



# The Voter

November 2011

League of Women  
Voters  
of San Bernardino  
1955-NOW!

November 2011

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## President's Message

**GREETINGS!** By now you have received an invitation to our **Holiday Party** and we hope you are planning to attend. Since this is a time of giving, we would like you to consider bringing a gift to the children living at Time For Change's Sweet Dreams or write a check to the Foundation. (The list is on the invitation.) And of course,

we look forward to enjoying some time together just for fun.

This issue of **The Voter** is devoted to bringing you up to date on what we've been doing.

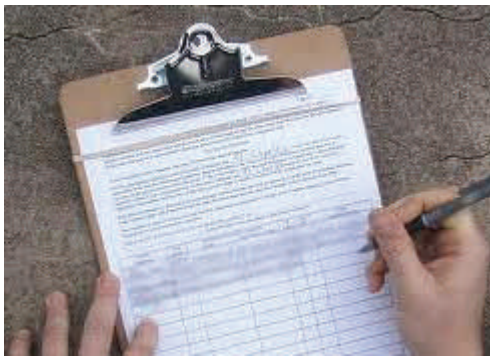
Although we haven't had a meeting this month, the League has not been idle. **The State Budget, the Initiative and Referendum**

**Process, Realignment, and our local Charter School Study** as well as the nationwide attempts at **Voter Suppression** have been among the issues that have had our attention.

**See you December 10!**

**Gloria Anderson**  
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## Initiative and Referendum Update



Anti-Redistricting Petition

Does the initiative process advance the cause of good governance in California, or just contribute to governmental dysfunction? These and other questions are on our minds as we begin our Initiative and Referendum Process position update study. Delegates to the 2011 LWVC convention approved doing a study of our existing position (adopted in 1988 and updated in 1999) to see whether members understand and

agree with the current position and to address what isn't in the position that should be added. The resulting consensus reports from local Leagues will be the basis of the revised position that delegates to the 2013 convention will vote on.

The study will include:

- ◇ A review of the current LWVC position on the process.
- ◇ The history of initiative and referendum, with a focus on California
- ◇ How the initiative and referendum processes have changed and are changing
- ◇ Identification of key issue for California
- ◇ Ideas for change and reform of the initiative and referendum processes

- ◇ Creation of community education and outreach material for use by local Leagues and other groups.

Study material will be sent to local Leagues in summer 2012; consensus reports will be due March 2013. If you are interested in being on the committee, let me know.

Meanwhile, we have been using our current position to oppose efforts of those who want to object to the lines drawn by the Citizens Redistricting Commission for Senate and Congressional districts.

They have gathered signatures to put a referendum on the issue on the November 2012 ballot. Stand by for future developments.

## California's Fiscal Outlook

Mac Taylor, California's Legislative Analyst, recently spoke at a UC Riverside seminar on the fiscal health of California. His presentation examined the state's current financial condition; the further budget cutbacks to education, social and health services and welfare programs that would be triggered by a revenue shortfall; and longer-run fiscal challenges to the state. It was a pretty grim prognosis, which hasn't improved.

The report released by his office in mid-November concludes that although the Legislature now faces a much smaller budget problem than projected

one year ago, there are few easy options left for balancing California's budget. Program reductions already have been passed, and significant one-time budget actions may be more elusive than in prior years. Thus, the remaining work of eliminating the state's persistent, annual deficit will require more difficult cuts in expenditures and/or increases in revenues.

Although the forecast does not include funding to address some of the state's key long-term fiscal and policy problems, it says that if the Legislature and the Governor were to eliminate the structural deficit this year or over the course of the next few years, the focus

of their efforts could finally shift away from short-term budget problems and turn to the serious long-term fiscal issues of the state's accumulated budgetary obligations and unfunded retirement liabilities. The full report is at [www.lao.ca.gov](http://www.lao.ca.gov).

Now we're awaiting the Department of Finance's mid-December forecast that will determine what cuts will be made. Again, the preliminary indications are that all of the first tier cuts and some of the second tier education cuts will be triggered.

You can also check out what LWVC is doing on the State Budget by going to [www.lwvc.org](http://www.lwvc.org).



Presentation slides can be found at:  
[http://www.lao.ca.gov/handouts/FO/2011/CA\\_Budget\\_Woes\\_102711.pdf](http://www.lao.ca.gov/handouts/FO/2011/CA_Budget_Woes_102711.pdf)

## Voter Suppression

The League has been fighting for equal access to the polls since our inception 91 years ago and this year the League actively opposed voter suppression legislation in 21 states – an unprecedented attack on voting rights. We were successful in protecting the vote in 13 of those states but the remaining states created new and in some cases insurmountable barriers to the polls.

Elisabeth MacNamera, LWVUS President, recently testified at the House Judiciary Committee forum on the impact of recent

state voting changes. The most onerous, she said, are the photo ID requirements that potentially disenfranchise millions of registered voters due to disability, age, illness, transportation, or financial issues. As many as 11 percent of United States citizens, more than 21 million individuals, do not have government-issued photo identification, according to a Brennan Center for Justice study.

She called on the federal government to step in to ensure voters rights are protected if the states are unable or unwilling to protect the

rights of every eligible citizen to vote. In addition:

- ◇ The League calls on the Congress and all Americans to join us in applying pressure on the Department of Justice urging them to deny pre-clearance of these new voter suppression laws in states covered by the Voting Rights Act.
- ◇ We call on the committee and other members of Congress to join Senator Nelson of Florida in asking the Justice Department to investigate

## Inside Story Headline

whether these new suppressive voting laws were passed as part of a concerted effort to discourage millions of people from voting in the 2012 presidential election.

- ◇ We ask for your support in our ongoing efforts to fight back voter suppression legislation and to repeal existing voter suppression laws in the states.
- ◇ We ask that you continue to conduct investigations

into the real-life impact these laws have on citizens and their right to vote.

In conclusion, she said that these new laws threaten to silence the voices of those least heard and rarely listened to in this country – the poor, the elderly, racial and ethnic minorities, the young and the differently abled. Now is the time to act. We must work together to repeal these unjust and prejudicial laws and implement new laws that will lower the barriers to voting and en-

sured that every eligible citizen will have the ability to vote.

You can read the full text of her testimony and access other information about the League's voter protection efforts by going to [www.lwv.org](http://www.lwv.org).

## San Bernardino County Realignment Plan

In October, I attended a meeting cosponsored by Supervisor Josie Gonzales and Rev. Sam Casey of C.O.P.E (a faith-based organization) for community-based and faith-based groups to discuss the county's realignment plan and where they might fit into it..

The plan was developed to implement the recently enacted law (AB 109) that displaces responsibility for the supervision of low-risk offenders from the state to the local level. Funding for the realignment for Fiscal Year 2011-2012 comes from a portion of sales tax revenue and Vehicle License Fees. However, the ultimate goal is to have a guaranteed dedicated funding stream for re-

alignment costs beyond the current year.

Representatives from the agencies involved in the realignment spoke on their role in the process. They included the County Sheriff, County District Attorney, Interim Public Defender, Public Health and Behavioral Health directors, and the Chief Probation Officer.

The alignment plan includes a chart listing new positions they will be filling to implement the plan, including 151 probation officers that will have the bulk of the load. Others will be hired by the Sheriff, Public Defender District Attorney, and Behavioral Health, Public Health, Workforce Development, and Human Re-

source Departments, for a total of 189 new positions. We were told that the plan is a living document, with a focus on rehabilitation, and adjustments to it will be made as needed.

There is much more information that came from the meeting, but the bottom line seems to be that San Bernardino County is prepared to do a better job than the state prisons have done with those who are incarcerated, but only if a stable source of funding can be found to continue implementation after this initial year..

There is a list of department contacts that I can give you if you have any questions.  
Gloria



**It costs \$47,102 to keep an inmate in prison for one year.**  
**California Legislative Analyst's Office.**

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**League of Women Voters  
of San Bernardino 1955-NOW!**

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**The League of  
Women Voters: Because Democracy is not a spectator  
sport.**

**Upcoming events—save the date!**

**December 10: 2-4 pm. Holiday Party at Bert's  
Home!**

**We're on the web: [http://  
lwvsanbernardino.ca.lwvnet.org](http://lwvsanbernardino.ca.lwvnet.org)**

## **Charter School Study Underway**

Charter schools are primary or secondary schools that receive public money and sometimes private donations but are not subject to some of the same rules, regulations, and statutes that apply to other public schools in exchange for some type of accountability for producing certain results, which are set forth in the school's charter. The charter school idea in the US was originated by Ray Buddle, a professor at the University of Massachusetts Amherst and embraced by Albert Shanker, President of the American Federation of Teachers, in 1988. Charter schools are typically found in urban areas where many parents have asked for choice in school districts fraught with failing test scores and other problems. Some charter schools provide an education that specializes in a certain field. Others attempt to provide a better and more efficient general education than nearby public schools. Charter schools students take state-mandated exams.

Charter schools can be founded by

teachers, parents, or activists who feel restricted by traditional public schools, or by non-profit groups, universities, and some government entities. They must be chartered by the local school district, county school district, the state, or some other governmental institution. Frequently, charter schools are run by corporations to manage chains of charter schools, but the schools themselves must remain non-profit and cannot be church-affiliated. So far, test score results for charter schools, on average, have not exceeded those of traditional public schools. However, most charter schools have long waiting lists of potential students, and the movement has continued to grow throughout the country.

There are eleven schools chartered by San Bernardino City Unified School District: ASA Charter School, Casa Ramona Charter, Crown Ridge Academy, EXCEL Prep Charter School, Hardy Brown College Prep, New Vision Middle

School, Options for Youth, PAL Charter, Public Safety Academy, SOAR Charter Academy, and Taylison Virtual Academy.. The study committee, consisting of Bert Fox, Barbara Sokoloff, Dotti Garcia, Marilyn Patterson, Sally Morris and Susan Nieblas, will be conducting interviews at each of these schools in teams of two or three, visiting classrooms, and evaluating each school based on the following criteria: curriculum and educational experience, funding and administration, and oversight by SBCUSD. A report to members will be presented in written form, followed by a membership meeting scheduled for next February. The results of our consensus from that meeting will form the basis for a local League position and allow us to have input on charter school issues within the SBCUSD.

Susan Nieblas

Sources:

*Wikipedia* (Charter Schools article)