



March Units Examine the LWVUS Privatization Study

Privatization can be defined as a shift from publicly to privately produced goods and services.

Those who support privatization believe the result will be more efficiency, quality and innovation, lower taxes, and a smaller government.

Those against privatization say that the private sector mandate to make a profit can endanger public safety, reduce services, and increase costs to consumers and government to pay off corporate debt loads. There is also a lack of transparency with private contractors as compared with public employees.

The privatization movement is an international movement. It has generally involved divestiture of government industries such as utilities, transportation, oil and gas, water, and other natural resources. In the United States the focus has been on deregulation of and reduction of taxes on industry as well as a move toward privatizing government services such as education, prisons, Social Security, Medicare, military services, and parks.

In 2008, the LWV San Diego looked at privatization and many of us read the book *You Don't Always Get What You Pay for: The Economics of Privatization* by Elliot Sclar. Because of the discussion that grew from that book, along with much discussion that has occurred as the pressures on our city to privatize services such as Miramar Landfill, we agreed that we could proceed with



going over the consensus questions in one month along with sharing information about privatizing in the *Voter*. So please read the following summaries of some types of privatization and attend one of the March Unit meetings as we go through the consensus questions. Those questions can be found in this edition of the *Voter*.

Privatization of Prisons

When governments run short of money, they turn to private firms to run their business for them. About 10% of the nation's prisons are privately owned largely by two companies traded on the stock exchange: Corrections Corporation of America and GEO Group. Their combined profits since 2000 are over \$2.9 billion. Prison populations have grown disproportionately fast and governments cannot keep up, although federal and state expenditures on prisons have mushroomed by 72% over the last decade. Private prisons are now termed prison industrial complexes, especially in California. There have been cases of judges collaborating with private prisons to make judgments that fill these prisons or help the private sector build more private prisons. California's voters have turned down prison construction general obligation bonds to build more prisons. Meanwhile, leading banks have financed lease-revenue bonds at a much higher

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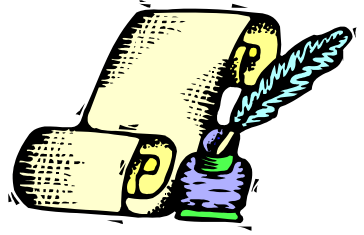
Unit Meetings
Privatization
Consensus
See page 3.



Splash and Mingle
Sunday March 11
See page 4.

Lunch with League
Tuesday, March 27
Why Are We So Broke?
See flyer.

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE



This month we were planning our Legislative Interviews. As we prepare to talk to the legislators, what do we make sure we check? Our positions.

Last month we worked on Program Planning. The main purpose of Program Planning is to determine whether to retain, update, or drop our positions, at each level.

When asked to circulate the petitions to eliminate the death penalty, we first looked to see whether we have a position against the death penalty. We do and so we could comfortably circulate and collect signatures for this petition.

As we work on planning the Unit presentations for each month, we ask ourselves questions like, "How should we approach fracking?" Do we have any positions on energy or on how we get energy? Should we be encouraging our members to join credit unions? Do we have any positions on banking and finance? If not, then we stay as neutral as possible.

League Positions are the basis of almost everything that Board members do and are critical when making decisions regarding how the League proceeds on issues. But how familiar is the average member with our positions? Ask yourself when you last checked our positions. Where can we find local, county, state, or national positions?

Probably the simplest way to find all of the positions that matter to our League is to go to our website www.lwvsandiego.org and look at the word "Positions" on the right side of the page. Click on the level that interests you and spend some time reading where we stand on a multitude of issues.

Where did these positions come from? Studies such as the one we covered last fall, "The Federal Government's Role in Public Education," and the study we will be gathering consensus on this month, "Privatization," are created to work towards formulating a position. The consensus questions are designed to give us an idea of where the grassroots membership stands on these issues. The national Board of the LWWUS will create a position statement that reflects those results. Then those position statements will be voted on at the convention in Washington, DC this June. We hope to have four voting delegates attending to represent our League.

All of this illustrates how positions are the bedrock on which the League stands. To have effective, participating members, we need our members to be aware of our positions and to join in achieving consensus on the questions. Join us at a March Unit to be an active, participating member of the LWWSD.

— Jeanne Brown, Co-president

Check out the online version of the Voter and/or sign up for e-mail delivery — you'll enjoy full color and sometimes more photos.



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Office hours Tuesdays & Thursdays
7 a.m. - 2:30 p.m. Call ahead, please.

Phone/Fax: 858-483-8696

E-mail: lwvsd@san.rr.com

Website: www.lwvsandiego.org

SmartVoter: www.smartvoter.org

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UNIT CALENDAR — MARCH — PRIVATIZATION

Saturday, Mar. 10 10 a.m.-noon	Southeastern	Malcolm X Library, Multi-media Room 5138 Market Street San Diego, CA 92105	Robin Loving 619-947-9717 La Quita Robbins 619-470-9095
Monday, Mar. 12 9:30-11:30 a.m.	Rancho Bernardo and Scripps Ranch	The Gateway – TV Room 12751 Gateway Park Rd. Poway, CA 92064 858-487-1197	Claire Weiner 858-679-7350 Betsy Stephens 858-451-5653
Tuesday, Mar. 13 9:30-11:30 a.m.	La Jolla	Riford Center 6811 La Jolla Boulevard La Jolla, CA 92037	Joan Dahlin 858-454-5019
Tuesday, Mar. 13 1-3 p.m.	University City	North University City Community Library 8820 Judicial Drive San Diego, CA 92122	Shirley Larson 858-272-9752 Mariette Kobrak 858-450-1521
Wednesday, Mar. 14 1-3 p.m.	Tierrasanta	Tierrasanta Library 4985 La Cuenta Drive San Diego, CA 92124	Carole Porter 858-279-5474
Wednesday, Mar. 14 5:30-7:30 p.m.	Mission Valley	Meeting Room, Mission Valley Library Fenton Pkwy., Ikea side of shopping center San Diego, CA 92108	Debra Blum 619-225-0353
Thursday, Mar. 15 9:30-11:30 a.m.	East San Diego	College Rolando Library 6600 Montezuma Road San Diego, CA 92115	Barbara Evje 619-463-0673.

LWVSD CALENDAR — MARCH 2012

All regular meetings are held at the LWVSD office unless noted otherwise.

1st Tues	4 p.m.	LWVSD Board
1st Thurs	9:30-11:30 a.m.	Unit Council
1st Fri	10:30 a.m.	LWVSDC ILO Board
2nd Fri	9:30 a.m.	Public Policy

3rd Mon	10 a.m.	Membership*
3rd Wed	9:30 a.m.	Education
4th Fri	10 a.m.	Program

*March Membership meeting cancelled

Special Events

Saturday, March 3, 10:30 a.m.–noon	Training for Candidate Forums, League Office
Saturday, March 10th, 5-9 p.m.	San Diego County Women's Hall of Fame Induction Ceremony and Dinner honoring Anne Hoiberg http://womensmuseumca.org/whof/
Sunday, March 11, 4 p.m.	Membership Social at Splash Wine Lounge, see p. 4.
Thursday, March 28, 11:30 a.m.	Lunch with League: "Why Are We So Broke? New Ways to Look at the Finances of our State and City" — see flyer.



Save the Dates — Watch for More Information

Sat., April 28, all day	"It's Global and It's Local: Human Trafficking," Community Conference to End Exploitation of Women and Children, see p. 8.
Thurs., May 3, 4:30 p.m.	Education Program "Hands On Math and Science: What, Why, and How"

Splash and Mingle



Join the League of Women Voters of San Diego and UPforEd for wine tasting, appetizers, and an engaging discussion about changing education in San Diego.

- Who?** Parents and community members interested in the future of our kids
- What?** A meet and greet with LWVSD and UPforEd
- When?** Sunday, March 11, 2012 , 4 - 6 p.m.
- Where?** Splash Wine Lounge, 3043 University Avenue, San Diego, CA 92104
There is **FREE PARKING** in the back! www.asplashofwine.com

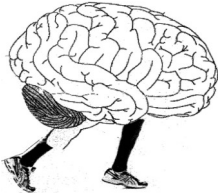
Come hear what is happening in your community to improve education.

See what you can do to be part of the conversation.

Splash is donating 10% of the night's sales to the League of Women Voters of San Diego

MEMBERSHIP

Membership In League



Exercises Your Brain

Are you ready to SPLASH on March 11? Please see the notice above with the details for wine tasting and snacking, mingling, and presentations on what the League is doing in promoting early childhood education and what Up for Ed is doing to get parents to speak out at their school sites. Bring your friends so they can learn about the LWVSD and meet other Leaguers; this is a membership event.

We have two new members this month:

Audrey Elliott - 92007

Janie Davis - 92117

And one future member: Lucas Hjerstedt was born on February 7 to Amy and Mike. He joins his brother Gabe, who is well indoctrinated to the League of Women Voters - look for them at SPLASH.

We hope to see all of our new members at SPLASH on March 11 at 4 p.m.

— Beryl Flom, Vice President/Membership, 858-459-4406 or edflom@sbcglobal.net

(continued from front page)

interest rate which do not require voter approval because the bank carries the debt and leases the facility to the state or county government. Of course, prisoners have no choice in the facility and services they are assigned to, so when a private prison reduces or eliminates services, there needs to be good oversight and advocacy for the prisoners' health and well-being. On the other hand, the state of California has been court-ordered to reduce its prison population because it cannot handle so many people well enough to meet the requirements of the law. The Federal government has been overseeing California prisons for a few years until the government-operated prisons are in compliance. California is also famous for paying prison guards generously and giving them hefty pensions. A private company probably would not do this.

Privatization of Water

There are three ways to privatize water:

- asset sale whereby a private company purchases government-owned water or wastewater assets,
- design, build and operate (DBO) a water treatment plant or water facility, or
- operation and maintenance of a water utility plant - this is most common.

Poseidon Resources is an example of a private company which is investing in desalination of water and its distribution in North County. Eighty to ninety percent of water utilities are still publically controlled, but as municipalities, counties, and states run short of funds to invest, they are privatizing a commodity which is essential to life. However, in the long run, privatizing water may not save the government money. For instance, in Stockton, CA, it was projected the city would save \$97 million, but, in fact, they lost \$1.7 million over the life of the deal (20 years). Consumers are concerned that there will not be enough control of their fees for water (everyone needs it and no one can choose to live without it). There are 50 million people in the world who get their water from private companies. Critics say that private companies are not paying the full cost of environmental damage, healthcare, and public infrastructure. Inadequate customer service is another complaint in some situations - the customer can be a government, individual, or industry.

Incidental Costs of Privatization

When Stockton, CA privatized their water, Public Citizen estimated that the minimum cost of feasibility studies, evaluating bids, negotiating contracts, and severance pay to municipal workers was \$4.9 million between 2000 and the start of the contract in 2003. In addition, city staff and attorneys for the city and the unions spent thousands of hours. When the outsourcing of Miramar Landfill was developed by the City of San Diego, Beryl Flom asked what this process was costing, but she got no answer. Note that the city workers have won the last two outsourcing attempts by the city of San Diego; all the money and time preparing them becomes questionable.

Privatization of the Military

The best-known private military corporation is Blackwater USA, that was formed in 1997 by Eric Prince in North Carolina. It got its name from the swampland where they conducted their training. It was formed to provide training support to military and law enforcement organizations. Prince stated that, "We are trying to do for the military what FedEx did for the Postal Service." Their first government contract was after the 2000 bombing of the USS Cole off the coast of Yemen.

Those who oppose the use of private military services often call them mercenaries and complain that they recruit from the services and take away trained personnel. Those in the services feel that these "private soldiers" are better paid than they are yet do not have to conform to the Military Code of Conduct. There are also complaints that many of the skills that were learned in the military that allowed veterans good-paying jobs when they are discharged, are now being done by these "hired personnel" so that most of those who enlist are trained to kill but little else. Another complaint is that it provides military personnel when not enough people are willing to enlist. This could allow the government to wage war when the country does not support it.

As you can see, this is a complex problem with complex answers. Please read the questions and think about how privatization is affecting San Diego, for the better or for worse. Then come to one of the March unit meetings ready to participate in this grassroots process that is at the heart of the League.

PRIVATIZATION CONSENSUS QUESTIONS

Consensus questions one and two should be presented to the group at the outset of the meeting and then repeated after the other questions have been answered.

1. As a general matter, the extent to which government functions, services and assets have been privatized in the past decade is:

Much too much Too much About right
 Too little Much too little No consensus

2. Core government services and functions important to well-being of the people should remain with government and not be transferred to the private sector.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

3. As a matter of good government policy, which of the following criteria should be applied when making decisions to transfer government services, assets and functions to the private sector?

a. Transparency and Accountability: All government contracts with private companies for services must ensure public access to relevant records and information regarding contracted services, functions and assets and provide for adequate government oversight and control.

High priority Lower priority
 Not a priority No consensus

b. Public Well-being: Provisions are in place to assure that, in the event any public services are to be privatized, there will be no increased risks to public well-being, especially to vulnerable populations.

High priority Lower priority
 Not a priority No consensus

c. Cost and Quality: Privatized services should not appreciably increase the costs or decrease the quality of services to the public.

High priority Lower priority
 Not a priority No consensus

d. Environmental and Natural Resources: Defined parameters should be in place to assure that environmental and natural resources are not compromised.

High priority Lower priority
 Not a priority No consensus

e. Contracts and Sales of Public Assets: All government contracts and privatized public assets should be subject to competitive bidding and comply with all laws regarding awarding contracts.

High priority Lower priority
 Not a priority No consensus

f. Economic Impact: Privatization should not result in a negative economic impact on the communities in which the services are provided.

High priority Lower priority
 Not a priority No consensus

g. Government Recovery of Services and Assets: Provisions should be in place to recover key services, assets, and functions should the private sector fail to safeguard them.

High priority Lower priority
 Not a priority No consensus

4. Privatization is not appropriate:

a. When the government lacks the will, ability, or resources to adequately oversee contracts with the private entity and any successor thereto.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

b. When there is no private entity able or willing to provide the service for the short and long term.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

Please bring these pages with you to your Unit meetings.

c. When it poses a potential threat to national security.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

d. When it poses a risk to personal or security data.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

e. When there has been evidence of potential corruption.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

f. When the private entity's goals and purposes are not compatible with public well-being.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

g. When the private entity has not complied with existing government requirements for public records, open meetings, or publication of reports and audits.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

h. When a loss of revenue decreases government support for mandated or critical services.

Agree Disagree No Consensus

5. Some states have developed laws and regulations to control the process of privatization within their jurisdictions.

As a general matter, should privatization be regulated?

a. Yes, all privatization efforts should be regulated.

b. Yes, some types of privatization efforts should be regulated.

c. No, privatization efforts should never be regulated

d. No consensus

6. Which of the following should be included in the regulatory process when privatizing public assets, services and functions?

a. Timely public announcements regarding intentions to privatize and the clear and measurable expected benefits to the public.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

b. Public and stakeholder (investors, shareholders, experts) input into the decision and terms of the contract.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

c. Feasibility study regarding performance, costs and benefits.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

d. Adherence to all laws regarding public contracts..

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

e. Transition plans for displaced employees.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

f. Accountability and transparency provisions in all contracts.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

g. Regular performance evaluations including meaningful opportunity for public comment.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

h. Provisions for transferring services and assets back to the government or another contractor in the event of inadequate performance.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

i. Adequate resources for enforcement.

Strongly agree Agree Disagree
 Strongly disagree No consensus

Comments: 500 Words or Less

BALBOA PARK: Parking Demands

Joan Dahlin, Public Policy Chair, recently attended an Historical Resources Board workshop on the Jacobs' proposal for Balboa Park. She is sharing this letter regarding the project that was presented at the meeting of the Historical Sites Board by USD Professor Nancy Carol Carter.



Statement to the City of San Diego Historic Resources Board

“Any decision that makes it easier for cars to enter and remain in the heart of Balboa Park compounds futility. Parking demands are not met now and they can never, ever be met in the heart of the park. This simple fact, along with the historic and iconic nature of the Cabrillo Bridge argues against building the proposed bypass and locating a parking garage in the park’s historic core.

“The better idea of redirecting traffic and parking to an area east of Park Boulevard and providing shuttles to the historic core of the park will surely result in howls of protest. Then, in a short time, San Diegans will adjust and function like millions of urban park visitors in other cities.

“Across this nation and around the world, enlightened planners have removed traffic from urban parks and public plazas. Public policy for San Diego’s major city park

should be moving in a similar direction, rather than catering to short-term arguments favoring greater accommodation of traffic. Balboa Park must not be treated like a shopping center with a parking problem. Again, parking demands will continue to grow and can never, ever be met in the heart of the park.

“Expedient decisions in the past have chipped away at the size and character of our treasured Balboa Park. At this decision point, I ask San Diegans to take the longer view and to do the right thing for the future of the park. Let us not compound poor choices in the past with another unfortunate and permanent alteration to the historic core of the park. Let us not repeat the mistakes of the past — mistakes that have robbed Balboa Park of precious land and reduced its serenity, its greenery, and its historic glory.”

— Nancy Carol Carter

Also see page 9.

LWVC Initiative and Referendum Update

The committee met in January in San Diego and the study guide, consensus, and discussion questions are well underway. With timelines and deadlines, the group is working hard to get materials ready for the State Board’s approval and then to the Units for education and lively discussion.

The committee discussed some interesting ways to help members review the initiative and referendum process, such as recruit local experts from the community to help start a conversation about direct democracy in California by using the initiative and referendum process. For example, some suggestions the members recommend is that Units ask local college professors, authors, and newspaper editors to talk to local leagues and the public about pros, cons, and reform ideas. Another idea the committee considered was book and/or discussion groups. There are many resources to help frame the debate and educate our members; a list of articles, books, and pamphlets are found on the LWVC



Members’ Only website, the LWVC Initiative and Referendum Facebook page, and the Yahoo Groups discussion board.

The committee recommends local Units work together to share information and forums to help ease the workload and create more dialogue about these important issues. Our Units can work with East County and North County to help facilitate future events.

Besides bringing in a captive audience to learn and discuss the initiative and referendum process in California, the forums and discussion groups are a great recruitment tool to help draw in potential new members. The initiative and referendum process is not going away in California, so the LWV can use this timely issue to help recruit new members, educate existing members, and learn about reforming a process that has created some concerns in our state and local politics.

— Amy Hjerstedt

You Missed a Good Tour



We had about 30 people take the tour of the **Richard J. Donovan Correctional Facility and Coming Home to Stay**. Eyes were opened and heads were spinning with some of the issues that these people deal with. The state prison houses

about 5,000 men in many buildings near the Mexican border in Otay Mesa. It costs about \$38,000 to house an inmate; there are 1,600 staff. Inmates are processed through

the San Diego County Jail, but once they are sentenced by the state, they are transferred to state prison. It takes 60-90 days to complete their intake where they are watched carefully; prisons have to be careful about mixing people who don't get along. There are four levels of incarceration including a building for people with mental illnesses, which is the building we saw on the inside. Each two-man cell measured about 8 x 10 feet and had bunk beds, sink, toilet, and a little storage space. They are allowed to have a couple of plug-in items such as a TV, but no computer. There are no windows, and the metal door with a little window in it is controlled from a control room upstairs. There is a common room and outside exercise area. The men are supposed to have jobs for very low pay, but there are not enough jobs to go around. They can also work on their GED and each building has a library. Medical services are now up to standard. The average stay is 5-7 years. When they leave, they are given \$200 and training about making a life plan. Recidivism is 88%, we heard.

Used or New Book Collection for Donovan Prison

After touring the prison, Leaguers decided to donate books to them. With so many buildings and each building having its own library, their need is great. Please bring your books to the League office or to League events and Bev Wilson will take them to Donovan.

At **Coming Home to Stay**, we talked with several people

who work with released prisoners to get them back on their feet and home to stay. They interview people who are interested in the program and help them get what they need - housing, food, jobs, education, clothes, paperwork, etc. Clients are then referred out to groups who provide these services and Coming Home to Stay follows up to be

sure they are participating. The average age of their clients is 40 because younger people don't seem to want to settle down and rehabilitate. They use peer coaches to work with their clients and we heard the stories of two of them - how they got into prison and how they rehabilitated. Coming Home to Stay serves people living in the southeast part of San Diego and does not take arsonists or sex offenders. Currently, they have 126 clients. For comparison's sake, their recidivism is 8%! The Jacobs Center handles their budget. In a very powerful presentation, we heard comments like, "Society never forgets or forgives;" "Everything starts at home;" "Welfare creates problems;" "How many no's can you take?"

What's next? - You've read how the state is unloading prisoners into the county jails. When the county jails fill up (which is beginning to happen), the prisoners are released early from county facilities. There seems to be no guarantee of money to transfer from the state to the county, but so far, it has been adequate. We are waiting for it to snowball onto our streets and into our communities. Many Leaguers are concerned.

— Beryl Flom,

ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW OF PLAZA DE PANAMA PROJECT

A Draft Environmental Impact Report on the Plaza de Panama project for Balboa Park was issued on January 23, 2012. The original 45 day comment period has been extended two weeks for a deadline of March 22, 2012. The proposed project encompasses a by-pass bridge re-routing traffic to a partially underground multi-level parking structure behind the organ pavilion. Members of the Public Policy Committee (Nan Valerio and Myles Pomeroy) are sifting through the massive (4,000 page) document and beginning to draft comments based on the League's Balboa Park position adopted at the last Annual Meeting. With the extended comment period, there will be time for input from the League Board and the Units!

— Joan Dahlin, Director, Public Policy

LWVSD Addresses the North Embarcadero Development Plan

February 14, 2012, Letter to Lou Smith, Chairman,
San Diego Unified Port District

“Dear Chairman Smith,

“Throughout the years of planning for the North Embarcadero, the most consistent priority for redeveloping this segment of the downtown bay front has been to transform it into an oasis of public open space in a pedestrian setting, unencroached upon by the intensity of development that characterizes the neighboring South Embarcadero. The League of Women Voters strongly supports this priority and believes that it is consistent with the tidelands Public Trust Doctrine.

“Also, it is a principle of the League of Women Voters that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen’s right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.

“The San Diego League wrote to the California State Lands Commission last October objecting to the timing and processing of an application from the port for a waiver for the construction of a pile-supported concrete mooring dolphin and catwalk in order to enlarge and extend the “B” Street Pier to serve the largest of cruise ships. This application was submitted without any public notice or opportunity for public review. Such a major project would commit the port to maintaining cruise ship operations at the “B” Street pier even while the industry is suffering from a significant downturn and current studies are looking at other sites that would be better suited for cruise ship operations.

“Recent discussions about the Midway Museum’s plans for Navy Pier appear to be moving forward with hasty, inadequate public review and apparent disregard for commitments required by the Coastal Commission to mitigate loss of public access and view corridors due to placement of the Midway on the downtown waterfront. The mitigation plan approved in 2001 that requires a 5.7 acre park on the existing deck of the pier, parking off-site, and no view obstruction (such as band shells or massive sculptures) is being ignored.

“View corridors and open views of San Diego Bay should

be safeguarded for the public. The public has already been deprived of reasonable bay access in adjacent areas to the south because of intense development. It is therefore, especially important to protect the remainder of the downtown waterfront.

“Finally, League hopes to see the many components of the North Embarcadero Plan addressed in an orderly, comprehensive planning procedure rather than the piecemeal, fragmented process that prevails.

“In summary, a pedestrian-oriented, visually unimpeded waterfront at the North Embarcadero, with parks, promenades, plazas, and viewing piers, would implement the city’s promise to the citizens of San Diego and become a favorite destination for residents, visitors, and tourists alike. We believe strongly that citizen involvement in the process, including restoring and maintaining the Citizen Advisory Committee, will help to ensure a successful outcome.”

Sincerely,

Jeanne Brown - Co-President

Mary Jean Word - Co-President

League of Women Voters of San Diego



“It’s Global and It’s Local: Human Trafficking”

April 28 — the San Diego County Office of Education

The workshop will address the following:

- Prevention (screening of the documentary, *Indoctrinated: The Grooming of Children into Prostitution*);
- Protection (rescuing and restoring trafficked girls and women); and
- Prosecution (law enforcement and programs to stop trafficking).

Breakfast, lunch, and program for less than \$25.

Please RSVP to ahoiberg@sbcglobal.net

— Anne Hoiberg



Save the date



The Rules Have Changed: Elections 2012

By Lianne Campodonico, LWVC Voter Service Director



There are significant changes for the 2012 elections. The Top Two primary system will be used in June, online voter registration could be up and running in the summer, and redistricting means that many voters will see different names on the ballot and/or new district lines and numbers. This is the time for voters to do their homework and avoid confusion at the ballot box. You can keep in touch with the latest election information by going to League of Women Voter websites, including SmartVote.org and CAVotes.org. <http://cavotes.org/issues/redistricting-implementation>.

Top Two Primary System

There are actually two primary elections taking place on June 5, 2012: a) the Presidential Primary, which is a partisan party nomination process used to select candidates for President and county central committees and b) the statewide Top Two Primary elections for congressional and state elective offices. The Presidential Primary produces “party nominated candidates” for president who then appear on the November General Election ballot by party. This is the type of primary that California voters are used to. The Top Two primary system, however, produces two “voter-nominated candidates” who have received the two highest vote counts and who then advance to the November General Election. Even if one of the candidates receives more than 50 percent of the votes, there is still a “runoff” between the top two vote getters. With the Top Two Primary system, all candidates running for an office are listed on one ballot, regardless of their party preference. All voters may vote for any candidate in the list. Here are some of the special features of balloting in the Top Two system that need to be understood by the voters:

- The Top Two system was placed on the June 2010 ballot by the legislature as a result of state budget negotiations and was passed by the voters.
- Voters will not see a “straight party ticket” on the ballot, but rather a list of names for the different contests with each candidate’s party preference indicated. However, a candidate for a voter-nominated office may choose not to have his or her party preference — as disclosed on their most recent affidavit of registration — indicated on the ballot.
- It is possible for two voter-nominated candidates with the same party affiliation to appear on the November ballot.

- Political parties may endorse candidates in the Top Two primary. Sample ballots must include a section listing these party endorsements.
- Although votes may be cast for write-in candidates in the Top Two primary election, no write-in votes are allowed in the November general election for the Top Two contests.

As of this writing, there are court challenges to the Top Two Primary system currently pending, based on the ban on write-in votes in the General Election for Top Two offices and on constitutional issues of third party access to the ballot and voters’ right of choice.

For frequently asked questions about the primary elections in California, you can go to this link on the Secretary of State’s website: <http://www.sos.ca.gov/elections/2012-elections/june-primary/faqs-primary-2012.htm>.

May 21, 2012 is the last day to register to vote in the June 5, 2012 primary elections.

Online Voter Registration

The Secretary of State would like to see Californians able to register to vote online sometime in the summer of 2012, in time for the November General Election. In October the Governor signed into law SB 397 (Yee) that allows the state to begin registering voters online before the completion of a planned new statewide voter registration database. State elections officials and the Department of Motor Vehicles are currently working on the technical details of using DMV digitized signatures for matching registrations submitted online.

The League, along with many other good government groups, has long supported online voter registration as a way of allowing more people to participate in elections and of protecting against fraudulent paper registration. Online registrants will be required to provide their birthdate, the number from their valid California driver’s license or California ID card, and the last four digits of their social security number. Dean Logan, Los Angeles County Registrar-Recorder/County Clerk, has called this development “a game changer.” In the last statewide election in Los Angeles County, his office received 64,000 registration affidavits the day after the deadline. He was certain that if online registration had been in force, many more people would have voted in that election.

League of Women Voters of California • 1107 9th Street, Suite 300 • Sacramento, CA 94814 • www.lwvc.org



LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SAN DIEGO

4901 Morena Boulevard
Bldg. 100, Suite 104
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