



# ***The Beach Voter***

League of Women Voters Beach Cities  
Serving El Segundo, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Manhattan Beach & Redondo Beach

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## **APRIL MEMBERSHIP MEETING TO FOCUS ON ELECTIONS**

The primary season is fast approaching, and it is time for Leaguers to focus on the elections in June and November 2012. The April membership meeting, to be held at the Manhattan Beach Library on Tuesday, April 24th at 7:00 p.m., will cover the two June ballot measures, followed by an update on current election issues, both national, statewide and, if time, local. Voter service and education are major parts of our mission, so please join us to become informed and share your views this election year.

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## **ANNUAL MEETING**

**And Salad Luncheon**

Saturday May 12th, 2012

10:00 AM to 2:00 PM

720 8th Street, Hermosa Beach

This is our annual event to wrap up the year. ***Please bring a salad to share*** and ideas for what you would like to see our League focus on for the coming year. It is your ideas and participation that make up our direction and focus. We need suggestions for a local study. We need to know what our members are most concerned about and where you want us to put our emphasis and energy. We are a grass roots organization and now is the time to plan for the coming year.

You are encouraged to bring a guest. Guests do not have to bring anything other than their interest in learning about League, who we are and what we do.

Parking is limited, if you would like to carpool please contact Susan Grebe [rgrebe6072@aol.com](mailto:rgrebe6072@aol.com) or 310-545-2097

Materials for this meeting will be sent via email this year to all members who have email. Members without email addresses will receive materials via US Mail.

INSIDE THIS ISSUE	PAGE
April Membership Meeting	1
Annual Meeting/Salad Luncheon	1
Inside This Issue	2
2012 Non-Event	3
Manhattan Beach Centennial Parade	4
Early Childhood Conference	4
January Membership Meeting	5
Winter League Day	5
Privatization Consensus Meeting	8
Tri-League Lasagna Supper	9
Interview with State Sen. Ted Lieu	10
The Value of Tap Water	13
Calendar	14

The League affirms our belief in our commitment to diversity and pluralism. There shall be no barriers to participation in any activity of the League on the basis of gender, race, creed, age, sexual orientation, national origin or disability. The League recognizes that diverse perspectives are important and necessary for responsible and representative decision-making.

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government, works to increase understanding of major public policy issues, and influences public policy through education and advocacy. Any person of voting age, male or female, may become a League member.

**The Beach Voter**

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To become a member: Send check in the amount of \$55.00 (payable to the League of Women Voters Beach Cities) to Susan Grebe at 629 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan Beach CA 90266.

Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone \_\_\_\_\_ Email \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Thank you to all our members who gave so generously to this year's Non-Event. Your donations make all our work possible. We salute you all!

2012

Velma Anderson  
Martha Andriani  
Joan Arias  
Barbara Arlow  
Peggy Bartlett  
Dr. Mary Lou Brenneman  
Jan Brittain  
Paulette Caudill  
Harriet Chase  
Irma Cohen  
Pat Driezler  
June Eicker  
Rockie Elkind  
Janelle Freeman  
Susan Grebe  
Marian Greenman  
Ruth Hart  
Dave Hilliker  
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Elizabeth Jensen  
Robert Johnson  
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Annabel Sims  
Margaret Thelen  
Mignon Thiem-Murphy  
Carolyn Waters  
Ray Waters  
April Halprin Wayland  
Elaine Weiner  
Lance Widman  
Maggie Wilkinson



## MANHATTAN BEACH CENTENNIAL PARADE

Saturday May 19<sup>th</sup> 2012 – 9:00 AM

Our League will be marching from Pacific School (Pacific and Manhattan Beach Blvd.) to Polliwog Park (Manhattan Beach Blvd & Redondo Ave) to celebrate the 100<sup>th</sup> birthday of the founding of the City of Manhattan Beach. We will be joining a parade of other community organizations; the parade will end in Polliwog Park with a picnic celebration including “A Walk Through Time” historic photo display, food, and entertainment.

*We are in need of an antique and/or convertible car (or two) for some of our members to ride in.* We are hoping that all our members would join us in representing our Beach Cities League in this historic event. For more information contact Susan Grebe [rgrebe6072@aol.com](mailto:rgrebe6072@aol.com) or 310-545-2097.

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### NOTES FROM THE WATER COOLER CONFERENCE

The March 2012 issue of the LWV/LACounty *Voter* includes an interesting article by Joanne Levitt titled “Notes from the Water Cooler Conference.” This conference on early childhood issues was held on February 8-9, 2012 and was co-sponsored by First 5 California and the Advancement Project. The first day, led by First 5, was titled *INVESTMENTS IN EARLY LEARNING: Let Evidence Lead the Way* and focused on the “what.” The second day, led by the Advancement Project, was titled *STRONGER TOGETHER: Winning Our Children’s Future* and focused on the “how” of doing this, that is, the advocacy piece.

If you would like more information on this subject, the March issue of the LA County *Voter* can be accessed at [http://lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org/files/2012\\_03\\_LACVoter.pdf](http://lacilo.ca.lwvnet.org/files/2012_03_LACVoter.pdf)

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## **January LWV Membership Meeting The Health District Blue Zones Vitality City Program**

At our January membership meeting the topic was the Beach Cities Health District Blue Zones Vitality City Program. Our speaker, Francey Marzicola, described how the program works and how we can individually participate.

The overall concept of the Vitality City program is to change the social, environment and habitat of a community to help residents live longer and improve their health and well-being. The three Beach cities – Manhattan, Hermosa and Redondo – have become members of the Vitality City program and are participating in the Blue Zones Campaign which will provide individuals and organizations with goals to increase their well-being and work toward encouraging participation in these programs. Vitality City will sponsor workshops to assist the cities in adopting walkable/bikeable streets, will sponsor more walking groups, and will work with employers and restaurants to launch a more expanded engagement campaign this spring.

The goal is to motivate residents to adopt and maintain healthier lifestyles by creating communities that are more walk-able, bike-able, healthy and socially engaged – where the healthy choice is the easier, more appealing choice. The Vitality City initiative is a three-year process and Francey encouraged us to join the program and participate in Vitality City events. To get involved and find out more about joining, you can email [vitality@bchd.org](mailto:vitality@bchd.org) and for more details about the program go to [www.vitalitycity.com](http://www.vitalitycity.com).

It was a very interesting evening and hopefully will encourage all of us to live a healthier lifestyle and at the same time to save energy and reduce our carbon footprint by walking more and driving less.

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## **League of Women Voters of Los Angeles County – Winter League Day** Joan Arias

Bob Stern's talk "Initiative and Referendum" drew more than 60 Leaguers (including 10 Beach Cities attendees) to Taix Restaurant on Saturday January 28, 2012 for Winter League Day. Nancy Mahr introduced the day by highlighting many of the attendees (including our 2 50-year members: Peggy Bartlett and Jan Nathanson). She introduced our afternoon speaker Bob Stern, formerly president of the Los Angeles Center for Governmental Studies (CGS), which recently closed because of funding difficulties, and Assemblyman Anthony Portantino, District 44 and LWV Glendale member.

The first activity of the day was "table talk," in which each table group received a question about the Initiative and Referendum process to discuss and propose answers. For example, our group discussed "Should Initiatives that involve taxes or

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

Constitutional amendments require a 2/3 vote to pass?" Despite the crowd and noise level, our group had a serious discussion about the subject. The groups reported on their discussions and their suggestions to the larger group in anticipation of Bob Stern's presentation, which followed the luncheon.

Bob Stern, called the "Godfather of Political Reform" by journalists and followers, opened his talk by referencing his recent publication "Democracy by Initiative in California." The book and Mr. Stern's many other publications may be downloaded from the CGS.org web site. Mr. Stern gave us some history of the initiative and referendum process noting that in 1911, California voted for direct democracy. He explained the differences between initiatives and referenda. An initiative is citizen initiated, citizen legislation and sent to the Attorney General. A referendum is legislation passed by the Legislature that citizens then vote to repeal because they don't like it! There are few referenda but one notable one is the current move to repeal the Senate plan on redistricting. Direct Democracy also includes direct recall of elected officials.

Mr. Stern pointed out that when Pat Morrison on NPR refers to "initiatives," she is often talking about ballot measures and propositions. He continued, focusing on 6 related topics:

1. Types
2. The Initiative Process vs. the Legislative Process
3. Quality of Initiatives
4. Circulation of Initiatives
5. Voter Information
6. Campaign Financing

There are usually quite a number of initiatives on the ballot. For example there were 20 on the 2008 ballot and back in 1990, there were 28, 13 of which were initiatives, 10 of which were defeated! He noted that people have a tendency to vote "no" when they are overwhelmed with ballot initiatives.

Right now there are 2 measures on the June ballot that were grandfathered in when the rules changed and placed all initiatives with the November general elections: the Tobacco tax Initiative and the Revision of term limits (recommending 12 years for both Houses of government. At this moment there are 78 ballot initiatives and referenda making their way through the qualification process for the November ballot. Mr. Stern suggested that about 10 will probably qualify. Two initiatives that have qualified so far are the Mercury Insurance Initiative (formerly the Proposition 17 defeated in 2010) and a Union Dues measure, which is sponsored by businesses and strongly opposed by unions. A referendum for the November ballot is the Referendum challenging the State Senate redistricting.

Mr. Stern challenged the group with a question: In which do you have more confidence: the Legislative Process or the Initiative process? Most of us responded that we have more confidence in the Legislative Process (although quite a few said "neither!") He noted that when

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Californians are given the choice, they express much less confidence in the Legislative Process! He pointed out that “the legislative process AT ITS BEST is superior to the Initiative Process” but allowed that there are not many examples of BEST!

He challenged us again asking us to think of a measure that was passed “irrationally.” When most of us thought of the Jarvis Amendment (Proposition 13), he said that if it were on the ballot again, it would probably pass! He also predicted that Proposition 8 (the anti gay-marriage initiative) will be repealed within 4-6 years, one of very few that would be overturned since it is very difficult to overturn measures already passed.

Mr. Stern noted that initiatives are only on the ballot because the Legislature did not pass something the people felt was desirable. It takes 2/3 of the Legislature to pass a measure and only a majority to pass a ballot measure. He pointed to several problems with the process:

- Once the initiative qualifies, it can't be changed at all
- The Legislature can't amend the Initiative if it passes unless the Initiative specifically states that it may be amended
- The Legislature can't repeal an Initiative once it passes.

Mr. Stern proposed his solutions to these problems:

- Flexibility: Once an Initiative gets enough signatures, it goes to the Legislature and the Legislature may pass it or put it on the ballot but once the signatures are turned in, the Legislature can't make any changes. It would be better if they could amend it in order to reach agreement. This would probably remove 10-15% of the measures. A proponent could still put the measure on the ballot if desired.
- Circulation and Approval: Why ask for signatures? With enough money, anything can be put on the ballot! Mr. Stern suggested better ways to operate: Pay the state to get something on the ballot for example, or use an internet poll to gather signatures and screen them, have a “mini-campaign” so that people are made more aware of what the measure means!

Mr. Stern noted that Voter Information is generally good but people don't always read it and praised Easy Voter for helping. He agreed with the group that it would be good to have a single page with measure supporters and opponents listed as well as a list of donors so people were aware of the measure's funding sources.

As for campaign financing, he noted that there are disclosure rules but no limits now. The solution might be more funding disclosure in ads.

In conclusion, Mr. Stern proposed that the Initiative Process should be more flexible and should be improved, not done away with - “make it a more 21<sup>st</sup> Century process.”

During a lively Q&A session, he responded to questions by pointing out that only 1/3 of the Initiatives proposed passed and he suggested extending the Initiative process nationally to handle things the Legislature won't (or can't) handle such as the death penalty, term limits, use of insider information.

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## **CONSENSUS REACHED ON PRIVATIZATION BY LWVBC MEMBERS**

Jan Nathanson, Program VP

At the February membership meeting, 20 well-informed, interested members heard brief summaries of examples of privatization, such as railroads, prisons, water treatment plants, libraries and charter schools, along with public policy issues and transparency considerations, and following lively discussion, reached consensus as follows: (you may refer to the consensus questions sent in the last Voter)

The first question, it was agreed, found that there was too much privatization, but it was hard to know how much. Another comment was that ignoring the military privatization made this study less effective. LWVUS may have intentionally avoided this category, but since most questions referred to policy and transparency, the questions could be answered for any type of privatization contract.

Question 2: strongly agree.

Questions 3 a, b, c: high priority. 3c would eliminate the word: appreciably.

Questions 3 d, e, f, and g: high priority.

Questions 4 a, b, c, d, e, f, and g: agree.

Question 4 h: no consensus. The question was difficult to understand.

Question 5 a: Yes.

Questions 6 a, b, c, d, f, g, h, and i: strongly agree.

Question 6 e: agree.

Additional comments: The members liked the study portion, but wanted more concrete examples concerning the level of consensus questions. They objected to "leading questions", stating it seemed like the position has already been written.

This report from our local League will be sent to national League, merged with other Leagues and presented for adoption, if there is a strong consensus, at the LWVUS convention in June. Watch for the final results. Thank you to an outstanding committee for your preparations and presentations: Joan Arias, Barbara Arlow, June Eicker, Ann Martin and Ray Waters.



## Tri-League Lasagna Supper – Susan Grebe

Our Annual Tri-league event, hosted by the Beach Cities League on Monday March 19<sup>th</sup>, was attended by approximately 35 members of the Beach Cities, Torrance and Palos Verdes Leagues. Our speaker was **Rick Velasquez**, Chief of Staff to County Supervisor Don Knabe. Mr. Velasquez has been with the Supervisor's office since working as an intern while attending college. He previously served as Knabe's Health Deputy and currently serves on the Board of Directors for the Rancho Los Amigos Foundation, a nonprofit foundation dedicated to preserving research education, equipment and patient needs at Rancho Los Amigos; Rancho Los Amigos National Rehabilitation Center is known as the crown jewel in the Counties healthcare system.

Velasquez filled us in the Counties redistricting efforts. Our District 4 lines stayed much the same except for the loss of Westchester and the addition of a portion of Diamond Bar. It was a lengthy contentious process with the end result being that Supervisor Knabe's plan was adopted with four of the five Supervisors signing on.

Speaking on the County budget, Velasquez stated that the County does a good job of managing the money as long as no unseen burdens are imposed by outside events. One such event this past year was the realignment of State prisoners to the County. As reported in the Los Angeles Times, *"After years of refusal to consider sentencing reforms, inability to provide adequate drug treatment, unwillingness to prepare parolees for lives outside prison and a continuing insistence on locking up more people longer, state prisons became so overcrowded that the **U.S. Supreme Court ordered** the population reduced. There was no appetite among the public or their elected representatives to build and staff more prisons. The state's options were to immediately release 33,000 inmates onto the streets, or to "realign": move much of the authority for inmates to the county level."* Los Angeles County received 5000 prisoners in this transaction.

Velasquez also touched on privatization at the County level. Proposition A passed by County voters states that privatization may be considered for services that can be performed more economically by outside contractors. There are requirements for insurance and a living wage for the employees of the firm submitting the contract. Currently privatization is used for janitorial services, tending golf courses and the like. Another subject of interest to our members is safety at the L.A. Port. Four years ago 24 hour guards were installed at the port after undergoing special training in surveillance and emergency procedures.

We were honored to have Mr. Velasquez address us and thank him for helping to keep us current on County issues. Also a big Thank You to the Committee who put this all together, Peggy Bartlett, Mignon Thiem-Murphy, Sunhee Park and Margaret Thelen, also to all of you who just stepped in and helped.

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## Interview with Senator Ted Lieu, State Senator, 28<sup>th</sup> District

Friday, March 2, 2012, 11a.m. -12 noon

Senator Lieu's District Office – 2512 Artesia Blvd, Redondo Beach, CA 90278

### Attendees:

Jennifer Zivkovic, District Director

From the League of Women Voters: Joan Arias, LWV of the Beach Cities

Susan Grebe; LWV of the Beach Cities; Elizabeth Ralston, LWV of Los Angeles;

Marianne Ramos, LWV of Torrance Area; Lola Ungar, LWV of Torrance Area; and Maggie

Wilkinson, LWV of the Beach Cities.

The interview consisted of four questions:

- 3. California has both a problem with insufficient revenue for the programs we would like to support, and an ongoing problem with the actual process of passing a budget. What measures would you support to balance the budget? What measures would you support to change the budget process?**

Senator Lieu listed the reasons he believes we have a difficult time balancing the budget:

- The Initiative System – The Initiative System has locked up 70 percent of our revenue; it is very restrictive. Voters never get asked what can be cut in order to fund the specific initiatives that get proposed if they pass such as the mental health and pre-school initiatives. This locked funding hamstrings the money.
- California's subsidies to smaller states – We are a large donor state to Washington but we receive 79 cents for each dollar we give to the Federal Government. So we are essentially subsidizing smaller states.
- Taxes – We are dependent on an unreliable revenue stream: income taxes and corporate taxes. Proposition 13 restricted the property tax stream. In recessions, our income taxes go down. We had a \$26 billion revenue gap last year because the economy caused revenue losses. We closed the budget gap by our structural changes but we have a \$9 billion deficit this year. Without revenue, we need cuts.
  - Senator Lieu supports Governor Brown's tax initiative proposing proportional tax increases on people making more than \$250K a year. The proposal also includes a sales tax increase by ½ percent. He doesn't like the sales tax because it's regressive but it's more stable. The tax on income is more volatile. This would fix the problem. We have to remember that it is very hard to get tax increases in California despite polling that shows public support for such increases.
  - There are several tax initiatives going around and if more than one qualifies for the ballot, they may confuse voters and all the initiatives will fail. Voters have

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

shown that they won't approve when there are 2 or 3 tax-related initiatives. They will pick one and "go with it" and this could be a negative in November. A millionaire's tax is volatile; the governor's tax proposal is much wider.

- We need to focus on growing the economy and we are doing well in that regard. Standard and Poor's upgraded our rating to "positive" because of our progress. We need to look at the areas in which we do better than other states such as high-tech, biotech, aerospace, agriculture, ports and entertainment. All these depend on higher education. We succeed by emphasizing a "sector strategy" as Michigan did. We look at where we can provide jobs best and fund scholarships for those specific areas. Senator Lieu sponsored a law last year to focus on retraining for specific areas. Rather than taking people who lose their jobs and finding similar jobs for them (moving an unemployed clerk to another clerical job, for example), we should retrain them for new jobs that are available.
- Asked about Proposition 13 and commercial property, Senator Lieu responded that any change requires a vote of the people "but I would vote for splitting commercial vs. personal property."

## **2. Initiative and Referendum Process: Do you believe that the current initiative and referendum process in California is in need of reform? If yes, what reforms would you support?**

When asked about the Initiative and Referendum process, Senator Lieu responded "I would eliminate the system if I could. It is very hard because it requires a vote of the people but it has done more harm than good."

He elaborated:

- It locks up revenue in specific areas.
- Initiatives have unintended consequences because they are not really well vetted. It is very different from getting a law passed. The Legislative process has a long vetting and analysis period before a law is created.

One idea is to take the initiative proposed and "run it through the legislative process" and then put it on the ballot with the original proposal. Right now, anyone with enough money can propose and get an initiative on the ballot.

"I support the California Disclose Act (California Clean Money Campaign) but that requires a 2/3rds vote. It is very hard to get the public to read initiatives and understand them so many people vote based on 2-second ads on television."

## **3. What do you believe are the key local issues for you in 2012?**

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

Lola Ungar discussed with Senator Lieu the Los Angeles County redistricting and her observations about their process. She asked about the possibility of a bill in the State for large counties to propose a commission like the California State Redistricting Commission. Senator Lieu commented that he would look at such a bill and would support that for cities as well. He noted that he had supported Senator Alan Lowenthal's proposal when he wanted to reform redistricting by statute. He commented that he felt the State Commission had done "a pretty good job" and that he felt comfortable with his new district, which is largely coastal and includes Palos Verdes. He pointed out that he wasn't happy that "they cut my home town in half" and that cities should be kept whole.

When asked about the elimination of redevelopment agencies, he voiced his support for cities "having the ability to do local investments and local projects" within local structures that are legal. He noted that most legislators support giving cities something. Right now it's taking everyone's time to dissolve the agencies, move funds around.

Marianne Ramos thanked Senator Lieu for his support of California Senate Bill 959 and Senator Lieu pointed out that he had testified at a Trustees meeting related to the California State Colleges' salary increases and they reversed course. Senator Lieu commented that the bill was put on hold to allow the Trustees to rework it so that consideration is given to fiscal conditions and tuition increases as well as salary increases. He commented that if necessary he would re-propose the bill in order to ensure that balance.

#### **4. What other major issues do you think the Legislature must deal with in 2012? What are your personal priorities?**

When asked about his personal priorities, Senator Lieu listed:

- The Environment – Climate Change - "I have a bill authorizing the Coastal Commission to fund projects for climate change and climate change adaptation."
- Health Care – "I had a bill last year preventing UV tanning in salons for people under 18." He noted that there is now proof that UV tanning actually causes cancer and that other states are looking at our bill.
- Medical billing – Senator Lieu talked about his bill related to disclosure of out of network services involved in medical billing from otherwise in-network procedures such as a radiologist who is out-of-network involved in a procedure at an in-network facility. At this time, such situations are not disclosed.
- Pensions for government employees – Sen. Lieu pointed to Senate Bill 400's rolling back of pension increases and commented that state pensions are "more or less OK" because of the way that CALPERS operates but he supports "a bunch of reforms to get rid of pension 'spiking'" and other mechanisms for reducing abuse. The Governor has

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

introduced a 12-point plan and the Legislature will introduce measures as well (“the question is how different is it from the Governor's”) including raising the retirement age (with a difference between public safety-related jobs and non-public-safety related jobs) and a hybrid plan such as a 401K. He feels sure that there will be reforms, almost all related to future employees.

When asked about polarization in Sacramento he noted that, although it was better than the situation in Washington, it has grown more partisan because of term limits. Senator Lieu feels that term limits reduce the incentives to work together. He pointed to the June term-limit initiative but was not optimistic about it passing. He also commented that the polarization in news sources contributes to the problem overall because people only hear one side of any situation. He commented that he tries to listen to a range of reports so that he gains an understanding of other views.

When Maggie Wilkinson asked about Assembly Bill 32, a landmark California law proposing measures to reduce greenhouse gases, Senator Lieu responded that “green buildings are one of my passions” and pointed to “greening buildings” as “low-hanging fruit” because buildings are enormous users of energy and you can do many things to buildings that don't require individual actions from the building residents.

On that note, we thanked Senator Lieu for his open discussion and the time he spent with us.

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## **The Value of Tap Water, airing Tues, April 10th at 7:30 on KCET**

Huell Howser examines some of the factors driving the cost of water, including energy, treatment processes, and the need to expand and replace plant and equipment for treating and delivering water. In his visits to two local water districts - The West Basin Municipal Water District (the wholesaler in our area) and Las Virgenes Municipal Water District (serving in the Santa Monica Mountains area), Howser notes that, even with rising costs, tap water is an exceptional value that compares favorably with other every day household services. Customers of public water agencies get more than just a product for their money. They are getting a reliable service that includes ongoing maintenance, sophisticated water quality testing and treatment, highly trained personnel, adequate flows for fire protection and robust water supplies and infrastructure to support the economy. Simply put, they are getting one of the best deals around.

### CALENDAR

<b>Date</b>	<b>Time</b>	<b>Subject</b>	<b>Place</b>
Tuesday April 10th	7 pm – 9:30 pm	Board Meeting	Home of Maggie Wilkinson 430 Loma Vista El Segundo
Tuesday April 24th	7 pm – 8:45 pm	Membership Meeting	Manhattan Beach Library 1320 Highland Avenue Manhattan Beach
Saturday May 12 <sup>th</sup>	10 am – 2 pm	Annual Meeting and Salad Luncheon	Home of Joan Arias 720 8 <sup>th</sup> Street Hermosa Beach
Saturday May 19 <sup>th</sup>	9 am - ??	Manhattan Beach Centennial Parade	Pacific School to Polliwog Park
Saturday May 19 <sup>th</sup> – Sunday May 20th	All day	LWVCA Leadership Council	Holiday Inn Capital Plaza, Sacramento



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