

Kern Voter

A PUBLICATION OF THE LEAGUE OF WOMEN VOTERS OF KERN COUNTY

September/October 2009

President's Message

STAY CONNECTED. That was the theme of the Board Retreat held at the beginning of the summer. We spent four hours planning programs focusing on the issues you care about.

How do we engage our members? Are we giving attention to the right issues? Are we connecting with the community? These questions formed the emphasis of our meeting as we discussed the goals and plans for the 2009-2010 year.

We tried a new approach. The board prepared for the retreat by meeting in small groups in the following areas: Community Relations, Membership, and Program/Advocacy. Each group completed a report to share. The retreat was focused and full of energy. Our MTA, Bev King from the state League, reviewed board responsibilities and provided valuable input throughout the meeting. We spent most of the time discussing our three-year planning goals and hearing reports from the groups.

The highlight of the meeting was the idea of hosting Coffee Klatches. Coffee Klatches are small informal gatherings to discuss current events. This is how I initially joined the League! I was invited to a member's home to discuss a current event. It was a great way to meet people, voice my opinion, and hear what others thought about the topic. Our first Coffee Klatch is scheduled for September on Health Care. Read more inside about the September meeting. Watch your Voter or visit our website for future meetings.

Get ready early! Be an informed voter by the 2010 election year. See you at the Coffee Klatches. Bring a friend!—

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Calendar

- September 8**—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. LWVKC Board meeting, Merced Center, 2000 K St, Room, USC-3.
- September 16**—Wednesday, 5:45 pm. Brenda Baldwin, Senior Account Executive with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company, will discuss alternate energy solutions at the monthly general dinner meeting at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue. Cost is \$22. Reservations required by noon, September 14; call the League Line.*
- September 23**—Wednesday, 11:30 am. Our own Town Hall meeting on health care with Del Gardner at Guild House, 1905 18th Street. Limited space; call League Line for reservation.* Cost for luncheon is \$16.
- October 7**—Wednesday, 7 pm. Tribute to Laura Dennison at the Guild House, 1905 18th Street. \$12 for dessert and beverage. RSVP to the League Line.*
- October 13**—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. , LWVKC Board meeting, Merced Center 2000 K Street, Room USC-3.
- October 28**—Tuesday, 6:30 pm. Curtis Creel, Manager of the Water Resources Department of the Kern County Water Agency, speaks about the Bay Delta Water Conservation Plan at the monthly general dinner meeting at the Petroleum Club, 5060 California Avenue. Cost is \$22. Please make your reservations by noon, October 26; call the League Line.*

Reminder: General meetings are usually the third Wednesday of the month. If you need transportation to a meeting, please leave that message on the League Line.

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.

Alternate energy is the subject of September meeting

So you think that electricity is the only concern of the electric company? Come to the League's September 16 meeting and listen to our speaker, Brenda Baldwin, Senior Account Executive with the Pacific Gas and Electric Company. Employed by PG & E for the past 26 years, Brenda is responsible for promoting energy efficiency and renewable self-generation to many of Kern County's largest commercial, industrial and agricultural customers. She will discuss solar energy, wind energy, and current alternative energy projects in which PG & E is participating.

A Bakersfield native, our speaker graduated magna cum laude from CSUB with a bachelor's degree in Business Administration. She has served in a wide variety of challenging, customer-focused roles.

The dinner meeting begins at 5:45 pm at the Petroleum Club. Please call the League Line for reservations, 634-3773, by the previous Monday noon.—Barbara Lovell

Bay Delta Water Plan topic for October meeting

The October 28 general dinner meeting will feature Curtis Creel who will discuss the Bay Delta Water Conservation Plan. This controversial plan centers on the best use of the Sacramento and American river waters. Do we provide water for salmon, delta smelt, and other at-risk species of

fish? Will such a plan allow Central Valley farmers to continue to grow crops that are important to the economy?

Curtis Creel is well qualified to speak to this issue. During his nineteen years with the Department of Water Resources, he has participated in a variety of technical and policy driven activities concluding with Chief State Water Project (SWP) Operations Planning Branch. His responsibilities ranged from making recommendations to the Director on SWP allocations to acting as the Department's lead representative on the development of biological opinions to cover the operations of the Central Valley Project and SWP and their interactions with federally listed fishery species.

Currently, Creel is Manager of the Water Resources Department of the Kern County Water Agency. He oversees the administration of contracts for imported water supplies, which includes local participation in the SWP, a water storage and delivery system of reservoirs, aqueducts, power plants and pumping plants that extends for more than 600 miles (two-thirds of the length of California). The SWP provides water supplies for 23 million Californians and 755,000 acres of irrigated farmland. He also oversees operations and administration of a variety of water management programs to provide for groundwater banking and development of additional surface water supplies for Kern County districts.

Once more Californians are caught in a war of words between the water rich northern third of the state and the dry southern two thirds over the supply and use of water. The political resolution of this battle will affect the economies and life styles of communities for years to come.

Do come to the League of Women Voters of Kern County dinner meeting **October 28**, 5:45 pm, at the Petroleum Club for more information about this vital commodity. Please note that the regular meeting date was changed to accommodate our speaker.--Lois Watson

Our own health care town hall meeting on September 23

If you have been watching the news, you are aware that *town hall* meetings on health care have been held throughout the country. Congressman Kevin McCarthy conducted a meeting in Bakersfield on August 26.

Exactly what is the legislation before the House and what is the Senate considering? Rumors are rampant. The pending legislation (pending as the Voter goes to press) is long and difficult to read and to understand.

Our own healthcare guru Del Gardner will bring us up to date at a special luncheon meeting on Wednesday, September 23 at 11:30 am at the Guild House, 1905 18th Street. Cost of the luncheon is \$16 and reservations can be made by calling the League Line, 634-3773. Space is limited.

Education in California suffering from lack of funding

Several issues are occurring in the area of education on national, state and local levels. A quick summary follows:

Kern High School District decided not to cut any athletics for the upcoming school year to "give parents and students time to adjust to the idea." A number of classified employees (custodians,

bus drivers, and security personnel) were let go. No further cuts in the teaching staff occurred this year, but if finances continue to be as bad as they are, many more cuts are in the offing.

Bakersfield City School District chose not to lay off any teachers this year but foresees significant cuts next year. Several classified personnel were laid off. Program cuts will be considered for next year.

Fruitvale School District plans to eliminate Physical Education and Music programs through teacher cuts.

All local school districts will have to make significant changes for the 2010-11 school year.

State concerns include a \$3 billion cut to educational funding this year. The California High School Exit Exam was maintained although many argued for its elimination. It was eliminated for Special Education students--a reversal of previous policies. The state promises to reimburse districts for the money it is cutting presently, but it appears that this repayment will be a long time coming.

At the federal level, \$4.35 billion dollars is available to school districts in competitive grants. However, California schools districts may be ineligible to compete for this money because our state does not tie teacher evaluations to standardized tests results in any way. The powerful California Teachers Association has fought linkage, and the Democratic controlled legislature has agreed with the CTA. Not having access to some of these funds is a significant problem for California school districts.

All of these actions (or lack thereof) don't even touch the serious consequences of cuts to the California community colleges, state universities and University of California, all of which are raising fees and cutting the number of openings for incoming students.

California schools are at the bottom when it comes to spending and class size in the United States. Unless the economy changes significantly thereby providing greater revenue, or unless taxes are increased, the outlook for education is poor. --Terri Stanton

STAY INFORMED

**For current up-dated information, check the local, state, and national
League of Women Voters' websites:**

www.kerncounty.ca.lwvnet.org

www.ca.lwv.org

www.lwv.org

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