



THE VOTER

LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF SOUTH SAN MATEO COUNTY

Celebrating over 50 years of service to our communities

www.LWVSSMC.org

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March 2017

Editor: Bernadette Burns, bernadetteburns362@gmail.com, 408-757-1250

How to Navigate Information in a World of Fake News and Alternative Facts

Wednesday, March 15, 7 pm

Please join us for a lively panel discussion co-sponsored by the Palo Alto League along with ours.

The experts on this timely topic will include:

- Stanford Economist **Matthew Gentzkow**, co-author, *Social Media and Fake News in the 2016 Election*
- **Sarah McGrew**, researcher at the Stanford Graduate School of Education and one of the co-authors of the recent report "EVALUATING INFORMATION: THE CORNERSTONE OF CIVIC ONLINE REASONING," which found that college students have trouble judging the credibility of online information
- Tech reporter **Daisuke Wakabayashi** of the New York Times, formerly with the Wall Street Journal
- Moderator: **Dan Russell**, search expert at Google.

Wednesday, March 15, 2017

7 to 9 pm

Cubberley Theater

4120 Middlefield Road, Palo Alto, CA 94306

Join North/Central San Mateo for Lunch with the League

Come and enjoy a delicious and lively *Lunch with the League* on **Friday, April 7** in the banquet room at the Poplar Creek Golf Course. speaker. The Congresswoman will convey her 2017 legislative priorities and **Congresswoman Jackie Speier** has graciously accepted our invitation to be our guest help us answer the question, how can more women be encouraged to seek elected office?

Everyone is welcome; you do not need to be a member to attend. Bring a guest! Make your reservation now, seats are limited. Use PayPal via our website, <http://www.lwvncmc.org>. Contact: Marie Baldisseri, Membership Chair, mbaldisseri@att.net or 650-992-2233.

Ellen Hope adds: "It would be fun to have a table - or two - for our League. If you are planning to go and would like to sit together, please call me/send me a note." (650-839-8647 or ellenjhope@aol.com)

FROM THE BOARD--Growing Our Presence

Have you wondered how the League can take advantage of the recently heightened interest in democracy and voting? We have some new ideas, with the results newly in hand of a Board-approved project led by a Stanford Graduate School of Business Alumni Consulting Team (ACT) with our local League over the past 6 months. The pro bono ACT consultants were asked to "help us make a greater impact in our communities by building a robust, sustainable, and eventually more diverse membership."

Through surveys of our community, the ACT volunteers confirmed that our League has a lot of strengths to utilize, and we have some areas where additional focus is needed. On the positive side, they heard a number of affirming comments about the League, such as *informative, nonpartisan, fair, unbiased, honest, impartial, political, integrity, intelligent, education, voting*, and that our League members are *impressive, gracious, persistent, and welcoming*. ACT confirmed that we have distinct opportunities for growth, especially in terms of more proportional representation from

every city in our geography as well as more age and ethnic diversity. ACT also identified some best practices of other Leagues to help guide our way forward.

There are actions our Board and current volunteers can do, and there are actions every member can do! Here's what the Board is doing: We are using our new "elevator pitch", which is highlighted elsewhere in this Newsletter. We have created a Membership Committee which is establishing a 3-year plan focused on membership growth and engagement. Leveraging lessons learned by other Leagues, we will be enhancing our use of social media and increasing the number and accessibility of activities for our members. We have already started improving the new member onboarding process. With nearly 30 new members since last summer, we are holding Welcome/Orientation sessions. Additionally, we will be identifying and sharing specific opportunities for member engagement in every aspect of what our League does.

What can YOU do? In any conversation about democracy or politics, share the League's elevator pitch and encourage your friends to consider joining or supporting the League. Proactively identify women AND MEN you know in various community circles (e.g., your book group, alumni group, work, social group, civic or faith-based group, other volunteer activities) and encourage them to join the League. Consider attending an Orientation session for the latest about the League; the next two are at 4-5:30 pm on Sunday March 12th and March 26th at Lucile Spurlock's home in Menlo Park. Simply RSVP to Lisa Conrad at darnoc@earthlink.net if you can come. As always, participate in League events and activities as your interest and time allow.

Our biggest takeaway from the ACT project is that each of us is responsible for expanding and engaging our membership! So let me or others on the Board know of your questions and ideas. We look forward to hearing from you!

Patti Fry, Member, LWVSSMC Board, and Secretary, Education Fund Board
menlopatti@gmail.com

This is our Elevator Pitch:

Imagine what it would be like if everyone voted!

The League of Women Voters works to safeguard democracy by:

- Fighting voter suppression
- Engaging new voters
- Empowering voters with information

If you want to make a difference in our democracy, join the League.

We would love to have you join us!

In Memoriam: Elizabeth Louise "Betty Lou" Taylor

Betty Lou Taylor, who died on February 22, 2017, at age 100, was a long-time member of our League who served in a number of assignments. In particular, she was the LWV observer of the San Mateo County Board of Supervisors for several years. She cared about many other social causes as well. She was soft-spoken, tall, and devoted to her causes. She helped staff our office for a number of years and was the first League voice callers heard on those days. She represented us well in whatever capacity she served our League.

A longtime member of the American Association of University Women, Prytanean Women's Honor Society, and the League of Women Voters, Betty Lou also was a lifelong member of the Unitarian-Universalist Fellowship. She lived her life in service to others, alleviating their suffering and easing their paths.

The ever-practical Betty Lou would prefer that, in lieu of flowers, you commit yourself to performing acts of kindness for those less fortunate; donations may be made to your favorite charitable cause.

(Condensed from member reminiscences and SF Chronicle obituary)

Legislative Interviews

Each year the state League asks Leagues around California to interview their local California Assembly members and State Senators. Three questions are set by the state, and the answers are used to guide their lobbying efforts in Sacramento through the upcoming year. The fourth question is optional, and may be a question of local interest or a question about the legislator's priorities for the next legislative session.

Legislative Interview

Assemblyman Kevin Mullin, 22nd District

February 10, 2017

Question 1: Funding of Elections. *State and local governments have a fundamental obligation to provide an election process that ensures integrity, accessibility, and security of our right to vote. However, the current approach to funding elections in California has many flaws. What legislative measures would you support to ensure adequate and stable funding of election administration in California?*

This is an important question. Most of the election systems currently in use are nearing the end of their usefulness and need to be modernized. Currently, there is a patchwork of systems across each of the 58 counties statewide. There needs to be a dedicated funding stream from the state to enable these counties to modernize their elections systems. This will be done by the Legislature in conjunction with the Secretary of State. CalAccess does have grant applications available to counties. In 2020, there is a proposal to move the presidential primary to "Super Tuesday" in March so that California voters have more of a say in who the various party nominees will be. This would be a consolidated primary in which all offices would be on the March ballot. In the past, we had a presidential primary in February followed by a primary for other offices in June; the June primary did not have a very high turnout so holding a consolidated primary would alleviate that problem. In non-presidential years (2018, etc.), the primary would be continue to be held in June. Assemblyman Mullin was quite adamant that voter fraud in California is almost nonexistent and claims to the contrary by the Trump administration are bogus and only serve to undermine public confidence in the system.

Question 2: Higher Public Education. *To increase access for students, the legislature has asked public higher education institutions to increase enrollment of Californians and to ensure that students with greater needs are also accommodated. Yet despite increased funding from the legislature in recent sessions, per student funding is currently less than before the recession and costs have risen. How can California meet the challenge of enrolling more students, including students with greater needs, at the UC and CSU? Is more state funding needed? Where does this issue rank in your legislative priorities?*

For Assemblyman Mullin, this is an important issue and is a high priority for the Democratic caucus. He is adamant that the middle-class scholarship should not be eliminated as the governor wants to do. He believes in a fixed tuition model and that we should lower barriers for “home grown” students. Community colleges are an important resource to provide new skilled workers and linkages to the UC and CSUs. Innovative partnerships between community colleges and business should be encouraged. He is in favor of updating the Master Plan and sees community colleges as a ladder of opportunity.

Question 3: Water Resources. *The recent multi-year drought has made many Californians aware of the need to rethink the way they use water. California’s economic activities in infrastructure are based on management models that were developed in the unusually wet 20th century. A report published in August 2014 by UC Davis researchers found that California has issued water rights for at least five times more surface water than the state receives on average from precipitation, even in a non-drought year. What kinds of legislative proposals would you support to ensure that enough water of adequate quality is available for municipal and industrial uses, agriculture, and the environment in the face of over-stretched surface water and groundwater resources and climate conditions different than those California experienced in the last century?*

Despite the recent rains, the drought is not going away. Climate change is a fact. We should not be lulled into complacency about water. We need to be smarter and wiser in how we use water. The use of recycled water (not toilet to tap) should be explored and expanded. We also need to increase innovation in water technology. A bond dealing with ground water is the first step. Assemblyman Mullin is also concerned about bay level rise as his district will be the one most economically impacted in the state.

Question 4: ACA. *What will happen to Californians if the ACA is dismantled?*

Assemblyman Mullin says this is an issue that keeps him awake at night. California could conceivably lose over \$15 billion dollars if the ACA is dismantled that is currently spent on health care. He is unsure what is going to happen. There will be a concentrated effort to ensure that Californians continue to have health care coverage. He believes the Legislature needs to develop a strategy and think strategically. In reality, we will need to “pick our battles” with the federal government.

Question 5: What other major issues *do you think the legislature must deal with in 2017? What are your personal priorities?*

In San Mateo County, housing and transportation were twin top priority issues. These are also top priorities in the Democratic caucus. Federal matching funds for the electrification of CalTrain are something that could be in jeopardy. However, the

Trump administration has said they would like to improve infrastructure so perhaps this funding will come through after all.

In the state, there is a proposal for a transportation infrastructure bill that would need to pass by a 2/3 majority of the voters. It would be \$50-60 billion over 10 years. The gas tax would increase by 12 cents. Vehicle License Fees (VLFs) would be increased. There would be a surcharge on electric vehicles which currently pay very little gas tax.

In the housing area, more affordable housing is needed. The governor needs to show more leadership in this area. There is talk of eliminating the mortgage interest deduction on second homes. Most communities are not meeting the need for housing. There needs to be an appeal process at the state level. He does not want San Mateo County to become the poster child for a jobs and housing imbalance.

**Legislative Interview Assembly member Marc Berman.
January 27, 11 am to 11:40 am in Berman's Los Altos office.**

Question 1: Funding of Elections

What legislative measures would you support to ensure adequate and stable funding of election administration in California?

Berman responded that he had asked to be on the Elections and Redistricting Committee. As a student in Washington DC, he worked on protecting the right to vote. Berman admitted that he did not know much about how elections in the state are funded. He believes that the state should move toward greater accessibility for voters, i.e., to make it as easy as possible for people to vote. Berman said he is willing to listen to the League regarding bills on the administration of elections. He is very upset with the gutting of the Voting Rights Act in some states, and he would like for California to have as progressive voting policies as possible.

Question 2: Public Higher Education

How can California meet the challenge of enrolling more students, including students with greater needs, at the UC and CSU? Is more state funding needed? Where does this issue rank in your legislative priorities?

Berman suggested there was a connection between the sharp increase in prison spending and the decrease in spending on higher education in recent decades. He is optimistic that recent prison reform will free up money that can be funneled into public education. He stated that education (pre-school through college) is one of his top three priorities. He feels the 1960 Master Plan for Higher Education must be rewritten, by bringing all the relevant parties together and working in a slow, deliberate manner.

He mentioned one major problem that keeps college students in school longer and makes college more costly: many students cannot get into required lower level courses in their first two years, so they cannot graduate in four years. Another reason the students cannot graduate in four years is that in order to afford the fees, they must work while going to school, so it takes longer to graduate.

Question 3: Water Resources

What kinds of legislative proposals would you support to ensure that enough water of adequate quality is available for municipal and industrial uses, agriculture, and the environment in the face of over-stretched surface water and groundwater resources and climate conditions different than those California experienced in the last century?

Berman responded that challenges still exist even though the drought is over. The ground water supply is decimated. We need to continue best practices regarding recycling, conservation and the use of reclaimed water. He does not think that desalination plants are a solution because of their impact on the environment and high energy needs. He thinks there should be more state regulations making it easier to use recycled and reclaimed water. The state needs to continue to work with the agriculture industry. He thinks the state should continue to support new technologies and innovation in agriculture that could help reduce the amount of water used by the agriculture. He supports the bills that were signed recently regarding the sustainability of ground water.

Question 4: Local League Question:

There are multiple agencies deal with transportation and public transit in the Bay Area. What measures can the state take to encourage these agencies to cooperate, consolidate, etc., to ensure better transit options?

Berman responded that funding incentives may be one way to encourage these agencies to consolidate. [noting difference between transportation and transit] Metrics could be created to measure interconnectedness between transit services as a way to provide incentives. He would focus on housing this next year. We mentioned how housing and transit are interconnected.

Question 5: *What other major issues do you think the legislature must deal with in 2017? What are your personal priorities?*

Berman responded: Housing, Health Care and Immigration. We need to take care of our most vulnerable residents and we cannot compromise our values. This is our first line of defense against the administration in Washington DC. When we defend California, we defend America.

<p>League Office: LWVSSMC, 3723 Haven Avenue, Suite 112, Menlo Park, CA Mailing Address: P.O. Box 2244, Menlo Park, CA 94026-2244</p>

Volunteer Opportunity:

The Alumni Consulting Team has recommended that we develop a broader-based Speaker's Bureau to complement Sue Alvarez's current responsibilities training, coordinating and presenting for the ballot proposition Pros and Cons. Sue would be delighted to share her experience and expertise with other people who are willing to help with that effort. Please let her know if you would be interested in participating: Sue Alvarez sbrock1944@aol.com.

We have so much talent and expertise in our League and there is an even greater urgency for providing accurate and unbiased information at this chaotic time, that a full-fledged Speaker's Bureau is an idea whose time has come! Please consider contributing your time--or at least your ideas for a potential brainstorming session in April, so that Sue can then take a recommendation to the Board.

"LIKE" our Facebook Page - LWVSSMC

If you have your own Facebook Page - you can now "LIKE" our FB Page using this URL: <https://www.facebook.com/LWVSSMC/>.

Once you type it in, it will lead you directly to the Page and you should "hit" the thumbs up "Like" button. If you have others from your FB friend group that you would like to invite to also LIKE the Page, just go to the MORE pull down menu (located in the top middle of your screen after the LIKE pull down and the FOLLOW pull down), it will show you your FB friends list and a way to INVITE as many as you wish to "Like" the Page.

NOTE that you will need to have your own personal Facebook Page before you can get to our League FB Page. I apologize for all the capital letters in this message, but once you start navigating on the site, you will see why.

If you have any stories, announcements or photos to share on the Page, you can send them directly to Rita Whitney (ravrita@aol.com) or to Lucile Spurlock (caspurlock@aol.com). In addition, you can contact our new Webmistress, Sanneke Jang (sannekejm@gmail.com) with any submissions appropriate for our Web page.

**OFFICERS AND CONTACTS FOR OUR LEAGUE
(LWV OF SOUTH SAN MATEO COUNTY, 2016-17)**

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UPCOMING EVENTS		
MARCH		
12 Sun	4 – 5:30 pm	New member reception at Lucile Spurlock’s, 856 Creek Drive, Menlo Park. Contact: Lisa Conrad, darnoc@earthlink.net 650-323-2343.
13 Mon	7-9 pm	LWVSSMC BOARD MEETING in the new office conference room. Contact: Ellen Hope, ellenjhope@aol.com
15 Weds	7-9 pm	League Lecture Series: How to Navigate Information in a World of Fake News Cubberley Theater 4120 Middlefield Road Palo Alto.
23 Thurs	12 noon	Book Group Meeting to discuss <i>Why Good People are Divided by Politics and Religion</i> by Jonathan Haidt . At Lucile Spurlock’s, 856 Creek Drive, Menlo Park. Contact: Judy Orttung, jorttung@comcast.net
26 Sun	4 – 5:30 pm	New member reception at Lucile Spurlock’s, 856 Creek Drive, Menlo Park. Contact: Lisa Conrad, darnoc@earthlink.net 650-323-2343.
28 Tues	1 pm – 3 pm	North/Central San Mateo League General Meeting: Senate Joint Resolution – Presidential Elections – Electoral College . Silicon Valley Community Foundation, 1300 South El Camino Real, San Mateo. Contact: Susie Raye, Program Director, program@lwvncsmc.org .
APRIL		
7 Fri	11:30 am – 2 pm	North/Central San Mateo Lunch with League—Jackie Speier . Poplar Course Golf Banquet Room, 1700 Coyote Point Drive, San Mateo. Contact: Marie Baldisseri, mbaldisseri@att.net or 650-992-2233.
10 Mon	7-9 pm	LWVSSMC BOARD MEETING in the new office conference room. Contact: Ellen Hope, ellenjhope@aol.com

SAVE THE DATES!!! California State League Convention in Sacramento, June 2-4, 2017.