The Vote Is the Emblem of Equality --
And Now It Is Under Attack

by Elizabeth MacNamara, LWVUS President

Ninety-three years ago this week, Carrie Chapman Catt founded the League of Women Voters to advocate for women's suffrage. A short time later, in August of 1920, following decades of advocacy, Chapman Catt, League members, and women across the country saw their dream realized with the passage of the 19th Amendment, giving women the right to vote. "The vote is the emblem of your equality, women of America," remarked Chapman Catt upon its passage, "the guarantee of your liberty... Understand what it means and what it can do for your country."

Yet today, 93 years after the League was founded to help democratize the right to vote, the voting rights of all Americans - or the "emblem of our equality" - are at deep risk. Later this month, the Supreme Court will review Shelby County, Alabama v. Holder, a case that questions the constitutionality of the Voting Rights Act (VRA) of 1965. Based on the 15th Amendment, which gave voting rights to people of color after the Civil War, the VRA ensures that every American citizen, regardless of race, has an equal right to vote by providing for effective enforcement. In its review of the VRA, the Supreme Court will focus on Section 5, which applies to specific states or jurisdictions with histories of discriminatory voting practices and requires that these jurisdictions obtain "preclearance," or federal approval, for proposed changes to elections laws.

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Voting Rights Under Attack, from page one

Since our founding 93 years ago, the League of Women Voters has fought for voting rights and to ensure that our elections are fair, free and accessible to all eligible citizens. The VRA, with Section 5 in particular, is indispensable to that work. Should the Court rule against the VRA, millions of Americans could face disenfranchisement. That's why we've joined the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights in filing an amicus brief in support of the VRA and Section 5. We firmly believe that for the Supreme Court to do anything but uphold Section 5 would be to turn back 50 years of progress by blocking effective enforcement of voting rights for all.

Since passage of the VRA, Congress has reauthorized Section 5 four times, most recently in 2006 when it held extensive hearings and released an over 15,000 page committee report that exposed large-scale evidence of voting discrimination, particularly in areas covered by Section 5. Not only did these findings lead to an overwhelmingly bipartisan vote to reauthorize the legislation, but Congress also cited the invaluable role of Section 5 in thwarting racial injustice. According to Congress, without the continuation of the VRA's protections, the evidence is clear that "racial and language minority citizens will be deprived of the opportunity to exercise their right to vote, or will have their votes diluted."

Even as recently as this past election cycle, Section 5 helped block a number of proposed election laws that would have discriminated against minority voters. What's more as the Shelby case approaches, disenfranchisement and discrimination based on race remains a sad reality in our election system. Politicians across the country are waging widespread attacks on voting rights, including attempts to mandate restrictive voter ID laws that will limit voting access, redraw districts to maintain their power, and limit early voting options. In January, NAACP president Benjamin Jealous said the nation has been facing some of "the greatest attacks on voting rights since segregation," and the potential repeal of Section 5 is the biggest threat yet.

The Voting Rights Act is an essential part of American democracy. The thought that the Supreme Court might overrule Congress and take away voting rights should send a chill down the spine of every American. Based on an extensive record of current discrimination, Congress reauthorized the VRA in 2006 and President Bush signed it into law. It would be wrong for the Supreme Court to challenge the role of Congress and the President in our constitutional system.

As the League celebrates our 93rd birthday and marks nearly a century of work on voting rights, we hope that the Supreme Court recognizes the importance of blocking racial discrimination in voting and upholds the Voting Rights Act. As our founder, Carrie Chapman Catt said, the vote is the "emblem of our equality," and we must do everything in our power to preserve it.

Lunch with League by Anita Smiley

Our speaker on March 28, 2013, will be Michael Matsuda, a trustee on the North Orange County Community College Board since 2005, administrator at the Anaheim Union School District, English Instructor at Oxford Academy, and the Induction Coordinator for BTSA, a beginning teacher support group. He has also been an Adjunct Professor at CSUF and Chapman. His education has been extensive, including degrees and credentials from UCLA, USC, Chapman and CSUF. He is a member of many California State Education Committees. He is also active in the Fullerton School as a parent. Mr. Matsuda will speak on the Core Curriculum and the affiliations between high schools and colleges that increase student success.

Lunch with League is held at the Meridian Club, 1535 Deerpark Drive, Fullerton, CA from 11:30-2:00. To make a reservation call (714) 254-7440 or visit lunchwithleague@lwnoc.org by noon the Monday before the event. After making the reservation, you can pay at the door. Great food and a fascinating speaker for $18. Cancellations must be received by noon on the Monday before the event.
Call to Convention by Arline Burgmeier

“My League: Leading the Charge for Change!” This is the theme of the 64th biennial convention of the League of Women Voters of California that will be held in May in San Jose. Attendance at the LWVC convention is open to everyone, and all members—and non-members are encouraged to attend. Based on our membership numbers, our NOC League will be permitted to send three official delegates to the convention. Delegates will vote on issues such as policy changes, program for 2013-15, adopting a budget for the fiscal year, and electing state LWV officers.

The convention officially begins in the morning on Friday, May 17, and ends Sunday afternoon, May 19. Before the convention there will be special workshops on Thursday, May 16. The convention will be held at the Dolce Hayes Mansion, in San Jose.

To register on-line, go to the LWVC website at lwvc.org/lwvonly/. Look for the heading California Convention. Click on Registration is Now Open. This will link you to the convention blog page. On that page, click on the heading REGISTER TODAY! The blog will also give you details about hotel rooms, prices, dates, workshops, etc.

You might want to carpool with one or more members from our League to save on gas and enjoy company on drive to San Jose. Email Arline Burgmeier at aburgmeier@sbcglobal.net if you need a ride or can offer a ride.

Tributes

Tributes can honor a person for an exceptional event, help to observe a special occasion, salute a deserving friend or a colleague, or serve as a memorial for a loved one. For publication in the Voter, send tributes along with a check to the LWVNOC Ed Fund, Penny Brown, Tribute Coordinator, P.O.Box 3073, Fullerton, CA 92834. For more information call Penny Brown at (714) 828-4668 or visit our website at www.lwvnoc.org.

"In tribute to Donna Miller for being such a welcoming and gracious hostess for our wonderful League Holiday Party. From Frann Shermet"
Read with League
by Lee Sjostrom

Greetings Readers. The next meeting of the Read with League group will be on Tuesday, March 19. Note: We will be meeting on all subsequent THIRD Tuesdays of the month. The host will be Barbara Dunsheath and because of her job, we will meet this time ONLY from 2 p.m. to 4 p.m. Normally the hours are 1 p.m. to 3 p.m.

The book is *Lethal Passage: the Story of a Gun* by Eric Larson, author of *White City*, and *In the Garden of Beasts*. It follows a gun from purchase to tragic use and is certainly timely. Barbara Orosz will review. A suggestion has been made to read a biography of Elizabeth Cady Stanton for April, but we still need a host and a reviewer.

Please try to attend, bring a friend, bring a stranger, but come. Come with additional suggestions for books also. See you the 19th.

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Sensible Gun Regulation: Your Right to be Safe
by Charlotte Pirch

On February 16, 2013, the Inter-league Organization of the League of Women Voters in Orange County presented a panel discussion of gun regulation. The panelists were Lawrence Rosenthal, Professor of Constitutional Law, Chapman University School of Law, Greg Magnuson, Superintendent Buena Park School District, and Dave Lopez, Retired Police Officer, Criminal Justice Instructor.

Professor Rosenthal explained the history of the Second Amendment to the Constitution, and discussed two Supreme Court cases, *District of Columbia v. Heller* (2008) and *McDonald v. Chicago* (2010), that applied the Second Amendment to the states and could be used to challenge California’s strict gun regulation laws. He also discussed the importance of Presidential Executive Order (PEO) #14 which directs the Centers of Disease Control to research the causes and prevention of gun violence. Professor Rosenthal pointed out that without the ability to study the causes of gun violence we cannot know what regulations will work to prevent gun violence.

Mr. Magnuson detailed the policies and procedures adopted by school districts to prevent violence on campuses prior to the tragedy at Sandy Hook Elementary School. He further stressed that in the wake of Sandy Hook school districts would use the lessons learned to institute additional safety measures on campuses. Mr. Magnuson explained what a “school resource officer” does as described in PEO #18. This PEO establishes a school based police officer who has received specialized training to promote positive relations between students and law enforcement and who also may also teach law related classes and counsel students.

Mr. Lopez discussed the role of law enforcement in preventing and investigating gun violence. He explained the E-trace system of the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, Firearms and Explosives, which is an electronic database of manufactured and imported firearms sold in the U.S. It is used by law enforcement to trace firearms used in crimes. He explained that the system is currently limited to tracing a firearm only as far as the first retail sale. When asked about whether the 1994 law banning assault weapons had been effective, Mr. Lopez pointed out that due to its narrow definition of assault weapons, the law did not succeed in reducing their use to commit crimes.
Sharon Quirk-Silva, Assembly Person for the 65th District

by Mary Fuhrman

Last month Mary Fuhrman interviewed Sharon Quirk-Silva, member of the California Assembly for the 65th district which covers communities in Buena Park, Fullerton, Cypress, La Palma, Stanton, West Anaheim, and Hawaiian Gardens. They discussed a variety of topics including the California budget, money in politics, election reform, environmental quality, the demise of redevelopment agencies, and education.

1. California Budget: California has both an ongoing structural imbalance, with insufficient revenue for the programs we would like to support, and an ongoing problem with the actual process of passing a budget. Even though we just passed Proposition 30, which raised the sales tax to 7.5% from 7.25% and the income tax on high earners, we recognize that this is just a first step towards financial stability for California.

   a. What measures would you support to continue the progress that Proposition 30 represents?

   b. What measures would you support to change the budget process?

As a new member of the Assembly, Ms. Quirk-Silva said she is on the current learning curve and enjoying the experiences. She informed us that all the Democratic leaders have been reiterating that new bills should not have extravagant costs and only smaller packages will be considered. There is no need to pass legislation that will have to be cut later due to reduced funding. They are reviewing previous programs that were cut. All legislators are being encouraged to be thoughtful and careful about proposals and not to push to spend money.

The Orange County delegation of both parties all signed a letter urging a settlement to avoid court procedures concerning the impending lawsuit between the county and state concerning vehicle license fees reimbursement to the counties; however, the effort did not stop the suit. Ms. Quirk-Silva also felt there were other signs of talking “across the aisle” in the Assembly and did not feel California was currently reflecting the partisan stalemate that prevails at the federal level in Washington.

2. Election Reform/Money in Politics: There was an unprecedented amount of money spent in this election in California. What measures would you support to address the problem of money in politics? What improvements are needed to disclosure rules in California?

The Assemblywoman supports the California Disclosure Act and told us a number of bills are coming up supporting this act. She wants the voters to know where the money is coming from. The money coming into
campaigns at the last minute poses an extreme problem for any candidate or proposition that is being attacked. Some immediate public release of who is spending the money should be enforced if at all possible. She was attacked in her own race by a wealthy single donor who hid behind several different PAC names.

3. California Environmental Quality Act (CEQA) During the last legislative session, efforts were made to change the California Environmental Quality Act. In particular, an end-of-session attempt at a significant rewrite of CEQA was attempted but was not successful. What is your view of CEQA? What changes do you think it needs, if any?

The Assemblywoman told us that CEQA was originally used only on public developments but over the years has now been extended to all new projects. She supports the idea of protecting the environment but feels that it is being used by opponents of developments to thwart and delay them, thus raising the costs. She feels some corrections need to be made in this area.

4. Local League Questions

We discussed the Redevelopment Agency cuts to local cities. She is concerned about projects that were in the works and then canceled even though they were very important to the cities. She said there is some work in the legislature to bring some help in this area. Cities should also be working with local developers to find ways to complete the projects without the subsidy of Redevelopment funds.

5. What other major issues do you think the Legislature must deal with in 2013? What are your personal priorities?

She wants a balanced budget without bringing new programs or previous ones that will have to be cut later. CEQA must be fixed. Education funding must be clarified and improved. She is concerned that the

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**LWVNOC Meets for Program Planning**
by Arline Burgmeier

On February 9, over 30 members of the North Orange County League met to review the LWV California policy positions. They were divided into three groups, each representing a category of positions: Government, Social Policy and Natural Resources. Jan Wagner, Donna Miller and Frann Shermet served as facilitators for the three groups, respectively. The facilitator guided the discussion as each group reviewed the positions in their assigned area and decided if a particular position should be retained, updated or dropped. The groups were also asked to select areas of emphasis for the years 2013-15 and whether a new study was needed.

Leagues all across California similarly reviewed the LWVC policy positions and reported its results to LWVC. The responses will be compiled and presented to the delegates at the May state convention for consideration.

The NOC reported the following results. The Government group voted to retain 7 of the 9 policy positions and to update 2. The Social Policy group voted to retain 4 of the 7 positions and to update 3. The Natural Resources group voted to retain 7 of the 8 policy positions and to update 1. The areas of emphasis suggested were air quality, transportation, education, mental health, housing and campaign finance. Two studies were suggested, one on preparing for climate change and another on mental health care.

Following the program planning session, those present enjoyed a buffet lunch provided by Board members. After lunch everyone sang “Happy Birthday” to celebrate the 93rd birthday of the League of Women Voters and viewed the video “Patriocracy.”
Avoiding Tragedy:  
A Better Way Forward for the Mentally Ill  
Informative Panel Discussion  

Saturday March 2, 3-5pm  
St. Joseph Center, 480 S. Batavia Street, Orange, CA 92868.  

Free and open to the public.  
Come, bring your questions.  

Sponsored by the League of Women Voters of Orange County ILO  

One in four adults suffer from a diagnosable mental illness/NIMH  

Panel Members  
• Dr. Jody M Rawles, Director of Hospital Services, Psychiatry & Human Behavior, School of Medicine, University of California, Irvine  
• Carla Jacobs, Mental Health Advocate and Executive Member of the Proxy Parent Foundation Board of Directors  
• Dr. Pete Farrell, Correctional Health Services Lead Psychiatrist, Orange County Health Care Agency  
• Sheryl Wamsley-Goldsmith, LCSW, MPA, Manager of the Correctional Health Services Mental Health Program, OCHCA  
• Kevin Smith, Division Manager, Adult Mental Health Services, Orange County Health Care Agency  

In light of the Sandy Hook tragedy we will ask our panel of experts:  
• What’s right and what’s wrong in our current mental health system?  
• What are the barriers to timely & appropriate diagnosis & treatment?  
• Why has mental illness been criminalized?  
• What changes are needed to prevent future tragedies?
HELP WANTED!

A league member who will be responsible to store and set up the portable signs advertising the League events, such as Lunch with League and Annual Meeting. These are mostly boxed materials that only require a bit of space in a garage for storage.

If you are willing to help out in this way, contact Wanda Shaffer, 714-525-6676

LWVNOC Membership Form

Name(s) __________________________________________
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