

VOTER

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Barbara Murray

February 12 – A Very Special Birthday

This February our country and the world will be celebrating the 200th birthday of two 19th century giants. Abraham Lincoln and Charles Darwin were both born on February 12, 1809. (On a more more personal note my grandson was born on this date last year!) What I find fascinating is that these two men still figure very prominently in the news today - Lincoln as a political model for tough times and Darwin as a visionary scientist whose theories continue to stir up controversy. As their accomplishments and characteristics are highlighted this month, I hope our leaders in government, science, and education will focus on what made them great and what we can learn from them to apply to the challenges facing our state, nation, and world.

January Discussion Meeting - Report

League members met at Diane Sheridan's house on the 31st to kick off the LWV-Texas re-study of Voting Rights and Election Laws. The goal of the study is to consider ways to increase voter participation. The official consensus meeting will take place next fall. However, we thought it would be interesting to discuss this topic close on the heels of last November's election while voting experiences were still fresh in our minds. We discussed such ideas as vote by mail, Internet voting, same-day registration, election-day centralized voting, overseas ballot provisions, and other procedural barriers to voting. While we didn't come to any conclusions, we did generate many questions and comments that Diane will forward to the state's study committee to be considered as they prepare study materials.

Interview with Mike Jackson

Many thanks to League members Melba Heselmeyer and Sara Young who met with State Senator Mike Jackson of district 11 who represents a majority of our members. Senator Jackson was very cordial and gracious as he answered several questions and discussed issues facing our state. LWV-Texas leaders will be able to lobby more effectively on League priority issues thanks to the information acquired from this interview as well as the interviews conducted by League members throughout the state.

Bay Area Citizens Guide to Elected Officials

We plan to publish this very popular and informative pamphlet later in February. Elizabeth Glenn has been hard at work verifying and compiling this comprehensive resource that includes contact information for all of our elected officials. Please contact her if you have some spare time to help in proof reading and/or delivering the completed pamphlets to area libraries, city governments, etc.

CONSENSUS ON USING THE NATIONAL POPULAR VOTE COMPACT AMONG THE STATES AS A METHOD FOR ELECTING THE PRESIDENT

Saturday, March 28, 2009
9:30 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.

At the home of Diane Sheridan
1107 Live Oak Lane, Kirby Woods, Taylor Lake Village

Debating this issue on March 28 is going to take some background reading ☺ Delegates at LWVUS Convention 2008 voted to study the advisability of using the National Popular Vote (NPV) Compact among the states as a method for electing the U.S. President. The compact provides a way to choose the President of the United States by popular vote without amending the Constitution. If the NPV Compact were enacted, all of the state's electoral votes would be awarded to the presidential candidate who receives the most popular votes in all 50 states and the District of Columbia.

The NPV bill would take effect only when enacted, in identical form, by states possessing a majority of the electoral votes—that is, enough electoral votes to elect a President (270 of 538). To date, four states have enacted NPV laws: Hawaii, Maryland, New Jersey, and Illinois.

The League has supported direct election of the President by popular vote since 1970, and has worked in past years for abolition of the Electoral College. The NPV is another approach for achieving our position. The League has no position on NPV specifically, thus the determination of whether there is consensus among Leagues across the country on NPV.

If you are able to join us on March 28 as we take part in this national League study, you will want to look at some of the materials on the LWVUS website. (If you are not computerized and need a paper copy, let Diane Sheridan know.)

At http://www.lwv.org/AM/Template.cfm?Section=National_Popular_Vote_Compact, you will find a background paper, the text of the NPV agreement, its pros and cons, and the consensus questions themselves.

The first consensus question provides an example of the choices we will be making:

1. *Which statement best reflects the consensus of the group? Select one.*
 - a. Action to alter a basic element of the Constitutional framework, which is achievable by amendment to the Constitution, should be accomplished by amendment to the Constitution.
 - b. Action by states through a compact process is an acceptable way to alter the method for electing the President and Vice-President.
 - c. The group could not reach consensus.

LWV-BA MEMBERSHIP

LWV-Bay Area membership for 2008-2009 totals 44. We have 27 individual members, 5 pairs of household members, and 7 members who joined through the national League of Women Voters. Thanks to all for joining or rejoining—we can't do our part to make democracy work without you!

CALENDAR

February 2009

7 **LWV-BA Board meeting**, 9:00 am, home of Verva Densmore

March 2009

9 LWV-TX Conference and Lobby Day, Austin

9 Last day to file for May election

28 **LWV-BA discussion** of National Voter Compact, 9:30 am, home of Diane Sheridan

Principles of the League of Women Voters

- The League of Women Voters believes in representative government and in the individual liberties established in the Constitution of the United States.
- The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government depends upon the informed and active participation of its citizens and requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen's right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings and making public records accessible.
- The League of Women Voters believes that all powers of the U.S. government should be exercised within the constitutional framework of a balance among the three branches of government: legislative, executive, and judicial.
- The League of Women Voters believes that every citizen should be protected in the right to vote; that every person should have access to free public education that provides equal opportunity for all; and that no person or group should suffer legal, economic or administrative discrimination.
- The League of Women Voters believes that efficient and economical government requires competent personnel, the clear assignment of responsibility, adequate financing, and coordination among the different agencies and levels of government.
- The League of Women Voters believes that responsible government should be responsive to the will of the people; that government should maintain an equitable and flexible system of taxation, promote the conservation and development of natural resources in the public interest, share in the solution of economic and social problems that affect the general welfare, promote a sound economy and adopt domestic policies that facilitate the solution of international problems.