



# ***The Beach Voter***

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

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## **PROGRAM PLANNING AND HOLIDAY JOY COMBINED**

Once a year, in December, we gather for a holiday luncheon, socializing, and fun, combined with a review of our program and positions.

Program is the heart of the League, for our studies and positions enable us to provide information and advocacy to the public as well as to League members. This year we will review our National positions and make recommendations to retain, drop or update them. A summary of these positions is included with this issue of the Voter. More details on the positions can be found on the National League website at <http://lwv.org/content/impact-issues-online-edition> and following the links. At our meeting, we will also ask for your recommendations for new studies. Is there an area of government or a social issue you believe we should study and hopefully be able to take action to change or improve? Come to the meeting and share your ideas and opinions. We are truly a grassroots organization!

**When:** Saturday, December 12, 2015 – 10:00 AM-1:30 PM

**Where:** Home of Ann Martin  
921 Rowell Avenue, Manhattan Beach

**Bring:** Last Name A – L: Salad  
Last Name M – Z: Hot dish

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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 \$60.00 (payable to the League of Women Voters Beach Cities) to Susan Grebe at 629 19<sup>th</sup> Street, Manhattan Beach CA 90266.

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## ELECTION 2015

During this election season, LWVBC moderated several candidate forums in Hawthorne and in Hermosa Beach.

On October 22, 2015, thanks to the LWVBC and the Kiwanis Club of Hermosa Beach, Hermosa Beach voters had an opportunity to hear the four candidates for two open seats on the Hermosa Beach School Governance Board. After their opening statements, candidates Patti Ackerman, Lisa Claypoole, Monique Ehsan and James Scott answered a wide range of questions from the more than 30 attendees at the forum, held in the Hermosa Beach City Council Chambers. The event was filmed and was re-run before the election on the local government channel. Leaguers Joan Arias moderated, Harriet Chase greeted attendees and signed up people interested in League, Susan Grebe collected and sorted questions and Margaret Thelen was the official timekeeper. They were teamed in their tasks with Kiwanis Club members Cheryl Cross, Earl Feys, Deborah Wright DeMaderios and Dorothy Yost. In advance of the meeting, Cathy McCurdy, Kiwanis Club, distributed flyers to shoppers at the Hermosa Beach Farmers' Market. The League would like to extend a special thanks to Jim Lissner, Hermosa Beach businessman and activist for all his help. Jim helped with the previous election's Education Board Forum and was material in the success of this year's.

Beach Cities co-sponsored three Hawthorne Municipal Elections' candidates forums in October. The Holly Park, Holly Glen, and Ramona Homeowners Associations' events drew large numbers of concerned citizens. The three candidates for mayor and eight candidates for city council shared with the audiences, in their opening and closing statements, why they believed they were the most qualified for the position. All the candidates responded to the questions submitted by the audience and the Holly Glen Homeowners Association. Thank you to the Ramona Homeowners Association for their donation.

On November 3<sup>rd</sup>, Patti Ackerman and Monique Ehsan were elected to the Hermosa Beach School Governance Board. Alex Vargas was elected Mayor of Hawthorne, and Haidar Awad and Nilo Michelin were elected to the Hawthorne City Council.

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## **MONEY IN POLITICS – FIRST MEMBERSHIP MEETING – Joan Arias**

On October 27<sup>th</sup>, the Manhattan Beach Library hosted the first of two meetings to update the League's national position on campaign finance. The meeting gave attendees a history of relevant legislation and Supreme Court decisions related to campaign finance that will enable us to reach consensus at the second meeting which will be held at the Malaga Cove branch of the Palos Verdes Library on Saturday January 16, 2016 from 10:00AM-12:30PM.

The campaign finance organizing committee consists of members representing the Beach Cities, Palos Verdes and Torrance Leagues. The following members attended the meeting. Susan Grebe (BC), Ruth Hart (BC), Julie Craemer (PVP), Henrietta Mosley (BC), Yvette Reiner (BC), Jim Stewart (BC), Donna Tarp (PVP) and Jo-Anne Waller (PVP, Chairman).

Jo-Anne Waller opened the meeting by describing the League of Women Voters study process and by reviewing the current LWV position on campaign finance, introduced in 1974 and revised in 1982:

- Ensure the public's right to know
- Combat corruption and undue influence
- Enable candidates to compete more equitably
- Allow citizen participation in the electoral process

She noted that the League has worked on transparency in financing political campaigns and on fighting big money and its influence in elections and government. She talked about the huge influence of big money on political spending and the recent surge of big money in political campaigns. She pointed to these circumstances as the spur for the League to re-examine and update our policies and to look at how to protect citizens and organizational rights under the first amendment.

Jo-Anne then introduced Ruth Hart who continued with a presentation based on National League work and on the LWV of Massachusetts' prior work. Ruth provided a history and background of past legislation designed to regulate campaign finance

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from the 1907 Tillman Act through the Taft-Hartley Act of 1947, the Federal Elections Campaign Act of 1971 (amended in 1974) which established the Federal Elections Commission and the McCain-Feingold Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act of 2002. These acts limited donations and expenditures in various ways.

Ruth then talked about key first-amendment court cases that refined and attempted to close loopholes in the various acts and attempted to control “soft money,” “sham” issue ads and other ways people had found to get around the limitations imposed by the law.

Major court cases include *Buckley v. Valeo* (1976), *Austin v. Michigan Chamber of Commerce* (1990), *Citizens United* (2010) and *McCutcheon v. FEC* (2014), all of which questioned the constitutionality of the limitations imposed by the acts.

Ruth took us through the influential court cases and how they changed the intent of the original acts. She also pointed to the dissents on the Supreme Court showing that there was an awareness and discussion of the power of money and the potential for corruption. The Supreme Court is very much divided now and there is an explosion of money in the political process. Ruth talked about the difference between “hard” money which is given directly to candidates and is trackable, and “soft” money given to PACs and SuperPacs as well as “dark” money given through 501(c)(4) organizations and not trackable. 501(c)(4) organizations have no disclosure requirements and 50% of their expenditures can be on electioneering. Ruth reminded us of the IRS investigations into these organizations and the subsequent controversy caused by these investigations.

The presentation showed the arguments people use in support and against unlimited spending in political campaigns and she noted that United States elections are funded now at about 80% by corporations and “super wealthy” individuals.

Following the formal presentation, the meeting was open to questions, one of which was whether other states have Election Commissions. (NOTE: I looked this up and according to Google, California, Florida, NJ, NY, Oklahoma and Virginia have such commissions).

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One attendee noted that Project Votesmart collects information on all candidates at [votesmart.org](http://votesmart.org). Another attendee questioned whether we can advocate “back door” ways to control spending such as shortening the electoral cycle, now seemingly endless! There was also an extended discussion of the differences between PACs and Super PACS: PACs gather money from many sources and must report income and expenditures. Super PACs cannot be directly connected to specific candidates but form alliances with 501(c)(4) charitable organizations and they do electioneering without disclosing donors.

There is a great deal of information available on the subject of money in politics and we urge all members to attend the January 16 meeting at which we hope to reach consensus on an updated position on this subject.

The presentation Ruth spoke to is now available for download in PDF format at the LWVBC website, [www.beachvoter.org](http://www.beachvoter.org), in the Newsletter area.

Susan Grebe read the consensus questions, which will be available at the next meeting.

## **MAKE IT FAIR UPDATE**

Recently, we received the following email from Helen Hutchison, League of Women Voters of California, regarding the Make It Fair effort described in the previous issue of the Voter:

The Make It Fair coalition has decided not to pursue an initiative for the November 2016 ballot. The League’s statement is on the website (<https://lwvc.org/announcement/2015/nov/make-it-fair-california-update>), and is included below.

The Make It Fair Coalition was formed to work for reform of Proposition 13 by changing the unfair way in which commercial property is taxed in California. The League of Women Voters of California joined the Make It Fair campaign because school districts and local governments in California desperately need more revenue to rebuild services and restore educational opportunities for the state’s children.

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Together, over the past several months, the Make it Fair Coalition has made huge progress in bringing real reform to Prop 13 to the forefront of public debate. A few major accomplishments include:

- securing nearly 300 organizational endorsements, speaking directly with over 100,000 voters, generating significant press coverage, and training activists across California
- working with a cutting-edge team of experts to develop a policy package and securing the introduction of a proposed constitutional amendment in the state Senate
- changing public attitudes: a September 2015 survey by the Public Policy Institute of California shows that 55 percent of likely voters support commercial property tax reform, an increase of five percentage points from the previous survey in May.

**Even with this significant and encouraging progress, the Make It Fair coalition has decided not to pursue an initiative for the November 2016 ballot.** Instead, Make It Fair will work to build an even more powerful coalition, expand public education, make the electorate reflective of California's diverse population, and raise funds to ensure the success of any future initiative.

Make It Fair is serious about reform and will continue to be in touch as plans for the coming months take shape.

## LWVC HIGHER EDUCATION STUDY UPDATE

The League of Women Voters of California's Higher Education Committee has completed their research and has published the **Higher ED Leader's Guide, Study Guide, and PowerPoint** for discussion and Consensus. These can all be accessed via computer at <http://lwvc.org/lwvonly/>.

Our League's Education Committee is working with members from the Palos Verdes Peninsula and Torrance Area leagues to set a location and time to hold a Tri-League Consensus meeting. We are having a planning session on Tuesday, Nov. 17, 2015 (Harriet's home, 1:30 pm). Information from the results of this meeting will be forthcoming.

The League cannot take a position on any issue until they have studied it and come to consensus on the results of the research. This is a detailed and time-consuming process. The Higher Ed study began in October 2014. Twelve members from across the state of California were chosen, from their applications, to meet in Oakland and begin their work. The goal was to come up with a plan that can be used to advocate for a more inclusive and affordable higher education. The ultimate objective is to have an educated workforce in California to meet the needs of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century.

Harriet Chase  
LWVBC Social Policy and Higher Education Committee Chair  
Home Ph: 310-545-1026 Cell: 310-465-5914

<b>CALENDAR</b>			
Date	Time	Subject	Place
Saturday December 12, 2015	10:00 am – 1:30 pm	Program Planning & Holiday Potluck	Home of Ann Martin 921 Rowell Avenue Manhattan Beach
Thursday January 14, 2016	7:00 pm – 9:30 pm	January Board Meeting	Home of Harriet Chase 2151 Valley Drive Manhattan Beach
Saturday January 16, 2016	10:00 am – 12:30 pm	Money in Politics Consensus Meeting	Malaga Cove Library 2400 Via Campesina Palos Verdes Estates
Monday January 26, 2016	7:00 pm – 8:30 pm	Membership Meeting – Community Choice	Manhattan Beach Library 1320 Highland Ave. Manhattan Beach
Saturday January 30, 2016	TBA	County Winter League Day	TBA



**League of Women Voters of the Beach Cities**  
**629 19<sup>th</sup> Street**  
**Manhattan Beach, CA 90266**