



THE VOTER

The Newsletter of The League of Women Voters of Humboldt County

Vol. 52 No. 2

February 2010

Inside This Issue

Forum: Census 2010	2
Thanks So Much!.....	2
Candidate Forums Are Coming	3
Access Humboldt	3
News from the LWVUS & LWVC	6
Board Briefs.....	7

President's Message

After the events of January, I am ready for February! The good news is that we had a successful program planning meeting and will report on it in the March VOTER. Membership Chair **Judy Bennett** has updated the membership list, including e-mail addresses, and we have new members. Plus, we ONLY had a 6.5 earthquake, and the office was not damaged.

February 12, 2010 is the deadline to apply to be in the pool of candidates for the Redistricting Commission that will begin serving in 2011. This is so important because our legislative and supervisory districts will be directly affected by data derived from the Census this year, and we need representation on that commission.

Our League is working to be sure the public understands the importance of participating in the Census. **Willa Mauro**, Citizen Education Director, has planned an excellent forum on the Census that will be open to the public on February 25 at 6 P.M. at 900 Hodgson Street in Eureka. Please plan to attend and bring a neighbor. If you can't make it, this forum will also be aired on Access Humboldt.

As the League of Women Voters prepares to celebrate its 90th anniversary, it is not too early to mention that the National Convention will be held in Atlanta, Georgia in June, and we hope to send a delegate.

Sincerely,

Dr. Sharolyn Hutton,
President

Making Connections: An Interview With Phillip Smith-Hanes, CAO

LWVHC: *There is a complete listing of your responsibilities as the County Administrative Officer on page 7 of the League-published "A Citizen's Guide to County Government," but could you please give our readers a brief overview of them?*

PS-H: My office serves as the administrative arm of the Board of Supervisors and is responsible for Revenue Recovery, Information Technology, Communications, Risk Management, and Purchasing for Humboldt County.

LWVHC: *What impact does the Federal Census have on areas of responsibility of the County Administrative Office?*

PS-H: The Census is one of the core functions of government as designed by our nation's founders. There are only 435 seats in the House of Representatives, so population gains and losses determined by the census data affect our legislative and supervisor districts. Additionally, because population determines the apportionment of federal and state grants available to Humboldt County, it is important to the county to have everyone counted.

LWVHC: *What is the most pressing issue facing Humboldt County at this time?*

PS-H: The economy. Locally, real estate has not been such a big problem, but the closing of the pulp mill, the problems at the Humboldt Creamery, and the losses in logging and fishing have acted to reduce county income at the same time there is an increased need for services. In 1991, a realignment sales tax went into effect and many of the social services such as child welfare, public health, foster care, and mental health are funded by those taxes. Those funds have not kept up with the needs. Humboldt County is "scraping along" just like everywhere else.

Note: *The Realignment Sales Tax was intended originally to provide a reliable source of funds and more flexibility to counties for mental health and related programs. For more information, please do an online search on the topic: "realignment sales tax" in California.*

-continued on page 2

Our Mission Statement...

The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

MAKE DEMOCRACY WORK!

Membership News

Forum: Census 2010

Plans for the February membership meeting on the 2010 Census are continuing on track. We are joining with the National League to encourage full participation in the Census. We hope that those who attend the forum will carry Census information back to other community groups to help raise awareness in our area.

Phillip Smith-Hanes, our County Administrative Officer, will be one of the featured speakers. He will describe the importance of full Census participation and tell us how the Census data benefits local governments. **Elaine Dempsey**, the local Census Program Specialist, will share information about how the Census will take place locally. **Linda Clark** will be coming from the Census regional office in Seattle to speak about the importance of the Census and how the data is used. There will be an opportunity to ask questions of these experts.

Join us from 6-8 P.M. on Thursday, February 25 at The First Congregational Church, 900 Hodgson Street in Eureka. Invite your family, friends, and neighbors and encourage them to be counted!

-Willa Mauro,
Citizen Education

Thanks So Much!

The League salutes the following members who not only donated a long day to help make democracy work by WORKING as a poll worker, but they also DONATED their stipend to the League:

Rudy Ramp
Deborah Storre
Byrd Lochtie
Carolyn Otis

Welcome New Members!

Thomas Rowe **Emily Stokes Rowe**

And thank you for your contribution to the League's annual operations.

Action

Call your state senator and urge her to vote 'yes' on S.B. 810, Single Payer Health Care.

**District 2: Senator Pat Wiggins
(707) 445-6508**

Making Connections Interview

-continued from page 1

LWVHC: *There has been a great deal of interest expressed in constitutional reform. Do you believe this is needed and, if so, what reforms do you believe would be most helpful?*

PS-H: It is hard to look at state government and not conclude that something needs to be done. I am not 100 percent sure a constitutional convention is needed, but reform is, because government is not working. What would be most helpful would be stability and predictability and the ability to chart our own course. Two-thirds of every dollar spent in Humboldt County comes from state and federal sources. The problem is that even though our politicians in Sacramento may listen and care about our problems, they find themselves in a constant state of crisis. We need programs and we need funding, but there is no predictability. As a result, we can't match our programs with our needs.

We are dependent on policies as well as on funds, and expend energy in Sacramento trying to get bills passed

to protect our county funding. We could spend that energy better here in our own county.

Additionally, there is a problem with initiatives. Over time there is a cumulative effect that, even though unintended, adds to the crisis in Sacramento.

LWVHC: *What message would you like to send our readers?*

PS-H: Most important is that we really are here to serve the community. We are human; we may have policy disagreements, but we really are here because we want to help this community, and we do like to hear from people. This office and the supervisors really do appreciate knowing about the issues concerning people, and we want to address them as much as we can.

We all live here and want to make it the best we can for our families and others. In fact, one of the nice things about working in Humboldt County is we do live here, unlike many urban areas. We get up every morning to help, not to fail.

Voter Service

Candidate Forums Are Coming!

2010—a year of important local elections—many offices, and many chances to volunteer. In addition to a number of state offices, including Superior Court Judges for Departments 1 and 5, Humboldt voters also will select all of the county's executive officers in June: the Assessor, Auditor-Controller, Coroner-Public Administrator, County Clerk-Recorder-Registrar of Voters, District Attorney, Sheriff, Superintendent of Schools, and Treasurer-Tax Collector. In the legislative branch, voters will be electing Supervisors for districts 4 and 5.

League members play an important role in this process. Our candidate forums, always organized in the spirit of civil discourse, offer candidates a chance to present their platforms in a nonpartisan setting. We do our best to make the forums available to as many voters as possible by holding them in communities all over Humboldt County, by making them available on our Web site, and the forums are often broadcast and rebroadcast on KEET and by Access Humboldt on our local public access channels.

At this point we know there will be at least six forums scheduled in the weeks prior to the June 8 election. How you can help: Volunteer to answer calls and transcribe questions to be asked of the candidates. Offer to sort questions to avoid duplication and to help the moderator organize the flow of topics. Agree to be a timekeeper, to keep the forum process on track and give every candidate equal time and opportunity to respond.

The job description for each task is brief, and on-the-job training is available. Contact **Carol Masterson** at 768-3118 or email her at buffy7@suddenlink.net to volunteer.

Another important nonpartisan voter service involves education about the ballot initiatives; at this writing, there will be five on the June ballot. They seek to adjust the property tax (new construction exclusion: seismic retrofitting); to regulate open primaries; the Fair Elections Act of 2008; a new two-thirds voter approval requirement for local electricity providers, and to allow auto insurers to base their prices partly on a driver's history of insurance coverage. Additional propositions may be qualified. The LWVHC will offer a *Pros & Cons* session on Wednesday evening, May 12, at the Main Library in Eureka. There is considerable library traffic at that time, and we hope to get some walk-in attendance as well.

A change to voter registration law makes it easier for first-time voters to register early. Anyone who is 17 years old can pre-register, and their registration will become effective as soon as they turn 18. Refresher training for those who register voters is in the works, and new volunteers will be welcome throughout the year.

If you haven't yet been a voter service volunteer, give it a try. Offer to work at a forum, and reap the benefits of spending a few hours in good company doing a good thing for the community.

-Nan Nieboer,
Voter Service Co-Director

ACCESS HUMBOLDT: Local Voices Through Community Media



The League's Special Elections Committee, under the direction of **Byrd Lochtie**, recently conducted an election for Access Humboldt to fill two of their elected board member positions. The League is a partner with Access Humboldt and designates one of its board members.

Access Humboldt is a nonprofit which operates four television channels: Channel 8 is the Education Channel; Channel 10 is the Government or Civic Channel, and Channels 11 and 12 are Public or Community Access Channels. Programming schedules are available online at www.accesshumboldt.net/site/our-channels. Watch for our League candidate forums and other voter service activities!

You can support Access Humboldt's mission of free speech, media access for all, and local media serving our community by becoming a member. Individual memberships are available for \$25, and orientations and video production classes will be offered soon. Members

will have access to computer workstations and video editing equipment. After training, members will also qualify to check out production equipment. Application forms are available on the website: www.accesshumboldt.net, or phone 707-476-1798 for more information.

Access Humboldt's offices and operations are located on the Eureka High campus and recently moved into a permanent facility: the long-awaited Community Media Center (CMC). The CMC is located in the Industrial Technology Building next to the Jay Willard Gymnasium. Visitors are welcome at the board meetings held at the CMC on the 4th Tuesday of the month at 3 P.M.

The CMC Grand Opening is scheduled for March which is Freedom of Information Month. Watch for the date in March and come! Attend a Board meeting! Join AH! And view the forums!

-Peg Gardner,
Access Humboldt Rep.

News from the LWVUS

Supreme Court Ruling Undermines Basic Pillar of Democracy in U.S.

Washington, DC – The following is a statement by **Mary G. Wilson**, LWVUS President: The League filed an amicus brief in this case:

“The Supreme Court has made a tragic mistake. Their decision announced today in *Citizens United v. FEC* is constitutionally irresponsible and will surely bring about an anti-democratic revolution in how we finance elections in this country. Today, basic pillars of American democracy have been undermined – that elections should not be corrupted by vast corporate wealth and that the voters should be at the center of our democratic system.

“In creating a new constitutional right for corporations to spend unlimited amounts of their shareholders’ money to determine the outcome in candidate elections, the Court has unleashed into our elections tremendous sums of money from for-profit corporations that cannot possibly be matched in quantity by contributions from ordinary citizens. The only possible outcome of this is that big money and special interests will have an even tighter grip on our democracy

“Congress and the President enacted campaign finance laws over a series of decades for a reason – to protect our democracy from the perverse influence of big money in our elections. In making this decision, the Court has ignored the best interests of the American public and our representative form of government.”

Congress Must Finish

Health Care Legislation

Washington, DC – The following is a statement by **Mary G. Wilson**, LWVUS President: “We have a health care crisis in America. Too many citizens lack adequate health insurance coverage, and rising costs threaten everyone. The failure of Congress to act on these issues over decades has simply compounded the problems and undermined faith in government.

“The League of Women Voters urges our elected members of Congress to finish work on health care reform and send a bill quickly to the President for his signature.

“We understand that there may be a number of ways for health care reform to succeed. None of these possibilities will accomplish all that needs to be done, and Congress will need to revisit many issues in coming years. But any of these alternatives moves us toward successful health care reform and thus is better than the status quo. Congress should not miss this historic opportunity to enact comprehensive health care reform legislation.”

News from the LWVC

Urge Your Senator to Vote for S.B. 810

The renewed push to pass Senator Mark Leno’s S.B. 810, the California Universal Health Care Act, begins with deadlines that must be met this month. SB 810 must be voted on by the Senate Appropriations Committee by January 22 and by the full senate by the end of January.

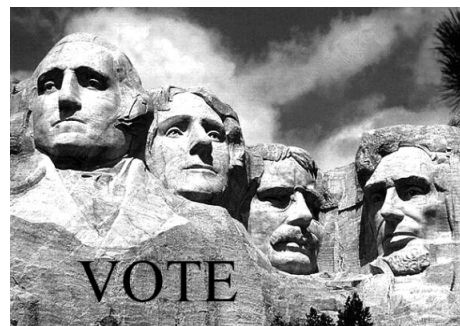
SB 810 is nearly identical to former Senator Sheila Kuehl’s landmark bill (S.B. 840) to establish a single payer health insurance system for California. It would provide fiscally sound, affordable health care to all Californians, provide every Californian the right to choose his or her own physician, and control health care cost inflation.

S.B. 810 was passed by the Senate Health Committee last April but was held on the Senate Appropriations Committee’s “suspense file” last May, along with a majority of other Senate bills that had a fiscal impact. Further action was postponed to this month. And now it’s time to act! Tell your state senator to vote YES on S.B. 810 when it comes up for a vote. **Patricia Wiggins**, Senator for District 2, 707-445-6508]

S.B. 810 will not only provide high quality, affordable, guaranteed health care to all Californians, it will save the state billions of dollars in health care costs. At a time when the state budget deficit threatens to exceed \$20 billion, and millions of Californians are without jobs and healthcare, the need to pass real health care reform in our state is greater than ever.

League Weighs in on Initiative Reform

On November 12 in Oakland, LWVC President **Janis Hirohama** testified on reform of the initiative process at the second of a series of joint informational hearings being held around the state by the Legislature’s Select Committees on Improving State Government. She stated the League’s support for the concept of the indirect initiative, review of direct initiatives before petitions are circulated for signatures, and other reforms. Read her statement at www.lwvc.org.



Board Briefs...

From the January 4 Board Meeting:

- ☆ **Dan Taranto** highlighted a history of public participation in the development of the housing element section of the Humboldt County General Plan and shared his concerns about the current status of public participation. The Board will take this under advisement.
- ☆ Ballot initiatives for the June primary have until January 28 to qualify. Voter Service chair **Nan Nieboer** is planning a *Pros & Cons* presentation for Wednesday evening, May 12, at the Main Library. Volunteers will briefly summarize propositions in a nonpartisan manner.
- ☆ **Carol Masterson** will be scheduling a training session for those interested in helping with Voter Service Forums on KEET. There are many positions up for election this spring. Watch for the date.
- ☆ **Beth Matsumoto** has scheduled the evening of March 22 for the Water Forum. A panel will discuss how national laws and regulations impact how the state water plan will affect Humboldt County.
- ☆ The Bear River Band of the Rohnerville Rancheria has contracted with the League to conduct a special election on March 27. **Helen Andrews, Sharolyn Hutton, and Sarah Reid** will assist **Byrd Lochtie**, Special Elections chair.

-Peg Gardner,
Secretary

**The League of Women Voters
of Humboldt County**

434 7th Street, Eureka CA 95501

Mailing Address:

P.O. Box 3219

Eureka, CA 95502

(707) 444-9252 www.lwvhc.org vote@lwvhc.org

Who's Who in Your League 2009-2010

☆ **YOUR LEAGUE BOARD** ☆

- President Sharolyn Hutton
- Vice President Beth Matsumoto
- Past President Lorey Keele
- Secretary Peg Gardner
- Treasurer Nancy Kay
- Director Byrd Lochtie
- Director Carol Masterson
- Director Beth Matsumoto
- Director Willa Mauro
- Director Nan Nieboer
- Director Sarah Reid
- Director Amanda Windsor

☆ **ACTION** ☆

- Government Helen Andrews
- Natural Resources OPEN
- Social Policy Sarah Reid
- Program Director OPEN

☆ **ADMINISTRATION** ☆

- Financial Development Director Nancy Kay
- Historian Carole Ziskin
- Membership Judy Bennett, Judi Stoffer
- Nominating Committee Chair Nancy Quintrell
- Publications Lorey Keele

☆ **FUNDRAISING** ☆

- Poll Workers Coordinator Carolyn Otis
- State of the Community Luncheon (SOCL)
Committee Co-Chairs Maggie Fleming,
..... Byrd Lochtie
- SOCL Committee Liaison Beth Matsumoto

☆ **MEDIA** ☆

- Media Chair Amanda Windsor
- Access Humboldt Rep Peg Gardner
- Publicity Director Beth Matsumoto
- VOTER Publication Amanda Windsor
- VOTER Circulation Carolyn Otis
- Webmaster Amanda Windsor

☆ **VOTER SERVICE** ☆

- Voter Service Director Nan Nieboer
- Candidate Forums Carol Masterson
- Citizen Education Willa Mauro
- Election Service Chair Byrd Lochtie
- Smart Voter Amanda Windsor

If You Haven't Already

Join the League! Membership in the League is open to all U.S. citizens of voting age, both women and men. Others may join as associate members.

Yes! I want to join the League of Women Voters of Humboldt County and become a voice for citizens and a force for change. I am enclosing for my annual membership:

<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Individual membership	<input type="checkbox"/> I cannot join at this time, but please accept my donation of _____
<input type="checkbox"/> \$75 Household membership	<input type="checkbox"/> Please send me more information
<input type="checkbox"/> \$50 Associate membership	<input type="checkbox"/> I would like to be contacted by the nominating committee
<input type="checkbox"/> Additional donation of _____	

Name _____

Address _____

City/State/Zip _____

Phone _____ e-mail _____

Please make checks payable to LWVHC P.O. Box 3219, Eureka, CA 95502
Membership dues and donations to the LWVHC are not tax-deductible. Donations to the LWVHC-Education Fund, through the Humboldt Area Foundation, are tax-deductible. For more information call 444-9252.

The League of Women Voters of Humboldt County

434 7th Street, Eureka CA 95501 - (707) 444-9252

www.lwvhc.org - vote@lwvhc.org

FEBRUARY						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S
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28						

MARCH						
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21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30	31			

Calendar

- February 1 **Board Meeting** 6-8 P.M.
434 7th Street, Eureka
- February 25 **Membership Meeting**
2010 Census 6-8 P.M.
First Congregational Church
900 Hodgson Street, Eureka
- March 1 **Board Meeting** 6-8 P.M.
434 7th Street, Eureka
- March 22 **Membership Meeting**
Voter Service Training
Time and location to be announced.

For changes to the calendar and lots of other information
check out our League Web site at:

www.lwvhc.org

The League of Women Voters of Humboldt County Diversity Policy 2009-2010

The League of Women Voters of Humboldt County, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief in and commitment to diversity and pluralism, which means there shall be no barriers to membership nor to participation in LWVHC on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin, disability, economic status, or political affiliation. The LWVHC recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making. The LWVHC affirms its commitment to reflect the diversity of the community in its membership, board and programs.

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P.O. Box 3219
Eureka, CA 95502

Editor: Amanda Windsor