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**PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE – May 2005**

The months of May and June are filled with annual conventions/councils at all levels of League. While this time poses its challenges in terms of calendaring (i.e. avoiding duplication of meetings – which inevitably happens), it is also an important time for Leagues to establish priorities for the future League year(s). It is also the once-a-year opportunity for representatives of local Leagues to have face-to-face contact with regional, state and national LWV leaders, and (probably as important) to meet and network with other Leagues.

At our Council meeting in May, LWVBA has sought feedback from our Bay Area League delegates about our publications, communications and general processes, and how they can better meet local Leagues' information needs related to the Bay Area. We will report the results to you in our next message.

Linda Craig, President  
League of Women Voters of the Bay Area  
[President@lwbba-ca.org](mailto:President@lwbba-ca.org)

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**CEQA Reform**

The issue of reforming the California Environmental Quality Act has become a priority with the California Resources Agency, which formed an advisory committee to propose “needed” reforms. ABAG's Regional Planning Committee held a meeting on April 6 to consider potential changes, with issues framed by the Advisory Committee consultants. The meeting, one of six to be held throughout the State, was organized and moderated by the California Center for Regional Leadership.

At the Bay Area meeting, only the Bay Area Council and the Building Industry Association presented strong arguments for substantial changes in the CEQA process, primarily to remove the procedural and legal roadblocks to getting need housing projects approved. Opponents, largely organized by the Planning and Conservation League through the Greenbelt Alliance in the Bay Area, spoke to the importance of CEQA providing a standing for community organizations to have full disclosure of information about proposed projects and a legal standing to be able to give input, have comments responded to, and to sue. Many talked about the need to provide local agencies with more money for proper planning “upstream” (i.e. prior to project proposal).

Since this involves the State government, and legislation, LWVBA has provided consultants of the LWV of California the details of our Bay Area positions and prior research on the CEQA process and the need for monitoring of mitigation of identified negative environmental impacts. As of this writing, we have not received the LWVC's position, but we can provide it to anyone who is interested – just let me know by e-mail.

Linda Craig, President  
LWV Bay Area  
[President@lwbba-ca.org](mailto:President@lwbba-ca.org)

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**LWVBA COUNCIL**

Saturday, May 14, 2005  
Unitarian Universalist Church, 505 Charleston Road, Palo Alto  
Registration: 9:30 am  
Meeting: 10-noon

In addition to adoption of the budget, reports on actions and other activities will be presented by portfolio directors. Will hold small group discussions to obtain feedback on LWVBA products and priorities and to solicit information from local Leagues as to how the LWVBA can serve their needs. Cost is \$15 per League. Two delegates are suggested but all may attend at this fee. **RSVP** to [treasurer@lwbba-ca.org](mailto:treasurer@lwbba-ca.org) by May 11.

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## **AIR DISTRICT REGULATES OIL REFINERY FLARES**

In March, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District (BAAQMD) staff conducted public workshops in Richmond and Martinez on draft regulation for oil refinery flares. Comments are being taken, and the proposed final rule will probably be considered by the BAAQMD Board in May. An earlier rule adopted by the Board in June 2003 requires the refineries to monitor and report flaring events to the BAAQMD. These reports provided the information that forms the basis of the draft rule being developed. Incidentally, the monitoring and reporting requirements focused refineries' attention on the proper operation of the flares, resulting in a reduction of air-polluting emissions due to flaring from 8 tons per day to 2.

The draft rule would prohibit routine flaring of gases released from the process units that manufacture the refineries' products. These gases are normally collected and processed to be used fuel in refinery operations. At times, such as start-ups and shut-downs and during process malfunctions, gases are generated in quantities greater than the recycling system can accommodate, and the excess is flared.

The draft rule would also require the refineries to prepare a Flare Management Plan (FMP) for each flare. Each FMP would diagram and describe in detail the process units and equipment associated with the flare and operating practices and procedures. Also included would be the steps the refinery has taken and could take in the future to minimize the number of flaring events. The purpose of the FMPs is to maintain the reduction of emissions that resulted from the monitoring and reporting requirement of the earlier rule and to promote further reductions.

Of the state's 12 (soon to be 13) petroleum refineries, five are in the Bay Area. Four are in Contra Costa County - Chevron in Richmond, Conoco Phillips in Rodeo, Tesoro in Avon, and Shell in Martinez. Valero is in Benicia in Solano County. All together, the five refineries have 23 flares.

Flares are intended to be safety devices for burning excess gases produced during the manufacture of the refinery's products. Gases not suitable for fuel are also flared. The alternative to flaring these gases is to release them into the atmosphere, causing greater air pollution than flaring. In the past, gases were often routinely flared rather than recycled.

Looming up on the landscape as they do, refinery flares represent a threat to the health of the people who live near them. In their neighborhoods, the incidence of lung disease and cancer is higher than average. Asthma is the most common chronic childhood disease, affecting ten percent nationwide of young people under the age of 18. The asthma rate among children in communities near refineries is twice the national average.

Besides the health hazard, refinery flares are a public nuisance. They are about 20 feet tall and about 4 feet in diameter. And they're noisy when in operation.

Not surprisingly, the March workshops attracted, not only residents of the affected communities and industry representatives, but people interested in air quality, health, and environmental justice issues.

For information on oil refinery flares, visit the BAAQMD website, <http://www.baaqmd.gov/enf/flares/>

Adelia Sabiston

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### **Calendar:**

**Friday, June 10, 2005, 11:30 – 1:30, Natural Resources/Water Committee.** EBMUB Bldg, 375 11<sup>th</sup> Street, Oakland., 8<sup>th</sup> Floor. Presentation by Save the Bay Association on the Moffett Field Site 25 clean-up. For more info contact Eileen Whitty: [ewhitty@ebmud.com](mailto:ewhitty@ebmud.com)

**Wednesday, May 11, 2005**, 12:15 – 2 p.m., **IN Committee North**. Berkeley-Albany-Emeryville League office, 1414 University Avenue Suite D: Phone 510-843-8824.

**Thursday, July 14, 2005**, 12:15 – 2pm, **IN Committee South**. Westminster House, Palo Alto.  
Please send agenda items to Iris R. Winogron: [programvp@lwvba-ca.org](mailto:programvp@lwvba-ca.org) or (510) 482-4439

**SAVE THESE DATES:**

**Saturday, September 24, 2005** — Know Your Bay Area Day: **Protecting/Reforming CEQA**

**Friday, January 20 or 27, 2006** — Bay Area League Day: **State of the Bay – Restoration and Access**

**Saturday, May 13, 2006** — LWVBA Convention

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**Web Sites:**

Bay Area Monitor: <http://www.bayareamonitor.org>

LWVC: <http://www.ca.lwv.org>

LWVBA: <http://www.lwvba-ca.org>

LWVUS: <http://www.lwv.org>

Smart Voter: <http://www.smartvoter.org>

Barbara Boxer: <http://boxer.senate.gov/>

Dianne Feinstein: <http://feinstein.senate.gov/>

**Emails:**

Barbara Boxer: [senator@boxer.senate.gov](mailto:senator@boxer.senate.gov)

Dianne Feinstein: [senator@feinstein.senate.gov](mailto:senator@feinstein.senate.gov)

George W. Bush: [president@whitehouse.gov](mailto:president@whitehouse.gov)

Arnold Schwarzenegger: [Governor@Governor.ca.gov](mailto:Governor@Governor.ca.gov)