

Summer 2015



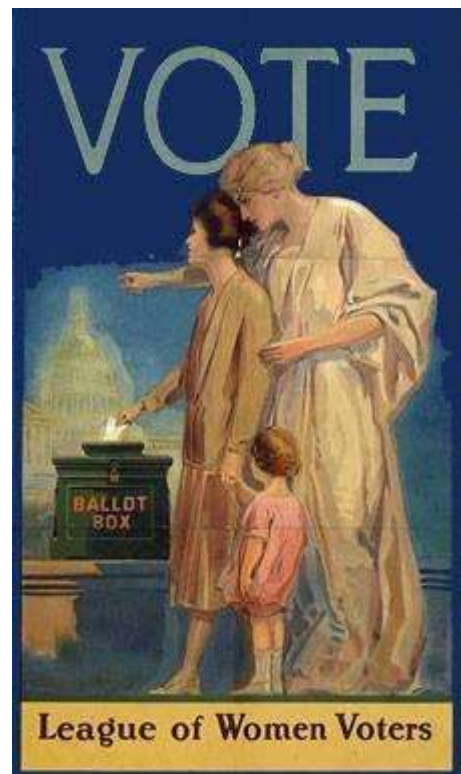
LWVTA VOTER

League of Women Voters of Torrance Area
Serving Carson, Gardena, Harbor City, Lomita and Torrance
P.O. Box 964, Torrance, CA 90508
www.LWVTorranceArea.org
Tel: 310 223-6897



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The League Past Present and Future!
Looking forward to 2020!

Diversity Policy
The League of Women Voters Torrance Area, in both its values and practices, affirms its belief and commitment to diversity and pluralism. This means that there shall be no barriers to participation in any activity on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability.

Calendar:

- **August 6 - 50th Anniversary of National Voting Rights Act**
- **August 26 - Women's Equality Day**
- **September 9 - LWVTA Board Meeting, call 310-223-6897 for location**
- **September 22 - National Voter Registration Day**
- **September 24 -State of the City Address**
- **October 3 - Tri League Brunch - save the date**

President's Message

Dear LWVTA member and friend,

I hope you enjoy your summer Voter. The month of May was full of events and we want to share a few of them with you. Our League members were out there attending many meetings; a Water discussion in Gardena, a meeting in Los Angeles on a Minimum wage, a Candidates Forum for a vacated seat on the Carson City Council, the LWVC Convention in San Diego and more, so please enjoy catching up with all our activities.

Our newest newsletter feature is "Meet Our New Member." This month features Pamela Thornton.

Enjoy the article about the County Advocacy Day. A special program called, "*How We Took Action!, Techniques for Local Action/Advocacy*" where you will hear from a panel of local League advocates from all around the County on recent ballot measures on Water, Oil Drilling, Santa Monica Airport, Districting, and more and

The *LWVTA Voter* is published monthly except July and December. All LWVTA members are encouraged to provide relevant articles and calendar events for publication in the *LWVTA Voter*. Articles must be nonpartisan and are subject to editing. Email submissions to lwv.torrancearea@um.att.net on or before the fifteenth of each month. The editor is not responsible for verifying the accuracy of the information reported. Editor:

see their flyers, posters and banners. Real people talked about real results.

Enjoy this summer's newsletter! and come out and join us at any event this Fall!

Cheers!

Athena

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Board of Directors

2015-16

***President:** Athena Paquette Cormier

***Vice President:** Pat Kromka

Secretary: Briana Krank

***Treasurer:** Dorothy Stewart

Directors:

Action/Program/Land Use: Lola Ungar

At Large: Terry Furey

***Communications:** Emma Simmons

Take Action

Volunteer

Opportunities

If you would like to volunteer for one of the upcoming forums please contact Jamie Watson at hightea322@yahoo.com

Education: Jackie LaBouff

Fundraising: Athena Paquette Cormier

Membership: Athena Paquette Cormier

Natural Resources: Vacant

Environmental Issues: Pamela Thornton

Public Relations: Lola Ungar

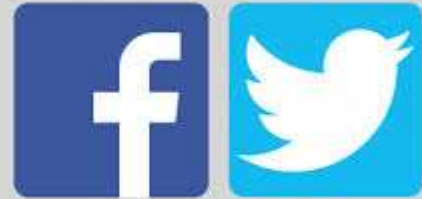
Program Planning: Jamie Watson

Smart Voter: Pat Kromka

Voter Editor: Judi Gerber

Voter Service: Jamie Watson

* Executive Committee



Please continue to tell your friends and acquaintances about our [Facebook page](#), and don't forget to ask them to "like" us.

Follow us on Twitter too [@LWVTA](#)

[LWVC Higher Education Study Update](#)

by Jackie LaBouff, LWVTA Education Director

Member LWVC Higher Education Study

The local Leagues of Beach Cities, Palos Verdes and Torrance Area have members who are

working together to follow the progress of the State of California League Higher Education Study. So far we have met and discussed the first in a series of questions relating to the history of the **Master Plan**.

The Little Hoover Commission and California Competes are two groups that are investigating the impact of education on the economy of the state. Both of these entities have proposed that the educational system is going to have to produce 2.3 million graduates by 2025 in order to maintain a viable economy. In the 1960s and 70s, California was rated 4th in economic stability. Today it is 23rd. Their reasoning is that we have fallen behind in producing a competently educated work force.

Members of the LWVCalifornia Higher Education Study are working with their League members across the State to determine what policies we need to develop to support quality education in the future.

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Meet Our Newest Member - Pamela Thornton



Pamela Thornton is a Real Property Agent with Southern California Edison. Prior to her career within the utility industry, Ms. Thornton's professional career was in local government, which spanned over **15 years** combined, working within the County of Los Angeles and the District of Columbia jurisdictions. Ms. Thornton **guided land use** and planning activities, utilizing community and economic development concepts. Over the last several years, Ms. Thornton has been a **change agent**, involved with the strategic and long range planning within the City of Los Angeles by serving as Vice-Chair of the Harbor Gateway North Neighborhood Council. In addition, Ms. Thornton serves as Chair of the Planning and Land Use Committee, where the focus is to advocate for sustainable planning and land use, with the emphasis on the environment, economic development and social equity.

Ms. Thornton holds a **Bachelor of Arts in Political Science** from San Diego State University, a **M.B.A.** from the University of Phoenix and is a candidate for a **Master of**

Science degree in Environmental Planning and Management from The Johns Hopkins University.

Advocacy is an important part of Ms. Thornton's life. As a **breast cancer survivor**, Ms. Thornton savors every opportunity to educate, empower and embrace others to be advocates of cancer awareness and cancer prevention. Ms. Thornton has identified that Healthy living and wellness is the key to her longevity and focuses daily on living and experiencing the best life has to offer..

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County Advocacy Day

How We Took Action! – Report from the County League Workshop
Submitted by Joan Arias and Nancy Mahr

The County Advocacy/Action workshop was held on Saturday, April 25, 2015. **Lola Ungar**, LWV LA County Action VP, organized the event and despite a small group of attendees, the discussion was lively and exciting. As Lola noted, action and advocacy are very important to the League and League members.

Joanne Leavitt, LWV California Advocacy and Program Director, reminded us that the roots of League are in action. She stated that action is taken after study and the formation of a position. There are many action/advocacy resources available to Leagues on the state and national websites.

The remaining panelists described actions or advocacy campaigns taken by their Leagues -- Santa Monica, Claremont Area, Pasadena Area and Whittier – and described some excellent strategies they used.

The Claremont League took action on a water issue. They began with a study that led to a position on community control of its local water. They then joined with other community groups to place a measure on the ballot and work for passage of the measure – successfully. Sally Seven shared a list of the various elements of their comprehensive campaign.

Joan Arias and Kathy Berlin, talked about the development of the **LWVBC** local position on oil drilling and the successful “No on Measure O” campaign they supported. Joan and Kathy gave a brief history of the oil issue in Hermosa Beach, of the formation of the position and the subsequent actions taken. They acknowledged the leadership of the local environmental groups such as Keep Hermosa Hermosa, Surfriders, Heal the Bay and others. They noted the value placed on our support of the NO on OIL vote by the environmental groups and the community.

Donovan Steutel represented the **Pasadena Area League**. They took action on campaign finance disclosure, a path forward that remains open in the wake of the Citizens United decision. They worked with the City Clerk and City Council members to bring disclosure to the public.

Control of the Santa Monica Airport rules and regulations was the focus of LWVSM's action/advocacy effort, as described by **Barbara Inatsugu**. A conflict of views on where control should rest – with the city or with the airport administration – led to competing ballot measures. The League worked with other community groups to support and pass the measure maintaining city control. Barbara noted that the League had to make the decision on whether it would only do public education on the issue or take an advocacy position.

Margo Reeg, LWV Whittier President, spoke on their work relating to the issue of open city council seats vs. council seats by designated districts with an elected mayor. The League

gave public input at meetings and submitted proposals for new district lines.

Following the presentations, the panel discussed lessons learned and responded to questions from the attendees.

Among the “Lessons Learned” noted by the presenters were the following:

Use the resources available to you.

Big money does NOT always win!

Partner with other organizations; build relationships.

Use advertising (including informational reminders).

Focus on the issue and articulate your point in simple terms.

—Start early!

Those who attended the workshop as well as the panelists considered it a successful morning and well-worth the time and effort.

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[LWVTA Goes to LWVC Convention](#)



**Athena Paquette Cormier touting
LWVTA's 2014-15 accomplishments during Roll Call of Local Leagues.**

LWVC STATE CONVENTION by Jackie LaBouff, Delegate, Torrance Area

Early Friday morning, May 15, 2015, the Plenary Session of the League of Women Voters of California was devoted to the discussion of Logistics, Parliamentary rules, Biennia Report, Financial Report, and Proposed Budget. In the afternoon we began the discussion for the Proposed Program of recommendations and non-recommendations. This led to an extensive debate on issues for the League to study, promote or put on hold for the future.

Issues:

- **An increase of \$5.00 was passed in order to cover the increase in PMP that was imposed by LWVUS.**
- **Environmental “CLIMATE CHANGE” There will not be a study but we are encouraged to research information on the LWVC.com web site for talking points and actions that we can do to defend the environment.**
- **LWVUS is actively working on Money in Politics**

The two Non-Recommended issues that received much debate were: “Death With Dignity” and “Voting/Election Reform.” Neither one received enough “yes” votes to stimulate the time and expense necessary to be studied. Without a League Study, a policy or position cannot become official. Currently, there is debate within the State Senate, on the issue of “Death With Dignity”.

The future pursuit, proposed by Elizabeth MacNamara, LWVUS President, is to learn and then to teach CIVIL DISCOURSE. She spoke eloquently at the final luncheon meeting about this dream. She firmly believes that the League has the talent and the power

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Voter Service

by Jamie Watson, Voter Service Director

The League of Women Voters of Torrance Area held its Candidates Forum for the City of Carson Council Special Election on May 2nd at the City of Carson Main Library. Four of the six candidates were in attendance. The Daily Breeze's Sandy Mazza and Lyn Jensen reporter for Random Lengths News were covering the event. The 4 candidates were well spoken and passionate. Topics such as the pay to field representatives and whether it is justified, the cost and benefits of having an NFL team, the length of the council meetings, the state of finances in Carson, the need for more services to the elderly and children, and much more was covered. Thank you to all the LWVTA volunteers who helped make this a smooth event.



**League volunteers before the festivities
from left to right Labouff, Ungar (front), Barker, Cormier,(front) Watson, White (front)
Simmons, Stewart, Herbers and Busch.**



Cormier (left picture) going over ground rules of the Candidates Forum, Kromka (arms raised right picture) giving last minute coaching.



Candidates getting ready, listening to rules.



Light-hearted moments during the proceedings.

Photos courtesy of Barbara Barker

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Water: Black, Yellow, Brown?

by **Athena Cormier, President**

On April 30th at 6pm at the Gardena Elks Lodge, I attended the 2nd meeting for the citizens of Gardena regarding their water problem. The Gardena Neighborhood Watch Captains had gotten the word out to gather on this day to hear from Erin Brockovich who is a renowned environmental activist (If you don't know her, go to www.Brockovich.com) and her Water Expert Bob Bowcock. As a team, they have tackled numerous communities' environmental problems across the US and had been asked to help the citizens of Gardena in getting Golden State Water to deliver clean water to them. The media, both television and print (channels 2, 4,5 & 7, the Daily Breeze and LA Times) were covering the evening's events. In attendance were Lawndale's Mayor Robert Pullen-Miles, Assemblymember David Hadley, Gardena Councilperson Dan Medina, as well as Gardena councilperson Tasha Cerda, and a representative from Congresswoman Maxine Waters' office. There were 200 people in attendance. This night was touted as a fact finding night for the citizens of Gardena to bring information, letters, actual water, etc. to the Brockovich team so that they could assess next steps.

The problem that brought the community together: The citizens of Gardena have been complaining about their water coming out of the tap black, brown, grey, with sediments and

sometimes smelling bad. This is now being commonly called “black water” though it comes out of the tap in different colors. Several citizens have complained of being sick, breaking out in rashes, skin discoloration (a woman in attendance that evening had a really dark complexion and had white spots all over her arms). The condition of the water was possibly related to one woman’s spinal meningitis (she came ready with documentation and still in a brace for the last 3 years). One homeowner in attendance said this has been the case since 1992. The citizens had reached out to Erin Brokovich’s office for help because they claimed that they have been trying to get Golden State water to investigate the foul smelling water and the different colors to no avail.

Erin Brockovich, who is a resident of the Los Angeles Valley area, began the meeting with about a 10 minute speech about how she was glad to be there but sad that it was under such bad circumstances. She explained that results will only come to the citizens of Gardena, unless they organize as a group and collect data and have a strong loud voice. Individually, they may not have been successful calling or letter writing, but together they can be but they need to take action.

The next speaker was Mr. Bowcock who is the founder of Integrated Resource Management an environmental consulting firm. He is an engineer and has been on Water District Boards for more than 20 years, an expert witness and consultant in all things about water. He has leant his expertise all across the globe but lives here in Southern California.

What is the problem: Gardena water actually comes from 3 sources that are then blended. Before Golden State Water took over, Gardena used ground water only. Now, they get it from Golden State as a blend. There is state water and ground water provided by West Basin and depending on the time of day and water usage, the amount coming from each source varies. The West Basin water is high in salts and low on organics. They use Chlorine to balance their water and clean out bacteria. The state water is high in organics and low in salts and they use Chloramine (a derivative of Ammonia) to balance and clean bacteria out of the water. Mixing these “3 aggressive waters is difficult,” according to Mr. Bowcock. Chlorine and Chloramine are used to balance each of these waters but together cause a sort of bio-cocktail

with residual effects that are causing all the problems. While the chemicals are tested at the source the levels are not tested in homes. The chlorine causes the metal pipes to free up iron and manganese that slowly builds up in the pipes to create the colored water. Chloramine can change the makeup of the water affecting lead and copper pipes. Lead and copper levels are strictly regulated in drinking water.

Golden State Water has been doing what is called “engineered directional flushing” which is high pressure angular water pressure (like fracking) into the pipes to loosen and flush out the metals. This is not cleaning the water but pushing the sediment through the system. Mr. Bowcock said that cleaning the water is what they should be doing not flushing it. One woman said she came home from work one day and her street was flooded with water and she drove around until she found the truck that caused the flood. One of the many concerns is that as the truck was hooked up to the system, it may cause backflow by dumping its chemicals into the water system. That water with added chemicals is not safe to drink. Manganese can cause a number of illnesses. The smell that people are smelling coming from their sinks is the bio reaction of these chemicals and ammonia. When Chlorine and Chloramine mix they create a bio-film called “Biophaline” (note: in doing a word search I could not find info on this word).

This is not just a Gardena problem: Golden State water owns 440 miles of piping in Lawndale, Gardena and Inglewood.

The math: Mr. Bowcock pointed out that Golden State has been taking depreciation tax write-off and that money is supposed to be to maintain and upgrade the City’s pipes. He also pointed out that Golden State has some of the highest water rates in the state. If Golden State is forced to make expensive corrective repairs/replacements, then they could go to the PUC (Public Utilities Commission) and then ask to raise rates. Another mathematical problem is the economic burden on landlords. Because people have to run water for a long time to get clean water, the water usage, during the drought, is causing higher water bills. For landlords,

this means that they either have to raise rents to cover the water bills (as one tenant said had happened to her forcing her to move) or simply cut back on maintaining the building.

Landlords are only permitted to raise rents 5% in Gardena before they can be called into a mediation meeting over the rent. So this puts tenants and landlords at odds over something out of their control. Mr. Bowcock also pointed out that Golden West paid dividends to their shareholders and the President earns a \$1.6 million salary.

Mr. Bowcock said that their team had already conducted 8 weeks of exploratory investigation and interviews and had determined a plan of action to get results.

One plan of action was to have a class action suit. This would be a long and expensive process, but given the harm that had been done to the many, Mr. Bowcock thought it was definitely worthwhile. He said that he would rather minimize costs and have more money left for corrective action. The second plan of action would have more immediate results in helping to get the citizens clean water and that is to use regulatory agencies as a way to get Golden State to act. Residents must complain so that the state board comes out and cites them for any infractions. It should be noted that none of the people who live in the "County" part of Gardena and are served by DWP reported any of the same water problems. Finally, there was no talk of when the next meeting would take place. Hopefully, future meetings will be well publicized.

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Raising the Minimum Wage: Will it Provide a Livable Wage or Kill Jobs?

by Emma Simmons, Communications Director

According to the Brookings Institution, Los Angeles has the 9th highest level of income inequality in American's largest cities. The Public Policy Institute of California found that in 37.3% of poor families in the state, at least one family member is working full time. Mayor Eric Garcetti and the City Council of Los Angeles have each proposed plans to raise the minimum wage in the City to provide a "living wage," allowing families to meet their basic needs for a safe, decent standard of living. A wage increase could, however, backfire and harm workers by companies cutting hours or jobs. Businesses also worry that increased costs will shutter their business or force relocation outside of the City and County of Los Angeles. What will the increase, if passed, do to Los Angeles' economic vitality?

These questions and other concerns were addressed and discussed at a recent Town Hall Los Angeles event that I attended at the City Club Los Angeles. This hot topic and timely discussion was moderated by Jon Regardie, Executive Editor, Los Angeles Downtown News. The panel consisted of Rusty Hicks, Executive Secretary-Treasurer, Los Angeles County Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, and Gary Toeppen, President, Los Angeles Area Chamber of Commerce.

Three studies have been done on the potential impact on businesses and non-profits. One was commissioned by the City of Los Angeles, another from the Labor Federation, and another from the L.A. Chamber of Commerce. Different conclusions resulted. Which one is right? Who do you trust? Maybe all three studies have merit. What is/are the right solution(s)? Thus, this important debate continues...

Resources

For excerpts of the discussion, go to www.calwatchdog.com. For information on the Beacon report, go to www.lachamber.com. For information on the report "Why LA Needs a

Raise”, check out [www. economicrt.org](http://www.economicrt.org).

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About The League



The League of Women Voters, a nonpartisan political organization, encourages the informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

The League has two separate and distinct roles. The League of Women Voters of California Education Fund, which conducts our voters service and civic education activities, is a 501(c)(3) corporation, a nonprofit educational organization.

The League of Women Voters of Torrance Area, a membership organization, conducts action and advocacy and is a nonprofit 501(c)(4) corporation. The League never supports or opposes any political party or candidate. We advocate only on issues that members have studied and on which they have come to consensus. In an era of proliferating and powerful special interests, the League's advocacy in the public interest is increasingly recognized as an essential voice of democracy.

With membership comes the opportunity to work with well-informed, grassroots activists on a broad range of public policy concerns. The League provides members with opportunities to learn valuable, transferable skills, including how to organize and run productive meetings, write more effectively, speak in public, organize and run effective campaigns, conduct research studies, and coordinate general civic leadership training.

Keep up-to-date with important League of Women Voters communications. Check out national, state and county issues on line at:

National: www.lwv.org

League Easy Web Help at:

<http://lwnet.org/easyweb/help>

Smart Voter: www.smartvoter.org

California: www.lwvc.org

California Education Fund: www.cavotes.org

Los Angeles County: www.lacilo.ca.lwnet.org

Torrance Area: www.lwvtorrancearea.org

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