



June 29, 2006

Roberta Davis
Chair, League of Women Voters Of California Education Fund
801 12th St
Sacramento, CA 95814

Dear Roberta Davis,

Lynda Hernandez forwarded to me your email explaining the criteria the League of Women Voters will use to determine who it will invite to participate in the California gubernatorial debates this year.

Outside of some minimal requirements, such as having a campaign committee, headquarters, and a calendar of appearances and, obviously, being on the ballot, you have a critical sentence concerning criteria by which you will decide who will be invited to the debates. But this sentence can have two totally different meanings. You state that a candidate must "demonstrate significant voter interest and support". However, in the United States, there can be a remarkable gap between whom the citizens want in the debates and who they may plan to vote for, because we do not have runoffs.

Therefore, I respectfully request, in the interest of fairness, that the League conduct a poll asking voters not who they may vote for in November, *but who they want to see in the debates*. I believe you will find that there will be massive support for my candidacy.

In a "spoiler" system, with no runoffs, if a poll asks whom people might vote for you will get a totally different result. It is, unfortunately, through this mechanism that many have used polls to deny the voters their wishes and limit debates to the two well funded parties that have consciously sought to prevent their being any alternative voices in American politics.

I understand and appreciate that the League attempts to be completely nonpartisan and to act as a service to provide voters with information so that they are in a better position to make a decision as to how to vote. The League has only recently begun to look at the peculiarity of the electoral system in the United States, and how it denies voters the right to vote for whom they support. Some of your chapters have urged you to take a stand for free elections in the United States, where people are truly free to vote for who they support, as almost all other countries have done by holding runoffs and providing proportional representation.

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In order to meet your honorable objectives of nonpartisanship and services for voters to help them make the best possible electoral decisions, I urge you to consider the contradiction that our electoral winner-take-all system has created, and ask that the League maintain that nonpartisanship when it conducts any poll regarding the debates.

To do otherwise, I believe, the League would, although unintentionally, work against the voters' desires and limit the voices heard against the desire of the electorate and its own stated goals. For instance, what if more than 50 percent of the people said to you we want Mr. Camejo in the debates? The League should, of course, allow me in the debates. In fact, as you know, a poll was done by ABC television in 2002, and it wasn't just 50 percent, but more than two thirds of Californians (69 percent), who wanted me in the debates.

Nevertheless, in 2002 I was excluded by the Los Angeles Times from that debate. The Governor at the time, Gray Davis, went so far as to say that, if I was in the building even to listen to the debate, he would leave, and there would be no debate. Then in violation of the law since I was a formally invited guest, the Los Angeles Times blocked my entry into the building even to listen to the debate.

However, in 2003, Stan Statham, the CEO of the California Broadcasters Association (CBA), and Channel KXTV 2 in Oakland, included me in what turned out to be nationally televised debates. The CBA event, with six candidates, received the largest audience of any televised debate ever for a California gubernatorial race. People preferred to have more than two candidates in the debates. A poll by the San Francisco Chronicle later showed that I was considered the "winner" of the debates with 36 percent of the vote; Arnold Schwarzenegger was in second place with 26 percent. Peter Schrag of the Sacramento Bee in his new book, *California America's High-Stake Experiment* states, "As the two candidates with the most unequivocal position on state issues, McClintock, the conservative Republican, and Camejo, the Green, seemed to be viewers' personal favorites in the debates".

Sadly, using the criteria you're suggesting I would have been kept out of those debates, because the public, when polled, gave a very different answer when asked about who they agreed with, or who they wanted in the debates. Interestingly, during those debates in 2003, Senator Tom McClintock pleaded with the voters to vote for who they supported. In any other country that would be taken for granted that people vote for who they support. Only in our winner-take-all, spoiler, undemocratic elections will voters massively vote against the person that they support.

Why is it that such a large number wanted me in the debates and said that I won the debates, but a much smaller percentage actually voted for me or even in polls said they intend to vote for me? This is the question that you really need to consider. But let me suggest that everyone knows the answer to this question: ***WE DO NOT HAVE FREE AND OPEN ELECTIONS.***

Our elections are designed so that people do not feel free to vote for whom they agree with. We do this by not allowing runoff elections for our partisan state and federal races. The two parties that control our political system have deliberately established a spoiler system that most often forces voters to vote for the "lesser evil" and against what they would prefer. And we do not

allow proportional representation that would make all votes count and all voters receive representation. In short, we have a system that effectively disenfranchises the majority of voters.

In large part because of the incumbents who write our electoral codes, the United States has a voting system that is completely different from 99 percent of the rest of the world where free elections are held. In almost all democracies of the world the US electoral system has been correctly rejected as fundamentally anti-democratic. Not one country in Eastern Europe chose to follow the US electoral system. Not one country in the Americas except Canada (which is considering changing its laws) is similar to the United States.

In the United States if a party gets 20 percent of the vote those voters do not receive 20 percent of the representation. In fact, they may very well be denied any representation at all. Further, many more than 20 percent of the people of California are not registered with either the Democratic or Republican parties, and not one of those millions of citizens is in our state legislature or senate. They are, for all intents and purposes, disenfranchised.

Our electoral system has led to people becoming so alienated that the majority do not vote, which is unlike any country in Europe where free elections are the norm and every vote counts. If we held a free election that includes a runoff for governor – thus eliminating the spoiler system – and/or allowed some form of proportional representation, would the vote for my candidacy have been much larger? *We all know the answer is yes.* At first the increase may be just two or three times what I received (5.3 percent) in 2002. But, over time, if free and open elections were held, the way in which people see elections would change, as would how they vote and respond to polls. The number of voters would increase and their willingness to vote for new voices would explode. That is precisely why free elections are not permitted.

We do have one extremely interesting and clear test of how Californians might vote if the spoiler issue was removed, and that is the 2003 race that took place for mayor in San Francisco where a runoff exists. A Democrat, Gavin Newsom, and a Green, Matt Gonzalez, made it to the runoff. The Democrat, Gavin Newsom, was endorsed by the Republican Party, so we had a clear test of what kind of support the Greens really have if no spoiler issue is involved. The Democrat/Republican had ten times the funding the Green had. Newsom had President Clinton and Vice President Gore come to campaign for him. Yet the Greens received not 3 percent or 5 percent, or even the 17 percent I received for Governor in San Francisco in 2002 (beating the Republican candidate). The Green received 47 percent, and almost won against both the combined forces of the Democrats and Republicans!

In the most recent June 6, 2006, Primary Election, we had another test of the interest voters have in what the Green Party candidates stand for. In the race for Superintendent of Public Instruction, there is a runoff because it is a nonpartisan race. Therefore, people feel free to vote for whom they agree with. There was a candidate endorsed by the Democrats and one endorsed by the Republicans. There was also a Green in the race, Sarah Knopp, who spent a total of \$3,000 on her campaign and was a complete unknown, 28-year-old high school teacher. All the voters had to help them decide whom to vote for was their voter guide because there was little news coverage and no televised debates. In this election, a race where people were free to vote for the candidate that best expressed what they believed, Sarah Knopp received more than 678,000

votes, defeated the Republican Party endorsed candidate and came in second with 17.3 percent of the vote. She almost forced the incumbent into a run off. He had a \$1.1 million campaign war chest.

The League of Women Voters, using the criteria outlined, would never have allowed Sarah Knopp into a debate. She did not have money, she did not have an office or staff and she would not have early on appeared on any poll as having support until the voter guide was available. You would have excluded Sarah Knopp, a working teacher of modest means who wants to stand up in defense of our education system and who comes in second as hundreds of thousands of people vote for her to express their support. And, the League of Women Voters, if it had structured a debate, would have excluded her and included the less popular Republican-endorsed candidate.

Tom Paine once said when something is done wrong for a long time it appears to be right. I implore the much-respected League of Women Voters to, in the future, take a strong stance for Instant Run-off Voting, public financing of elections and the inclusion in debates of candidates the public wish to hear, and to try to help put to an end the exclusionary anti-democratic policies of the Democrats and Republicans.

In 2006 you can make this statement by insisting on my inclusion in the debates so that at least one candidate that favors free and open elections in our nation can be heard. In California, on one issue after another, whether it is the death penalty, the war in Iraq, our tax system, civil liberties, funding for education, gay marriage, or the environment, a huge percentage, if not a majority, agree with my proposals. For this election I have written a book, *California under Corporate Rule*, outlining our views on many of the key issues. But we do not have millions of dollars precisely because we support the poor, the immigrants, working people and not the major corporations or the richest 1 percent who have more income than 60 percent of our people.

One of the most controversial issues in this election will be what should be done about immigration and the large number of undocumented workers in California. America appears at this moment to have three currents of opinion. One current favors criminalization, as expressed by the majority in the Congress of the United States; another favors a guest worker apartheid system as expressed by the compromise in the United States Senate; and the third is for legalization and equality as expressed by the largest demonstrations in U.S. history these past few months, where millions rallied in the streets.

I am the only candidate for Governor who has spoken at these demonstrations. I am the only Spanish speaking Latino truly representative of the majority opinion on immigration in the Latino community. To exclude my voice from the debates would be to exclude our community. My presentation at the May 1st demonstration of 100,000 or more in San Francisco means that I have spoken to more people directly than both the incumbent Republican and Democrat combined, multiplied several times. And I was received with an ovation of support. Of course no media covered my presentation and the San Francisco Chronicle the next day ran a front page article stating that no candidates for Governor spoke at any of the May 1st rallies. (Actually two gubernatorial candidates spoke – me and Barbara Becnel, a Democrat.)

The League of Women Voters should have but one criterion for who is included in the debates: Who do the people want included in the debates. Period. Not who the people think will win the election, or who they may vote for in the election after hearing the debates, or who has the backing of the wealthy expressed in their funding.

I urge you to conduct that poll, and ask the question directly: "Who do you want in the debates?" You will, no doubt, have a target level required for inclusion, maybe 5 percent, or 10 percent or even higher. But please tell me how you can exclude a candidate the majority of the people are asking you to include?

Thank you.

Sincerely,

Peter Miguel Camejo