Making Democracy Work: An Equity Lens

The League of Women Voters of California is working to apply an “equity lens” by analyzing our processes and foundational assumptions from the perspective of how they impact marginalized and underrepresented individuals and communities. To that end, this kit weaves in explanations of ways the legislative interview questions touch on issues of diversity, equity and inclusion.

In that spirit, we encourage you to proactively and mindfully form interview teams that include young members, people of color, and other individuals from underrepresented groups. With legislative interviews you have the opportunity to help develop League leadership that is truly representative of California’s democracy, and to add the richness of diverse perspectives to your advocacy work.

Legislative Interviews 2018-2019

Every year, the LWVC encourages local League members to interview their state legislators. This is an opportunity for legislators to share their priorities with League members and develop an understand of League positions and priorities. Local League members can discover how state legislative actions are going to impact their communities. In turn the LWVC learns more about legislators and the legislative interests of local Leagues, and gains information useful in planning statewide activities.

Legislative interviews are a powerful tool, increasing League visibility and raising awareness among California’s state representatives of our interest in policies they are considering.

Use the interview to become better acquainted with your legislator and to emphasize that the League never supports or opposes candidates or parties, but that it is political and takes positions on issues after thorough study and consensus.

If you have any questions about which legislators represent your League, or which other Leagues are in the same district, please refer to our newly updated Section L of the LWVC Resource Directory. Please contact Sharon Stone <sstone@lwvc.org> if you find any problems with this cross-referenced list of districts and local Leagues or if you need the password to open the Resource Directory.
General Guidelines

If you have not participated in legislative interviews recently, you may notice a few changes.

➢ **Local Issues.** The questions leave an opportunity for you to ask about issues of local interest.

➢ **Multiple League Districts.** In the past local Leagues were assigned to individual legislators and one League was designated to coordinate multiple Leagues in a district. Now Leagues in multiple League districts are asked to coordinate among yourselves. (See below, under The Legislative Interview Team.) If you each wish to schedule separate interviews, perhaps because you have different issues to discuss with a particular legislator, feel free to do so. **NOTE: it is critical that you keep all other Leagues in the district informed if you choose to schedule a separate interview.**

➢ **Relationship Cultivation.** In the past, we have stressed the importance of speaking personally with the legislator. While it is important to try to get an appointment with the legislator, it can also be extremely difficult for some Leagues. There is also great value in establishing a good working relationship with the local office staff of a legislator. Use your own judgment and use the legislative interview time to cultivate that relationship. Time with your elected legislator is still the first choice. If you do not get through all the questions it’s worthwhile to ask if you can meet with staff, either as a continuation of this meeting or at a later time.

**Should We Send the Questions Beforehand?**

We are often asked whether we should send out our actual legislative interview questions to the legislators in advance. While we don’t want to be seen as playing “gotcha,” we believe there’s a clear benefit in legislators’ unrehearsed responses. The purposes of an in-person interview are to look the representative in the eye, hear their tone of voice, and get a sense of their interest in an issue. In addition, this gives the legislator an opportunity to interact with our local League members and develop or further an ongoing relationship. A pre-prepared statement of positions that could simply be mailed to us fails to accomplish these goals.

Our recommendation is to **not share the actual interview questions with your legislator in advance. Please do feel free to share the issue areas (State and Local Redistricting, Public Education – Closing the Achievement Gap, and Water Resources) with the representative in advance** so that they may comfortably equip themselves for your questions. Tell them that the specific questions asked by your interview committee will come from those issue areas.

**The Legislative Interview Team**

Advance work by League interview team members is essential to success. This is a short-term project that includes preparation, the interview, and wrap-up. If the interview team includes new League members or those new to the process, the preparation should include some face-to-face time, if at all possible.
Steps in the interview project:

➢ Planning/assignment of roles and responsibilities
➢ Briefing to review roles at the interview, and the questions and topics to be covered
➢ The interview
➢ Post-interview wrap-up: review of the reports to be sent to the LWVC and presented to your membership. This should happen as soon as possible after the interview.

State legislative districts often encompass more than one local League. Check Senate Districts and Assembly Districts online. You may want to arrange to meet along with one or more of the other local Leagues in your legislative district. However, recognizing that Leagues within a given legislative district may have very different issues of interest to members, it is no longer required that local Leagues try to arrange a single meeting within each legislative district.

If you would like to arrange to meet with your legislator in the company of another League or Leagues in your legislative district, the Section L of the LWVC Resource Directory lists all of the local Leagues in each district. Please let us know if you find any problems with this cross-referenced list of districts and local Leagues, or if you need the password to open the Resource Directory.

Interview Etiquette

Be prepared. Study the background materials and the substance of the topics covered in the interview questions.

Follow your assigned role on the interview team.

Opinions expressed should be only those of the League, not of individuals.

Do not overstay your welcome.

Secure the legislator’s permission and specific conditions under which you may print any part of the interview in a VOTER or other newsletter.

No matter how you arrange to interview your legislator, be sure to keep other Leagues in the district informed of your plans.
Assembling an Interview Team

Teams of three to five members are ideal. Coordinators should try to include:

- at least one person with a long-term League background
- a member with a history of working with the legislator
- members well versed in the program items covered by the questions
- young members, people of color, and other individuals from underrepresented groups to develop representative League leadership and add diverse perspectives
- new members accompanied by experienced League members

Suggested Roles and Responsibilities:

Team Leader

- **Make the Appointment.** Contact the legislator's local district office. Be persistent. Ask for an hour, but accept less if necessary. If possible, arrange to meet in an office or a home free of distractions. If you cannot get a meeting with the legislator, ask to meet with the district director. They are often extremely well versed about everything going on in a district and in the legislature. Your visit will still be noted and remembered.

- **Confirm.** Send the legislator and staff a letter or email message confirming the appointment, mentioning the topics you will discuss. *(Do not send a copy of the “Background” or the “Legislative Interview Report Form” sections of this kit.)*

- **Set a Team Pre-Meeting.** Brief the members of the team on interview etiquette, the role each member will take in the interview, and their responsibilities as an interview team member.

- **Make Introductions.** Lead off the introductions at the start of the interview and invite League members to introduce themselves.

- **Watch the Clock.** Pace the interview and tactfully keep everyone (including the legislator) on the subject. You will know in advance how much time the legislator has agreed to spend with you, and allot an appropriate amount of time to each question.

- **Send a Thank You.** Write a follow-up thank you after the interview. A thank you note gives you an opportunity to underscore points made at the interview, answer any questions you were not sure about, or send a League publication you may have referred to during the course of the interview.

Researcher

- **Background.** Brief the other members of the interview team on the legislator’s relationship with the League and his/her voting record. What are his/her committee assignments and/or leadership positions in the legislature?
➢ **Check Legislator’s League Membership.** Is the legislator a member of your League or another League in the district?

➢ **Check Bill History.** Check the LWVC Bill Status Reports, for information about bill(s) your legislator authored and the League either supported or opposed. You can dig even deeper by checking the legislator’s history on California’s legislative information site. You may want to take a moment to express the League’s appreciation or disappointment about a particular bill on which the state League took a position, and briefly state the League’s position.

➢ **Keep a Digital Research File.** The information you develop should become part of an ongoing file about each legislator.

**Background Briefer**

➢ **Team Briefing.** Inform team members as to League positions and history on the interview question topics.

➢ **Team Discussion.** Lead a discussion with team members about the background information on question topics and the substance of the interview questions.

➢ **Legislator Briefing.** If your legislator is new or does not know the League well, plan to spend some time talking about the mission of the League and briefly explain the difference between the League’s advocacy and education roles. Describe how we take positions on issues.

**Recorder**

➢ **Document.**

- Have the interview questions in front of you.
- Make note of bills or policy objectives mentioned by the legislator.
- Make note of requests for information or League materials from the legislator.
- Write up the material from your notes promptly.

➢ **Debrief.** Conduct a debriefing with team members shortly after the interview.

➢ **Report.** Complete the online report form by March 11, 2019. Responses received by this date will be the most useful for action on League priorities.

**Bring with You to the Interview**

➢ Membership brochures from each local League represented. Ask the legislator and staff members present to join!

➢ **Voter’s Edge.** Tell the legislators about Voter’s Edge and ask them to spread the word. Order bookmarks to leave behind! Voter’s Edge is the League and MapLight’s unbiased online elections guide covering federal, state, and local races in California.
With over 2 million users in the 2018 gubernatorial election, the site allows candidates to reach voters with direct, unfiltered messages and in-depth information about priorities at no cost. Voters access a full, personalized ballot by address, learn about candidates and issues, get clear explanations of ballot measures and find out who’s funding them, and check where, when, and how to vote. Check [here](#) for more info and downloadable flyers.

➢ Appropriate League publications. In addition to the [Action Policies and Positions](#), and your League’s business card, you might include local Facts for Voters or a similar publication.

➢ Copies of local League newsletters.

**Electronic Reporting**

Please fill out the online [Legislative Interview Report Form](#). This makes it easier for us to compile and analyze your responses effectively.

Please let us know if you need help using the Survey Monkey online report form.

**Questions?**

If you have any questions about the interviews, please contact LWVC Vice President for Advocacy and Program Joanne Leavitt, [jleavitt@lwvc.org](mailto:jleavitt@lwvc.org).

**Links to Basic Resources**

- **District maps** from the California Citizens Redistricting Commission
  - Find your: 1. Legislators 2. Assembly Districts 3. Senate Districts
  - [LWVC Resource Directory Section L on legislative representation](#). Please let us know if you find any problems with this cross-referenced list of districts and local Leagues, or if you need the password to open the Resource Directory.
  - [LWVC Legislative Bill Status Reports](#). Information about bills on which the LWVC has taken a position and recommends action.
  - [LWVC Advocacy Resource Directory](#). A comprehensive set of resources organized by issue area and type of organization with a short description of the nature of each resource.
  - [LegInfo](#). California’s comprehensive online site for legislation and law. Also see their “other resources” page for more useful information.
  - [California Legislative Analyst's Office](#). The Legislative Analyst's Office (LAO) has provided fiscal and policy advice to the Legislature for 75 years. It is known for its fiscal and programmatic expertise and nonpartisan analyses of the state budget. In addition, the office estimates the fiscal effect on state and local government of all proposed initiatives (prior to circulation) and prepares analyses of all measures that qualify for the statewide ballot.
Legislative Interview Questions

SUMMARY: Short versions of the questions to be posed to your legislator are listed here for your convenience. The full versions of the questions and background information for Questions 1 through 3 may be found on the follow pages.

Question 1: Redistricting, State and Local
Would you support a bill to require local governments that have district representation to establish independent redistricting commissions, that would use a transparent process, and fair criteria similar to the State, including safeguards against discriminating against any political party?

Question 2: Water Resources
California’s elected officials are called to sustain California’s economy and way of life in the face of formidable water management challenges associated with controversial and/or aging infrastructure, unrealistic water expectations, and unpredictable future supplies. These challenges must be viewed against a backdrop of conflicts between the north and the south; between coastal and inland areas; and between environmental, agricultural, rural, and municipal and industrial uses of water. It can be tempting, and expedient, to focus on water conflicts that engage constituencies in ways that are oversimplified, misleading, and counterproductive.

What ideas do you have for addressing the needs of your own constituency while advancing water management planning that benefits all Californians?

Question 3: Public Education In California – Closing the Achievement Gap
Large achievement and opportunity gaps still persist in California by race, ethnicity, income and English learner status. School finance reforms have helped districts improve student outcomes, but these gaps still persist. The recently released Getting Down To Facts II study concludes that California’s public schools need a continued focus on closing achievement gaps through multiple approaches. This time, however, early childhood education is cited as a priority because of “the disproportionate achievement gap that already exists when children enter kindergarten.” In fact, early childhood education is identified as one of the three areas representing “the major (public education) policy challenges of the coming decade” and Governor-elect Gavin Newsom has clearly stated his commitment to universal preschool and early childhood education.

For years closing the achievement and opportunity gaps has been both a clear state and local priority. We join with the researchers in asking a different and equally important question: "Are there ways to avoid the gaps in the first place?" As a legislator, what are your thoughts about the findings of Getting Down to Facts II? What action(s) would you support to further these goals?

Question 4: What other major issues do you think the legislature must deal with in 2019? What are your personal priorities? Please make sure to ask this question. It
provides us with very valuable insight about your legislator.

Optional Question 5: Local League Question(s) about issue(s) of particular local concern. This is entirely optional, but you are welcome to include a question related to local issues.

Internal Background Material
The background material provided here is for League members only and should not be sent to the legislators or their staff. If asked for questions or topics in advance, please indicate that you want to talk about issues of importance to the League and to the legislator, and topics will include state and local redistricting, water resources, and closing the achievement gap in public education.

Question 1: Redistricting
Would you support a bill to require local governments that have district representation to establish independent redistricting commissions, that would use a transparent process, and fair criteria similar to the State, including safeguards against discriminating against any political party?

Background on Question 1: Redistricting

Redistricting and the LWVC

Redistricting of California’s state legislature and US House seats is done by our California Citizens Redistricting Commission. The League co-sponsored this reform because we believe it is a conflict of interest for elected officials to draw their own districts. The process was an overwhelming success, and is now the model for other states.

Unfortunately, we continue to see partisan, racial, and pro-incumbent gerrymandering in local (city, county, school district, special districts) redistricting.

For more about redistricting in California, check here.

Redistricting and the Legislature

Over the past several years, the Legislature has passed several bills making it easier for local governments to establish independent redistricting commissions, and has passed bills establishing commissions for LA and San Diego counties. Independently, many cities have established independent commissions on their own, including Sacramento, Modesto, Oakland, San Francisco, and San Diego.

You can find out more about this recent legislation here and here.
Local Elections: Districts vs At-Large

Why would a local government use district elections instead of at-large elections? District elections are one way for a minority community within a jurisdiction to have a voice in governing. In larger jurisdictions, district elections also provide for a stronger sense of local community representation. Some communities have changed to district elections voluntarily; others are forced to by lawsuits.

History of CVRA Lawsuits

The California Voting Rights Act (CVRA) was passed in 2001. It builds on the Voting Rights Act enacted in 1965. In particular, it provides a way for minority voters to prove that their votes are being diluted by at-large elections. If minority voters are able to show that district elections would give them the power to elect representatives from their communities, then local governments can be required change to district elections. The first step in the process is for someone to file a lawsuit against the local government.

You can learn more about the CVRA [here](#).

In recent years, there have been an increased number of lawsuits based on the CVRA. Some of these have been brought by groups representing minority voters (MALDEF, NAACP, AAAJ, and others); others have been brought by an independent attorney. In part because of these suits, more local governments are using district elections.

Question 2: Water Resources

California’s elected officials are called to sustain California’s economy and way of life in the face of formidable water management challenges associated with controversial and/or aging infrastructure, unrealistic water expectations, and unpredictable future supplies. These challenges must be viewed against a backdrop of conflicts between the north and the south; between coastal and inland areas; and between environmental, agricultural, rural, and municipal and industrial uses of water. Many of California’s water problems have an outsized impact on low-income communities and communities of color. This includes issues related to reliable access to safe and affordable water and the impact of water management practices on the environment, livelihoods, homes, and public health. It can be tempting, and expedient, to focus on water conflicts that engage constituencies in ways that are oversimplified, misleading, and counterproductive.

What ideas do you have for addressing the needs of your own constituency while advancing water management planning that benefits all Californians?
Background on Question 2: Water Resources

Infrastructure Challenges

A report done by the American Society of Civil Engineers, the 2013 Report Card for America’s Infrastructure, found that California reported $44.5 billion in drinking water infrastructure needs and $29.9 billion in wastewater infrastructure needs during the next 20 years. This includes not just building new multi-region infrastructure but maintaining and replacing aging local and regional infrastructure to store, deliver, and treat water and wastewater.

WaterFix, the controversial plan to build twin tunnels (currently estimated to have an initial cost of almost $20 billion) to move Sacramento River water under the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta for export, continues to face regulatory and funding challenges, with many State Water Project and Central Valley Project potential agricultural beneficiaries of the tunnels project unable or unwilling to help pay for it, while the Metropolitan Water District of Southern California and the Santa Clara Valley Water District have expressed willingness to have their ratepayers subsidize the project.

Proposition 3 on the November 2018 statewide ballot would have committed $17 billion over 40 years, including $430 million per year, of general fund monies to a wide variety of water projects without legislative oversight. Proposition 3 included dozens of worthy projects, including projects for wetlands and watersheds, and clean water projects for people, fish, and birds. However, about half the money raised to promote the measure came from groups and individuals seeking specific projects and improvements. Infrastructure work that shifts costs from end users to California taxpayers is not appropriate for general obligation bond funding, and water users need to fund these kinds of projects by other means.

Unrealistic Water Expectations

A report published in August 2014 by UC Davis researchers found that California has issued water rights for at least five times more surface water than the state receives on average from precipitation, although the same water may be used multiple times by different rights holders. One result is “paper water,” which are water rights issued for a watershed that exceed the amount that is actually available; or water service contract allocations within a project that prove to be consistently unreliable. The long-term effect of this over-allocation of surface water rights has not been obvious until recently because most urban and rural users supplement surface water with groundwater. In the 20th century, groundwater provided 30% to over 50% of the water Californians used, depending on whether a year was wet or dry. Meanwhile, our watersheds, wetlands, and endangered species habitats have been compromised by a water rights system that was not designed to value environmental water.

An especially controversial current process relating to expectations about water
availability is the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan developed by the State Water Resources Control Board. The completed phase of this plan requires flow management in the three Lower San Joaquin River tributaries to send more water through the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta and result in improved water quality for users, including fisheries and habitat. Flows on tributaries to the Sacramento River will be addressed in the second phase of the plan, now under development. Interests concerned about the ecosystem health of the Delta and the Estuary argue that even the flows required by the Water Board are too low. Meanwhile, some agricultural and municipal users relying on water from these tributaries, including some Bay Area municipal users depending on transfers from Sierra watersheds, argue that the proposed flow requirements will be devastating for their economies. Regardless of what the Water Board decides, litigation is certain.

Meeting the requirements of the Bay Delta Water Quality Control Plan would make it difficult for some regions to meet the requirements of the Sustainable Groundwater Management Act (SGMA), that was passed by the Legislature in 2014. This historic Act requires local groundwater users to manage their basins to control groundwater overdraft. One way to do that is to use more surface water, but in some areas, flow requirements for fisheries and habitat will make surface water less available. Water managers are also uncertain about the extent to which the State Water Resources Control board will permit groundwater recharge projects using surface flows.

**Unpredictable Future Supplies**

Complicating the contested water supply situation even further is the fact that the 20th century was the wettest of the past millennium, not just in California but throughout the American Southwest. Although the century was punctuated by several multi-year droughts, much of the time there was enough snow and rain to support generous allocations of water for agricultural and urban development. But by the first decade of the 21st century, it had become apparent that changing climate conditions will affect the amount, location, and timing of precipitation relied on by the water system, creating both increased risks of flooding and delivery uncertainties, as well as increased risks of wildfires. We can expect what we think of as drought conditions to become the norm rather than the exception.

A recent report by the Public Policy Institute of California (PPIC), *Managing Drought in a Changing Climate*, points out that although groundwater is California's drought reserve, excessive pumping during droughts is responsible for radical groundwater overdraft, especially in the arid southern Central Valley. High temperatures amplify the effects of drought, and we can expect to see more high temperature days year round. Higher temperatures also affect surface water by causing harmful algal blooms, algae that grow out of control and produce toxic or harmful effects on people, fish, shellfish, marine mammals and birds. Shrinking snowpack, with more precipitation falling as rain than as snow, will change the timing of water entering the system and consequently how we will need to manage it to continue the economic activities to which we are accustomed.
Urban Southern California will have to rely less on water from the Colorado River as other states in the Colorado River Basin begin to use their own entitlements and as an 18+-year-long drought intensifies in the Southwest. This will also affect agriculture in the Imperial and Coachella Valleys and the amount of water available for Salton Sea restoration.

Fortunately, some agricultural regions are better situated than others to adapt to changing climate conditions and water supply uncertainties without heavy reliance on expensive storage and transfer infrastructure.

**Quality of Life Considerations**

Dr. Jeffrey Mount of the PPIC has noted that urban areas, which generate 98% of California’s GDP, did fairly well in the most recent drought, although they do not have urban water management plans robust enough to manage future droughts.

Meanwhile, although agriculture in California represents less than two percent of the state’s GDP, that statistic does not reflect either the large volume of water it takes to grow food or the importance of the agricultural sector to California’s quality of life. California and the nation have not had public discussions about how to put a dollar value on food security, and we have not sufficiently investigated how to make growing food for hungry people work effectively on a large scale with agricultural markets. We also take for granted our world-class wine grape growing regions, as well as the benefits of living near areas that produce crops not just for export but for local consumption. A variety of public institutions and non-governmental organizations are helping farmers adapt their cropping decisions and agricultural practices to changing climatic and water supply conditions.

The Human Right to Water Act, passed by the California Legislature in 2012, recognizes that “every human being has the right to safe, clean, affordable, and accessible drinking adequate for human consumption, cooking, and sanitary purposes.” The State Water Resources Control Board has identified dozens of water systems throughout California that are out of compliance with health standards. People in rural and agricultural areas, and those served by small community systems, are especially vulnerable. Even if government funding is available to install water treatment infrastructure, paying for ongoing operation and maintenance can be out of reach for small economically disadvantaged communities. Legislation to address these issues failed to pass in 2017-2018, and will be reintroduced in the 2019-2020 session.

**Water References:**
- LWVC Positions on Water and Agriculture
- LWVUS Positions on Natural Resources
- Recommended resources: Water Priorities for California’s Next Governor and California’s Water, Public Policy Institute of California, November 2018.
Question 3: Public Education In California – Closing the Achievement Gap

Large achievement and opportunity gaps still persist in California by race, ethnicity, income and English learner status. School finance reforms have helped districts improve student outcomes, but these gaps still persist. The recently released *Getting Down To Facts II* study concludes that California’s public schools need a continued focus on closing achievement gaps through multiple approaches, but this time with early childhood education being a priority because of “the disproportionate achievement gap that already exists when children enter kindergarten.” In fact, early childhood education is identified as one of the three areas representing “the major (public education) policy challenges of the coming decade” and Governor-elect Gavin Newsom has clearly stated his commitment to universal preschool and early childhood education.

For years closing the achievement and opportunity gaps has been both a clear state and local priority. We join with the researchers in asking a different and equally important question: "Are there ways to avoid the gaps in the first place?" As a legislator, what are your thoughts about the findings of Getting Down to Facts II? What action(s) would you support to further these goals?

**Background on Question 3: Public Education In California – Closing the Achievement Gap**

The questions of Early Childhood Education and universal preschool for four-year-olds may sound simple and intuitive, however, there are many questions and factors that need to be taken into account.

One of the simplest introductions to early childhood education can be found at Ed100.org, which asks the following basic questions in Lesson 4.1. - Does early childhood education work? Does pre-school save money? Should all kids go to preschool? How many kids are in preschool? Why doesn’t California provide preschool for all? How much does preschool cost? … and more.

*EdSource* cites the Getting Down to Facts II finding that the big achievement gap for California’s low- and middle-income children relative to their peers in other states starts in kindergarten, indicating a need to significantly expand preschool and quality child care. When inclusive, early learning programs can be seen as preventive: they can head off achievement gaps before they happen. California’s achievement gap, one of the biggest in the nation, is not because of failures in K-12 education -- rather, it is because of “the disproportionate achievement gap when children enter kindergarten.”

For those who question the value of early childhood education, including preschool, we just need to look at practices of parents who have the means to provide these early opportunities. Parents who can afford to will send their children to enriching preschools or provide stimulating learning environments. They want their children to have the best opportunities to succeed when they enter the K-12 system.
Research, including the LWVC’s Education Update Study of 2003-5, leads to the conclusion that investing in access to preschool for all children will put the state's K-12 schools in a better position to succeed. The resulting updated LWVC public policy position includes a section titled Equitable Access to Quality Education: Readiness to Learn. It states that “All children should enter school ready to learn to their fullest potential. Measures to ensure this are (a} school readiness programs, including universal access to preschools that are high quality, developmentally appropriate and voluntary, and (b) outreach to and support for parents of young children to enable parents to contribute to their child’s readiness to learn.”

Scientific American reports the largest study to date of publicly funded early education (pre-K) programs and shows a major, sustained educational boost.

State Intent

Since 2014, the California Legislature has made a significant push to increase full-day programs in state-subsidized preschool for low-income children. Senate Bill 858, which Gov. Jerry Brown signed in June 2014, stated clearly that “it is the intent of the state to provide all low-income 4-year-old children from working families with full-day, full-year early education and care.” However, as described in an EdSource article, California still has a ways to go in offering full-day preschool. And, in 2015 Gov. Brown vetoed a policy bill that would have set a date to expand access to preschool to all four-year-olds in low-income households. The context for the veto and response from Early Edge California can be found here.

Challenges: Access, Quality

Researchers have asked whether the gap reflects less access to preschool and child care programs or the poorer quality of programs attended by low-income children. But seven studies of early childhood education led by Deborah Stipek, professor and former dean of Stanford’s Graduate School of Education, conclude it’s both. In an interview, she stated that “Just addressing one factor in isolation won't solve the problem.”

- High costs to parents: Childcare costs consume on average a third of the median income of a single parent.
- Low pay to workers: 58 percent of childcare workers qualify for public assistance. Early educators are among the lowest-paid workers in the country.
- Low training requirements: Training requirements for early childhood teachers are among the lowest in the nation.
- Insufficient regulation: Low-income children comprise 90 percent of children in unlicensed childcare programs.
Challenges: Fiscal

The State of Preschool 2015, a nationwide study, found that California is behind other states, putting our students at an ongoing disadvantage. According to the report, 18 percent of California 4-year-olds and 8 percent of 3-year-olds were attending preschool in 2015. By comparison, Oklahoma had 75 percent of its 4-year-olds in state preschool and West Virginia had 68 percent of its 4-year-olds in state preschool. It points out that these aren’t states that have a lot of money; California is far wealthier. It’s about how political leadership sets priorities. More information about this report can be found here.

A question commonly asked when debating what universal preschool in California should look like is, of course, a fiscal one. **The question:** Given competing priorities, can we afford the ongoing expense of a universal preschool system. The converse of that is – can we afford not to?

- According to Ed100.org, the cost of a year of public preschool in California (about $7,000 in 2018) is less than a twelfth the cost of a year of prison. At a societal level, universal early education is almost universally acknowledged as a smart investment. Estimates of the long-term return on investment from preschool programs range from a low of 200%-400% (based on a meta-analysis of multiple studies) to 700% or more. These gains come in the form of fewer students being held back or getting involved in crime, and more graduating from high school and college and earning higher salaries in their careers.

- A report from RAND finds even more evidence of the importance of early learning. "Investing Early: Taking Stock of Outcomes and Economic Returns from Early Childhood Programs."

- A new California coalition, The Alliance for Continuous Improvement, made up of most major California education-related organizations, has laid-out an eight-point plan that calls for more K-12 funding, early childhood education, and better data systems. More information is available on its website: California Education GPS.

- The California Legislative Analyst has recommended full-day preschool for all low-income working families -- that there should be a focus on unserved eligible children before expanding eligibility.

- A 2017 study from Brookings suggests "that if limited resources rule out a universal program, then the best strategy may be to target pre-K services to disadvantaged communities rather than to disadvantaged children." See Brookings site.