
The February Voter Is Here!

1 message

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Thu, Feb 2, 2017 at 3:00 PM

The Voter

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League of Women Voters,
Long Beach Area

Serving the Cities of Long Beach, Lakewood, and
Signal Hill



February 2016

In This Issue

- Third Annual Climate Change Symposium
- Activities Update from the Committee on Homelessness
- Upcoming Solicitation Drive

Calendar of Events

Sat., Feb. 4 - Board Meeting

1 - 2:30 pm; Ella Mae
Marble's home

Note: this meeting will be followed by program planning

Third Annual Climate Change Symposium

by Ron Salk, Symposium and Membership Chair

Our third Annual Climate Change Symposium, in partnership with the Aquarium of the Pacific, Jan. 21, was titled: "The New Challenges of Climate Change: Sea Level Rise and Water Conservation -- Local, Regional, and Global Effects." Our numbers this year, estimated between 75 and 100 attendees, were impacted by the all-important Women's March, which also began that morning. But, by all accounts from those present, the symposium did not disappoint. (See the January *Voter* for the list of speakers.)

Our keynote speaker, Dr. Jerry R. Schubel, CEO and president of the Aquarium, gave a riveting overview of the dangerous proliferation of greenhouse gases warming the

**Tue., Feb. 14 - Happy 97th
Birthday, League of
Women Voters!**

**Mon., Feb. 20 - Happy
President's Day!**

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Off Board Positions

atmosphere and leading to sea-level rise that could possibly devastate our coastline by 2050, if not sooner.

For a full look at the symposium, which was live-streamed to a broad audience, please click on the link below, provided by the Aquarium. You will then be able to be present at the event.

We are grateful to the Aquarium of the Pacific, one of the premier aquariums of America, for their cooperation and for live-streaming the event via YouTube.

Click Here to Watch the Symposium on YouTube!

Activities Update from the Committee on Homelessness

*by Megan Barry, Nicole Bennett,
Phyllis O'Connor, and Zhita Rea*

The League of Women Voters, Long Beach Area's recently formed Committee on Homelessness has been extremely active since the League's November event which addressed the same issue. Below is some information on the committee's activities since that meeting. Proposed (but still unconfirmed) upcoming events include a meeting with the City's housing investment company, which spends the City's affordable housing money, and a meeting with Arlene Mercer, the Executive Director of Urban Community Outreach.

If you'd like to get involved with the committee, please send an email to [Nicole Bennett](#).

Local Study Committee:

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LWV California Ed Fund provides information about statewide propositions, local candidates and issues, media links and background materials

[LA County Registrar-Recorder](#)

Election calendar, polling places, absentee voting information, multilingual voting materials

[Easy Voter Guide](#)

Concise faces about statewide propositions; Chinese, Korean Spanish, Vietnamese, English

[Secretary of State](#)

Official text of ballot measures, candidates' statements, maps, dates,

Compassionate Town Hall: Homelessness in LB
by Megan Barry

“Homelessness is not a crime.” Those were the words of Long Beach Police Department Homeless Outreach Officer Johnny Dodson, as he addressed hundreds of residents attending the Compassionate Town Hall: Homelessness in Long Beach event hosted by community organizer Justin Rudd at the Bay Shore Church in Belmont Shore on the evening of Jan. 30. Over 600 people packed the church, eager to learn about what can be done to stem the critical levels of homelessness in Long Beach, where approximately 2500 to 3000 men, women, and children are living on the streets.

Dodson was just one of 22 speakers who served to inform the public about what resources are available, what is being done, what more needs to be done, and how citizens can get involved.

“The issue of homelessness is not my problem. It’s not the police department’s problem. It’s not anyone’s ‘problem’. It’s an opportunity that we have as a community to help those in need,” said Councilmember Suzie Price. She echoed several of the themes heard throughout the evening. Most notably, that it will take compassion and involvement by everyone to improve the current situation.

When answering the question about what citizens can do to help, “Number one thing: say ‘hi’ to people. Make a relationship,” said Steve Be Cote, President of the Long Beach Area Coalition for the Homeless. Be Cote encouraged members of the audience to give the homeless a hand up, not a hand out. Rather than giving food and money to the homeless, which can be traded for

election returns

[CA Legislative Analyst](#)

Analysis of all ballot measures

[CA Voter Foundation](#)

Voter resource for information on voting and elections

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About the League

The League of Women Voters, a non-partisan political organization, encourages informed and active participation in government and influences public policy through education and advocacy.

We do not support or oppose any political party or any candidate. We do, however, take action on selected government issues

drugs and sexual favors, he said building a relationship with those in need and providing them with information is a better alternative. He held up a small pamphlet titled the Pocket Guide Resource Directory and asked everyone to start keeping several copies on hand to offer up instead of food or money. The Pocket Guide provides a list of agencies providing food, shelter, and other resources for the homeless, as well as emergency hotlines.

Copies of the Pocket Guide Resource Directory are available through Health and Human Services Homeless Services.

Nearly all of the speakers expressed a need for volunteers to support their agencies and the homeless populations they serve.

[Click here to see Mr. Rudd's Facebook post with a full list of speakers and video of the entire meeting.](#)

in the public interest.

Opportunities for Service

Write an article, a Letter to the Editor or a book review for *The Voter*. Time commitment: low.

Contact: [Nicole Bennett](#)

Volunteer to join the Board.

Time commitment: moderate.

Contact: [Kim Ritter](#)

Volunteer to serve as an Observer at City Council meetings, or at other meetings of government or agencies.

Time commitment: variable.

Contact: [Phyllis O'Connor](#)

Volunteer to serve on a planning committee for a monthly meeting. Time commitment: variable.

Contact: [Kim Ritter](#)

Join a Committee: Voter Service (Renee Simon); Membership ([Ron Salk](#)); Speakers Bureau (Thelma Teitel); Committee on Homelessness ([Phyllis O'Connor](#)).

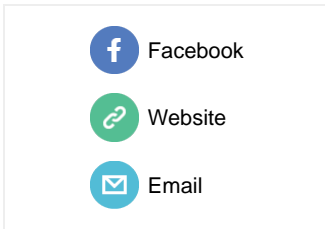


Phyllis O'Connor and Nicole Bennett at the Multi-Service Center after the 2017 Street and Shelter Count.

2017 Street and Shelter Count *by Nicole Bennett*

On Thursday, January 26, Phyllis O'Connor and I, along with a record-breaking 400 other volunteers, met at the Multi-Service Center bright and early to take part in the city-wide street and shelter count.

We were there because, in order to meet federal requirements of the Department of Housing and Urban Development, the city of Long Beach must conduct a homelessness count every odd-numbered year. The purpose of the count is not only to gauge the number of people experiencing homelessness in our city, but also to obtain demographic data about those affected by homelessness. While the federal government requires



basic information regarding gender, age, and ethnicity, the city of Long Beach goes above and beyond in their surveys and seeks to understand past and present issues that might be affecting our homeless population.

Before the count began, Elsa Ramos, the Multi-Service Center Coordinator, split the volunteers up into groups of 4-6. Each group was assigned to a particular neighborhood where they would walk the streets, seek out those who could potentially be experiencing homelessness, and, if willing, conduct the city's survey. Volunteers also passed out snacks, shirts, and socks to those who were willing to take part in the survey.

Our group was responsible for the area of the map directly east of El Dorado park. Wearing our bright blue homeless count volunteer t-shirts, we walked along Coyote Creek and our map's two major streets: Wardlow Rd. and Norwalk Blvd. We also spoke to locals in restaurants and on the street to see if they had seen or knew of anyone experiencing homelessness. Because we were in a highly residential area, we didn't encounter anyone experiencing homelessness. Nonetheless, our group was made up of very intelligent and passionate graduate students from CSULB, two who studied social work and another studying geography, and we had quite a nice time walking our part of the map and getting to know the other volunteers.

The committee will keep the League updated on the results of the street and shelter count once those numbers are released to public.

Star Apartment Homeless Housing Tour
(Downtown Los Angeles)
by Phyllis O'Connor

The Skid Row Housing Trust is a nonprofit organization with a mission of providing permanent supportive housing for people most in need of it in order to help break the cycle of homelessness. As of the end of 2015, the Trust operated 25 buildings, predominantly in downtown Los Angeles, housing more than 1800 formerly homeless men and women. They live in single occupancy, fully self-contained apartments, designed to be permanent homes with comprehensive, supportive services onsite. An important aspect of this Trust's model is the "Housing First" concept. Potential residents are not required to demonstrate "readiness" by being drug-free or meeting other preconditions; they simply must be in the greatest need for housing and supportive services. One of the Trust's buildings is the Star Apartments, with 102 homes. Vi lungerich of the County League arranged for a group of us to tour these apartments on January 15. The following is from the report prepared by LWV/LAC Board member Sandra Trutt:

"Star Apartments are for the chronically homeless who have been on the streets from one to ten years and are most at risk of dying. The development consists of prefab modular units that are lifted into place to create a 4-story building. The single apartments have their own bathrooms and kitchens, a bedroom with a full-sized bed, some furniture and a table with 2 chairs in the fully equipped kitchen. Each new resident is given a Welcome Kit that includes a set of sheets, dishes, towels, and cooking utensils, etc. to help them get started. All the apartments open to a walkway that is open to the sky, no boxed in feeling. Meeting spaces are provided for socializing, classes, and activities for residents. They have had good success in preventing death among their residents.

Support services are available in the lobby for medical and

mental health needs. A caseworker helps them find funds if they are eligible for VA benefits, SSI, Social Security, or General Relief (\$229/month). They also receive services to find a job.

The apartments are not free; everyone signs a lease and has to have some income, and they pay about 1/3 of their income for rent. Caseworkers can help residents obtain Social Security, SSDI, SSI, and any other public income support to which they may be eligible. 90% of residents voluntarily engage in support services; most residents stay for 6 months or longer, with the average stay being 4 years. Reasons for leaving are that they reconnect with family, need full-time nursing care, they want to move to another of their units, they go back to the streets, or they pass away."

Homelessness in Los Angeles County is a major issue; as of the last official count about 2 years ago, there were almost 47,000 homeless people, 31% of whom were chronically homeless, 30% with mental illness, and 7% were veterans. Permanent supportive housing saves about 50% of the cost to the County in the first year and almost 2/3 of the costs in subsequent years.

More funding is needed to continue the types of services exemplified by the Skid Row Housing Trust and many other organizations throughout the County. Measure H on the March 7 ballot, asks for a ¼ cent increase in the sales tax to support the homeless. The Los Angeles County League has voted to support this measure, and further information will be provided to members as soon as available.



At the end of our walking tour of The Villages at Cabrillo. From left: Jaylene Westfall, Phyllis O'Connor, Zhita Rea, Nicole Bennett, Megan Barry, and Rene Castro.

The Villages at Cabrillo *by Zhita Rea*

In our ongoing study of Homelessness in Long Beach, the committee took a guided tour of The Villages at Cabrillo. As we walked around this remarkable community with Rene Castro, Director of Community Engagement, and Jaylene Westfall, Resident Services Supervisor, it was apparent that those who lived here, whether individuals or families, were in an ideal setting to meet their needs. The streets and gardens were lovely, the buildings modern and well maintained, the atmosphere peaceful and hospitable.

Ms. Castro described the variety of social services available to residents, the governance which involves resident councils, the special programs for children, the classes and therapies for residents. She was also very honest in acknowledging the limitations, perhaps the most significant of which is the limited number of available apartments. Ironically, the fact that this is “permanent

housing,” the ideal that all would seek, also means that vacancies are few and far between. And, since many of the homeless are single men, the opportunities for families are also limited. We were pleased to see that a new multi-story building is under construction.

The Villages is a model that needs to be replicated a hundred-fold; where is the magic wand?

[Click here to see The Villages at Cabrillo's 2016 Social Impact Report.](#)

Get a Head Start of the LWVLBA Solicitation Drive Volunteers also needed!

by Phyllis O'Connor, Treasurer

Attention early birds! It's that time of year when we ask for donations to support our League work, and the annual solicitation letters will be going out in a few weeks. If you'd like to save us a little postage, you can just send your tax-deductible check to LWV Long Beach Area and mail it to:

LB Treasurer
180 Nieto Ave.
Long Beach, CA 90803

Volunteers will be needed for stuffing envelopes, folding, stamping, and other mailing chores. These go very fast with a group of 5 or so people, and the company is always congenial. If you're interested, email me at pocphyllis@gmail.com and let me know whether you're available weekdays or weekends during the day or weekday evenings.



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