



Bakersfield Voter

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF
BAKERSFIELD

MARCH/APRIL 2008

President's message

Elections—one down and two to go! It was exciting to hear the buzzing conversations around town about the presidential candidates and the ballot propositions prior to the February 5th primaries. This historic presidential election has changed political attitudes in a positive direction. Record voter turnouts at the February primaries sent a clear message that citizens want a voice.

Did you see the Public Service Announcement on television? The Elections Department of Kern County produced several versions announcing the voter registration deadline for the February election on local, cable, and Spanish language networks. The information directed viewers to call the League or visit the SmartVoter.org website for registration information. As a result, the League registered over 234 voters which is an increase of over 30% from last year. I appreciated the incredible dedication of our Speakers' Bureau members who prepared to present the pros and cons of complex propositions to make sure voters were informed and ready to vote.

Get your calendar and save the dates for the following upcoming events: ***International Women's Day*** is scheduled on March 10 at 6 pm at the Petroleum Club. The League of Women Voters will honor the contributions and successes of foreign-born women. Valley Public Radio and the League are among other organizations co-sponsoring the event

this year. Your invitation is enclosed in this Voter. For more information visit the website at www.iwdkern.org.

Women's Equal Pay Forum, will be held on April 22 at 6 pm at the Student Union at CSUB. The League and American Association of University Women are coordinating a forum with a panel of business and professional women who will share stories on the progress of closing the pay gap between males and females.

LWV of California Leadership Council—Bridge to the Future will be held on May 17 and 18 in Sacramento at the Holiday Inn Capitol Plaza. Bring a friend and attend individual, multi-day, or full day educational workshop or observe League process by attending the plenary sessions. The fees are structured based on your level of participation. Visit the website at www.lwvc.org for more registration material and information.

LWV of the United States 48th National Convention—Reaching New Heights Together will be held on June 13 – 17 in Portland, Oregon. This is the call to all local and state Leagues to send delegates to adopt the national program, elect officers and directors, adopt the budget, vote on amendments to the by-laws, and attend caucus meetings and educational workshops. Visit www.lwv.org and click on the national convention link for more information.

Help us support the Governor and state League on the **California Voters FIRST** redistricting initiative. (See page 4.) We will participate in signature gathering and the campaign to pass it in November 2008. This reform will enable voters to choose their legislators and eliminate the conflict of interest that occurs when legislators draw the lines and choose their constituents. Read about this initiative inside.—Diane Williams

March/April 2008 Calendar

March 11—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. LWVB Board meeting, Merced Center, 2000 K Street, Room US-2, first floor

March 19—Wednesday, 5:45 pm. General dinner meeting at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue, 12th floor. Brenda Turner, Public Information Representative, San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, will discuss “What’s the State of Valley Air and What Can We Do to Improve It?” Cost is \$22. Dinner reservations required; call the League Line.*

April 8—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. LWVB Board meeting, location TBA

April 16—Wednesday, 5:45 pm. General dinner meeting at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue, 12th floor. Learn about a new program for Kern Medical Center that will provide the un-insured with healthcare; speaker Allen Miller, CEO of COPE Health Solutions. Cost is \$22. Res-ervations are required; call the League Line.*

May 21—Wednesday, 5:45 pm. **ANNUAL MEETING** at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue, 12th floor. Elections, adoption of budget, presentations and special guest speaker. Watch for details.

**Reservations are required for dinner and luncheon meetings and special events. Please call the League Line, 634-3773, by Monday noon prior to the Wednesday event. No charge for attendance at program only. Thank you.*

Informative Programs Scheduled for March and April

What’s going on with the air in our Valley? Sometimes we can see it; sometimes we can taste it. What is being done to improve the quality of our air? What can we, as individuals, do to make sure that we can actually see the mountains that surround us more often ?

Brenda Turner, Public Information Representative for the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution District’s Southern Region office in Bakersfield, will speak at the League’s March 19th general meeting. Her power point presentation will provide an update on the current state of Valley air. In addition, Turner will describe a new program of the San Joaquin Valley Air Pollution Control District, Healthy Air Living, a comprehensive outreach initiative that aims to improve the health and quality of all Valley residents through strategies that clean up our air.

Prior to assuming her position with the SJV Air Pollution Control District, Brenda Turner worked in health care for Mercy and Memorial Hospitals. She has a degree in communications and is completing an MBA from the University of La Verne. She began her career as a newspaper reporter in West Texas and worked as a writer and editor for Pepperdine University.

Finally a program has been developed that will take some of the pressure off the emergency room at Kern Medical Center while simultaneously providing better health outcomes and health care for the county's uninsured. Sound too good to be true? Come to the April 16th general meeting and meet Allen Miller, CEO of COPE Health Solutions. Miller will talk about the new Kern Medical Center Health Plan (KMCHP), a Medicaid Demonstration Project, through which Kern Medical Center will be able to access up to \$10 million annually in matching federal funds for three years.

The goals of KMCHP are to

- improve health outcomes for uninsured patients
- decrease avoidable utilization of the Medical Center's Emergency Department, inpatient, and specialty care resources
- demonstrate a "proof of concept" to the state and federal government that providing care through the KMCHP model is more efficient and therefore should be incentivized through ongoing funding

The son of local League members Mike and Sharon Miller, Allen Miller has over 19 years experience working for and with hospitals and healthcare systems. A graduate of UCLA, he has provided strategic planning, business development and operations analysis/improvement consulting services to hospitals throughout Southern California. Currently, Miller serves on the Governor's Health Workforce Diversity Advisory Board for the State of California, the Policy and Advocacy Committee for the March of Dimes Los Angeles Area, and the Advisory Board of UCLA School of Public Health, Department of Health Services-Certificate Program in Health.

Both the March and the April general meetings begin at 5:45 pm at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue, 12th floor. Cost of the dinner is \$22 and reservations are necessary. Please call the League Line, 634-3773 no later

than noon on the Monday preceding the meeting. Members and guest are welcome to attend the program only. Programs begin at approximately 6:45 pm.—Lynne Rosenstein

Brown Act Workshop Planned

Ann Cervantes, Carolyn Dixon, and Del Gardner are currently reviewing the text of the Brown Act in preparation for a training program which will be offered by the League in late spring. Carolyn Dixon is spending time at the Kern County Law Library identifying the most current Case Law decisions that will be included in the workshop which will be offered to all elected officials and individuals appointed by elected officials who serve on city councils, water boards, or any agency that serves communities in Kern County that must abide by the Brown Act.

It is our plan to repeat the workshop at the beginning of 2009 for those people elected to office in the November election and those newly appointed to serve on boards and agencies to familiarize them with the Brown Act. Announcements will be sent soon to all parties who are required to follow the Brown Act in any actions they take in public and executive sessions.

The Brown Act, authored by Assemblyman Ralph M. Brown, was enacted in 1953 by the California State Legislature in an effort to safeguard the public's right to access and participate in government meetings within the State. The introductory section of the act states: "In enacting this chapter, the Legislature finds and declares that the public commissions, boards and councils and the other public agencies in this State exist to aid in the conduct of the people's business. It is the intent of the law that their actions be taken openly and that their deliberations be conducted openly. The people of this State do not yield their sovereignty to the agencies which serve them. The people, in delegating authority, do not give their public servants the right to decide what is good for the people to know and what is not good for them to know. The people insist on remaining informed so that they may retain control over the instruments they have created."—Del Gardner

Health Care Dialogue Scheduled for the Guild House

The unit meeting on the topic of health care has been postponed to Wednesday, May 7 at 11:30 am at the Guild House.

Health care is a major issue among all candidates running for president. Current economic studies indicate that the cost of health care for individuals and families is increasing rapidly. Seniors are struggling to maintain their supplemental insurance, purchase prescribed drugs and keep up with increased premiums for Medicare Parts B and D.

The League of Women Voters of California strongly supports Senator Sheila Kuehl's Universal Health Care Bill (SB 840). Fortunately, letters requested by the LWVC president urging a "no" vote on ABX11 and sent to the State Senate Health Committee helped to defeat it by a seven to one vote. This bill, developed by Governor Schwarzenegger and Assembly Speaker Nunez, ignored cost containment and had no means to negotiate fees and prescription costs. The bill would have put a hardship on the mandatory enrollment in some insurance plans for many low income earners. Estimates by the Legislative Analyst argued the bill would cost more than \$14.5 billion to serve less than 5.3 million uninsured. It appears that Assembly Bill ABX11 will not be brought to the voters as an initiative this November.

Space at the Guild House is limited so early reservations are suggested. Call the League Line, 634-3773.—Del Gardner

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