

# **Recap of the LWV California Convention 2017 in Sacramento**

## **Lobby Day**

It started with Lobby Day on Thursday, June 1. Having made appointments while still at home, and after a briefing by State League staff and Board members, a goodly number of League members from all over California streamed into the State Capitol in Sacramento and found our way to our state representative's offices. We were provided with information about the particular bills we wanted to talk with them about, and we did our duty! We met, we talked, we explained, we listened. Our group visited with staff members of Senator Pat Bates and Assemblyman Rocky Chavez. We discussed bills related to upcoming Bond Acts on Library funding vote minimum requirements and on funding \$450 million to buy modern voting machines for the entire state to guarantee reliability, security, and speed with ballots. We also discussed SB54 (De Leon), the California Values Act, which seeks to protect state and local public safety monies from being co-opted by federal actions, makes schools, libraries, medical and court system areas protected from federal deportation activities, and limits co-operation with federal deportations to people with violent or serious felons. And we discussed AB 378 (C. Garcia) which extends the cap-and-trade program from 2020 to 2030 and requires the Air Quality Control Board to add to its regulating duties factoring in the social cost of carbon and pollutants connected with climate change. The aides we met with, Heidi Wettstein for Senator Pat Bates, and Veronica Badillo for Assemblyman Rocky Chavez were both attentive, smart, and delightful people to lobby.

## **Voter's Edge Dinner**

We went back to the convention site to report on our experiences to LWVC staff and Board members, took a break, and then attended a dinner with guest speaker Secretary of State Alex Padilla. Mr. Padilla told us about the many changes coming to voting in California. Of special interest to us will be the new possibilities for voters beginning in 2018. All registered voters will receive a mail ballot automatically. It will be possible to vote by mail at any time over the 30 days up to Election Day. There will be Voting Centers scattered throughout the County where ballots may be returned during the 10 days prior to Election Day. Mr. Padilla also pointed out that California is encouraging voter registration, not suppressing it, by adding automatic voter registration to citizens through the DMV.

## **Convention Begins**

On Friday, the actual State Convention began. In the course of the day we had two Plenary sessions where we adopted rules and procedures, heard from the Nominating Committee, were introduced to proposed Bylaw revisions, Board proposed Program for 2017-2019, and discussed possible Non-Board Program ideas. We also heard from two speakers. In the morning, Celinda Lake of Lake Research Partners told us about how since 11/17, 86% of contacts to Congress have been made by women, there are six times more gun dealers in California than MacDonald's, successful political campaigns are those that frame the debate of the campaign, and many other things. In the afternoon, we heard from Chris Hoene, Executive Director of the California Budget and Policy Center. He talked about the implications of federal policies for California. After showing us data indicating how many billions of dollars California receives from the federal government (37% of the General Fund), and how over 70% of that money goes to Health and Human Services programs, he discussed likely outcomes if the federal government tries to withhold money. I encourage you to visit the LWVC members only website to see the PowerPoint slides from both talks. You will be amazed.

On Saturday at two Plenary sessions we had presentations and discussion on the proposed budget, bylaws, Program for 2017-2019, Non-Recommended Programs, and a talk about MyLO (My League Online), the new operating system for web operations. This day was strictly business. In the evening we had a banquet and inspiring talk by Michael Tubbs, the mayor of Stockton, 26 years old had a banquet and inspiring talk by Michael Tubbs, the mayor of Stockton, 26 years old and passionate about serving his city's residents.

On Sunday, we had our final Plenary session and formally adopted the budget, the Bylaw revisions, adopted the proposed Program (there were no Non-Recommended Programs suggested this year), and elected some new LWVC Board members. Amongst those elected was Karen Vanderwerken, of our League, who will join continuing LWVC Board member Martha Cox. San Diego League also has two LWVC Board members, Jeanne Brown and Amanda Berg. San Diego County presently has represented on the LWVC Board four out of the 12 Board members. Congratulations to them all!

We finished up with a luncheon and a speech by Snopes.com Managing Editor and writer Brooke Binkowski. Her topic was Fake News, and her speech was fascinating. She feels that we may have reached the bottom on fake news and public concern will force more stringent review of allegations that are deliberately inflammatory and aimed at sowing distrust. She pointed out that all dictatorships in the Twentieth century started with attacks on the credibility of the press, so we need to stay alert about where real news is coming from and be discerning of what is deliberate propaganda vs. what is truth. She also said that a story having a byline, credible sources, and verifiable context are all good things to look for when trying to determine what is real and what is not.

On a personal note, this was my first League convention. I found it informative, , stimulating, and exhausting. It helped me to focus on what the LWVC does, how it is organized, how we are all part of a vast network, and it made me, once again, delighted to be a member of the League of Women Voters. I have always felt that the diverse array of topics that the League studies and supports makes it an unusually useful and effective organization. This convention reinforced that conviction. Thank you for letting me be a delegate.

*Anne Omsted*

## **Workshops**

The LWNCS D delegation – Suzanne Carneiro, Arlene Meadows, Anne Omsted, Roni Seay, Nancy Telford, and Connie Ulrich, then broke up and went to workshops on Friday and Saturday afternoons. We made sure that each workshop had at least one of our people present. Following are a few words on each workshop from the attending member(s).

### **FRIDAY**

*Working With the Media* - "Fight fake news and learn how to be a valuable resource to the media in your community."

Presenters: CALmatters reporter Laurel Rosenhall; and Elizabeth Leslie, LWVC Communications manager:

- Anne reports that the ideas about how to spot fake news were especially interesting –

is there a byline, are “facts” attributed to anyone, are there multiple sources referred to in the story, is the headline super inflammatory? Suggestions on how to get stories into the media were also useful, doable, and reasonably easy to do. -

Roni reports the workshop was a chance to learn "how to" cultivate reporters and how

to get your material to the media on their timetables. Check out the nonpartisan, nonprofit <https://calmatters.org>. -

Suzanne reports that the workshop gave us new info on how recognize fake news and led us in an exercise on writing a story about an important issue in our community and the process it takes to pitch it to a reporter.

*Climate Change* – Taking it Local. Presenters: Diz Swift, LWV Berkeley/Albany/Emeryville; and Gloria Chun Hoo, LWV San Jose/Santa Clara.

- Connie reports that the workshop discussed the global and local effects of climate change-from changing weather patterns to forecasting how California would be impacted by a rising sea-level. We looked at local action-from planting the right trees in the right location to permeable sidewalks to stricter energy and water efficient standards.

*Risk & Resiliency: Planning for an Uncertain Future*. Presenter: Sarah Diefendorf LWVC Director.

- Nancy reports that Sarah taught and led the group in using a tool called the PESTLE Analysis. This is a way to use key factors to imagine and prepare for the future. PESTLE stands for Political, Economic, Social, Technological, Legal and Environmental factors.

### **SATURDAY**

*Impact & Influence! A Strategy Session on Leveraging Voter's Edge California*. Presenters: Mony Flores-Bauer & Bonnie Hamlin, LWV Oakland; Samuel Molina, Mi Familia Vota; and Dora Rose, LWVC Senior Director for Civil Engagement.

- Anne felt this session gave excellent suggestions on ways to extend the usefulness of Voters Edge. We can post candidate or issue forums on VE, we can post questions for candidates, we can point to the constantly updated financial donation information, thanks to VE partner Maplight, and we can add information on upcoming forums to the specific candidate or issue listing on VE. - Connie was impressed that Suzanne Carneiro's interview during the past election with a reporter from a local news channel during was used as the best example of how to promote Voters Edge as a tool for new voters.

*Web-volution!* Presenter: Rain Michaels, Technical Project Manager, Staffer.

- Suzanne reports that the workshop gave us a preview of the new platform where we will be moving our website this August. "My head is still spinning."

*Engaging New Members Around Local Issues.* Presenters: Jeanne Brown, LWV San Diego and LWVC Membership Director; Helen Hutchison, LWVC President; Joanne Leavitt, LWVC 2nd VP; and Trudy Schafer, LWVC Senior Director for Program and Advocacy.

- Roni reports basic, sound suggestions on how to involve new members ASAP in a variety of League activities and causes. I have handouts & notes from both workshops.

*Get to the Point! Writing for Everyone.* Presenter: William Cooley, Program Manager, Common Knowledge.

- Nancy reports the workshop was about focusing on eliminating rhetoric and complexity in our writing. The goal is to write using plain language and focusing on your audience. "Get results with messages that move people to Action!"

*Go Fund Yourself: Money in the Mailbox!* Presenters: Christina Dragonetti, LWVC Director; and Jenny Burger, LWVC Development.

## **CAUCUSES**

### **SATURDAY**

*Water: What's Your Issue?* Presenters: Roberta Borgonovo and Jane Wagner-Tyack, LWVC Water Committee.

- Connie learned of the diverse water concerns facing local communities: the need for better catchment systems; of balancing surface water-river and dams and the effects of an expanding agriculture on well water; of water quality problems as a result of drilling or pesticides use, and the ongoing severe drought in some areas. We agreed we are inter-dependent; each issue is a concern to the entire state. We are planning to continue our dialogue.

*Bylaws Q & A.* Presenters: LWVC Bylaws Committee.

- Nancy attended because she had questions related to some of the proposed Bylaws language changes. Members from other parts of the state attended with the same questions. The ensuing discussion led to a proposed amendment to the language from the floor of the convention.

### **SUNDAY**

*Bridging the Divide: Sharing the Work of Local Leagues*

- Connie reports the speakers at the morning caucus were local league members whose leagues had completed innovative projects: Sharon Kimball ( LWV San Luis Obispo) reviewed their Civil Discourse Handbook and discussed how they promoted civil discourse within local government; Donovan Steutal (LWV Pasadena) detailed their study on Gender Representation on City Commissions—for example they found that appointees to planning commissions were mostly, if not all male, while the converse was true for commissions on senior issues; Amanda Berg (LWVSD) spoke about Sips & Civility and Becky Newman (LWV Orange Coast) reviewed their league's pamphlet—A College Student's Guide to Voting in Orange County. The caucus concluded with Martha Cox's discussion on North County's efforts in promoting Civil Discourse, the role of the LWV in facilitation training, and the annual Restoring Respect seminar. There was so much interest in the topic (standing room only at 7:30 am) that there is hope Sharing the Work of Local Leagues becomes a standard feature at every state convention.

*Roni's Other Comments:*

### **LOBBY DAY**

I went with LWV San Diego members, Laurie Thiel, Jennifer Avila, Penny Adler, and Serena G. to visit State Senator Toni Atkins and Assemblyman Todd Gloria. We met with staff members because the legislators were in sessions. It was hard to determine what impact our lobbying made--everyone was so polite and cordial. It was helpful to have printed LWVC fact sheets to hand to these staff members.

We met with Edson Perez, Atkins's staff member. Pleasant young man who was cordial and said he would pass our information to Atkins. He seemed interested in League and the bills we were lobbying for. We met with Juan Reyes, Todd

Gloria's very new staff member--he had worked for Gloria little more than a week. He was cordial, appeared interested in our take on the bills and said he'd pass our information along. After the formal interview, I told him a few facts about LWV and he acted interested.

It was enlightening to see the small windowless offices, busy staff and feel the bustle of the capitol. The State Capitol building and the chambers where the Assembly and the Senators meet were quite ornate and impressive. You could feel the weight of history in this place. In the more modern wing there were fascinating "window" displays created by each of the Counties in California and I was struck once again by the geographic, economic and ethnic diversity in our State.

Bills we lobbied for:

SB 54 (De Leon) (passed by Senate) California Values Act AB 378 (C. Garcia) Cap and Trade Extension & Air Quality AB 688 (Gonzalez-Fletcher) (passed by Assembly) Voting Modernization Bond of 2018 SCA 3 (Dodd): Local Library Bonds--Vote Threshold. Pass by 55% like school bonds rather than by 2/3

### *Suzanne's Other Comments:*

I think was the best State convention I have ever attended. If I remember correctly, this was my fourth. The food was the best we've ever had.

First it was meeting up with old friends and making new ones. It was great to be able to thank the staff I have been working with for several years in person. With the addition of Sharon Stone two years ago, they work harder and are more accessible and responsive than I experienced in the past. I was also honored to be asked to be on the election committee by Helen Hutchison, our state president. As it turned out, we had an early flight home so I didn't actually have to do anything but I got an extra ribbon for my delegate badge. I was also recognized for being a Voter's Edge team member. One of the other new things they had was a ribbon for first time attendees. That really helped everyone know who was new and to welcome them and answer their questions.

On Wednesday our delegation participated in Lobby Day. LWVC gave us some useful training in the morning and handouts with talking points that helped us stay on topic. Even though we couldn't meet with our representatives and senators, their aides welcomed us and heard our take on important issues. I loved being at the capitol and being in the building where it all happens.

Thursday I attended the Voter Service dinner. Our Secretary of State, Alex Padilla, was the speaker and he filled us in on some of the new innovations being rolled out for the next election. A very dynamic speaker. The ranks of Voter Service are growing and Voter's Edge is spreading to more and more counties.

The plenary session overall went smoothly. What was interesting to me was seeing new members, many of them younger than the majority of our members, present motions and argue for them and learning the workings of parliamentary procedure. The speakers we had were good but it was disappointing that several had to cancel. One of the first was Celinda Lake, a pollster. Her takeaway was this quote, "League is constitutionally incapable of lying to the public." I plan to use it for branding in the future. My favorite speaker was Michael Butts, Mayor of Stockton. So much youth and energy working hard for his constituents.

### *Nancy's Other Comments:*

It was so nice to visit with friends from other parts of California. We have so many very committed and hardworking League members. I especially enjoyed spending time with Trudy Schafer, our state Sr. Director for Program whose main focus is Advocacy on League priorities at the state Capitol. She shared ideas and processes behind the ways League lobbies and also suggested ways to stay informed as well as communicate individually with our legislators.

In addition to Workshops, many discussions of specific subjects were held during early morning, late afternoon, or late evening time slots. These were to inform attendees about various aspects of League work.