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Thank you for supporting our Green-on-Green Smith-Weiss Environmental Champion Awards event



Los Angeles League of Conservation Voters  
150 E. Olive Av., #308  
Burbank, CA 91502

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# Conservation Voter

June 2002

## Smith-Weiss Environmental Champion Awards Reception

While the weather might have been grey and blustery, it was Green-on-Green March 17 for the Los Angeles League of Conservation Voters. We celebrated our third LALCV Smith-Weiss Environmental Champion Awards event at the home of Resources Secretary Mary Nichols. At the event we honored Senator Martha Escutia, Assemblymember Fran Pavley and the community group Pacoima Beautiful as environmental champions for 2002 (see right). Also among our noted guests were First Lady of California Sharon Davis, former Assembly Speaker Antonio Villaraigosa (a 2000 LALCV Smith-Weiss champion and this year's event emcee), and city councilmembers and candidates from Los Angeles, Manhattan Beach, Culver City, South Gate, Santa Monica and Long Beach.

More than 200 people attended the afternoon event including several LALCV-endorsed candidates such as Gary Silbiger (who has since been elected to the City Council of Culver City), Tonia Uranga (newly-elected to the Long Beach City Council), and Wendy Greuel (who only two days before had been officially declared the winner in her very close Los Angeles City Council race). The City of Los Angeles put in a strong show of support with five LALCV-endorsed councilmembers in attendance including LA City Councilmembers Eric Garcetti, Jan Perry, Ed Reyes and Tom LaBonge. Also attending were LA City Councilmember Jack Weiss, State Senator Debra Bowen (a past Smith-Weiss award recipient), South Gate City Councilmember Hector de la Torre and four Youth Environmentalists, several board members and Executive Director Marlene Grossman from Pacoima Beautiful.



Marlene Grossman, Executive Director of Pacoima Beautiful, with a group of Youth Environmentalists



Hector de la Torre, South Gate Councilmember with Senator Martha Escutia, honoree



Andi Liebenbaum, LALCV president with special guest, Sharon Davis, California's First Lady



L-r LA Councilmember Eric Garcetti, Assemblymember Fran Pavley (honoree) and Antonio Villaraigosa

**The Honorees**

**The Honorable Martha Escutia, California Senate**

As a member of the State Assembly and currently as a State Senator, Martha Escutia has championed a variety of environmental causes, most significantly those dealing with environmental justice. She established the first-ever Children's Environmental Health Protection Act to ensure that health-based pollution standards consider impacts on children as well as healthy adults. She has also authored bills establishing the California Land Environmental Restoration and Reuse Act, waste tire recycling, brownfields clean-up, hazardous liquid pipelines remediation, and water replenishment. Her work has garnered her recognition from the California League of Conservation Voters, the Sierra Club and the American Lung Association.

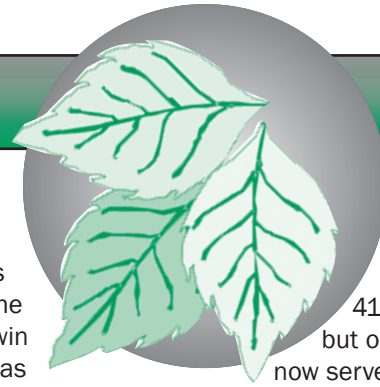
**The Honorable Fran Pavley, California Assembly**

As four-time Mayor of Agoura Hills, former member of the California Coastal Commission and now a member of the State Assembly, Fran Pavley has made the environment a top priority. While serving on the Coastal Commission where she made protection of the San Simeon coast, public access to the beach and cleaning Santa Monica Bay top priorities, she was recognized by the Sierra Club, Natural Resources Defense Council and the League for Coastal Protection as the commissioner with the best conservation voting record. In the Assembly she has introduced environmental bills that span such issues as the protection of endangered species, indexing of conservation easements, reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions from cars, Malibu Canyon Scenic Highway, the Water Quality and Watershed Protection Act, and the Used Oil Recycling Fund.

**Pacoima Beautiful**

Pacoima Beautiful is a grassroots, community based environmental organization that was established in 1996 by five Pacoima residents in an effort to improve their often-neglected community. With few financial resources but a legion of volunteers, this dynamic community group has successfully completed a number of community improvement projects. Among them: creating a program to help residents identify hazardous materials and get them removed; helping to create a partnership that established one of the first environmentally sustainable schools in California; and, engaging teens in identifying assets and deficits in their community to share with the community in order to effect change. Pacoima Beautiful reaches 35,000 residents annually through its various programs.

*We would like to thank all of you who contributed to our Green-on-Green event. (See your names in print on page 4 of this newsletter.) Because of you, we raised over \$20,000. We appreciate your support and recognize the confidence you have in us to identify and endorse environmental leaders for local elections throughout Los Angeles County.*



### LALCV Makes the Difference in Culver City



There were two city council seats up for grabs in Culver City this spring with five candidates vying for them. One, a former councilman with high name recognition, was the clear favorite to win one of the seats (and he did). Other candidates, including an incumbent, had run before and had some name recognition - always a plus in a local election.

*How could a relative unknown possibly succeed in taking the second seat?* By raising issues important to the voters, but not to the other candidates, namely the environment. Gary Silbiger called the Los Angeles League of Conservation Voters to inquire about our endorsement process. (The League's endorsement process is threefold: first a candidate must answer a lengthy questionnaire; then the candidate interviews with a League committee that makes a recommendation to the Board. Finally, the LALCV Board votes to endorse (or not) the recommended candidate.)

Endorsing Gary was a cinch since he was very aware of the environmentally sensitive issues and important geographic con-

siderations in Culver City. Specifically, Culver City is situated on the edge of the Ballona Creek bed, in the middle of the 405 freeway expansion, next to Baldwin Hills Regional Park, and close to LAX. Gary had ideas and solutions for the traffic, open space and environmental education needs in Culver City. Some solutions may require a regional approach, but Culver City's City Council is a good place to begin focusing attention on them.

The League not only endorsed Gary, but we also ran an independent expenditure campaign, placing an ad in the local newspaper. The ad outlined Gary's environmental credentials, highlighted the our endorsement and gave voters a clear message that they had a real opportunity to see environmental issues raised at the Council level. The ad and the endorsement were powerful enough for Gary to win the second seat by just 58 votes over the third-place candidate. Gary gives the League a lot of credit for his victory.

We'll keep our eyes on you, Gary, and we wish you every success to make a real difference over the next four years!

Politics often boils down to a numbers game: It takes 41 votes in the Assembly to pass a pro-environmental bill, but only 32 reliable pro-environmental Assembly members now serve. These numbers too often work against us. Los Angeles County, with 20 seats in the Assembly, has a real opportunity to change this ratio, and increasingly, local races showcase the up-and-coming environmental leaders who will eventually move on to state office.

We, the Los Angeles League of Conservation Voters (LALCV), work to elect pro-environmental candidates at the local level. Our colleagues at the California League of Conservation Voters (CLCV) play that role on a statewide basis, supporting pro-environment candidates for state and national office, and then assessing their performance in an environmental scorecard. And now, with the impacts of term limits becoming more profound, good environmental candidates for state office are, with increasing frequency, coming from local political office, making LALCV's endorsement more vital and valuable than ever.

#### LA's local officials shine!

Recent elections for statewide office show the importance of endorsing local elected officials for their environmental savvy and dedication. Among the March primary-winning environmental candidates from Los Angeles for state office were three local city council members. They are Norwalk City Council Member Rudy

Bermudez, San Fernando Mayor Cindy Montañez, and Los Angeles City Councilmember Mark Ridley-Thomas. All of them are expected to win their seats comfortably in the November general election.

We are certain that environmental support made a difference in their primary races. Fewer than 19,000 votes were cast in each race. Moreover, each of these candidates continues to take leadership positions on environmental issues so that their local track record lays a solid foundation for the environmental work by which they will be supported and measured in Sacramento.

By understanding environmental issues in their own neighborhoods and by leading efforts on behalf of a variety of environmental causes in their cities, these great local officials are now poised to become statewide environmental leaders.

#### Stop the press!

Just as the *Conservation Voter* was going to press, LALCV learned that our endorsed candidate Tonia Reyes-Uranga beat incumbent Mike Donelon for the 7th Long Beach City Council District seat by 58 votes! LALCV endorsed Reyes-Uranga starting with the Long Beach primary election this spring, in which she won a runoff bid against Donelon. The June 5th runoff was slated to be close, and efforts like those of LALCV members Don May and Mel Nutter helped our candidate win the vital votes necessary to win the race. Congratulations, Tonia. And congratulations Long Beach!



### An Interview with Los Angeles City Councilmember Wendy Greuel

When asked if the work of a Los Angeles City Councilmember is harder than she had anticipated, freshman Wendy Greuel says no. In fact, she claims that running her campaign prepared her for the on-the-go pace that she has maintained her first two months in office. She claims that she's doing exactly what she wants to be doing - serving Los Angeles - and she carefully manages her time so that on Mondays and Thursdays she is in her Van Nuys field office meeting with constituents and otherwise taking care of the "home front," while spending the rest of the week at City Hall in council and committee meetings trying to help craft a sound future for Los Angeles.

**On Valley secession:** She believes that people aren't convinced secession is the answer, but they're sure that the status quo is not good enough. She says that the city council members have an obligation to come up with a plan that will make genuine and acceptable changes in the way city government is run so that people don't feel that the only good option is to leave. Wendy has proposed a borough system, not dissimilar from the New York City system, as an alternative to secession. She says that creating boroughs and allocating to them certain powers and responsibilities would give residents more local control and less of the feeling that they were being governed from afar. She has proposed that a borough implementation committee be created per a ballot measure she introduced for the November election (the same election in which Valley secession will be decided). She is careful to point out that such a committee would be created by the measure, not just contemplated, so that the process would begin immediately and the borough system could be in place as soon as possible.

**On redistricting:** Redistricting is, she says, something that happens every 10 years and no one is ever completely satisfied with proposed redistricting plans. But Wendy is both a pragmatist and an optimist. She is pragmatic in that she knows that she must represent a new group of constituents come July 1st (her district will change by about 50%) and she looks forward to giving them the best service possible from a council member. And she is optimistic about her chances to win their favor and keep her seat next spring. She knows, as with all campaigns, there will be tough moments, but she believes that her work ethic and commitment make her well-suited to serve Los Angelenos wherever her district lines lie.

**On the environment:** Everyone, she says, wants clean air, clean water, parks, safe areas for their children to play and good schools. Wendy spends at least two days a week hearing directly from people in the 2nd District about their needs and the health and safety problems they face, many of which are environmental problems. She encourages tree-plantings and she has helped establish a nine-acre park after years of community effort. She is constantly looking for opportunities for her constituents to help improve their quality of life and their communities. At the council level, she hopes her committee work and her open and frank dialog with fellow members will earn her a reputation of knowing and caring about environmental issues that will place her among the environmental leaders on the council.



### LA's "Graduates" Shine in Sacramento

This year's State Assembly Freshman Class boasts five outstanding graduates from city councils in Los Angeles County. Among those earning an impressive 100 percent environmental voting record according to the California League of Conservation Voters are Judy Chu (Monterey Park), Jackie Goldberg (Los Angeles), Paul Koretz (West Hollywood), Carol Liu (La Canada) and Fran Pavley (Agoura Hills).

These policy makers don't just vote green. They're leading a number of important environmental initiatives. Assemblymember Pavley has gained national attention with her sponsorship of legislation that would regulate greenhouse gas emissions from vehicles, and she has engineered efforts to protect funding for critical environmental programs. Assemblymember Chu has moved quickly into the ranks of environmental leaders with her bill imposing a fee on petroleum to generate funds to clean up envi-

ronmental damage caused by the use of petroleum products. Assemblymember Liu has introduced legislation to reform regulations governing the protection of groundwater, and Assemblymember Goldberg is the author of pending legislation that would facilitate greater use of reclaimed water. Assemblymember Koretz and several of these legislators were key coauthors of the bill that put Prop. 40 - the successful park bond measure - on the ballot last fall, as well as legislation that provided more than \$800 million in funding for energy conservation programs.

As a result of term limits, those with experience serving as mayors and city council members often are in the best position to move up to the state legislature. LALCV's work to ensure that good environmentalists are elected to local office has never been more important.

(If you'd like to receive future versions of the Conservation Voter electronically, please send a note saying so to lalc2001@aol.com)

### Board of Directors of the Los Angeles League of Conservation Voters

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