



VOTER

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 League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County

Message from your Co-Presidents



Cindy Marie Absey and Ann Havlik

History repeats itself. In 1920, as suffragists and others supporting women’s rights were celebrating the passage of the 19th Amendment and the creation of the League of Women Voters, a strain of influenza known as the Spanish Flu was finally abating. It had killed an estimated 50 to 100 million people worldwide and infected up to a third of the world’s population. Then, as now, the origins of the outbreak were debated, many governments were slow to act and quick to deflect blame, and there were serious shortages of medical personnel and supplies. As in the current COVID-19 pandemic, people were advised to avoid infection and stop the spread by washing

hands, staying home, and wearing masks. Bogus cures appealed to people’s fears and hopes. In 1920, life went on, but the world would suffer long-term effects for decades. Our 2020 pandemic story is still unfolding, and only time will tell how effectively we managed this crisis.

As most of us learn to adapt to restrictions to our lives, we recognize the suffering of those who have died, lost family and friends, and the added stress to those who are laid off work, homeless, or living on the margins. States and counties have rolled out emergency and stopgap measures to promote public safe-

[Cont. Co-Presidents.” p. 6](#)

Happy 100TH Anniversary, League of Women Voters!

Juliane McAdam

Ask anyone who was there—our February 22nd League Centennial luncheon was a huge success! The 188 attendees, including 50-plus-year League members, government officials, friends of the League, and our 8th grade student essay contest winners, gathered in the Grand Ballroom of the Embassy Suites. Displays set

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up around the edge of the room as you entered allowed people to see the framed proclamations from the SLO County Board of Supervisors and our State Legislators commemorating two of the 19th Amendment’s centennial milestones last year. Other tables highlighted various activities of our League: Civil Discourse, Democracy Concierge, and Voter Registration.

After a welcome from our co-presidents, we were treated to a surprise visit from Carrie Chapman Catt, League founder, delivering remarks from her original speech to the League, updated with an inspiring call for the future. (Our thanks to actress **Cynthia Anthony** for her stirring portrayal of Catt.) During Catt’s speech, and throughout the program, a rolling slide show appeared on the two big screens, featuring historical photos and photos of League activities.

Of the nine student essay contest winners, eight attended the luncheon, along with their English/social studies teacher from Los Osos Middle School. As the students were recognized, each received a certificate and gift card from the League, presented by San Luis Coastal Unified Superintendent Eric Prater. Students also received a special certificate from our congressman, Salud Carbajal.

Our keynote speaker, **Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins** (more about her elsewhere in *The Voter*) told us at the outset that she would probably say things that made us uncomfortable. Several people afterward reflected that

yes, her remarks about racial inequality in the League, both historically and now, were difficult to hear but that they needed to be said; her speech was very well received. Following Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins, we heard from documentary filmmaker Beth Pitton-August and watched the trailer for her film “Just the Beginning—100 years of women’s political power.”

Our own **Julie Rodewald** talked about the various activities of our very active League, from high school voter registration to Democracy Concierge to Civil Discourse and more. It was apparent that many non-League members in attendance were not aware of—and were impressed by—all that our League does. Following Julie, local documentary filmmaker Sky Bergman briefly talked about her new film *Forever Voters*, which profiles our program in the county’s high schools. Three of the teachers featured in the film attended the luncheon and were recognized

[See page 3 for photos of the anniversary celebration.](#)

for the wonderful work they do.

All in all, the luncheon was a jubilant celebration of the first 100 years of the League of Women Voters! Huge thanks go to our luncheon sponsors, The Community Foundation of SLO County and the San Luis Obispo Repertory Theater. And thank you to all who attended!

Zooming in on New Members

Deb Humphreys

So how do we get our new LWVSLO members introduced and oriented without our typical in-person welcome event? Between July 2019 and now, through the excellent outreach and interesting political times, our LWVSLO now has thirty-three new members. Word is spreading through our fine Membership Committee outreach, LWVSLO Website, special programming, City Council Concierge Service, and mostly, word of mouth.

The Membership Committee is offering new members an opportunity to be oriented through their choice of one of two separate Zoom Orientation meetings either May 6th 2:00-3:30 PM or May 15th 11:00-12:30. We are hopeful that the two separate meetings can result in a larger number of participants.

The Objectives of each meeting are to 1) get acquainted, 2) provide a bigger picture of LWVSLO’s structure, history, guiding principles, and protocol, 3) introduce LWVSLO programs, program leads, activities, and contributions, 4) identify LWVSLO opportunities to contribute, and to 5) determine new member interest areas.

To our new members we send a grand “Welcome” and hope that you will initiate contact with those program area leads to indicate your interest in and readiness to contribute.



In Case You Missed Our Super 100th Anniversary Celebration.....



To Finish the Fight

Glenn Silloway

Carrie Chapman Catt called on the suffragists who formed the League of Women Voters in 1920 to organize around a new purpose: to help newly enfranchised women make good use of their votes. She called on them “to finish the fight.”

At the LWVSLO Centennial Celebration luncheon on February 22, **Dr. Carolyn Jefferson-Jenkins** made the Catt quotation the theme of her keynote address. Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins is especially qualified to talk on the issue because she was the first (and only) woman of color to be elected President of the League of Women Voters US. She was in office when the issues of voting rights and voter participation were already highly charged, and these issues like voter suppression and gerrymandering are now at the heart of the League’s national program. We do not now have voting equality, especially since the Supreme Court’s

gutting of the Voting Rights Act of 1965.

The theme of her talk was about how women of color have been left behind from the very beginning of the League. League practices adapted to state and local policies such as Jim Crow laws that effectively disenfranchised minority voters in some jurisdictions.

Look at this famous photo of suffragists marching in a fine formation to demand their voting equality rights and note that something is missing. These women are all white. There were black women in this march too, but they were made to walk at the back.

Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins has just published a book about the role of



race in the formation and history of the League of Women Voters. It shows how League policy and practice chose practicality over principle when issues of race were concerned.

For example, when Carrie Chapman Catt was working to get states to sign on to ratify the 19th Amendment, she made the pitch to Southern states that giving

Looking Back Over Our First 50 Years!

An Interview with Jan Clucas

Jan Clucas was a founding member of our League. She served as president in 1961 – 1962 and again in 1980 – 1981. Jan passed away on March 16, 2020 at the age of 98. This interview was first published in the VOTER in August 2010. We are reprinting it here to honor her memory.

Having been active in the Ann Arbor, MI and Sacramento Leagues, **Jan Clucas** found she missed both the friendships and nonpartisan citizen roles available in the League after moving to San Luis Obispo in 1956. In the late 1950s she met **Anna Alexander**, also a former League member, through their son's nursery schools and over the next two years they began to discuss forming a citizen-based group. Thus in 1961, Jan and Anna, together with about 10 other ladies, many of them having family affiliations with Cal Poly, started the SLO League of Women Voters. That first year they met in homes and childcare was provided. Jan remembers **Ruth Worship** as an enthusiastic member instrumental in their success.

The new organization was warmly welcomed by the press and city officials as the reputation of the League preceded them. Their high standards for nonpartisanship and scholarship were nationally recognized. The new group immediately had to break up into units that met on different nights because their rapidly increasing membership outgrew the capacity of their homes. By the end of the first year LWVSLO had 100 members!

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Ken Schwartz (1925-2019)

Ken Schwartz was an important community leader in San Luis Obispo City and County for many years. A professor of Architecture at Cal Poly for 36 years (1952-1988), he served as Mayor of San Luis Obispo for ten years (1969-1979), as well as later serving on the Planning Commissions of both the City and County, and on the San Luis Obispo City Council. He is perhaps best remembered for his leadership in the creation of Mission Plaza, where there was a

With Ken's passing a bequest of \$30,195 from the Schwartz family trust came to the local League, for which we are very grateful.

community uprising against paving over San Luis Obispo Creek to make a parking lot in the late 1960s! Ken led a group of Cal Poly students in a design exercise to develop the Plaza as an alternative to the parking lot, and that plan was eventually adopted by the City and built largely with volunteers. That effort got Ken elected, and he was an advocate for the City's environment—and especially San Luis Obispo Creek—ever since.

Both Ken and his wife Martha (1925-2004) were strong supporters of the local LWV. Martha was active with the local League, serving as its president from 1983 to 1987, and was also active in management of the historic Jack House on Marsh Street for many years.

With Ken's passing a bequest of \$30,195 from the Schwartz fami-

ly trust came to the local League, for which we are very grateful. The Budget Committee has made recommendations to the League's Board of Directors for some possible uses of that bequest, including the following items:

- Sponsoring educational forums for the community (e.g., Homelessness in SLO Co., Water preservation measures, Fire dangers and mitigation measures).
- Promoting activities that engage members and benefit the community (e.g., regular meetings with speakers addressing pertinent local issues).
- Renting a storage unit for League assets
- Paying someone to promote our interest on social media for a few hours per month
- Paying someone to create a new website
- Hiring a financial adviser to help us with investing the majority of the bequest.

Annual Meeting in the Time of COVID-19

Save the Date – June 20, 2020

To our members:

As of this writing, the League of Women Voters of San Luis Obispo County is planning to hold our 2020 Annual Meeting on June 20, 2020. If the event can be held in person, we will have a brunch meeting at the Madonna Inn. If the event cannot be held in person, because of social distancing and other restrictions required to contain the spread of COVID-19, we will find a way to conduct it through an electronic platform. We are currently investigating the options and will keep you advised about the course we decide to take. We are looking for the option that will best provide a secure platform for a successful and inclusive meeting.

We thank you all for your support and understanding in this time of uncertainty. We assure you that we will continue to work to defend our democracy and protect the right to vote.

We urge you to take care of yourselves and your loved ones. Stay safe. Stay sane. Be well.



Here's what our April LWV Board meeting looked like on our Zoom conferencing app.



[“Co-Presidents,” from p. 1](#)

ty and minimize infection rates. The safety of its citizens is the first job of government, but history cautions us that in times of crisis governments can misuse their powers to justify barriers to democratic institutions, suspend rights and services, and amend regulatory protections, sometimes indefinitely. To help preserve the democratic values and principles we hold dear, our vigilance is needed now more than ever.

Recent news stories reveal the challenges inherent in balancing the protection and safety of citizens with legal rights and services and a healthy economy. Inevitably, partisan politics colors and even drives events—and facts can be obscured in the mire of falsehoods and “spin.” These headlines offer opportunities for a deeper dive into details, discussion with family and friends, and personal advocacy and action.

March 26, *New York Times*:
“EPA, Citing Coronavirus, Drastically Reduces Rule for Polluters”

April 3, 2020, *Newsweek*: “Are Abortions Considered Elective Procedures During Coronavirus? A State by State Round-up”

April 18, 2020, *Los Angeles Times*: “As Coronavirus Restriction Protests Take Place Across the US, Trump Defends Demonstrators”

April 19, 2020, *Wall Street Journal*: “Coronavirus Intensifies Legal Tussle Over Voting Rights; Pandemic Adds Twist to Some Long Simmering Controversies Playing Out During 2020 Election Cycle”

We are in strange and troubling times that call for our resilience, patience, and compassion. To stay connected with our board and committee members, we are using all available forms of technology, including online meetings, to share information and conduct essential business. If necessary, our Annual Meeting of all members on June 20 will be conducted online. We extend our heartfelt wishes to our members and their loved ones to stay safe and healthy and look forward to brighter days ahead.

LWVSLOCO Adds 33 New Members

Mary Bianchi

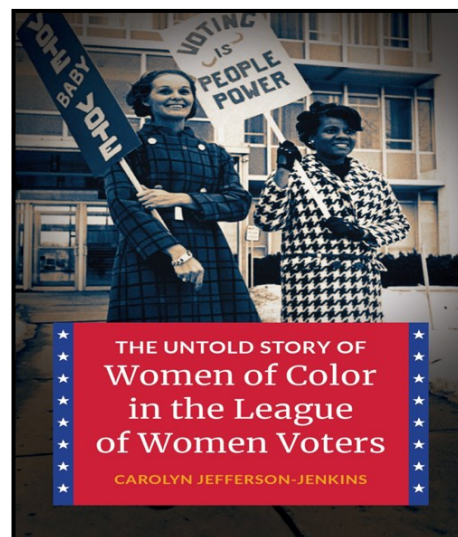
The Membership/Mentoring Committee touches the participation of every member of our local League chapter throughout their volunteer life with the League. We are responsible for greeting new members into our local chapter and providing new member

mentoring. The important Member Directory is part of our committee responsibilities and we also provide monthly updates as new members join our local chapter. We work with other League committees to coordinate collection of yearly dues. Our committee members

[Cont. “Membership,” p. 10](#)

[“Fight,” from p. 4](#)

women the vote would strengthen white supremacy. When the League held conventions, it often used hotels that would not serve blacks. When it came time to recognize a state or local League chapter, the decision was made based on the policy that each jurisdiction could be represented by just one League. That meant that if the local League did not



allow black women to be full members, the recognized chapter was segregated. Black women responded by forming their own organizations, and they continued to cooperate with and join local Leagues if possible. But they were not fully part of the League.

Today the LWVUS is working to attract more people of color as members (since 1974, of both sexes). Dr. Jefferson-Jenkins was instrumental in starting the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) program of the League. Despite the effort, the League remains a disproportionately white organization. We have work to do.



Voter Services Recap of Activities for March Primary Election

Julie Rodewald

As I write this recap of Voter Services activities since January, we are all under shelter in place orders and hopefully staying healthy and sane during this extraordinary time. The March primary was just over a month ago and in the lead up, the members of our local League, like Leagues around the country, participated in the grass roots efforts to educate voters and encourage them, as well as give them the tools to be active participants in their community and government. As Voter Services Director, I am so proud of the non-partisan work our members are doing in our own community. While I will only mention by name the team leaders for these efforts, I know that behind every leader are many, many members whose commitment make these projects such a success and I want to thank them for giving so willingly of their time and expertise.

Candidate Forums--The League always gets rave reviews for our commitment to educating the public with our candidate forums and this election was no exception. Co-chairs **Marilee Hyman** and **Valerie Steenson** spearheaded three candidate forums for county supervisorial candidates in partnership with Latino Outreach Council and NAACP. Two were held in San Luis Obispo and one in Paso Robles. A big thanks to all who volunteered for the various roles necessary to conduct a successful forum. In addition, the groundwork has been laid to partner with Cal Poly Associated Students and Cuesta College's student government to present forums for Congressional, Assembly, and State Senate candidates in the fall.

Voter's Edge--The *Voter's Edge* team, ably led by **Shelly Higginbotham**, contacted all candidates on the ballot for the March election and were rewarded with a 75% participation rate of our non-central committee candidates. This was the 4th highest in the state, and we far exceeded the statewide average of 58%. Shelly and the team continued to spread the word about this valuable resource with outreach to the media and at public meetings.



Adopt-A-Poll--The League staffed three polling places for the March 3rd election, with **Marilee Hyman**, **Patti Dale**, and **Julie Rodewald** fulfilling the role of precinct inspector and many of our members working throughout the day. This is a great fundraiser for the League as we earned over \$1,500, but it also provided our members an opportunity to be involved in this most important part of our democracy. Many changes were instituted before this election, new procedures, voting machines and same day registration at every polling place, but our League members were well trained and performed their duties with their usual commitment to excellence and professionalism. It was so rewarding to see the smiles on the faces of first-time voters and receive the heartfelt thanks from voters as they cast their ballots on Election Day.

Voter Registration--The High School Registration team visited

five schools and registered or pre-registered over 220 students, many of whom were eligible to vote in the March primary. As part of our follow-up with students who sign our voting pledge, text messages or emails were sent to over 1,000 eligible voters to remind them about Election Day and encourage their participation at the polls. In addition, League members participated in the Women's March and resource fairs at Cuesta College and registered 33 voters.

So, Now What for Voter Services?

With the County, State, and Country on virtual lockdown many questions remain as to what is next for our community voter services efforts. At the time of this article, there are not many concrete answers, but that does not mean that the League's work is done. Perhaps even more during this time, the presence and steady hand of the League will be necessary to help our community navigate the challenges presented around participation in voter registration, education and voting activities.

All Vote-by-Mail in November? San Luis Obispo County has the opportunity to participate in the Voter's Choice Act just like every other county in California. However, this move presents significant challenges even in the best of times, including opening multiple vote centers for weeks and many more in the days immediately preceding the election. To address the requirements of shelter in place and social distancing, the Governor

[Cont. "Services," p. 11](#)



League Supports “a Citizen’s Right to Know” during the Current Pandemic

“The League of Women Voters believes that democratic government...requires that governmental bodies protect the citizen’s right to know by giving adequate notice of proposed actions, holding open meetings, and making public records accessible.” LWVUS

The League of Women Voters of California has provided guidance to local Leagues concerning government transparency, public access to government decision-making, and government accountability during the coronavirus pandemic. The League is concerned that some governments – cities, counties, school districts, special districts, as well the state government in California – are either reducing or completely suspending transparency rules. While recognizing that governments have limited resources, and that the current crisis means already thin resources are stretched even more thinly, League principles, state law, and the California Supreme Court support the need for governmental transparency. Access to information is a fundamental and necessary right of every person in this state; openness in government is essential to the functioning of a democracy.

LWVC urges local Leagues to monitor their local governments and push back if they attempt to suspend transparency rules. Public access to meetings and to information about government business is just as crucial in times of crisis as at any other time. Governments must remain functional and the people have the right to know about how they are operating. Delayed responses to requests for public records may be inevitable,

but these requests should not be totally ignored. Governments are obliged to take reasonable measures to make their records available to the public. Leagues should urge all reasonable measures be taken to ensure that governments continue to provide information to the public and the press. Governments should not be allowed to take advantage of the opportunity that this crisis provides to make major decisions without public input if these decisions can reasonably be postponed.

League member **Eric Greening’s** cogent letter to the *New Times* (March 27, 2020) on constitutional rights in a time of crisis follows below:

We still need public access to government meetings

Much attention is rightly being given in our current crisis to damage to the economy and how interrupted livelihoods might be restored or mitigated. What has gotten almost no attention, and needs it, is damage to our constitutional rights, and a much-needed conversation on how to ensure their restoration when medically possible. The right of the people to peaceably assemble and to petition the government for a redress of grievances slipped away in an instant with no apparent notice. I understand the overriding need to prohibit all gatherings at this time, but, knowing that for virtually every political and social advance in our nation's history the exercise of this right has been central to its struggle for success, I watch

[Cont. “Greening,” p.15](#)

[“Clucas,” from p. 4](#)

A first order of business for the new league was to conduct a “*Know Your Town*” study – a look at their town and its needs, areas that could benefit from League advocacy. Nonpartisanship was respected and stressed; political parties were never mentioned at meetings. Even though it took more preparation, Jan felt scheduling unit meetings with small group discussions was essential to their early success. The meetings moved from individual homes to local churches and schools and then by 1963 into public meeting rooms provided by local banks.

In 1962, when Jan moved to Palos Verdes, **Anna Alexander** became the second LWVSLO president. Years later Jan returned to SLO, moved into her present house, and again, in 1980, became president. One issue she especially remembers was when PG&E invited the League to tour Diablo Canyon Power Plant. The League was asked to send the names of those who would take the tour. PG&E sent word that two of the League members could not participate (because they were also members of Mothers for Peace), and the LWVSLO replied, “Then none of us will come.”

Looking forward to our second half century, Jan reminded us that the League name and reputation for excellence is entrusted to us while Voter Service continues to be our most important activity. She would like to see a return to units/small discussion groups as valuable tools in maintaining an active membership. She was personally hesitant about open membership, feeling that “women

[Cont. “Clucas,” p. 15](#)



SCHOOLS & COMMUNITIES FIRST

Alex Stack

Schools & Communities First Makes History With Most Ever Signatures Submitted

To qualify for the November 2020 ballot, Schools & Communities First submits more than 1.7 million signatures of support

Today, the Schools & Communities First campaign is proud to announce the [submission of more than 1.7 million signatures of support to qualify for the November 2020 ballot](#) – the most signatures ever submitted in California for a ballot initiative. This historic benchmark was achieved weeks ahead of schedule and surpassed the original 1.6 million goal set by the campaign.

In a sign of the Schools & Communities First coalition’s robust statewide infrastructure and support, a massive grassroots volunteer operation collected more than 410,000 signatures of the total – an unprecedented number. This statewide infrastructure will be key to victory in November.

“Schools & Communities First is proud to make history by submitting more than 1.7 million signatures of support from Californians, illustrating the momentum and support for this initiative. Now more than ever, we need to support those heroes on the front lines who have been caring for the most vulnerable, educating our children, and keeping Californians

safe – the Schools & Communities First initiative puts more resources back in the hands of local leaders who best know how to address local needs and priorities.” – Alex Stack, Schools & Communities First Communications Director

The Schools & Communities First coalition is composed of everyday Californians who are motivated for the common good, and groups and organizations advocating on behalf of those on the front lines throughout the state who deliver critical services and hold our communities together:

“For months leading up to the crisis we find ourselves in now, thousands of volunteers gathered signatures from voters eager to create a California where all people can belong, whatever their race or where they come from. This is reason to celebrate in the midst of a very challenging time for families in our communities. These 1.7 million signatures represent 1.7 million reasons to pass Schools & Communities First in November, in support of our teachers, public health workers, nurses, doctors, sanitation workers, and first responders who are saving lives and making our communities more resilient.” – Joseph Tomás Mckellar of PICO California, a network of faith-based, multicultural community organizations repre-

senting 400 congregations and 450,000 families across California dedicated to developing clergy and grassroots community leaders to enrich congregational life through racial and economic justice

“Whether during a crisis or in normal times, schools and colleges are the heart of our communities. That’s why CFT members have made Schools & Communities First our top priority, and we are proud to have collected 20,000 signatures to help qualify this critical initiative.

Today, we, alongside our labor and community partners, are submitting these signatures to qualify Schools & Communities First for the November ballot.”

– Jeff Freitas, a former high school math teacher and president of the California Federation of Teachers, a union of educators and classified employees committed to promoting high-quality education and securing the conditions necessary to provide the best services to California’s students

“San Diegans are thrilled to have done their part in providing the most signatures ever submitted in California for a ballot initiative. These signatures send a strong message that we need to prioritize resources to cities and counties so they can respond to health threats and

[Cont. “First,” p. 10](#)



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maintain expertise with the National Member Database and report our member numbers to the National League Organization for inclusion in the National Roster and for payment of our program participation fees. Our mentoring group coordinates introductory meetings to help new members find their niche within our chapter activities.



Our sincere thanks to these generous members and friends of our League. You make it possible for us to do what we do. Thank you!

**Community Foundation
San Luis Obispo County
Maggie & Bob Higgins
Gloria Chun Hoo
Howard Miller
Wendy Most
Vallerie & Gary Steenson
Mary Beth Stromberg
Mendi Stubson
Gail Wechsler**

This wonderful support from such dedicated members is greatly appreciated.

“First,” from p. 9

other community needs quickly and compassionately. Let their signatures be a reminder that we still need to support our teachers and frontline responders who are called to rise to every crisis in support of our community’s well-being.”
– *Andrea Guerrero of Alliance San Diego, a community empowerment organization working to ensure that all people can achieve their full potential in an environment of harmony, safety, equality, and justice*

“The overwhelming support for the Schools and Communities first initiative is reflected by the 1.7 million signatures, the most ever gathered in California, to put this important measure on the ballot. At this moment, we are witnessing the need for this very measure as educators, healthcare workers, first responders and communities as a whole grapple with the COVID-19 pandemic and its effects on each one of our lives. The lack of resources has become ever-so-evident with so many students and families across California not having access to internet or computers. Schools & Communities First will help provide the resources our students, families and communities need for public education, healthcare, housing and public safety. Thank you to all who have joined with educators and our broad coalition to put this measure before California’s voters.” – *E. Toby Boyd, kindergarten teacher and President of the California Teachers Association, the voice of 310,000 educators in California’s public schools and colleges*

“This historic accomplishment doesn’t come easy, and it illustrates the fact that Californians overwhelmingly want to bring more resources back locally for our critical government services and schools. Those local leaders on the front lines know exactly what the most pressing needs are in their communities, and now more than ever we must ensure they have the tools at their disposal to continue doing their jobs.” – *Anthony Thigpen of California Calls, an alliance of 31 grassroots organizations throughout the state dedicated to engaging, educating, and motivating new and infrequent voters to make California’s electorate reflect the state’s diverse population*

“Nurses, clinic workers, school workers, home care workers, and so many other dedicated workers are at the front lines of this crisis, caring for our seniors, our children, and the sick. Now more than ever we need strong and well prepared communities and infrastructure to meet moments like these. That’s why SEIU members gathered so many signa-

[Cont. “First,” p. 13](#)



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“Services,” from p. 7

signed an executive order in late March that allows special elections taking place in April and May (LA, Riverside, and Ventura County) to be conducted as all vote-by-mail. In addition, he included this message about the November General Election:

The Secretary of State’s office recognizes that further changes may need be needed to safely administer the November 2020 General Election. While the impacts felt by the current health pandemic are developing on a daily basis, the Secretary of State is reviewing options for the safe and healthy administration of the November General Election. Any changes to election administration would be made in collaboration with county elections officials, the State Legislature, and the Governor. The goal of any changes would be to protect voting rights, voting access, public health and public safety.

The statewide association of Clerks and Elections Officials (CACEO) has sent a proposal to the Secretary of State and the Governor to allow all counties to send every voter a vote-by-mail ballot for the General Election. Vote centers to assist voters with replacement ballots and same day registration could be opened, but the number and duration of those would be left to County discretion. To ensure that counties can properly prepare for the conduct of the election, a decision on the approach should be forthcoming within the next month, so stay tuned for more information on this front. On our local level, we will be advocating for a seat at the table with the County Clerk-Recorder to make plans for the best approach to ensure protection

of voting rights and access as well as public health and safety.

Virtual Voter Registration Outreach--I consider California voters fortunate to have access to online voter registration as they do not have to seek out a paper form to participate in this important process. With schools shuttered, our high school registration program has hit the pause button. We would have been visiting San Luis and Lopez High Schools in the spring as they have new students who have not yet heard our presentation. I am working with those teachers to ensure we can reach out to their students and encourage them to register or pre-register to vote online. I will also be reaching out to our dedicated high school teachers for presentations (perhaps virtual) in the fall to ensure all students have the opportunity to register to vote. The League will have other opportunities to promote online voter registration, which while it doesn’t offer the same excitement and fulfillment as in-person registration, does accomplish this necessary step in the voting process.

What Does Voter Education Look Like? While the media attention for the November General Election will be focused on the Presidential contest, the ballot will be packed with other contests as well. Congressional and State Assembly and Senate contests are on the ballot along with Mayors and City Councilmembers for all seven cities, school board members, and district directors for all independent (water, hospital and community

services) districts throughout the county. In addition, there will be state and local measures. It is for these local contests and state measures that the League has provided voter education in the form of candidate forums, pros & cons presentations, and active participation in *Voter’s Edge*. It is too early in this ever changing situation to know what will be advisable and allowable in the lead up to the General Election but our League will do our utmost, working with partners at Cal Poly, Cuesta and local media, to ensure voter access to candidate and measure information. In addition, *Voter’s Edge* will become an even more important tool for candidates and voters alike.

I realize in writing this article that there are many unknowns in relation to our election and voter registration activities, but I do know this – your San Luis Obispo League leadership will be laser focused on how to best provide the voter education services and resources for which we are known – but we cannot do it without your help. I encourage you to volunteer with our voter services committees and share with us if you have technology skills and knowledge that can help us attain our goals. Let us know of opportunities for voter registration outreach. Email or call me with suggestions and ideas for how to ensure we can continue to fulfill our important role of encouraging education and participation. Email me at voterservice@lwvslo.org or call (805) 235-5463. Thanks again for all you do and all your support for our voter services efforts.



What Do Civility and Civil Discourse Look Like at Teleconferenced Meetings?

First, we need to define the term “teleconference” and provide some background about how government meetings are currently being held since in-person meetings have been temporarily suspended during the COVID-19 pandemic. “Teleconferencing” is the generic umbrella term for remote viewing or remote listening to a meeting that is not in a physical location but held online via a desktop computer, laptop computer, iPhone, telephone, or iPad. There are a number of apps and platforms that organizations can use to hold online meetings. Some platforms can be used for meetings of any type or size, some are specific to a particular kind of meeting, e.g., medical or doctor conferences, and many have limitations on size and time. ZOOM is currently one of the most popular and widely used interactive online platforms. The Morro Bay City Council is currently using the ZOOM Webinar platform for its City Council Meetings. Many of you may already be familiar with ZOOM.

Our League now uses ZOOM for our League Board Meetings. The upcoming online New Member Orientation sessions on May 6th and May 15th will use the ZOOM platform. Currently, most government meetings are streamed live using Charter Cable Channel 20, which is good for remote observing but not for interactive participation. Most government meetings are recorded and archived for the public to view later. While public comment is primarily relegated now to mail, email, or

voicemail, government bodies, that are not using an audio-video conferencing platform like ZOOM, can and do include a “call-in” phone number on their website for use by the public during public comment or when a specific consent agenda item is addressed while broadcasting the meeting “live.” While teleconferencing is not new to many organizations, it has rarely been used as a substitute for in-person public meetings – until now – during this state of emergency because of COVID-19.

So what do the best practices of civility and civil discourse look like in this new virtual world? At this point, I think all of us have more questions than answers. With public libraries closed and government offices closed, how can members of the public who do not own or have access to computers participate in virtual public meetings? Many members of the public do not feel comfortable about using the devices they own. Can the “call-in” phone numbers delegated for public comment handle the volume? If you don’t have cable TV or a device to access the link for live streaming Channel 20, what do you do? Just as leadership is key for promoting civility and civil discourse, the host in a ZOOM meeting has the power to not only admit or not admit people to a meeting, mute participants’ audio, and recognize or not recognize participants using the “hand” to com-

[Cont. “Civility,” p. 13](#)

How Does the Public Participate in Teleconferenced Government Meetings?

Sharon E. Kimball

In compliance with the San Luis Obispo County Health Official’s March 18, 2020 Shelter at Home Order and Governor Newsom’s Executive Orders N-25-20, N-29-20, and N-35-20 from the Executive Department of the State of California, all government meetings for the San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisors, and the City Councils of Arroyo Grande, Atascadero, Grover Beach, Morro Bay, Paso Robles, Pismo Beach, and San Luis Obispo **will no longer be physically open to the public.** Instead City Council Members will be “teleconferenced” into the meeting consistent with these orders. So, what does this mean and how do Governor Newsom’s Executive Orders impact the California Brown and Bagley-Keene Acts’ primary purpose of providing that all meetings of a legislative body of a local agency are open and accessible to the public so that the public can attend and participate?

In an effort to keep up with technology, the Brown Act was comprehensively amended in 1994, 1997, and 1998 to allow a legislative body to use any type of teleconferencing to meet and perform other functions.

“Teleconference” is defined in the Brown Act as “a meeting of a legislative body, the members of which are in different loca-

[Cont. “Civility,” p. 13](#)



“Civility,” from p. 12

ment or ask a question but also the power to apply the best practices of civility and civil discourse in this new virtual world. For public members who are now relegated to using mail or email for their public comments, can the public trust that their public comments will be read verbatim into the record? Does the mayor or designee who reads into the record public comment sent by mail, email, and/or voicemail public have the right to censor or limit content that exceeds the 400 or 500 word limit?

Now that several Brown Act Rules have been temporarily suspended, can we trust that our leaders and government officials will follow the transparency laws and avoid making decisions and taking actions without adequate public notice and public participation – even if it is in the virtual world? Certainly it is more important than ever for the public to choose their

We hope they will not only be conscious of their choice of words, but aware of their tone of voice so they, too, can increase the positive impact of their message.

words carefully within the three-minute parameter using the best practices of civility and civil discourse if they want to increase the positive impact of their public comment messages. For the public whose voice will be heard “live,” we hope they will not only be conscious of their choice of words, but aware of their tone of voice so they, too, can increase the positive impact of their message. Our

League’s Democracy Concierge Service has been temporarily suspended during COVID-19 and we don’t foresee reopening this “in-person” service until there is either a cure or vaccine for COVID-19, as we don’t want to endanger the lives of any of our League volunteers regardless of age. We do think there are a number of Civil Discourse projects that could benefit San Luis Obispo County government bodies and the public using ZOOM.

Our Civil Discourse Leaders and Action Team will be exploring not only the question of “What does civility and civil discourse look like in a teleconferenced government meeting,” but we will also be exploring options for helping the public make their voices heard using the best practices of civility and civil discourse in this new virtual world. Our upcoming Civil Discourse ZOOM Meeting will be held after the May 15th New Member Orientation Session. Invitations will be extended to all current civil discourse members as well as new civil discourse members. If you have either participated in Civil Discourse projects in the past and want to again offer your skills and talents on our Civil Discourse Team or you are a new member and want to lend your voice, talents, and ideas to our new Civil Discourse projects, please call Sharon Kimball, Director of Civil Discourse at (989) 780-3669 or email her at sharon.e.kimball@gmail.com so we can send you an invitation to our upcoming Civil Discourse ZOOM brainstorming meeting.

“Participate,” from p. 12

tions, (Government Code 54953 (b)(4).) When a Governor declares a State of Emergency as Governor Newsom did on March 12, 2020, the Governor can invoke his authority under the State Constitution and Government Code sections 8567, 8571 and 8572 to issue Executive Orders N-25-20, N-29-20, and N-35-20 suspend various provisions of the Brown Act and the Bagley-Keene Act to authorize a local legislative body or state body to hold public meetings via teleconferencing and to make public meetings accessible telephonically or otherwise electronically to all members of the public so long as the legislative body provides easy to understand steps for accessing the meeting and submitting public comment as well as easy online access to all documents pertinent to each government meeting. These new teleconferencing procedures must provide platforms that satisfy ADA requirements and must be advertised to the public in multiple locations on the website and on each agenda for all government meetings. All submitted public comments by mail, email, and/or voicemail must be read into the record during the teleconferenced meeting.

While Executive Order N-35-20 waives certain restrictions on serial meetings and other provisions of the Brown Act and the Bagley-Keene Act to allow all members of a local legislative or state body to receive simultaneous informational updates relevant to the declared emergency – COVID-19 –

Cont. “Participate,” p. 16



LWV SLOCO—Events Calendar		
May 2020		
May 1—1:30 TO 4:00 PM	Board Meeting	Via Teleconference info@lwvslo.org
May 5—5:30 TO 7:00 PM	Democracy Concierge Services	SLO City Hall deborahumphreys@hotmail.com
May 6—2:00-3:30 PM	New Member Orientation	Via Teleconference deborahumphreys@hotmail.com
May 15—11:00 AM-12:30 PM	New Member Orientation	Via Teleconference deborahumphreys@hotmail.com
May 30— Postponed	Annual Meeting, Madonna Inn Garden Room	100 Madonna Road, SLO annhavlik@aol.com
June 2020		
June 2—5:30 TO 7:00 PM	Democracy Concierge Services	SLO City Hall, 990 Palm St. SLO deborahumphreys@hotmail.com
June 4— Cancelled	Fundraiser at SLO Rep, “The Marvelous Wonderettes”	888 Morro St., SLO wildarosene@gmail.com
June 5—1:30 TO 4:00 PM	Board Meeting	550 Dana St. SLO info@lwvslo.org
June 9—10:00 AM-12:00 PM	Voting Issues Presentation, Veterans Collaborative	SLO Veterans Hall, Grand Ave. & Palm St. SLO voterregistration@lwvslo.org
June 15—12:00—1:30 PM	Centennial Celebrations presentations	San Luis Obispo Rotary, Madonna Inn, 100 Madonna Rd., SLO jlcarr@charter.net or juliane.mcadam@gmail.com
June 16--5:30-7:00 PM	Democracy Concierge Services	SLO City Hall, 990 Palm St. SLO sharon.e.kimball@gmail.com
June 20—10:30 AM-1:30 PM	Annual Meeting	Madonna Inn, Garden Room, 100 Madonna Rd., SLO annhavlik@aol.com
June 25-28	LWVUS National Convention	Washington, DC
July 2020		
July 7--5:30-7:00 PM	Democracy Concierge Services	SLO City Hall, 990 Palm St. SLO sharon.e.kimball@gmail.com
July 21—5:30-7:00 PM	Democracy Concierge Services	SLO City Hall, 990 Palm St. SLO sharon.e.kimball@gmail.com
August 2020		
August 4--5:30-7:00 PM	Democracy Concierge Services	SLO City Hall, 990 Palm St. SLO sharon.e.kimball@gmail.com
August 8—9:30 AM-12:30 PM	Civility Walk	Meadow Park, 2333 Meadow St., SLO sharon.e.kimball@gmail.com



LWV SLOCO—Events Calendar (cont.)

August 13	Reception for Library of Congress Exhibit on the 19th Amendment	SLO City/County Public Library, 995 Palm St., SLO jlcarr@charter.net
August 15-29	Library of Congress Exhibit on the 19th Amendment	SLO City/County Public Library, 995 Palm St., SLO jlcarr@charter.net
August 18—5:30 TO 7:00 PM	Democracy Concierge Services	SLO City Hall deborahumphreys@hotmail.com
August 22	Celebration of Centennial of the 19th Amendment	Mission Plaza, SLO jlcarr@charter.net

“Greening,” from p. 8

in vain for assertions of its value and of the need to plan for its restoration.

We may, indeed, face an ambiguous period during which the danger of the currently rampaging virus will fade, but not disappear. Where is the balance point between epidemiological risk and the risk of losing our liberty? Where is the line between needed precaution and convenient pretext? We need to be having these conversations!

A corollary loss has been our ability to participate in the decisions of local governments and state bodies, as guaranteed by the Brown Act and the Bagley Keene Act, now that physical attendance at, and participation in, their meetings is impossible. Some bodies, such as our SLO County Board of Supervisors, are making attempts, however jerry-rigged and untested, to provide some semblance of customary public process, for which I am grateful. Others, such as the CSU Board of Trustees, with a meeting next Tuesday, have yet to provide any way for the public to participate – a lack that could become a major concern if, as indicated by Peter Johnson's story "Town-gown 2035" (March 19), the Cal Poly Administration is

dead set on ramming through, at the CSU Board's subsequent May meeting, a Master Plan that will straitjacket the campus's future in a pre-crisis mold at a time when every assumption about the future of the system needs to be rethought.*

What is the plan for full recovery of the Brown Act and the Bagley Keene Act? What is the plan for full recovery of the right of the people to peaceably assemble? There will be no plan unless the people assert the value of these rights! Let the conversation begin!
Eric Greening
Atascadero

**After this letter was submitted, the California State University Board of Trustees, at the very last minute, came up with a jerry-rigged mechanism for written and phoned-in comments to be entered into the public record. A lot of agencies are operating “seat of the pants” – often in good faith, but improvising, and not always adequately. It remains to be seen how other public entities will evolve to manage remote meetings.*

“First,” from p. 10

tures and are more committed then ever to closing these corporate tax loopholes and building up our communities.” – Bob Schoonover, President of SEIU California and SEIU Local 721, a union fighting for progressive change for working people across the state

A recent report from the University of Southern California (USC) showed that every county in the state stands to benefit from the Schools & Communities First initiative, and polling has shown that the Schools & Communities First initiative is supported by 58% of likely California voters.

The Schools & Communities First initiative would direct \$12 billion every year to the most pressing needs in our communities, including critical local services and schools, while protecting homeowners, renters, and small businesses.

“Clucas,” from p. 8

might defer to a man's opinion,” but was willing to let any problems work their way out. All in all, Jan Clucas felt the League is continuing to serve an invaluable role in the well-being of San Luis Obispo County.



“Participate,” from p. 13

ask questions of those federal, state, and local officials in order stay apprised of emergency operations updates and the impact of the emergency updates on their constituents, members of the government body must still refrain from taking any action on or discussing amongst themselves any item of business prior to public meetings via teleconferencing. None of the Executive Orders waive the requirement for roll call votes during a teleconferenced meeting, which are required pursuant to Government Code section 54953(c)(2).

So, how do you access, participate in, and submit public comment at a San Luis Obispo County Board of Supervisor or City Council teleconferenced meeting during the “Shelter-at Home” orders? First go to the government body’s website. Don’t have their URL address? Start by “Googling” the name of the government body’s website, e.g., “San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors website in CA.” Then, click on “San Luis Obispo Board of Supervisors website.” When you arrive at the online homepage, you should immediately see detailed information about the new protocols for participating in teleconferenced meetings. When you go to any of the seven different City Council website pages, you need to click on “Agenda and Minutes” and click again on a specific agenda before you see information about how to participate in their particular government meeting. When you go to the San Luis Obispo City Council’s website and click on “Agenda and Minutes,” the new protocols immediately come up so you don’t

have to click on a specific agenda to see them. The Morro Bay City Council is using the ZOOM Webinar platform that provides both audio and visual teleconferenced meetings. ZOOM has one of the most interactive and easy-to-use teleconferencing platforms.

So, what does public comment look like at most teleconferenced meetings in San Luis Obispo County? Most government bodies are accepting public comment via phone, mail, or email with a word limit of between 400 and 500 words – the equivalent to speaking 3 minutes – the allotted time frame for public comment at most government meetings. As previously mentioned, the Morro Bay City Council is using the ZOOM Webinar platform that allows the public to not only speak online in “real time” during the public comment period at the beginning of the City Council Meeting, but also allows the public to use the “raise hand” feature to ask questions during the consent agenda in “real time.” The SLO County Board of Supervisors and all City Councils accept public comment by mail, email or voicemail and will read into the record at the teleconferenced meeting **if submitted by the deadline date and time provided in the online instructions on that government body’s website.** It’s your responsibility to go to your government body’s website and access this information. In most cases, it is the mayor who reads public comment submissions into the record. Some government bodies will provide a

“call-in” number so the public can give their voice during public comment or comment on the consent agenda.

If you only want to observe a government meeting live but do not want to participate during public comment or during the consent agenda, you can view the government meeting on your TV at Charter Cable Channel 20 or live stream it on your computer or smart phone using the hyperlink provided on the government body’s webpage. If you want to view the meeting later, you can usually view the recorded audio or video version of the meeting the following day by clicking on “Archives” or “Meetings, Agendas, and/or Minutes on the government body’s website. Updates on COVID-19 can also be found on these websites on the homepage by clicking on either a “red button” at the top of the page, ReadySLO.org or “Please click here.” For your convenience, we have provided links to the San Luis Obispo County’s Board of Supervisors and seven city council websites below:

San Luis County Board of Supervisors - <https://www.slocounty.ca.gov/Departments/Board-of-Supervisors.aspx>

Arroyo Grande City Council - <https://www.arroyogrande.org/201/City-Council>

Atascadero City Council - https://www.atascadero.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=614&Itemid=571

Cont. “Participate,” p. 17



All Hands on Deck for Climate Change

Diz Swift, LWVC

Heat records are being broken, glaciers are melting, and the seas are rising. We have reached a point where no matter what we do, we cannot avoid a very different climate future. We must act now to prevent truly catastrophic consequences. But what can we do? The most powerful action is everyone's knowledgeable vote.

Together, members of the League of Women Voters of California are educating and advocating in the fight against climate change – and influencing those votes.

The LWVC [Climate Change Task Force](#) is a group of over 300 League members across California working on climate action. The Task Force has an ambitious agenda. It is now forming **state-wide teams** to tackle a number of topics related to climate change. As a member of the Task Force you can take climate action at the

level that works for you. The Task Force steering team sends periodic notifications on climate change issues, events, and actions. It shares its work to make the whole much better than the parts.

The Climate Change Task Force is part of LWVC's long history of support for actions to fight climate change and to protect the public from preventable disasters. In June 2019, the LWVC unanimously resolved to declare a climate emergency: "We ... call upon the LWVC Board, Action Committee and local Leagues to advocate for 'Climate Emergency Declarations' and urgent relevant action by state, county, and local governments."

It's time for all hands on deck in this climate emergency and you can make a difference. Join the

LWVC crew at whatever level works for you. Check us out online at lwvc.org/climate-change-task-force, or email climatechange@lwvc.org.

Diz Swift is the Climate Change Program Director for the League of Women Voters of California and the LWVC Area Director for Natural Resources. She holds a PhD in geology, worked in minerals and oil and gas, and for the past 15 years has studied climate change and advocated for action. She lectures widely on climate science, action, policy and politics, including five years lecturing at the NYU Stern Business School. She leads the steering team for the LWV-US efforts to get a price on carbon, including sponsoring and authoring the PriceonCarbon.org website.

["Participate," from p.16](#)

Grover Beach City Council – <https://www.grover.org/177/City-Council-Members>

Morro Bay City Council - <https://www.morro-bay.ca.us/267/Mayor-City-Council>

Paso Robles City Council - <https://www.prcity.com/178/City-Council>

Pismo Beach City Council - <https://www.pismobeach.org/60/City-Council>

San Luis Obispo City Council -

<https://www.slocity.org/government/mayor-and-city-council>

Remember to click on "Agenda and Minutes" after arriving at the homepage of the above websites in order to find the new protocols for accessing information on how to participate in teleconferenced meetings. When you click on the "Agenda" for the next scheduled meeting, you should see information on how to access teleconferenced meetings and submit public comment at the top of the agenda. The Board of Supervi-

sors has this information on their homepage. The San Luis Obispo City Council has a summary of this information on the page that lists the agendas. We are experiencing unprecedented challenging times that need all the civility and civil discourse we can offer or promote. So, in spite of our own problems and frustrations, let's all remember to be courteous, kind, and respectful – and just for this moment in time – be supportive of those in the front lines in government – regardless of party affiliation -- who are doing their best during these difficult times.



Board of Directors 2019-20

Ann Havlik	Co-President (2019-21)	Cindy Marie Absey	Co-President (2019-21)
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Join the League

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(Very Important)

Do not include my information in the League Directory.

Please select your class of Membership.

A voting member is at least 18 and a citizen.

Annual Dues:

_____ **\$70.00 Individual Annual Membership**

_____ **\$120.00 Two-member Household**

_____ **\$25.00 Associate Member**
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LWVSLO is a 501 (C)3 organization, and dues are tax deductible for those who itemize.

I want to support the work of the League of Women Voters with a donation of \$ _____.

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Thank You for Your Support!

Membership in the LWV of SLO County entitles you to national, state, and local membership in the League. Membership extends from July 1 of any calendar year through June 30 of the next year.

The League is nonpartisan. We do not support or oppose candidates. Join us! Add your voice to the work of the most respected and effective grassroots organization.

