

Conservation Voter

October 2003



No on the Recall

By David Allgood

When ultra-conservative Congressman, Darrel Issa (LCV score 5%) decided to fund signature gathering to qualify a gubernatorial recall election, he did so for clearly partisan reasons. An unpopular Governor and millions of dollars of personal money to fund the recall signature gathering were all that Issa and his colleagues needed to undo an election their party lost just months earlier. The prospect of an off-cycle special election holds the appeal of a dramatically reduced turnout that conservatives assume will favor their own party. They leave us, the taxpayers, to pick up the \$60-\$70 million tab.

Until this year, the recall process was assumed by most to be a weapon of last resort, a way to save democratic government from the clutches of thieves and felons. Unpopularity was not thought to be part of the equation. The threat of recall to destabilize representative democracy and the probability of electing a Governor with a tiny plurality was considered too great a risk for use in all but the most dire of circumstances. Indeed, a partisan circus was predicted. Well, welcome to the circus. Of the 135 candidates on the recall ballot, only two have experience in state government.

Take a look at what is happening in Washington D.C.

for a glimpse of what's in store for California if this recall succeeds and Issa's conservatives win. Expect rollbacks on California's clean air protections, watch our wild lands auctioned to the highest bidder, and look for new oil drilling off our coast. The actual list of threats is much longer.

Contrast this with California's environmental achievements with Davis in Sacramento. He has shown leadership on fighting oil drilling off our coast, supported global warming policies, park acquisitions through Props. 12, 40 and 50, New Source Review to curb power plant emissions, and a host of other environmental initiatives. The Governor's environmental record is public, his commitment to the environment is genuine.

California has consistently rejected the anti-environmental agenda offered by legions of conservative candidates. Apparently, however, beating them in election after election has failed to curb their drive for power, and, in fact, has encouraged them to use this weapon of last resort. LALCV urges you to **VOTE NO ON THE RECALL**. While we still have to foot the bill for this needless election, we **MUST** protect the environmental gains of the last five years.

Find out what the issues are & vote !!



The Newest Environmental Justice Threat: Proposition 54

By Kafi Watlington-MacLeod

On October 7, 2003, Californians will go to the polls to vote on a dangerous initiative that could have devastating impacts on the environment and our health – Proposition 54.

Entitled, "The Classification by Race, Ethnicity, Color, and National Origin Initiative," Proposition 54 is a radical ballot measure that was introduced by Ward Connerly, past chairman of the Proposition 209 campaign and Governor Pete Wilson's appointee to the UC Regents.

Although proponents of Proposition 54 claim that the initiative furthers "racial privacy" and a "colorblind society," it actually impedes our ability to identify, study, and remedy discrimination. Proposition 54 would ban race as a factor in the pursuit of research and a healthy environment. If passed, it would prevent the State of California and local governments from collecting and maintaining any data on race and ethnicity. Without this data, advocates, environmental organizations, grassroots communities, and local and state agencies, would be limited in addressing disparities in environmental hazards exposure by race and ethnicity.

Through years of work by the environmental justice community and the use of public health studies and academic

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Villaraigosa Moves to Address Urban LA's Enviro Concerns

By Andi Liebenbaum

Antonio Villaraigosa's dedication to the urban and natural environments has made him a leader for environmentalists throughout the state. The Los Angeles

League of Conservation Voters recognized him as a natural local leader early on, and we endorsed his bid for Los Angeles mayor with great enthusiasm. Undaunted, he ran for and won his local council seat with LALCV support when the incumbent's first term was through.

Antonio has long advocated for more and better park and open space throughout LA. In concert with LA's Department of Recreation & Parks, Villaraigosa will create a master plan for parks. Antonio's idea is to start with a plan for the 14th Council District. Once the planning bugs are worked out, he sees the process and the outcome as models for a citywide park planning process and map. He sees parks as needing to be redefined. Parks can no longer be just huge expanses of preserved open space. Parks may be lot-sized. They may be on top of buildings. They may disguise below-ground parking structures. They need to be squeezed between buildings in downtown LA to support the urban center's revitalization and growing residential community.

Antonio also has a long-standing interest in revitalizing

the LA River. He has a particular interest in looking at ways to bring new life to the Boyle Heights rail spurs, and wants to see more park and recreation areas for the many park poor neighborhoods along the River. Part of this effort will require working with former colleagues in the Assembly, who must join his effort to "convert brownfields into green fields." Antonio is currently looking for a site or sites to use as models of brownfields remediation projects, while at the same time trying to get some financial and political support from the Capitol.

Other efforts include Ascot Hills, the largest piece of undeveloped open space on the East Side, which needs protection. On the issue of transportation, Antonio wants to see more HOV lanes, better bus service in transit-dependent neighborhoods, and discussions and solutions to the serious freeway connector hot spots (just think about Interstate 5 just about anywhere it connects with another freeway in and around downtown LA). In his position as Chair of the Transportation Committee and with his seat on the MTA Board, Antonio is uniquely situated to make a lasting regional difference for the transportation woes of the City of Los Angeles and its regional transportation partners.

Antonio is proud to be serving his community at a more local, hands-on level, and invites constituents and others to share ideas with him. He says he is motivated by the desire to see LA be more environmentally sustainable. An environmentally sustainable city is, according to Antonio Villaraigosa, "an environmentally friendly city," and that's just what he wants LA to be.

Environment on Forefront of Cardenas Agenda

By Andi Liebenbaum

The environment is on the forefront of Tony Cardenas' political agenda. He says that as Chair of the Los Angeles City Council's Commerce Committee, he wants to pursue an aggressive stance with the City's Department of Water & Power to use more renewable energy. He says that if the state's regulated utilities can have a goal of producing 20% of their energy from new renewable resources by 2020, DWP, can too. Tony sees the shift at DWP as necessary. The DWP and its production and delivery of energy, he says, must be modernized. He suggests that the retooling and improvements that DWP must make to manage the supply of and demand for energy for the 21st century provide an opportune moment for those improvements to be grounded in clean technologies.

Closely linked to the DWP's efforts toward sustainable energy generation and delivery is the City's partial

ownership of the Mohave generating plant in Utah. The heavily-polluting coal-burning facility has raised questions in Cardenas' mind about how the city does the responsible act of generating and delivering clean energy while supporting a plant that pollutes the lives, land and air of other people. He says he understands DWP's claims that it needs the facility because its costs are low and it generates necessary power, but Tony believes that this strictly financial perspective does not consider the long-term impacts of energy production through coal on the people who must tolerate the facility. He recognizes that his views might seem aggressive, but doesn't approve of the "out of sight - out of mind" mentality of generating dirty energy in someone else's backyard.

In addition to power generation and delivery, Tony cares about trash. During his endorsement interview with LALCV, Tony repeated his opposition to enlarging any of the municipal landfills in Los Angeles. He says his opposition is not a NIMBY (not in my backyard) response because his backyard already has a landfill. But he does want the City



LALCV Weighs in on Duarte Council Race

By Wendy James

LALCV is moving to the foothills of the San Gabriels this fall as we take on the Duarte City Council elections in November.

Like many of the foothill communities in the San Gabriel Valley, Duarte faces intense pressure for hillside development, and also faces air quality and traffic concerns. The current council has been split – often with the more pro-environment candidates out-numbered by the pro-development interests. LALCV is looking to change that.

The endorsement process is underway, and the results will be posted on the web site at www.lalcv.org. You can also learn more about our endorsement process and how to go about encouraging us to get involved in local elections in your area by visiting the web site.

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Check us out online

The League Online

By Shelley Billik

Although we've been around since the 1970s, the LA League of Conservation Voters recently joined the electronic age with our new website, www.lalcv.org. The site offers great information for just about everyone. You can get to know our Board Members. You can learn about past and current elected officials who have been endorsed by LALCV. You can learn about elected officials and community activists who are past recipients of the Smith-Weiss Environmental Champion Awards. You can find out how our endorsement process works. And, you can connect with the County Registrar/Recorder and the calendar of upcoming elections.

You can also use the website to sign up for our mailing list, send us your thoughts, and support LALCV with a much appreciated contribution.

The website is administered by LALCV board members, and we're always open to your comments and suggestions. Email us at shelley@lalcv.org, or moe@lalcv.org.

(Cardenas Agenda continued from page 2)

to think about ways to reduce waste through recycling, composting and energy generation, so that landfills don't need to be bigger. He also opposes sending LA's waste to the desert.

Tony says that his vision for lasting, long-term policy comes from his engineering background, where a process may be launched by one person, and furthered and finished by those who follow. He says he doesn't mind if all of his ideas can't be implemented and in full operation by the time his tenure as City Council Member is through. What's important, says Cardenas, is "the long-term vision toward sustainability."

Look for more interviews with LALCV-supported political leaders in future issues of the *Conservation Voter*

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research, we know that environmental health hazards, such as disposal facilities and waste treatment centers, are disproportionately concentrated in communities of color. If Proposition 54 passes, the South Coast Air Quality Management District, for example, could be prohibited from gathering data about the public health impacts of stationary sources on communities of color and requiring permitting to address these impacts.

LALCV recently voted to oppose Proposition 54, joining civil rights organizations, public health agencies, social justice advocates, Los Angeles City Council members, the Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors, and Mayor James Hahn in opposing the measure. It is crucial that environmentalists promote environmental justice and protect public health by opposing Proposition 54.

For more information about Proposition 54, contact the author at kafi@lalcv.org.

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Small elections make big differences. I'm not just talking about a little election on October 7th (that will vastly impact the landscape of California politics for the foreseeable future). All elections serve an important function and should make their way into your routine. You may not know much about the school board or the community college trustees, so you think, "My vote's not worth much because I don't know what the issues are." FIND OUT WHAT THE ISSUES ARE AND VOTE. You may not know much about water policy, or the Franchise Tax Board. This is no reason to not vote. It's a reason to learn about the political system and use your voice. FIND OUT WHAT THE ISSUES ARE AND VOTE. The recall, as well as other measures that have found their way to the October 7th ballot, are serious, and your vote counts.

While we are a political action committee that works to elect and support candidates and ballot measures that will preserve and protect the environment in Los Angeles County, we recently took the rare step of weighing in on issues at the state level. In this edition of the *Conservation Voter*, you will read articles opposing both the recall of Governor Gray Davis and Prop. 54. We discussed these two important issues at length and determined that the impacts on Los Angeles, should either of them pass, will be devastating. Please read these articles, discuss them with friends, colleagues and family. Figure out how these two ballot items will affect your life and the lives of the people you care about. FIND OUT WHAT THE ISSUES ARE AND VOTE.

While our resources may be limited, both in terms of dollars and volunteers, LALCV is committed to participating in as many elections as possible. And whenever we make the decision to get involved in a race, we find out what the issues are, we vote, and then we get that message out to you as quickly as possible. You have a role in this process. If there is a race of significance to you, please contact us with the issues and information we need to determine if there is some way we can participate. Additionally, your contributions, from \$25 to \$2,500, add to our capacity to make big differences in seemingly small places. Please continue to be active in and supportive of the work and success of the LA League of Conservation Voters. Your views and your contributions help us, even in small elections. For more information about what we're up to, please visit us at www.lalcv.org. And, please, don't forget. FIND OUT WHAT THE ISSUES ARE AND VOTE ON OCTOBER 7th.

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