



The Beach Voter

League of Women Voters Beach Cities

Serving El Segundo, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Manhattan Beach & Redondo Beach

Los Angeles County Jail Study

League of Women Voters of the Beach Cities

Special Guest Speaker

Emily Baker

Los Angeles Deputy District Attorney

Tuesday February 22nd 7 PM to 8:30 PM

Manhattan Beach Library

1320 Highland Ave. Manhattan Beach

*All League members are encouraged to participate * Visitors Welcome*

Go – See Trip

Ocean-Water Desalination Demonstration Project

Sat, March 19th, from 10:15 to noon

1021 N Harbor Drive, Redondo Beach

**Up to 30 spots available for this complimentary Go-See tour
of the demonstration ‘desal’ plant in Redondo Beach!**

**Members are encouraged to attend as we continue to explore water issues in southern California,
and may bring children (7 or older).**

**Reservations required! Please contact Maggie Wilkinson – by Mon, March 10th
at Maggie@BeachVoter.org or (310) 322-7870.**

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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 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 Beach Voter

Co-Presidents:
 Barbara Arlow
 Fatima Malik

Editor:
 Susan Grebe

Copy Editors:
 Barbara Arlow
 Fatima Malik

Production:
 Mignon Thiem-Murphy
 Peggy Bartlett
 Sunhee Park

Labels:
 Ann Martin

For membership. Send check in the amount of \$55.00 (payable to the League of Women Voters Beach Cities) to Peggy Bartlett at 701 13th Street, Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

Name _____ Phone _____ Email _____

Address _____

NON-EVENT

Thanks to all our generous League Members, the contributions for the Non-event are pouring in. All donations, no matter the amount, are welcome. There is still time to respond and be included in this yearly event. Below are the members who have already sent in their contribution.

Peggy Bartlett, Treasurer

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ROCKIE ELKIND

CAROLYN AND RAYMOND WATERS

SUNHEE PARK

JENNIFER STEFFEN

County League Day—Saturday January 29th

The topic was the California Budget. Not an easy one to tackle. To help us understand the complexities of the task we were introduced to a website which would help us understand what would be needed to balance a budget with a 23 to 28 billion dollar deficit. The website is www.nextten.org. It has hands on exercises that allows you to see how good you would be at making the shortfall go away. We took a stab at it as a group but the best we could do was to lower the amount to a 2.3 billion deficit.

Our speaker was Jean Ross, Executive Director of the California Budget Project. Her prior professional experience includes serving as principal consultant to the Assembly Revenue and Taxation committee and she is currently a member of the Advisory committee to the California Franchise Tax Board. Her list of accomplishments is too long to reprint here but her knowledge was imparted in an upbeat and informational manner that helped us understand the daunting task ahead for the Governor and the Legislature.

She promised us no answers but we received a deeper understanding how difficult this task will be. We also learned that no one is going to be happy with this budget. Favorite programs will need to be cut and revenue will need to be increased to avoid catastrophic consequences. A special election on the budget is being proposed for the Spring.

Susan Grebe

We regret to inform you of the passing of a long-time member, Beth Perkins, on Monday, February 7, 2011. Beth joined the LWV of Inglewood on or about 1957 and was active for many years, serving a term as President. The Inglewood League became LWV of Inglewood-Hawthorne, then LWV of Centinela Valley, and in the late 1970s, merged with Manhattan Beach LWV to become our current LWV of the Beach Cities.

Beth worked as a lab technician at Centinela Hospital until her retirement and remained active as a volunteer at the Beach Cities Health District and in her church until recently. She will be missed.

JAIL STUDY REPORT—January 25th by Joan Arias

Three Senior Deputy Sheriffs from the Los Angeles County Custodial team answered questions about the Los Angeles County jail system and helped the League of Women Voters group come to some consensus about jail conditions at a special membership program organized by Michelle Murphy on January 25 at the Manhattan Beach Public Library. Bryan Aguilera, a 7-year veteran of the Sheriff's Department, Mike Johnson, with 20 years' experience and Tina Lorenzi, with 10 years in the Department talked about their "open door" policy which allows "anyone and everyone" to visit the jails. They specifically noted that the American Civil Liberties Union visits frequently to make sure that the civil rights of inmates are respected. "Our job is to keep inmates safe," observed Sheriff Lorenzi and the comments from all three speakers highlighted that goal.

When asked why there was such a large population in Los Angeles in particular and in the United States overall, the sheriffs all agreed that "Drugs and gangs" were responsible for a large percentage of the crimes for which inmates are incarcerated. They also pointed out that our country is freer than many others and that people have more access to harmful substances. They also highlighted the economy as contributing to the dilemma since many young people are left home alone, giving them time to get in trouble and reach out to gangs to serve as "family."

Although the law provides that inmates remain in the County jail for up to a year, many have been in the jail longer and since recidivism is high, there is a "revolving door" so that many of the inmates return more than once.

Mental illness is a special problem for the Department and the speakers described the extensive screenings they perform to classify and work with inmates with special problems. The Sheriffs noted that they are constantly learning how to manage the population which is now at somewhat of a "low" although several facilities are closed. They observed that overcrowding is not currently a problem since the system has 20,000 beds and there are currently around 16,000 inmates.

One of the goals of the Department is to keep sworn deputies from being laid off in the difficult California economy and many deputies put in some of their time in the jails. They expressed the hope that they would be able to tear down the very old facilities such as Men's Central, and build new, safer buildings.

When asked about electronic monitoring, they thought it was an effective alternative to full incarceration and they noted that the Department is implementing various Community Based Alternatives to Custody (CBAC) programs but that many of the support programs are understaffed which is a problem for the Department.

Following the Q&A session, the Sheriffs worked with three groups to help us reach consensus on Health, Oversight and Overcrowding.

HEALTH (led by Susan Grebe): We achieved consensus that most of the proposed programs should be mandatory. We had mixed feelings about pre-natal care, abortion (this was a legality issue) and diagnostic testing, feeling that these were "desirable", rather than "mandatory", given the financial and legal realities.

OVERSIGHT (led by Jan Nathanson): This team reached consensus, feeling that there is sufficient oversight based on the current Sheriff and Board of Supervisors but that this oversight should be mandated formally for the future.

OVERCROWDING (led by Janelle Freeman): The group did not reach consensus although they had a productive discussion and achieved a greater understanding. They will continue their work at a future meeting.

Desalination Trip

Please join us to learn about the challenges people in southern California face regarding our water supply. Also we will be learning about the actions the West Basin Municipal Water District is taking in the areas of conservation, education, recycled water, and desalination to ensure a safe and reliable water supply in the South Bay.

Instead of our regular monthly evening meeting, we've arranged this special Go-See tour on a Saturday morning. Viewing the plant during daylight will allow you to better understand mechanisms intended to protect fish and other aquatic life from the desalination processes.

Hope you'll join us. (Contact Maggie for a reservation.)

PROGRAM REMINDER AND UPDATE

By Jan Nathanson

In anticipation of the program planning portion of the Annual Meeting, please review our *local* program positions and let us know if you wish to retain them, update or delete any of the positions. We are anxious for suggestions for a new study and welcome your ideas. If you have a vital issue of concern for your local community which is not part of our existing program positions, please let any board member know or contact me at 310-643-6247 or by email at rjnathanson@yahoo.com.

At the program planning luncheon meeting in December, approximately 20 members and guests reviewed the LWVC (State) program positions and recommended the following:

1. All existing positions should be retained. Some were recommended for an update and three positions stood out as "issues for emphasis", meaning that they should receive high priority for action. Finally a new study on the prison system was recommended.
2. In summary: Updates were recommended for Elections Systems, Initiative and Referendum and State and Local Finances. Issues for Emphasis (top three) were for Water, State and Local Finances and Health Care. Close behind were the Initiative and Referendum, Education—Charter Schools, and Campaign Finance Reform.
3. A new study on the prison system at the state level was unanimously recommended. There is another movement with wide support for a concurrence using studies from other state Leagues. Our board members strongly support this recommendation.

Thank you to all who participated in the discussions, to Maggie Wilkinson, Harriet Chase and Joan Arias for serving as discussion leaders, to Wendy Phillips for her chart on websites and to our State President, Janice Hirohama, for her valuable and informative comments. Last but not least, to our gracious hostess, Ann Martin, and to all the "best cooks in League" for the delicious luncheon.

Writing on Richard Rothstein's Report on Reauthorization of ESEA

By Ellen Wheeler

LWVC Social Policy Director/Ed. Committee Chair LWV Santa Clara County/CSBA member

Renowned education researcher Richard Rothstein gave a talk titled "ESEA Reauthorization: Looking Ahead" at the California School Boards Association annual convention on Dec. 3, 2010. Below is a sketch of his remarks. For a more complete description of the work of Mr. Rothstein and other likeminded education leaders go to www.BoldApproach.org

The *Elementary and Secondary Education Act* (ESEA) is more commonly known to most of us as *No Child Left Behind* (NCLB). Signed into law with high hopes by President George W. Bush with bipartisan support, its reauthorization is complicated by politics and politicians, not to mention principled discussions of educational philosophies and goals.

As an experienced education observer Mr. Rothstein began his talk not about philosophies, but about . . .

The politics of it all:

The impact of the 2010 election will be felt in ESEA. New Speaker John Boehner was an original supporter of ESEA, while the new chair of the House education committee, Rep. Kline, wants to keep the federal government out of schools. Will Speaker Boehner spend political capital on ESEA reauthorization? This is further complicated by the strange alliances in education. Some Democrats and Republicans are strong supporters of accountability and testing. Others are skeptical of testing and what they see is narrowing of the curriculum. The new Senate Education Committee chair, Democrat Tom Harkin, strongly supports labor (teachers) and has little interest in testing. But, we *may* get a coalition for special education funding. However, Republicans are generally opposed to increased spending. If special education gets more funding, what programs would we cut to allow for this?

The share of funding for special education has grown. It's now 23 percent of all money in education, and the number of children identified is growing (whereas other education funding has fallen). **We would be much better off spending more for high quality early childhood education, says Mr. Rothstein.**

Let's review what NCLB/ESEA does:

1. Holds schools accountable for basic skills in math and reading, and requires students to pass an annual test on them;
2. Reports scores by subgroups within schools, instead of just by schools (as in the past).
Subgroups include Hispanic, African American, Asian, White, low economic status, and special education.
3. Promotes "accountability" by penalizing schools if not all subgroups of students pass the annual tests.

Results of focus on subgroups, testing, and accountability:

1. Narrowing of curriculum, since what's tested (reading and math) is how a school is held accountable. What isn't tested (subgroups of reading and math, not to mention history, science, art, and music) isn't taught, or at least gets less time.

2. Narrowed focus on individual students that can reach "proficiency" (roughly grade level) with concomitant less attention to students who have already reached proficiency.

"Absurd goal" of 100 percent proficiency by 2014 and "Closing the Achievement Gap":

This violates everything we know about psychology—to set the same challenging standard for everyone. No educator in his right mind believes we can "close" the Achievement Gap.

Key longitudinal study on language acquisition by babies and toddlers (Hart and Risley):

1. Children start kindergarten with huge advantages or disadvantages. Why does Mr. Rothstein believe it's absurd to think we can close the Achievement Gap? Because kindergarteners start school with such a huge differential in normally acquired words. Betty Hart and Todd Risley tape-recorded one full hour a month for 2-½ years in 42 families, categorized as professional, working class, or welfare. By age three, trends in amount of talk, vocabulary growth, and style of parent/child interaction were well established. Critically, children in professional homes heard 2,000 words per hour in the background, blue collar children heard 1,300 words per hour, and children in welfare homes heard 600 words per hour. Extrapolating this verbal interaction to a year, a child in a professional family would hear 11 million words while a child in a welfare family would hear just 3 million. In fact, by age three the *children* from the professional families had a larger spoken vocabulary than the *parents* from the welfare families! These trends continue into elementary school and beyond.

2. Children start kindergarten with huge differences in their sense of self-worth and belief that they can achieve. Another component of the Hart/Risley study spotlighted the quality of interaction between toddlers and their parents in the three groups of homes. 80 percent of the feedback to children in professional homes was positive. Working class children heard 50 percent positive comments. And, welfare children heard 80 percent *negative* comments.

So, what should we be focusing on?

Instead of punishing schools for not getting all students to proficiency, we should:

- Put our attention on high quality parenting and early childhood programs (beginning at or even before birth)
- Help every child get health, dental, and vision care (maybe at school-based health centers) so children can concentrate on their lessons, and
- Help students prepare for careers, not just college.

CALENDAR

Feb 22nd Tuesday	7 PM - 8:30 PM	Jail Study—Part Two	Manhattan Beach Library 1320 Highland Ave. Manhattan Beach
March 8th Tuesday	7 PM	Board Meeting	Jan Nathanson 13731 So. Rossburn Ave. Hawthorne
March 19th Saturday	10:15 AM to noon	Go See Trip Desalinization Plant	1021 North Harbor Drive Redondo Beach
April 12th Tuesday	7 PM	Board Meeting	Maggie Wilkinson 430 Loma Vista El Segundo
April 26nd Tuesday	7 PM	General Meeting “Education”	Redondo Beach Women’s Club 400 So. Broadway



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Manhattan Beach, CA 90266