



Conservation Voter

July 2004

Annual Awards Highlight Environmental Heroes Throughout LA County

The clear link between good environmental policy and good policy in general was evident as environmental heroes from across the Southland were honored at LALCV's Dos de Mayo celebration. A Member of Congress, an LA City Councilmember, El Segundo's Mayor and a community organization working to protect Wilmington's citizens were honored at the League's annual Smith-Weiss Environmental Champion Awards.

Presenting to El Segundo Mayor Mike Gordon - likely headed to the State Assembly in November - was former LA City Council Member Ruth Galanter and former Santa Monica Mayor Denny Zane. The award to Congresswoman Hilda Solis of Irwindale was presented by California Assemblymember Judy Chu of Monterey Park. LA City Councilmember Janice Hahn presented the LALCV award to the Wilmington Coalition for a Safe Environment.

Celebrating...



LA City Councilmember Janice Hahn with Jesse Marquez, from the Wilmington Coalition



Mary Nichols with LA City Councilmember Ed Reyes



Ruth Galanter, El Segundo Mayor Mike Gordon and Denny Zane



Assemblymember Judy Chu with US Congressmember Hilda Solis

"Our honorees also represented another strong connection - that the best environmentalism is, by its nature, about justice," said LALCV President Andi Liebenbaum. "Our honorees were not selected because they are environmental justice advocates, but because their work promotes the importance - and the justice - of living in a clean, healthy environment."

Past honoree and LA City Councilmember Jack Weiss served as master of ceremonies. The event host and former California Resources Secretary Mary Nichols presented the award to LA City Councilmember Ed Reyes.

...the Environment

For complete descriptions of the environmental actions that were honored, see LALCV's Spring 2004 newsletter at www.lalcv.org.

Once again, the event attracted dozens of state and local elected officials from throughout Los Angeles County, many of whom LALCV helped elect to office. Please take a look at the list of sponsors on the back page of this issue and thank them for supporting good environmental policy in Los Angeles County.



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Rae Gabelich Trounces Incumbent in Long Beach

by Don May



LALCV-endorsed environmental activist Rae Gabelich defeated incumbent Robb Webb 61% to 39% in a heated runoff election for the 8th Long Beach Council District. Webb had been endorsed by Long Beach's current Mayor. Just two months ago, voters turned out another incumbent for LALCV-supported candidate Patrick O'Donnell. They now join four other

Councilmembers endorsed by the League in prior elections to form a new veto-proof environmental majority on the nine-member City Council of the second largest city in LA County. The pro-environment Councilmembers have promised an early review of appointments to regional resource agencies, like the Alameda Corridor, the Rivers and Mountains Conservancy, AQMD and the MTA.

With arguably the worst air quality in the Nation, the 8th District lies directly downwind from the Port of Long Beach, is overflowed by departing flights from Long Beach Airport, and separated from adjacent Wilmington by the diesel truck-dominated 710 Freeway, and the most contaminated portion of the Los Angeles River just opposite Compton Creek.

Environmental issues offered the voters a clear choice. Where the Mayor and defeated incumbents favored attracting tourists, by building a shopping mall and affluent housing on the former long beach, and luring trade by expanding the Port with more container terminals and an LNG refinery, the new majority has pledged to purge the Port of dirty diesel sources, to clean up the River using constructed wetlands to scrub urban runoff and implement open space requirements to make park-impooverished neighborhoods livable for current residents.

LALCV Candidate Takes First Place in Whittier

by Denise Ng



Seven candidates sparred for three seats on the Whittier City Council in April 2004, and the League's endorsed candidate, Owen Newcomer, came in first with 26 percent of the vote. Following the election, Newcomer, a 29-year professor of political science at Rio Hondo College, was appointed by his council colleagues to be the city's mayor for the coming year.

Since 1992, Whittier has developed a reputation for preserving the Puente Hills that run from the 605 Freeway to the 57 Freeway creating a wildlife corridor linking the Puente Hills, Chino State Park and the Cleveland National Forest. Past city councils created the Habitat Authority that used park bond money and a fee on trash dumped in the Puente Landfill to purchase 3,600 acres of land, now preserved forever in a natural state.

The current challenge is to protect this remarkably diverse habitat from development proposed on the open hillside between Harbor Boulevard and the 57 Freeway. Proposed are 3,600 new homes and three commercial centers that would choke wildlife movement. A coalition of the cities of Whittier, Brea, La Habra, and La Habra Heights, and the Hacienda Heights and Rowland Heights Community Associations has organized to preserve and acquire open space along the border of Los Angeles and Orange counties.

Enviro Candidates Sweep Top Spots in El Segundo

by Wendy James

El Segundo may be losing longtime Mayor and City Councilmember Mike Gordon, who is likely heading to Sacramento to replace retiring Assemblymember George Nakano, however the city picked up two new environmental leaders in its April council elections.

LALCV-endorsed candidates Jim Boulgarides and Eric Busch polled first and second place respectively in the race for three open council seats, helping to assure continued progressive environmental leadership for the city.

Boulgarides, who is passionate about the environment and his city, was raised on public service, with his father having served on Culver City's City Council for 16 years and his mother a

veteran of the school board. He's been a firefighter and a lifeguard, and served as the public information officer for LA County Lifeguards. Jim worked successfully to secure a \$40,000 grant from the Santa Monica Bay Restoration project to undertake a public information outreach effort that began a grassroots movement reaching some 10,000 middle and high school students.

Busch, an 11-year resident of El Segundo, brings environmental experience to the Council, having served as corporate and environmental safety officer for Sony Pictures. Busch plans to promote environmental stewardship by the business community, encourage carpooling and increased use of mass transit, and work to ensure compliance with clean water and clean air goals.

LALCV is proud to have helped elect Jim and Eric and looks forward to continued environmental vision and leadership in El Segundo.

Successful LALCV Candidates at Work in San Gabriel Foothills

by Wendy James

A veteran city official and a newcomer to politics both were able to use LALCV's endorsement to stave off a serious challenge in last November's municipal elections in the City of Duarte.

Mayor John Fasana is now serving his third term as the city's mayor, despite a well-funded attack. Retired community activist Lois Gaston always thought of herself as an environmentalist, but was inspired by LALCV's endorsement to mobilize her community to fight threats to the environment. Both are now at work on the Duarte City Council, already addressing environmental concerns and opportunities.

"The LALCV endorsement provided an independent assessment of my environmental positions. And the environment is important to most people, including Duarte's voters," said Fasana.

He featured the LALCV endorsement prominently in his campaign materials, including a picture of the endorsement headline from the LALCV website. Fasana is working with conservation groups such as the Trust for Public Land and local conservancies to ensure protection for the most sensitive parcels in Duarte's foothills. He is working to open a trail to Fish Canyon Falls - considered the premier falls in the San Gabriel Mountains - where quarry activity has blocked access.

Gaston says she was glad LALCV showed confidence in her, and that many people were impressed when she received the League's endorsement. She says traffic congestion and air quality were always a concern for her, but more of a private battle.

"The LALCV endorsement reminded me that I need to mobilize a whole community to fight these concerns," Gaston said. "And knowing that somebody else thought that I could make a difference made me work extra hard to get the community engaged on these issues."

Gaston says her environmental plate is filling up. She's learning all she can on air quality issues, gearing up for an update of the city's general plan and hillside ordinance, and looking for ways to start educating children early about the importance of the environment.

Both Fasana and Gaston say they are glad to know that they can turn to LALCV for input on a wide range of environmental issues the city will be addressing. To reach them, call the Duarte City Hall at (626) 357-7931.

Kuperberg Preserving Quality of Life in Agoura Hills

by Andi Liebenbaum

He hadn't quite finished what he was elected to do, so in the last quarter of 2003, Dan Kuperberg assembled his troops (family, friends and political supporters), launched a campaign to be re-elected to the Agoura Hills City Council, won his seat, and even became mayor. This LALCV-endorsed local official represents much of what LALCV stands for and strives towards as the leading environmental political action committee in Los Angeles County. He understands his small city, he cares about the quality of life of everyone who lives there, he understands the economic and other social issues of his community and its surroundings, and he brings people together to develop plans and solutions. Considering the rural quality of life that Agoura Hills residents consider the premier reason to live in their community, Kuperberg is thoughtful about the intersection of human needs and environmental protection, seeing common goals, and devising inclusive plans to erase conflicts.

During his campaign, Kuperberg enumerated the following as his priorities. His primary focus is on the preservation of open space and the addition of passive/low-impact recreation to the city. He is also very much in favor of active recreation areas, and touts the city's extensive public recreation system, which includes everything from courts for tennis and basketball to trails for horseback riding and mountain biking. He led the city's open space planning effort during his first term in office, which has resulted in a comprehensive document that catalogs every parcel in the city so the council can prioritize the purchasing of private property for the public good. Kuperberg, a deputy public defender in Van Nuys, convinced us that he will continue to further the efforts he began when he was first elected to Agoura Hills City Council. He said he welcomes the scrutiny that comes from being a public official because public participation will keep him focused and encourage the best results from the Council.

The Los Angeles League of Conservation Voters is proud to have endorsed Dan Kuperberg. Thanks to your non-deductible contributions to us, we helped elect Dan, as well as over a dozen other local officials throughout Los Angeles County in the past year. To find out how you can help us in the future, please visit our website at www.lalcv.org. And if you live in Agoura Hills, please feel free to contact Dan Kuperberg at City Hall (818) 597-7341.

It's not too late to support the LA League of Conservation Voters. Your contributions are critical, especially as we look to early 2005 at the dozens of races throughout LA County where environmental issues will be important. Please send your check today to help us support another round of great environmental candidates.

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Master of Ceremonies, Hon. Jack Weiss



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