



THE BEACH VOTER

The League of Women Voters of the Beach Cities
 serving El Segundo, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach, Inglewood, Manhattan Beach, and Redondo Beach

V O T E R
 F E B R U A R Y
 2 0 0 4
 P R I M A R Y
 E L E C T I O N

Direct Popular Vote? The Electoral College? How should we elect our President?

When voters select a presidential candidate on their ballots, they are actually voting for electors pledged to that candidate or party. Although our “National” position calls for abolishment of the electoral college, we had a lively discussion on the pros and cons of our current system for electing our president — see June Eicker’s summary of this discussion on page 2.

It’s now time for you to express your opinion and to help us form a basis for an updated national position on electing the president. Whether you attended our meeting or not, we ask that you consider the proposed new position statement — check your January/February issue of the *National Voter* for the proposed position, or www.lwv.org. Then send your response to the LWVUS — the postmark deadline for responses by mail is **March 1, 2004**. Or you may respond electronically (www.lwv.org/concurrence/) by March 4th.

Be a part of the process!

Inside This Issue

Electing the President	1-2
President’s Message	3
Our Calendar	4
Pros and Cons	insert
Lasagna Dinner	insert

Pros and Cons – check it out!

The League of Women Voters of California — our “State” League — publishes *Pros and Cons* before every major election (and special elections, such as the recall election last October). This publication is a well-known and respected source of non-partisan information. Read it — and pass it on!



Also, at our February meeting, we’ll be discussing the ballot measures for the March 2nd election. Please join us — the public is welcome!

Monday, February 23rd, 7:00 to 9:00

Manhattan Beach Library, 1320 Highland Avenue

(see insert for parking information).

At our January meeting, we reviewed how the electoral college works, and tackled the issue of the presidential election process. This review was followed by a lively discussion on whether or not we should abolish the electoral college. Key points are summarized below.

Pros

- It ain't broke, so don't fix it. For the past 100 years, it has functioned without a problem and without much complaint from the public in every presidential election through two world wars, a major economic depression, and several periods of civil unrest.
- It fosters the two-party system. A "winner take all" system generally means that third party and independent candidates get few electoral votes. As a result, the electoral college inhibits the rise of splinter parties that can contribute to political instability and deadlock. (This is also a con.)
- It gives added power to minority groups. Because of the "winner take all" system, a relatively small number of voters in a state can make the difference in determining which candidate gets that state's electoral votes. This gives well-organized minority groups a chance to influence the election by getting their voters to the polls.
- It promotes a federal system of government, as it was designed to reflect each state's choice for the presidency and vice presidency. To abolish it in favor of nationwide popular election of the president would strike at the very heart of the federal system of government, which reserves important political powers to the states.
- Protection from tyranny of the majority (James Madison, *The Federalist Papers*).
- Power of large cities — without the electoral college one could campaign and win in only the largest cities in the nation, disenfranchising sparsely populated states.

Cons

- It ignores the popular vote — the electoral college does not base its decision on the popular vote across the country, but on which candidates win which states. As a result, there's a chance that someone could be elected president without receiving more popular votes than any other candidates. Two candidates in the 19th century, as well as George W. Bush in 2000, were elected president without the popular vote.
- It discourages voter turnout. The electoral college makes many people feel that their vote doesn't make a difference. Voters might be inclined to skip voting, for example, if it's clear from news and polls that Candidate X is bound to win their state.
- It violates the one person one vote ideal. Each state has a minimum of three electors, regardless of its population. This gives residents of the smallest states, which based on their population might otherwise be entitled to just one or two electors, more influence than residents of larger states.
- It doesn't require electors to vote the way they pledged to. Although it rarely happens, there's nothing to prevent electors from defecting from the candidate to whom they are pledged. Most recently, in 2000, an elector from the District of Columbia abstained from voting. The main danger of faithless electors is that the candidate who wins the popular vote could wind up one or two votes short of the electoral college majority, and the election would be thrown to the House of Representatives.

The League of Women Voters is a non-partisan organization open to all citizens, men and women, of voting age. The League's mission is to promote political responsibility through informed and active participation in government. The League never supports or opposes any political candidate. The League advocates on issues that members have studied and on which members have reached consensus.

Beach Voter

Co-Presidents

Jeanne Leuschner

Jan Nathanson

Editor

Wendy Phillips

Associate Editor

Jeanne Leuschner

Assistant Editor

Kate Alson

Production

Susan Grebe

Sunhee Park

Mignon Thiem-Murphy

Circulation

Ann Martin

It seems to be that time of the year when we must make many decisions. What issue regarding County government do you want to study for the next two years? On March 27th, County Convention will be held. All positions will be reviewed. Should any changes be made? Should we study Land Use? (Our position dates from 1974.) Or how about our water policy — do we have enough and is there an adequate long-term supply?

State League has a Council in even-numbered years; this year, Council will be held in May for presidents or their representatives in May. And in June, the LWVUS holds its convention in Washington D.C. There a new program for the next two years will be presented, officers will be elected, and a new budget will be adopted. And, of course, on May 8th Beach Cities League will have elections, approve a budget, and decide on our program for next year.

In the meantime — League turns 84 in February. To celebrate our birthday it has been suggested that we all encourage citizens to take part in their government and their communities. Some of our Leaguers will be attending the debate of the Democrat contenders for the Presidential nomination on February 22nd. Our League had an allotment of tickets which went very quickly. The debate will be broadcast on NBC television at 5 pm on Sunday, February 22nd. This debate is being sponsored by the Leagues of Women Voters. LWVUS President Kay Maxwell will be attending.

Maggie Wilkinson and June Eicker gave an excellent presentation at our January membership meeting on the Presidential Selection Process. If you haven't already done so, please review the articles in the last couple of National Voters and send in the form regarding your thoughts on the position. National is asking for individual votes.

Don't forget to vote on March 2!!!!

Jeanne



We have new members! Welcome to Michelle Murphy, Dianne Barrow and Estelle Carlson, and welcome back to Leslie Gault. We are delighted they have chosen to join us.

Susan Grebe and Valma Evans, Membership Co-Chairs

And we have donors! Thank you — Cecilia Ball, Marilyn Dubas Barbara Keel, Jeanne Leuschner, Irma Cohen, Mignon Thiem, Joan Arias, Walter and Maureen Skiba, Sue Carter, April Wayland, Lance Widman, Ruth Money, Joann Kennelly, Paul Kratz, Barbara Hammer, Jean Lombardo, Bea Savellano, Sunhee Park, Robert Koch, June Eicker, Betty And Jim Mc Elmell, Mary Louise Brenneman, Paulett Caudill, Jean Davidson, Harriet Chase, Charlotte Richard, Lillian Lunt, Annabel Sims, Ann Martin, Michelle Murphy, Maggie Wilkinson, and Valma Evans.

Peggy Bartlett, Treasurer

Feb 22	Sun	5:00 to 6:00	Democratic Presidential Primary Debate	Broadcast live on NBC
Feb 23	Mon	7:00 to 9:00	Membership Meeting on Ballot Issues	Manhattan Beach Library 1320 Highland Avenue
Feb 28	Sat	1:00 to 3:00	Discussion Leader training — to be led by Barbara Inatsugo	El Segundo Public Library 111 West Mariposa Avenue, El Segundo
Mar 2	Tues	7 am to 8 pm	National Primary Election	For information on your precinct, go to www.SmartVoter.org and type in your address
Mar 4	Thur	6 pm	Deadline! For articles to be included in the March issues of the <i>Beach Voter</i>	Please submit your articles electronically.
Mar 8	Mon	7:15 to 9:15	Board Meeting	701 13th Street, Manhattan Beach (at the home of Peggy Bartlett)
Mar 18	Thur	6:00 pm	14th Annual Lasagna Dinner— Assemblyman Lowenthal on Sacramento	Katy Geissert Civic Center Library 3301 Torrance Blvd, Torrance
Mar 18	Thur	7:45 am to 3:30	27th Annual EdSource Forum Overhauling School Funding in CA	Manhattan Beach Marriott — for registration, call (650) 857-9604 or go to www.edsource.org .
Mar 22	Mon	7:00 to 9:00	Membership Meeting Issue for Emphasis — Healthcare	Manhattan Beach Library 1320 Highland Avenue
Mar 27	Sat	9:30 to 2:30	County Convention: Speaker Richard McKee — CA First Amendment Coalition	Tamayo's Restaurant 5300 E. Olympic Blvd, Commerce



701 13th Street
Manhattan Beach, CA 90266

(310) 413-6904 or editor@beachvoter.org
www.beachvoter.org

The League of Women Voters of the Beach Cities

serving El Segundo, Hawthorne, Hermosa Beach,
Inglewood, Manhattan Beach, and Redondo Beach

