is a date, it shows when your membership expires. Renew using the form in this Voter or online.