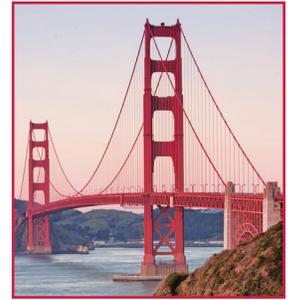




# BAY AREA MONITOR

October/November 2016

Volume 42, Number 2



## Ballot Box Traffic Jam

By Cecily O'Connor

The November ballot is significant for Bay Area transportation. Big measures from cities, counties, and agencies are seeking billions via sales taxes, bonds, and other revenue-generating measures to fill funding gaps. While the specifics vary, a common thread among 2016 transportation ballot measures is a priority to make investments that help the region be a sustainable, livable, and equitable place.

Transportation officials are hoping to appeal to voters and their pocketbooks in order to compensate for diminishing gas tax revenue and a lack of stable funding in general. In January, the California Transportation Commission cut \$754 million from its five-year project budget, a move that's put big upgrades on hold. Roads and highways throughout the region are congested and crumbling, while public transit requires maintenance and modernization.

As a result, "more and more, communities are trying to take charge of their infrastructure future and lay out a plan before voters," said Keith Dunn, executive director of the Self-Help Counties Coalition, which represents 20 California counties with transportation sales taxes.

A proposed measure from the Santa Clara Valley Transportation Authority, for example, would raise up to \$6.5 billion through a ½-cent, 30-year sales tax measure to help pay for extending BART to Silicon Valley, patching local roads, and improving bus service. Similarly, in Contra Costa County, transit officials are proposing a ½-cent, 30-year sales tax to pump \$2.9 billion into transit upgrades, congestion relief, and local road repair.

At least a dozen cities, meanwhile, are pitching their own measures. Many want to increase or extend existing

sales taxes with transportation among potential eligible expenditures, according to memos from the Metropolitan Transportation Commission (MTC).

San Francisco wants to repair its transportation network, make it more reliable, and alleviate crowding issues on public transit that stem, in part, from rapid growth in ridership. The city's proposed sales-tax package would increase the sales tax by 0.75 percent and syphon the revenue into a fund for transportation improvement and homeless housing.

Suisun City is proposing a new, 1 percent general sales tax for which some proceeds would go toward street repair and crack

*continued on page 2*

★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★



This edition of the *Bay Area Monitor* focuses on the 2016 election year through the lens of our standard regional coverage areas of transportation (this page), open space (page 3), water (page 6), and air quality (page 7). A variety of general voting resources are listed in this edition as well.

photo by Alec MacDonald

★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★

## Ballot Box Traffic Jam (from page 1)

fills. The commuter community is looking to make up for the fact that it has a lower total revenue per capita than the average California city, according to City Manager Suzanne Bragdon.

“That’s what we’re struggling with in terms of our revenue,” she said. “Our last four budgets have been status quo, and we’ve not been able to make headway after reducing staff and working on a shoestring.”

Suisun City is part of Solano County, which failed to pass a general ½-cent sales tax in June. Vallejo, Vacaville, and Fairfield are among Solano County cities with sales tax pitches this November.

“Every community has roads at risk and every community has a shortfall,” said Daryl Halls, executive director at the Solano Transportation Authority. “That’s why we need a state bill and local funding sources.”

Overall, the proliferation of local measures on the upcoming ballot underscores a trend to tap engaged voters during notable election years.

For example, in 2006 when former California Governor Arnold Schwarzenegger ran for re-election, voters weighed Proposition 1B. It was a \$20 billion transportation measure that was part of California’s largest general obligation bond package ever offered on a single ballot. In the Bay Area, the measure gained an average of 62.9 percent support among the nine counties, compared to 60.9 percent statewide.

“In past transit measures, the gut reaction is to vote ‘Yes’ with anything that might help with transportation, specifically with traffic,” said Terry Christensen, professor emeritus at San Jose State University (SJSU) and the host of “Valley Politics” on CreaTV.

However, there’s a limit on how much spending voters are willing to approve, especially when they face multiple funding requests. In certain jurisdictions, transportation

measures will compete among themselves and with other local needs like education.

Oakland residents, for example, are being asked to step up on three separate fronts. They will decide for or against an AC Transit measure to extend an existing \$96 parcel tax by 20 years. They also will consider a \$600 million city infrastructure bond, more than half of which would spiff up local streets and roads. And they will weigh in on Measure RR, which is aimed at rebuilding the 44-year-old BART system.

Measure RR is seeking approval for a \$3.5 billion general obligation bond that’s funded by a property tax increase among homeowners in San Francisco, Contra Costa, and Alameda counties. The measure would need to pass a two-thirds vote in the three counties, a big undertaking, even in a region with a history of endorsing transportation financing.

“What’s at stake is the well-being of our ability to get around in Oakland and the Bay Area,” said Liz Brisson, co-founder of Transport Oakland, an advocacy group. She claimed Measure RR is intended to make the system safer, more reliable, and offer relief from conditions that, in her experience as a BART rider, “are sardine-like, at best.”

BART bond opponents like David Kersten, president of the Kersten Institute for Governance and Public Policy, said the proposal doesn’t offer long-term financial stability and leaves the door open to future fare increases. The measure, as written, contains loopholes for funneling bond revenue into labor costs, he said, citing recent news articles.

“I think BART is a great system with a lot of potential,” Kersten said, “but I also believe we need a viable long-term plan to fund BART.” He added that “if we don’t correct the issue of financial management, BART will not be sustainable in the long term.”

MTC proposed a long-term expenditure plan of its own this spring. It suggested a regional 5-cent gas tax that could generate

### About the *Bay Area Monitor*

Launched in 1975, the *Bay Area Monitor* is published six times a year by the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund, and covers transportation, air quality, water, open space, and land use issues in the nine-county San Francisco Bay Area. The publication is distributed to League members, elected and appointed officials, government employees, libraries, media outlets, nonprofit organizations, business leaders, and engaged residents. Every edition is also posted online at [www.bayareamonitor.org](http://www.bayareamonitor.org).

Subscriptions to the *Monitor* are free, but reader donations are encouraged and help to sustain the publication. Donations are tax-deductible, as the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund is a nonprofit 501(c)3 organization.

The *Monitor* is also supported by the Alameda-Contra Costa Transit District, the Bay Area Air Quality Management District, Delta Diablo, the East Bay Regional Park District, the Marin Municipal Water District, the Metropolitan Transportation Commission, the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District, the Peninsula Corridor Joint Powers Board and the San Mateo County Transit District, the San Francisco Bay Area Rapid Transit District, the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority, the Santa Clara Valley Water District, and the Sonoma County Water Agency. The *Monitor* retains editorial autonomy from its supporters.

Contact us at (510) 839-1608 or [editor@bayareamonitor.org](mailto:editor@bayareamonitor.org)  
Alec MacDonald, Editor • Madeline Kronenberg, LWVBA President

\$140 million annually to pay for road repairs. But concern about a crowded ballot was among several reasons MTC chose not to move forward. Polling showed the idea was within “striking distance of getting passed,” said Rebecca Long, MTC’s government relations manager. Given other big local measures, the agency “just didn’t feel like the timing was right,” she said.

Petaluma officials also scrapped a sales tax measure aimed at road repair, citing low polling data in support of the plan, according to July city council meeting minutes. The measure is on hold until 2017 or 2018, and community engagement remains a focus to make the case for improvement during a future election.

Even with some measures off the table, so-called ballot fatigue is a concern. This occurs when voters grow tired of reading the different choices on the ballot, and either ignore decisions or make them arbitrarily.

“On a ballot such as this with 17 statewide propositions, as well as local measures, you get in that fatigue factor,” said Melinda Jackson, an SJSU political science professor. “It’s quite burdensome to do homework on all the issues.”

*Cecily O’Connor covers transportation for the Monitor.*

## A Diverse Electoral Landscape

By Aleta George

The cities of Gilroy and Cotati sit at opposite ends of the nine-county Bay Area. Although Gilroy is eight times bigger and has about seven times the population that Cotati does, the cities have a lot in common. Both were incorporated in the 1860s, and both have historic downtowns and rich agricultural heritages. Both cities are famous for their festivals, and both are surrounded by open space and farmland, features they highlight as an amenity to living there.

This November, the cities have something else in common. Each has its own Urban Growth Boundary (UGB) initiative on the ballot. In general, a UGB establishes geographic limits to a city’s expansion, encourages growth within city limits, and protects surrounding open space and farmland.

The use of UGBs in the Bay Area is a fairly new conservation tool. About 20 years ago there was a small explosion of cities that implemented them, and today more than 40 cities have them. Most UGBs have expiration dates built in, and that is why this November several cities have UGBs up for renewal, including Milpitas (Measure J) and Cotati (Measure Q). The

*continued on page 4*

★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★



★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★

The deadline to register to vote in California for the November 8 election is October 24. The California Secretary of State provides online registration at [www.registertovote.ca.gov](http://www.registertovote.ca.gov). Inquire with your county’s elections administration if you have specific questions.

**Marin County Elections Department**  
(415) 473-6456  
[www.marincounty.org/depts/rv](http://www.marincounty.org/depts/rv)

**Sonoma County Registrar of Voters**  
(707) 565-6800  
[www.vote.sonoma-county.org](http://www.vote.sonoma-county.org)

**Napa County Elections Division**  
(707) 253-4321  
[www.countyofnapa.org/elections](http://www.countyofnapa.org/elections)

**Solano County Registrar of Voters**  
(707) 784-6675  
[www.solanocounty.com/depts/rov](http://www.solanocounty.com/depts/rov)

**Contra Costa County Elections Division**  
(925) 335-7800  
[www.cocovote.us](http://www.cocovote.us)

**Alameda County Registrar of Voters**  
(510) 267-8683  
[www.acgov.org/rov](http://www.acgov.org/rov)

**Santa Clara County Registrar of Voters**  
(408) 299-8683  
[www.sccgov.org/sites/rov](http://www.sccgov.org/sites/rov)

**San Mateo County Registration & Elections Division**  
(650) 312-5222  
[www.shapethefuture.org](http://www.shapethefuture.org)

**City & County of San Francisco Department of Elections**  
(415) 554-4375  
[www.sfgov.org/elections](http://www.sfgov.org/elections)

photo by Ruby MacDonald

★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★

## A Diverse Electoral Landscape (from page 3)

proposed UGB in Gilroy is a first.

When it comes to the ballot box, UGBs are just one way that cities, counties, and park districts can protect open space. Conservation interests also put forth measures to raise funding through sales taxes, parcel taxes, or bonds. But while governments and nonprofits across the region frequently propose these different types of initiatives, rallying support for them is not always a walk in the park.

### Shared Values

Some communities prioritize open space and parks, with support coming from elected officials, the business community, and the electorate. In other communities it's more complicated.

Sonoma County, for example, has a long history of open space protection. It's the only county in the Bay Area where every city has a UGB. The City of Sebastopol renewed its UGB this year without even taking the issue to the polls. With solid support from the city council, the UGB in Cotati is expected to pass. And on the county level, ballots will feature Measure K, which would renew protections for so-called "community

separators" another 20 years; in 1996, voters overwhelmingly approved the preservation of these greenbelt buffer lands between cities and towns.

"The public here has a long history of recognizing our special landscapes and using the political process and the power of mobilizing people to protect them," said conservation activist and consultant Dennis Rosatti.

Similarly, constituents in Alameda and Contra counties show strong support for the East Bay Regional Park District (EBRPD). In 2008, 72 percent of voters approved a \$500 million general obligation bond for the agency.

"[The district] has been part of the region's DNA since 1934. It's part of the culture here," said Erich Pfuehler, the government affairs manager for EBRPD. "We are also constantly in the community listening to what people want in their park experience."

Not all communities have that unity.

"Although there is an inclination in every county for land conservation, there is more diversity in the Bay Area than outsiders might recognize," said Deb Callahan, executive

★ ELECTION 2016 ★

ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★

ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★

Contact your local League of Women Voters for voter services and other support this and every election season.

**Alameda**  
www.alameda.ca.lwvnet.org  
(510) 865-2439

**Berkeley-Albany-Emeryville**  
www.lwvbae.org  
(510) 843-8824

**Benicia**  
www.lwvbenicia.org

**Cupertino-Sunnyvale**  
www.cs.ca.lwvnet.org

**Diablo Valley**  
www.lwvdv.org  
(925) 283-2235

**Eden Area**  
www.lwvea.org  
(510) 538-9678

**Fremont-Newark-Union City**  
www.lwvfncuc.org  
(510) 794-5783

**Los Altos-Mountain View Area**  
www.lwvlamv.org  
(650) 429-8382

**Marin County**  
www.marinlwv.org  
(415) 507-0824

**Napa County**  
www.napa.ca.lwvnet.org  
(707) 257-7450

**North & Central San Mateo County**  
www.ncsmc.ca.lwvnet.org  
(650) 342-5853

**Oakland**  
www.lwvoakland.org  
(510) 834-7640

**Palo Alto**  
www.lwypaloalto.org  
(650) 903-0600

**Piedmont**  
www.lwvpiedmont.org  
(510) 655-0854

**San Francisco**  
www.lwvsf.org  
(415) 989-8683

**San Jose/Santa Clara**  
www.lwvnet.org/ca/sjsc  
(408) 271-7163

**Sonoma County**  
www.sonco.ca.lwvnet.org  
(707) 546-5943

**South San Mateo County**  
www.lwvssmc.org  
(650) 325-5780

**Southwest Santa Clara Valley**  
www.lwv-sw-santaclara-valley.org

**West Contra Costa**  
www.lwvnet.org/lwv/ca/wccc  
(510) 298-1255

If you need further help, call LWV Bay Area at (510) 839-1608.

★ ELECTION 2016 ★

director of the nonprofit Bay Area Open Space Council. “Urban areas have a more liberal voting base, and initiatives can almost pass on philosophical arguments alone. Other areas are less inclined towards regulation and taxation.”

Gilroy is one example of a community grappling with how best to grow. The local chamber of commerce opposes Measure H, the UGB initiative that residents launched after the city council tried to advance a large housing development project while the city was in the process of a general plan update. A group of diverse residents called Gilroy Growing Smarter obtained 3,500 signatures to qualify the measure for the November ballot.

“There are 15 cities in Santa Clara County and it’s hard to tell where one ends and the other begins,” said Gilroy Growing Smarter Co-chair Connie Rogers. “The only marking is a sign on the road, but the streets and the intensity of the development are the same. We don’t want that.”

### Housing and Open Space

There is an affordable housing crisis in the Bay Area, and it will only get worse as the population increases. By 2040, our population is expected to grow from 7 million to 9.3 million people, and even before that growth occurs there is a need for affordable housing. Some believe that the answer to our housing needs lies in new developments. Others disagree.

“It is a misconception that all growth is good,” said Megan Medeiros, the executive director of the Committee for Green Foothills, a nonprofit based in Palo Alto. “Morgan Hill is a good example. They have been spreading for some time, and now they pay more per capita for services than many other cities in the county. Our region needs homes, but sprawling on prime farmland when there’s a lot of potential downtown is not the way to do it.”

### Putting Dollars Where Your Boots Are

In addition to controlling the parameters of development by supporting or rejecting community separators this November, Sonoma County voters will decide on a half-cent sales tax for park improvements (Measure J). Voters in neighboring Napa County will face a comparable decision about whether or not to renew a quarter-cent sales tax for their park district (Measure Z).

It’s not just the North Bay that has asked voters to pony up. In recent years, Santa Clara County voters approved a parcel tax for the Santa Clara Valley Open Space Authority (Measure Q), and voters in three counties said yes to Measure AA, a \$300 million general obligation bond to help fund the Midpeninsula Regional Open Space District.

There are reasons why voters are seeing more funding measures on the ballot recently. “The 2008 downturn hurt the parks and open space community very, very badly, and each jurisdiction is still digging

out and making themselves whole,” said Callahan.

EBRPD’s Pfuehler said that park districts have to go directly to voters for funding because two sources of once-available money dried up. One is the Land and Water Conservation Fund, a federal pool of money collected from oil and gas companies that pay fees for public land use. Those fees are supposed to be distributed among states for natural resources, parks, and open space, but “Congress is controlling the money, and that stream is not flowing,” said Pfuehler.

Local and regional parks have also benefited from state bond measures, but there hasn’t been one of those since 2006. This year’s Assembly Bill 2444 (E. Garcia) would have placed a park bond measure on the November ballot, but it died in the Senate.

“AB 2444 was the little bill that could — almost,” said Callahan. “But there isn’t a sense of defeat. Members who led it intend to reintroduce it next year.”

### Is There a Better Way?

When faced with an array of initiatives and measures, voters may wonder if there is a more efficient and less costly way to protect open space and support parks in the region. The notion of a more regional approach to protecting open space is why park managers and planners are happy with the passage this past June of Measure AA, a parcel tax for wetlands restoration (*see article next page*). It was the first-ever region-wide measure of its kind.

“Measure AA was a positive step,” said Pfuehler. “It’s viewed as a good precedent for what could happen for open space and park agencies in the future.” 

*Aleta George covers open space for the Monitor.*

### Thank You for Your Support

The *Monitor* would like to acknowledge recent donations from Eloise Bodine and Alex Starr in the memory of Polly Amrein, and from Miriam Keller, the McGuirk Family Fund, and Sally Germain. Such generous financial contributions are greatly appreciated, and help this publication continue to fulfill its mission. Donations to the League of Women Voters of the Bay Area Education Fund, a 501(c)3 organization, are tax deductible.

## Passage of Restoration Measure Offers Useful Regional Lessons

By Robin Meadows

The Bay Area made history in June 2016 by passing Measure AA, a wetland restoration parcel tax and the first ballot measure to include all nine counties. Besides providing wildlife habitat and flood protection, the measure may hold lessons for future regional governance. Most of all, however, the measure's success underscores how important the Bay is to us.

"We learned how much the region's residents love the Bay," said Save the Bay Political Director Paul Kumar, who helped run the Measure AA campaign. "We strongly identify it as a unique feature that unites us and gives the region identity."

The groundwork for Measure AA was laid in 2008, when the state legislature created the San Francisco Bay Restoration Authority. Staffed by the State Coastal Conservancy and the San Francisco Estuary Partnership since its inception, the Restoration Authority's initial job was to persuade local voters to fund tidal marsh restoration along the shores of the Bay. "There were 36,000 acres under public trust for restoration, but no reliable source of funds," Kumar explained.

But then the economy tanked nationwide, dashing the chances of winning the two-thirds super majority vote required to pass a tax measure. "It was not feasible to put forth a measure during the Great Recession," Kumar said. "People cared about the Bay, but it wouldn't rise to the top of what they would fund."

So, while waiting for the economy to rebound, the Restoration Authority optimized the Bay restoration measure and honed its campaign message. "A two-thirds vote is an incredibly high bar to clear — you need very broad consensus," Kumar said. Opinion polls showed that people preferred a small annual parcel tax to a large general obligation bond. Polling also revealed the reasons for restoring the Bay that resonated with voters: people cared most about clean water, wildlife habitat, and access to the beauty of the Bay.

Interestingly, protection against floods — which are expected to worsen with the rising seas and stronger storm surges of climate change — was not a compelling message. "The chain of reasoning had too many steps," Kumar said. Likewise, while the accountability built into the measure was key to garnering support from elected officials and public watchdogs, factors such as a citizens' oversight committee and region-wide representation were not major inducements to voters.

The Restoration Authority placed Measure AA on the June ballot because it was less crowded than the November ballot. "It didn't have as much competition for attention because the election cycle wasn't as noisy," Kumar said. In

addition, the June ballot featured the presidential primaries, and the Republican primary was relatively uncontested while the Democratic primary was hotly contested. This helped the measure by boosting the turnout of Democratic voters, who are often more likely to support tax measures than their Republican counterparts.

Measure AA passed with more than 70 percent of the vote throughout the Bay Area. While the measure didn't achieve a super majority in every county, it did win a majority of votes in each of the nine counties, with support ranging from a high of 78 percent in San Francisco County to a low of 54 percent in Solano County. "It's an almost indescribable thrill to have two-thirds of the Bay Area say, 'Let's tax ourselves for the Bay,'" said Coastal Conservancy Executive Officer Sam Schuchat. "When has the region ever had one voice on any issue?"

Could Measure AA's success pave the way for Bay Area-wide solutions to other regional issues like transportation and affordable housing? Kumar thinks so. "There are lessons for future collaborative work across the region on other pressing problems," he said. "Some of the best and brightest news out of this is that, for example, business and conservation groups found common ground via substantial fact-based discussion."

The measure's \$12 annual parcel tax will raise \$25 million a year for 20 years. County tax assessors will start collecting funds in fall 2017, and the Restoration Authority expects to allocate the first round of funds to projects in early 2018. There is plenty to do in the interim. Tasks include revamping the advisory committee to ensure geographic and demographic representation, and establishing the citizens oversight committee. "They're both for accountability — one for before decisions are made, and the other for after to see how they worked out," Schuchat said. "Did they fund the right projects? Did they spend the money as promised and as efficiently as possible?"

The \$500 million from Measure AA won't fund all the Bay's restoration needs. Experts say it'll take 100,000 acres of tidal marsh for a healthy estuary, and getting us the rest of the way there will cost an estimated \$1.5 to \$2 billion. A Restoration Authority map of likely projects shows nearly 50 wetland areas that need help: they dot the shoreline all around the Bay, from the once vast marshes in the South and North bays to the Suisun Bay and neighboring parts of the Delta.

"We're excited to embark on this," said San Francisco Estuary Partnership Director Caitlyn Sweeney. "It's a great boon to the region." 

*Robin Meadows covers water for the Monitor.*

# More Than Just Hot Air: Are Campaigns Considering Emissions?

By Leslie Stewart

During political campaign season, one issue can seem as invisible as the air we breathe — and that is the air we breathe. For anyone fortunate enough to escape respiratory ailments, air quality doesn't feel as pressing as crime rates or potholes.

This year, however, priorities may be shifting. Air quality and related environmental issues have attracted the attention of deep-pocketed contributors and local constituents alike, as state legislative battles promise to carry over into the next two years.

“This is the first time I can recall where the environment was front and center,” enthused Mike Young, who's responsible for campaigns and organizing for the California League of Conservation Voters. The environmental nonprofit endorses candidates for the state legislature after assessing them with a questionnaire and interview; this year, candidates were asked about expanding California's role as a leader in climate change, and about priorities for spending revenue from the state's cap-and-trade program to reduce greenhouse gases. Young said issues like these were “top three” in at least six races around the state during the June primary elections.

Environmentalists aren't the only ones paying close attention to climate change legislation and the candidates who may shape it. “Oil interests have always been represented, but this year oil is spending unprecedented amounts of money,” according to Young. Industry groups such as the Western States Petroleum Association lobbied hard against Senate Bill 32 (Pavley) and Assembly Bill 197 (E. Garcia), although both emissions mitigation laws still passed in August. Last year, however, the industry had some success against Senate Bill 350 (De León), working to eliminate one of the law's three climate protection goals (reducing petroleum use by 50 percent by 2030).

The 2016 bills will give new and returning lawmakers more to do. SB 32, which requires California to cut emissions to 40 percent of 1990 levels by 2030, was tied to passage of AB 197, which grants the legislature greater authority to shape the plans of the California Air Resources Board (CARB) to achieve emissions goals. In addition to establishing a legislative oversight committee, AB 197 also directs CARB to prioritize emissions reductions by focusing on large emitters

like power plants and refineries; industry groups dislike this shift and may attempt to amend the process.

It's not just state legislators who will be wrestling with these issues. More refinery emission regulations will also be considered during the next year by local elected officials sitting on the board of the Bay Area Air Quality Management District. The agency is concerned with the local allocation of cap-and-trade revenues as well. Tom Addison, a legislative analyst with the Air District, explained that although 25

percent of this money is earmarked for disadvantaged communities, “the Bay Area legislative delegation feels strongly that the tool used by the state misses many of our most disadvantaged communities.” He added, “This is a major issue for the region, as we try to ensure that our communities next to major stationary sources see the promised benefits of cap-and-trade funds.” He anticipates more bills

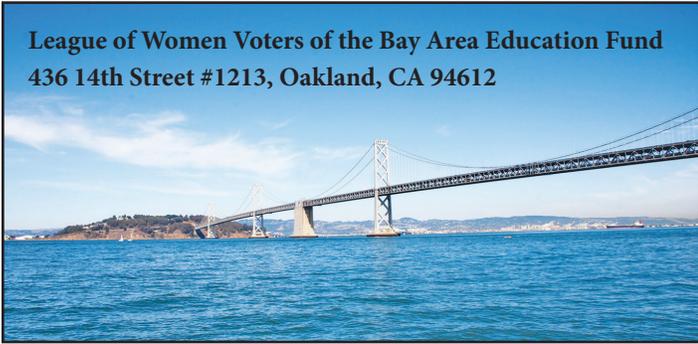
focusing on ‘disadvantaged communities.’

This year, Air District legislative priorities included sponsoring two bills, one on commuter benefits and the other on unregistered vehicles. New legislative priorities, including positions on cap-and-trade revenue bills, will be the responsibility of next year's board, which may include new members selected from winners in the November local elections. But leading up to those elections, to what extent will candidates — and their constituents — consider air quality on the campaign trail?

One problem is a lack of clarity about which local officials will serve on a regional board. Jenesse Miller, communications director for the California League of Conservation Voters, acknowledged that sometimes it's hard to connect an issue to the correct decision maker, especially since officials aren't directly elected to the boards of most regional agencies, but get appointed instead. “It depends on how savvy people are,” she noted, adding, “We really need civic education along with environmental education.”

Of course, even if a local official doesn't end up on the Air District board — or on another regional board with responsibilities affecting air quality, such as the Metropolitan





NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION  
U.S. POSTAGE PAID  
OAKLAND, CA  
PERMIT NO. 2508

**LWV**<sup>®</sup> Visit Us Online  
[www.bayareamonitor.org](http://www.bayareamonitor.org)  
[facebook.com/bayareamonitor](https://facebook.com/bayareamonitor)



## More Than Just Hot Air (from page 7)

Transportation Commission — they may still make local and regional decisions related to air quality. For example, when considering where to build infill housing, city councilmembers must take into account the proximity of busy freeways. Other local actions that affect the regional and global environment include everything from tree planting and green building ordinances to carbon sequestration on rangelands.

Many of these types of actions move forward via ordinances, policies, and budget decisions. It's safe to say, however, that many candidates — and many voters — are unaware of these possibilities. The same holds true in elections for transit district boards, despite a clear link between transit and improved air quality. Ports can have significant air quality impacts, particularly on neighboring communities, but the candidates who would be responsible for appointing port commissioners may never hear about that topic during a campaign.

Endorsement interviews and questionnaires may introduce candidates to air quality issues. Miller suggested voters can use organizations' candidate rankings, as well as local meetings and forums, to inform themselves. However, many state and national environmental organizations don't include local races in their endorsement process, unless they have local chapters which make endorsements, such as the Sierra Club.

In other encounters with voters, candidates may be asked about issues such as transit funding or bicycle lanes, but unless the air quality link is spelled out, the connection may be ignored. It's often up to voters to be aware of the ways in which an official's decision might affect air quality, and to bring up the topic with candidates. However, experience by local League

of Women Voters groups around the region indicates that air quality questions at candidate forums are rare, although climate change questions are increasingly frequent. Members of LWV Diablo Valley, who coordinate televised candidate forums covering most Contra Costa County races, could not recall a single recent question on these issues.

Even if a question is asked, Young cautioned that candidates may deliberately dodge those for which they don't feel they have the background. They might give information that is non-specific and hope the question doesn't come up again, or they may say what they think the voter wants to hear. He recommended that voters check on candidates' records if possible — “don't just take the candidate's word for it!” 

*Leslie Stewart covers air quality and energy for the Monitor.*

★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★

ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★

**Voter's Edge California** ([www.votersedge.org/ca](http://www.votersedge.org/ca)) is a nonpartisan, online guide to federal, state, and local elections in California. It allows voters to view:

- their personalized ballot;
- detailed descriptions about candidates and ballot measures; and
- information on their polling locations.

Voter's Edge California is a joint project of the League of Women Voters of California Education Fund and MapLight.



★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★ ELECTION 2016 ★