



The Voter

The League of Women Voters of Western Nevada County

February 2012



**WHAT IS “VOTER SUPPRESSION” ?
Should Nevada County Care ?**

Guest Speakers:

Lola Acosta, President, League of Women Voters, Sacramento County

Irma Jordan, President, Butte County NAACP

Gregory Diaz, Nevada County Clerk-Recorder/Registrar of Voters

Saturday, February 11, 2012

Refreshments at 9:30 a.m.—Program at 10:00 a.m.

Peace Lutheran Church

828 West Main

Grass Valley

The Prez Sez

Our January meeting proved to be a great beginning for the year ahead. Our program on Prison Realignment was both compelling and reassuring.

An outstanding panel of speakers including Judge Thomas Anderson, Sheriff Keith Royal, and Chief Probation officer Doug Carver, all of Nevada County, as well as Margarita Perez, Deputy Director for California's Division of Adult Parole Operations, gave us a detailed picture of what to expect as many state prisoners return to their home counties. They also placed the rationale for realignment in the bigger picture of California's ongoing budget problems and the need for prison reform. As we gained insight into the future, many of us were impressed with the high degree of preparation and cooperation among our Nevada County officials with these changes.

But we're not stopping there.

We have a great year planned for you. In February we will learn more about voter suppression attempts in progress around our nation. Clever strategies and deceptive rationales to disenfranchise voters seem to abound. The voting rights of the young, elderly and poor voters are especially vulnerable. Should we be worried?

Our March program will focus on the ever-increasing role of big money donors in determining the outcome of elections throughout the U.S. SuperPac money, enormous infusions of cash from corporations and wealthy anonymous donors, is attempting to influence your vote. You'll learn more about how recent court decisions have changed traditional notions of democracy. Are corporations people? Is money equivalent to free speech? You decide.

In April, we will examine California's initiative and referendum process. Begun as an attempt to allow ordinary citizens a greater role in shaping the state's political focus, the initiative and referendum processes have been misused and abused to produce problems never envisioned by its proponents. Now, many citizen groups question the value of continuing to allow these processes to shape our lives. Is it too late to reform this reform?

In May, our Annual Meeting will provide you with the opportunity to tell us what you want our League to consider when we are planning future meetings. Of course, we also want you to enjoy meeting new members and visiting with old friends and acquaintances over a delicious luncheon!

To prepare for the November election, we're already busy planning for Candidates' Forums and Pros & Cons presentations on the ballot initiatives. We want to help you to make informed choices when you vote!

So, hold on to your collective hats—we're off to a great start for an exciting year ahead!

Karen Schwartz, President

Little Known Facts in the Felon Voting Debate

Did You Know:

- In 1789 Kentucky became the first US state to ban convicted criminals from voting?
- In 2004 Florida had the highest percentage of disenfranchised voters (9.01%) of any state, Delaware at 7.54% was second, and Alabama at 7.37% was third?
- Maine and Vermont are the only two states where felons are permitted to vote while in prison?
- Ten states and the District of Columbia restrict some people with a misdemeanor conviction from voting?
- In 2002 the US Senate voted 63-31 against legislation that would have restored voting rights to ex-felons voting in federal elections?
- In Canada convicted felons have no voting restrictions and can vote while incarcerated?
- The percentage of state prisoners incarcerated for a drug offense peaked in 1997 at 26.9% (1 in 4 inmates) up from 10.4% (1 in 10) in 1983. As of 2008, 18.4% of all state prisoners were in for a drug offense?
- In 2008 US jails and prisons housed 2,322,486 people - more than the entire population of Alaska, Montana and Vermont combined?

(Reprinted in part courtesy of ProCon.org)

Our February 11 Program

Voter suppression is a strategy to influence the outcome of an election by discouraging or preventing people from exercising their right to vote.

It is distinguished from political campaigning in that campaigning attempts to change likely voting behavior by changing the opinions of potential voters through persuasion and organization. Voter suppression, instead, attempts to reduce the number of voters who might vote against the candidate or proposition advocated by the suppressors.

The tactics of voter suppression can range from minor "dirty tricks" that make voting inconvenient, up to blatantly illegal activities that physically intimidate prospective voters to prevent them from casting ballots. Voter suppression could be particularly effective if a significant number of voters are intimidated individually because the voter might not consider his or her single vote important.

5 Myths About Voter Impersonation

MYTH: Voter impersonation is a widespread problem.

FACT: Between 2002 and 2007, after undertaking a massive investigation into voting irregularities, the U.S. Justice Department did not prosecute a single individual for impersonating another voter at the polls.

MYTH: Third-party registration drives contribute to voter impersonation.

FACT: Since 2008, only 31 cases of suspected voter impersonation have been reported to Florida authorities. But due to a restrictive new law there, the League has been forced to suspend its Florida registration activities for the first time in 72 years.

MYTH: Everyone either has an ID or can easily obtain one.

FACT: Eleven percent of eligible voters, or about 21 million people, don't have updated state-issued photo IDs. Furthermore, most states require producing a passport or birth certificate to get one. This presents a tremendous burden for people who work multiple jobs, lack transportation, have disabilities, live outside the state where they were born, and are poor or elderly.

MYTH: Election Day registration invites voter impersonation.

FACT: An investigation by the Secretary of State in Maine - which was the first state to adopt Election Day registration - did not find evidence of voting irregularities due to same-day registration.

MYTH: Early voting increases voter impersonation.

FACT: Incidences of impersonation in early voting are just as rare as they are in Election Day balloting. A CBS News report on 17 early voting states revealed no widespread signs of irregularities in the 2008 election.

BEWARE!

Petitions Are Waiting For Your Signatures!



1. Initiatives and Referenda Cleared for Circulation (55)*
2. Initiatives and Referenda Pending Signature Verification (2)*
3. Initiatives and Referenda Failed to Qualify (4)*
4. Initiatives and Referenda Pending the Attorney General's Office (21)*

* *Information from the Secretary of State—January 13, 2012*

Submitted by: Voter Service Chair, Ruth Schwartz

P.S. Be careful what you sign - it might just become the law!

VOTER ID REQUIREMENTS**Requires a photo ID**

Georgia, Indiana, Kansas, South Carolina*, Tennessee, Texas*, Wisconsin

Requests a photo ID

Florida, Hawaii, Idaho, Louisiana, Michigan, Puerto Rico, South Dakota

Requires a non-photo ID

Alabama, Alaska, Arizona, Arkansas, Colorado, Connecticut, Delaware, Kentucky, Missouri, Montana, North Dakota, Ohio, Oklahoma, Rhode Island, Utah, U.S. Virgin Islands, Virginia, Washington

Does not require an ID

California, D.C., Guam, Illinois, Iowa, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, Minnesota, Mississippi, Nebraska, Nevada, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New Mexico, New York, North Carolina, Oregon, Pennsylvania, Vermont, West Virginia, Wyoming

***Will require Department of Justice approval**

Sources: National Conference of State Legislatures, Election Boards

(Reprinted courtesy of aarp.org/bulletin—January-February 2012)

They came first for the Communists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't
a Communist.

Then they came for the trade union-
ists,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't
a trade unionist.

Then they came for the Jews,
and I didn't speak up because I wasn't
a Jew.

Then they came for me,
and by that time no one was left to
speak up.

Martin Niemoller (1892-1984)

National League Advocacy Activity

The League of Women Voters has been active in its opposition to efforts to overturn administration environmental initiatives. On January 19, 2012 a letter was sent to the U.S. Senate urging members to oppose efforts to overturn initiatives that protect public health and the environment. Included are those rules under the Clean Air Act to cut power plant emissions of mercury, arsenic, acid gases and other toxins. To void the mercury and air toxics rule would be a public health disaster. Each year, the new regulations could prevent 4,700 heart attacks and 13,000 asthma attacks among children and save 11,000 lives. Mercury, particularly, harms children, including effects on IQ, learning and memory.

The Administration also recently rejected the proposed Keystone XL Pipeline which would carry tar sands oil from Canada across the U.S. The President of the League of Women Voters of the United States issued the following statement on January 18 concerning the Keystone decision:

“Washington D.C.—Today’s step by the Obama Administration to deny the Keystone Pipeline was the right decision. It is a decision that puts the health and safety of Americans ahead of blind reliance of fossil fuels. The route of the Keystone XL Pipeline was a threat to the drinking water of millions of Americans. The pipeline was just too big a risk to allow it to go forward.

“Putting the Keystone XL Pipeline over the Ogallala Aquifer, which provides agricultural and drinking water to so many in the Plains states, was an incredibly bad idea. The majority of any jobs created would be short-term and short-lived. The damage to such an important supply would last for centuries.

“In addition, approval of this pipeline would be inconsistent with meaningful action on climate change.

“We applaud President Obama for standing up to the polluters.”

Elisabeth MacNamara,
President, League of Women Voters

Polly Bacich, Action/Legislation Chair

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(530) 272-8980

www.woodenspooncalif.com

Mill Street Clothing

Lisa Swarthout

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Flour Garden Bakery

999 Sutton Way & 109 Neal Street, Grass Valley

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